

**Minutes of the Academy Committee Meeting
held on Wednesday 31st January 2024 at 7:30am at Walton Academy.**

Membership	Initials	Governor category	Absence
Mrs L Crerar (Interim Chair of Governors)	LC	Appointed Governor	
Mrs H Ind	HI	Appointed Governor	A
Mr J Horsfield	JH	Parent Governor	
Mr D Morgan	DM	Appointed Governor	A
Mrs L Purcell	LP	Appointed Governor	
Mr J Robertson	JP	Appointed Governor	
Mrs K Hardy	KH	Appointed Governor	
<i>1 x Chair of governors vacancy</i>			
<i>1 x Vice chair of governors vacancy</i>			
<i>1 x parent governor vacancy</i>			

In Attendance	Initials	Position	Absence
Mrs C Saxelby	CS	Senior Principal	
Mrs J Leonard	JL	Principal	
Mr M Hoad	MH	Vice Principal	
Mrs K Dolby	KD	Assistant Principal - Behaviour & Attitudes	
Mrs T Bassan	TB	SENCO	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional	

Quorum required	4	Governor's present	5
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Item No	Item	Action/ by who/ when
AC/25/2324	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Mr Morgan and Mrs Ind, and these were accepted by the committee.	
AC/26/2324	Declarations of interest There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for any items of business on the agenda. The chair asked if anyone had any declarations to update. Governors confirmed that the declarations given at the beginning of the academic year were correct.	
AC/27/2324	Local Training - SEND Update Mrs Bassan introduced herself and delivered a SEND update: Due to its success, SEND at Walton Academy is considered a beacon of excellence across the trust. Many SENCOs from other academies have visited to learn from Walton. The SEND students achieve very strong GCSE results and Walton is one of only 2 mainstream academies within Lincolnshire that offer a nurturing facility called the Hub. It is important that we are successful, less than 10% of children with SEND go to a special school. Needs are becoming greater and there are no places in special schools. It is therefore important to ensure that education is accessible for those students and that they do not miss out.	

