

**Minutes of the Academy Committee Meeting  
held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 5:00pm at Walton Academy.**

<b>Membership</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Governor category</b>	<b>Absence</b>
Mrs L Crerar (Interim Chair of Governors)	LC	Appointed Governor	
Mrs H Ind	HI	Appointed Governor	
Mr J Horsfield	JH	Parent Governor	A
Mr D Morgan	DM	Appointed Governor	
Mrs L Purcell	LP	Appointed Governor	A
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>			

<b>In Attendance</b>	<b>Initials</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Absence</b>
Mrs C Saxelby	CS	Senior Principal	
Mrs J Leonard	JL	Principal	
Mr M Hoad	MH	Vice Principal	
Mrs L Owen	LO	Assistant Principal - Outcomes	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional	

Quorum required	4	Governor's present	5
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<b>Item No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action/ by who/ when</b>
<b>AC/37/2324</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b> Apologies were received from Mr Horsfield and Mrs Purcell and these were accepted by the committee. Mrs Ind had informed the governance professional that she may be late due to traffic. The chair began the meeting, all attendees accepting that Mrs Ind would be arriving shortly.	
<b>AC/38/2324</b>	<b>Declarations of interest</b> 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.	
<b>AC/39/2324</b>	<b>Training</b> Mrs Hardy told the committee that she had joined the National School Governors Awareness Day and had found it interesting with some very good speakers. It was agreed that Mrs Hardy will share the slides with the governance professional for distribution to the committee. <b>[AP-KH]</b> The governors asked if there was anything specific of interest that Mrs Hardy would like to share. Mrs Hardy said that there was a lot about culture and recruitment and sharing of best practice.  All attendees were sent a link to the Trust led training, <b>Evaluating the Quality of Education</b> prior to the meeting and confirmed that they had viewed the	<b>KH 28/03/24</b>

training video. Mr Hoad explained that he would like to add context to the training from a Walton Academy perspective and explained that the academy is expected to follow at least the national curriculum in key stage 3 (KS3), that is years 7, 8 and 9 and for the core subjects, the expectation of content is clearly defined. In some other subject areas such as arts and technology, the content requirements are less defined. There are also statutory requirements within the curriculum to cover specific subjects which includes religious education, physical education and sex and relationships education (SRE) and therefore at KS3 much of the curriculum is fixed. At Walton performing arts is protected throughout KS3 and two languages are offered. This differs in other schools.

Key Stage 4 (KS4) is different in that the structure is defined by performance tables, (Progress 8, Attainment 8, English Baccalaureate (EBacc)). The Academy is free to deliver what it wants within reason but to perform well in league tables this must be in line with those measures. There is an element of choice with regards the exam boards, at KS4 the exam boards package the curriculum in a certain way, and this will dictate what is taught. The statutory elements are also expected to be delivered at KS4.

*Mrs Ind arrived at 17:10*

Key Stage 5 (KS5) is defined by funding in that the academy are free to do what they want as a subject offer. This will come down to guided learning hours as set by exam bodies and will follow a designed course. There is an expectation around the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) requirements and at Walton these elements are delivered. Core PE is also delivered in post 16 as well as enrichment and personal development. A fourth qualification is offered to Post 16 students. They can select from core maths, the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), Arts Award etc. These are level 3 courses that can be taken alongside A Levels and provide additional UCAS points. Some students are also studying for a fourth A level. The broad expectation is that all post 16 students will study for 3 A levels plus the additional qualification. *The governors wanted to know* if this ran through the full 2 years and Mr Hoad confirmed that generally the extra course has been studied in year 12 only which frees up time to focus on A levels in year 13, there might be individual circumstances which means that some students complete the course in year 13. *The governors wanted to better understand* what core maths is and Mr Hoad explained that it earns additional UCAS points or a reduced offer at university, it involves maths that students will be familiar with from GCSE Maths, and it focuses on applying maths to real-life problems in a practical way.

*The governors asked* how the academy approaches assessment of the delivery of the curriculum. Mr Hoad said there is the data driven approach to assessment and ongoing quality assurance which is done through the line management structures, such as learning walks, student interviews, book scrutiny etc. This all follows a quality assurance calendar; every senior leader and head of faculty meet fortnightly to discuss the programmed discussion points.