	<p>Mrs Bassan (SENCO) leads a team along with assistant SENCO, A Banner and trainee SENCO, H Bingham who will be covering the role when Mrs Bassan is on maternity leave (April onwards), a clear succession plan is in place. The SEND team is one of the largest teams in the academy, with 20 members of staff on the team including teaching assistants, all with their own areas of responsibility and this includes a dyslexia champion in L Stow.</p> <p>Key Roles of the team were summarised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Maintain and share important information about SEND students. ➤ Sharing information securely through Mint Class to support teachers with bullet pointed support strategies for students who might ordinarily struggle to stay in the mainstream lesson. ➤ Track and monitor progress through TA data folders and these have been highlighted as strength within the academy, Ofsted having been impressed by them. ➤ TES provision maps are maintained, and this allows the team to track and monitor pupil progress, build educational support plans for parents and students. This is part of Assess, Plan, Do Review. This is very important to assess the impact of all interventions, and this enables clear costing to understand cost versus effectiveness to ensure money is being spent well for the students. ➤ Regular meetings are held with parents as it is very important to have them on board. Parents often have a battle to get a referral from a GP in getting an EHCP for example. It is therefore important to work with parents as they are the experts when it comes to their children. ➤ Child in Need meetings are also covered by this department. ➤ Traditional TA activities, supporting children in lessons academically alongside providing behavioural and emotional support. ➤ Supporting students with exam accessible arrangements to make the exam experience for young people with SEND more manageable. ➤ Prepare for intake and liaise with primary SENCOs and outside agencies to ensure appropriate support is in place. ➤ Support alternative curriculums. ➤ Lead lunchtime support in the form of a nurture group which is a quiet sensory area for some of the young people. <p>Data</p> <p>EHCPs – the national average for secondary students is around 4.3%. At Walton it is 3.38% but this is rapidly changing as year upon year there are significant increases. The academy is also identifying students without EHCPs that need them and are applying for them.</p> <p>SEND - the national average for secondary students is around 13%. At Walton the figure is around 20% this sits within the context of the school. The SEND register is constantly reviewed to ensure everyone on the register should be on but also identify those that are not on the register and may need to be.</p> <p>Funding</p> <p>EHCP – A student receiving highest level of support (profound funding of 32.5 hours of support in school) equates to £13,860 for full time wrap around care. This sum does not equate to a full time Teaching Assistant.</p>	
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	<p><u>The governors asked</u> if the intent from the government is that this funding provides full time support in schools. Mrs Bassan explained that all other funding is also considered along with term time working and this includes the age-weighted pupil unit (AWPU) which is the basic per-pupil funding received.</p> <p>Mr Hoad added that the government would expect schools to double up these roles to ensure efficiency and parents sometimes have a misperception that full funding means exclusive one-to-one support. Therefore, it is very important that information about EHCP support is presented to parents clearly and carefully.</p> <p>Mrs Leonard said that it is important to note that in most cases, the support is in place to meet the needs of a student irrespective of the stage of the EHCP application process that they might be at.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> how SEND needs are funded. Mrs Leonard explained that through the census all schools are given additional funding for SEND need which is calculated per student on the SEND register. The national picture is that there isn't enough funding for SEND. At Walton there is a fine balancing act in terms of the budget and where staffing capacity is. The introduction of the Hub facility supports the academy and enables those complex EHCP students to receive bespoke support which allows them to access a mainstream curriculum. The Hub allows the academy to deploy the TA team efficiently which results in better utilisation of funding.</p> <p><u>The governors were interested to understand</u> how and when the academy will take the decision to apply for an EHCP for a student. Mrs Bassan explained that it ties into the provision map. If the student is receiving high levels of support, their need will be identified through the regular cycles of assessment and review. Staff members will also flag students if they feel that additional support beyond that already being provided is required. In order to apply for an EHCP there first needs to have been 3 cycles of Assess Plan Do Review which means that it is not an easy or speedy process. Mrs Bassan added that the issues won't just disappear when the EHCP is granted as the additional funding received pays for the support that has already been put in place.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if the increase in SEND needs is in line with an increase in mental health issues. Mrs Bassan explained that before it was coded as 'behavioural and emotional' and now the coding of 'social emotional and mental health' covers a broader spectrum than SEND registers had done previously. The national context has changed in terms of social and mental health and currently the highest code is likely to be social and mental health. This need is expected to continue to increase. Walton is lucky to have a school counsellor and have good relationships with other organisations that provide support in this area. Mrs Saxelby added that special school provision is extremely limited. <u>The governors further asked</u> what happens when you get to the point where the academy cannot support a student any further. Mrs Bassan gave an example of one Walton student who was likely to remain in the Hub throughout their schooling. They were placed, as part of an alternative provision, at a special school on a part time basis, being supported</p>	
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by a TA from Walton. Eventually they were offered a full-time place at that school which is exceptionally rare. The biggest issues are the behavioural ones and unfortunately children with SEND and poor attendance are twice as likely to be excluded than a child without a SEND need. For many of these students, a smaller setting is better suited to them. Support is limited so the more demanding parents tend to receive better support from the local authority.

The governors then asked if a student would come off an EHCP and how that is decided. Mrs Bassan responded that Local Authority work to an understanding that a student will eventually come off an EHCP, but the reality is that they don't. The governors wanted to understand if the academy therefore need to re-apply for EHCPs regularly. Mrs Bassan explained that EHCPs are reviewed annually but that reapplication is not required. Mrs Leonard explained that all local authorities have different ways of funding EHCPs. In Nottinghamshire funding is applied differently, no money is provided for an EHCP, they provide Higher Educational Needs money which has to be applied for every year. A child living in Nottinghamshire and attending Walton would need to follow Nottinghamshire's rules. The governors then asked how many students are from Nottinghamshire. Mrs Leonard explained that there are now very few due to changes in local circumstances. There are still some students higher up within school from Nottinghamshire with siblings still filtering in however, the majority of students with the most complex needs are coming from the local primary schools.

The HUB is a bespoke learning environment for students with SEND. Support requirements are reviewed as consults come in from the local authority. The team will look at whether needs can be met within the academy and if not can they be met within the Hub. If the team feel that needs cannot be met the response has to be robust and, even then the local authority can insist that the academy take the student. The Hub is a small setting aiming to bridge the gap between primary and secondary. Some of the students may not be mainstream secondary ready. A lot of the time working below the level of their peers, or sometimes have not been attending. These are considered on an individual level. Students in the hub are mostly year 7. Into year 8 they are gradually transitioned into more mainstream lessons and activities and by the end of year 9 it is expected that students are working in mainstream school with additional TA support where necessary. Sometimes this is not possible and under those circumstances, bespoke packages are considered working closely with the leadership team, parents and other agencies. The governors asked if there is scope for other schools to learn from the HUB at Walton. Mrs Leonard confirmed that visitors do come to view the provision and that Mrs Bassan also attends the 'SEND partnership board' this is a formulation of the SEND team from the county some headteachers from special schools and some secondary schools are invited which is an opportunity to share knowledge and best practice. The Local Authority would like lots of school to have what Walton have but unfortunately there isn't the infrastructure in most schools to offer it. Mrs Leonard said that she feels that it is important to protect the provision at Walton for the local community. Governors acknowledged that the local primary schools in the area will be aware that

	<p>Walton is the preferred option for students with additional needs and this will most certainly filter through to parents <u>and asked</u> how students with an EHCP are considered under the oversubscription criteria. Mrs Leonard confirmed that students with an EHCP are prioritised. Mr Hoad added that the Hub not only serves as a step into mainstream education but can also be utilised as a step out of mainstream where appropriate. <u>Governors asked</u> if there is potential to use the HUB for respite in circumstances where students are dealing with particularly sensitive issues such as bereavement for example. Mrs Bassan explained that when official consults come from the Local Authority she has to be very clear that there is no capacity in order to turn them away and therefore it is difficult to justify using the Hub in this way. For the most part, students accessing the Hub will need to have an EHCP in place or an EHCP in progress.</p> <p><u>The governors wanted to know</u> what happens to the students at the end of their education. Mrs Bassan explained that all SEND students are prioritised when it comes to careers support and are seen before other students. The careers lead, S Emerald, will work with them along with the TA's to consider next steps, will arrange college visits for them, provide support with telephone interviews etc. Mrs Leonard added that EHCPs can last up to the age of 25, and in these cases the Local Authority will also support transition for students with complex needs. She added that Walton do have a number of SEND students and students with EHCPs within Post-16 and continue to support them on their journey. <u>The governors asked</u> if work experience was offered to SEND students, and Mrs Leonard explained that the academy do not operate work experience as such but instead host businesses on next steps days and experience of work is held within the academy.</p> <p>SEND training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ SEND training is ongoing for all staff, a specialist is coming in to talk about Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) which is being seen more in schools. ➤ A session will be delivered to staff on Behaviour for SEND, a trauma informed approach. ➤ SEND learning partnership - this is interesting to be a part of as it contains senior members of Childrens Services from the Local Authority. ➤ Trust led SENCO training led by Rachel Cosgrove, author of Inclusive Teaching In A Nutshell. These have been very worthwhile training days. ➤ Working with Futures In Mind and Edcite support in school which is not Local Authority provided anymore. <p>The governors thanked Mrs Bassan and asked if she would share her full presentation with the governance professional for onward distribution. ACTION: Share presentation with NB ACTION: share presentation with governors via SharePoint.</p> <p>Mrs Bassan and Mrs Dolby left the meeting.</p>	<p>TB NB</p>
<p>AC/28/2324</p>	<p>Actions / Feedback from link governor visits ACTION: Mrs Crerar to arrange a GDPR meeting with Andy Batten and invite Mr Robertson to complete the handover of link responsibility.</p>	<p>LC</p>

	ACTION: The governance professional to identify the relevant contact for the stakeholder engagement link meetings and introduce Mrs Hardy	NB
AC/29/2324	Minutes of the AC meeting dated 17th November 2023. The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the vice chair.	
AC/30/2324	Matters Arising: AC/14/2324 The attendance presentation following the meeting is available on SharePoint via this LINK Attendance Training Recording which has been shared with all governors. complete AC/14/2324 provide data at the next meeting on core attendance having removed outliers JL – covered in this principals report. complete AC/20/2324 share the cost of rent for the new building JL – covered in this principals report. complete AC/20/2324 complete the report to trustees. NB/LC - complete AC/20/2324 Ensure relevant items are carried over for discussion at next agenda setting meeting NB/LC/JL - complete AC/20/2324 raise additional questions from the pre meeting documentation that could not be covered in the meeting to the governance professional. Govs - questions discussed in mid term meeting have been added to the agenda. complete AC/20/2324 provide feedback to the trust on time taken on training section of agenda. NB – complete . video training will be available to review before the meetings in future	
AC/31/2324	Principals Report Mrs Leonard referred to the principals’ report provided in advance of the meeting and asked if governors had any questions. <i>The governors asked</i> if the year 11 cohort had been as challenging as anticipated and wondered how this has been managed in terms of reporting. Mrs Leonard said that there continues to be a high number of suspensions and exclusions this year. The decisions that are made are for the safety of the community and disruption to education. Behaviour systems and structures are used to deal with one-off incidents which impact on safety and persistent disruptive behaviour which results in disruption to learning. All such decisions are very difficult and are not taken lightly. Looking at the data, there has been a spike in the need to use those sanctions, and the local, national and trust data reflects this. As well as sanctions, there have been systems and structures put in place to develop the wider pastoral team to provide social and emotional support, safeguarding support, attendance support and behaviour support which has seen rapid growth and increased capacity. Mrs Leonard added that the academy is still on a journey, but she feels confident that compared to 12 to 18 months ago is in a stronger position. As well as the educational landscape changes nationally, the academy at the same time has been through a huge journey; going to co-ed, significant growth in size, catchment area changes for example. The AIP works towards enabling the academy to mitigate behavioural issues and this is a work in progress. Some of the challenges include the nature of	

the site and buildings. Having to close off the quad area while exams are in place creates a health and safety problem as there isn't space in the corridor for the community to move around, this impacts on behaviour and attitudes. There are some challenges that are more difficult to address than others, the trust are supporting to solve some of the challenges, in particular exam space. Due to the speed of growth, some challenges can't be anticipated.

The governors asked whilst respecting the boundary of strategic versus operational, is there anything that governors can do to support those students that may be close to exclusion. Mrs Leonard confirmed that there are procedures in place which are statutory requirements such as the 15 + suspension panel. Mrs Leonard felt that additional support from governors could be considered as an informal layer within the steps and agreed to discuss it with Mrs Dolby and the Heads of Year. Any meetings would need to be managed on an informal basis as there would be no value in replicating work that already goes on.

The governors asked if Mrs Leonard could expand on the comments in the principals' report about 'My Concern'. Mrs Leonard said that there had been a huge increase in the number of safeguarding concerns reported. One of the things there has been a noticeable increase in recently has been, [encompass notifications](#) from the police. The academy is notified of domestic violence / abuse within the family, no details are provided and therefore it is very difficult for the safeguarding team to deal with this. The academy will already know about some cases however it is more difficult where there haven't been any concerns reported internally. The concerns at Walton are mirrored across the trust. The volume of reports coming doesn't currently reflect the capacity within the designated safeguarding teams as these staff members have other roles within the academy. The trust is looking at doing an audit on what school safeguarding teams look like to identify the substantive roles. There may be a need for a safeguarding admin role to work closely with the DSL to ensure things are being picked up and recorded as quickly and efficiently as possible. This comes back to budgets and financial pressures. My Voice – the student version of My Concern has been launched however there have been some technical issues, it needs to run a little longer to assess whether this is an effective safeguarding tool. The governors voiced their concern that the platform could lose credibility because of the technical issues. Mrs Leonard said that Mrs Dolby holds safeguarding assemblies with students every half term and has encouraged students to participate in the latest safeguarding survey of students embarked on by The Trust. This process identifies trends and obtains valuable data that is fed back to academies. The closing date is the end of this half term. This will be shared with governors when the data is available.

Mr Hoad added some context around the encompass alerts received from the police and explained that it has slowed down recently but he is still getting around 2 or 3 per week. The numbers peaked around Christmas time. Mrs Leonard explained that in her previous role as DSL she would probably receive about 2 or 3 per year. Mr Hoad added that the change in demographics (now much more urban) will be a significant factor along with more reporting. The

	<p><u>governors questioned</u> whether numerous alerts could be relating to the same family and Mr Hoad confirmed that this is sometimes the case. Mr Hoad explained that there are only a handful of very complex safeguarding students and these are very closely monitored.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if 6th form applications were now open and if there is a feel for numbers for next year as a result. Mrs Leonard said that interviews have started but are currently on pause due to mock exams. 50 existing Walton students have been interviewed so far, external student interviews will be later in the year. There has been significant interest from Charles Read Academy who had invited Walton to have a stand at their careers fair as they don't have a Post-16 offer. Numbers are expected to increase and there is some concern about the growth that could happen over the next few years due to the pressures on the academy in general. Walton may be in a position to apply oversubscription criteria which is described in the admissions policy. The governors asked how many Post-16 students there are currently and Mrs Leonard confirmed that there are around 50/60 in each year group. The maximum for each year group is 100. There is a cap of 20 places for external applicants. Mr Hoad clarified that curriculum wise there is no cost to having greater numbers of students however it is the common room, tutor group sizes, and car parking that create issues. <u>The governors further asked</u> if every year 11 student must have an interview. Mrs Leonard clarified that all year 11s will have a one-to-one careers interview but in terms of Post-16 they need to complete an application form and will be interviewed. Sometimes, interviewing all students can have a negative impact as Post-16 isn't right for every student. The Post-16 landscape is changing in terms of qualifications and more changes are likely in Sept '24, '25 and beyond. This will impact what the applied general offer will look like. Faculty teams are reviewing this and will navigate this with those young people affected as and when necessary.</p> <p><u>The governors wondered</u> whether an offsite Post-16 venture could be explored. Mr Hoad said this might lose the role modelling and the visibility of the aspiration. The value of a Post-16 to a school is its visibility. Mrs Leonard added that when the Post-16 started it was off-site for a period of time and for that year or so no-one thought Walton had a Post-16. The huge benefit to having Post-16 on site outweighs the challenges that need to be navigated.</p> <p>Cat C Trips Mr Hoad informed governors of the trips in the pipeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Iceland trip goes out next Thursday with 40 year 10, 11 and 12 students. ➤ Disney maths trip will go out after half-term. <p>New trips for the Summer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ France and Spain languages trips for year 8 & 9 ➤ GCSE Geography field trip – Yorkshire coast trip for year 10 ➤ A level Geography field trip (combined with Tuxford Academy) <p>Future trips at planning stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ December – Christmas truce history trip to France and Belgium ➤ Planning Borneo World Challenge for 2 to 3 years time. This is still at early planning stages, funding will be a challenge as the students are required to fundraise for this. 	
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	<p>In summary this equates to a lot of international trips in a short period of time. There have been responses from some parents regarding the volume of trips, and the cost and it is acknowledged that there is a balance between this and providing opportunities. From a planning point of view five international trips in one year is not something that will likely continue. A ski trip had also been polled but uptake was low, and this be rolled forward to next year along with the Disney trip. Mr Hoad added that he is looking at creating a central fund that might be supported by organisations and local charities that departments can then bid into. <u>The governors asked</u> if Mr Hoad was aware of the Evolve presentation on how schools can claim funding. They are running some sessions on how schools can get funding for trips. Mr Hoad said that he will look into this. ACTION Investigate funding through Evolve for school trips.</p>	MH
AC/32/2324	<p>Out of Cohort application The academy is awaiting the application paperwork from parents. The governance professional will organise a Teams meeting, to include a minimum of 4 governors when the information is available to consider the application.</p>	
AC/33/2324	<p>How has the AC held senior leaders to account? There was significant discussion and challenge from governors in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EHCP and SEND provision, including funding and budgeting. - Support for students with mental health needs 	
AC/34/2324	<p>How have the VMV of the Trust / Equality been upheld?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust & Equality has been upheld. 	
AC/35/2324	<p>Complete report to Trustees</p> <p>-</p>	
AC/36/2324	<p>Determination of Confidentiality Equalities Act consideration 7 Nolan Principles AC members considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no confidential items discussed • There had been no Equalities Act implications • Attendees were content that all decisions made adhere to the 7 Nolan Principles. 	
	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Academy Committee meeting Wednesday 20th March at 5:00 pm at Walton Academy The meeting closed at 09:00am</p>	

Signed by Chair: L Creer

Date: 20/02/2024