	<p><u>The governors then asked</u> if the additional qualification is core maths or AS maths. Mrs Owen explained that core maths is a different qualification to AS maths and that it now carries greater value than the AS level in maths. The AS level in Further Maths is still delivered as it bears greater weight. Mr Hoad went on to explain that AS Levels no longer follow the same plan as an A level which reduces the cost benefit of delivering AS levels. The Further Maths AS level has a greater cost benefit than most A levels. At Walton the Further Maths GCSE is offered to help prepare those students wanting to study A level maths.</p> <p><u>The governors wanted to know</u> if there are any general targets in terms of grades that the academy want to see students leaving with. Mr Hoad said the aim is for all students to achieve what they need to as individuals to open as many doors as possible. It is important that they achieve passes in English and maths and a few more.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> how exam boards are selected and explained the question by asking if it decided by the head of department, the trust, staff or a combination of all of those things. Mr Hoad explained that most vocational subjects are limited to one exam board, there are some that have consistency across the trust and some that don't. If a subject leader were to advocate for a board for specific reasons and can demonstrate their reasoning, then a change of board might be considered. Good reasons could be around tiers of entry and how they are better suited to a specific cohort, or because some staff members are exam markers within a department and will therefore have greater knowledge and experience of a specific board. Mrs Leonard added that heads of faculty and subject leaders have ownership of these decisions. Discussions and challenges will be given by the senior leadership team (SLT) to ensure that the right board is selected for the community, which includes both students and teaching staff. <u>The governors then asked</u> if there are many exam markers within the teaching staff. Mr Hoad said that there are a handful, but the numbers are reducing due to time pressures and poor pay awarded. <u>The governors wanted to know</u> how a cohort is affected when having to make adaptations to the way the curriculum is delivered due to a change in exam board. Mr Hoad assured governors that from experience it is important to challenge students as this is where the engagement comes from and any changes to exam boards and therefore curriculum content will be because of the QA cycles discussed earlier and will be to better support the students.</p> <p>The chair brought discussion on this item of the agenda to a close being mindful of the time.</p>	
<p><b>AC/40/2324</b></p>	<p><b>Actions / Feedback from link governor visits</b></p> <p>Mr Hoad informed the GDPR link governors that a recent meeting was held and agreed to share the minutes with Mrs Crerar and Mr Robertson. [AP-MH]</p> <p>Mrs Hardy confirmed that she and Mr Hoad have the next steps planned for the stakeholder engagement link role.</p>	<p><b>MH</b> <b>28/03/24</b></p>

	<p>Mr Robertson gave feedback from the recent Standards and Outcomes Trustee visit that he attended and said that he felt the level of dialogue and engagement from staff was very good. He said that there was obvious pride amongst staff which reflected exceptionally well on the academy.</p> <p><u>The Chair fed back points from Mrs Purcell in her absence and asked</u> if there is any information that can be shared around staff absence figures and around teacher retention and how the Academy supports staff / life balance etc. Mrs Leonard explained that there are continuous professional learning and development (CPLD) pathways and packages that are delivered in line with the association and the trust and suggested that Fran Gilbert be invited along to the next meeting to expand on this further.</p> <p><u>The governors wanted to know</u> if staff leaders have the opportunity to feedback on how their teams are feeling. Mrs Leonard explained that within the meetings cycle and link meetings, the first item of the agenda is always around wellbeing, how is everyone etc. She went on to say that each year she has an annual catchup with every staff member, this is very worthwhile and is a better investment of her time than issuing surveys. Mrs Leonard added that with the regular cycle of meetings and the open-door culture, staff are comfortable coming to talk to leaders and she is confident that the SLT know their staff on an individual level. All new staff within the Trust have a 1-, 3- and 6-month induction meeting and at Walton they will have a catchup with Mrs Leonard after 3 or 4 weeks to check that they have settled in.</p>	
<p><b>AC/41/2324</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the AC meeting dated 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023.</b> The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the vice chair.</p>	
<p><b>AC/42/2324</b></p>	<p><b>Matters Arising:</b>  <b>AC/27/2324</b> TB to Share SEND presentation with NB. <b>Complete.</b>  <b>AC/27/2324</b> NB to share presentation with governors via SharePoint. <b>Complete</b> – presentation stored in the January 24 meeting folder.  <b>AC/28/2324</b> Mrs Crerar to arrange a GDPR meeting with Andy Batten and invite Mr Robertson to complete the handover of link responsibility. <b>ongoing</b>  <b>AC/28/2324</b> NB to identify the relevant contact for the stakeholder engagement link meetings and introduce Mrs Hardy. <b>Complete</b>  <b>AC/31/2324</b> MH to Investigate funding through Evolve for school trips. <b>ongoing</b></p>	
<p><b>AC/43/2324</b></p>	<p><b>Principals Report</b>  <b>ERM report</b>  Mrs Leonard asked if governors had any questions from the ERM report issued with the papers prior to the meeting.</p> <p><u>The governors wanted to know</u> more about the Freedom of Information (FOI) request <u>and asked</u> why the year 9 parents evening had been cancelled. Mrs Leonard explained that the year 9 parents evening had been postponed because of high staff and student absence at the time. A bug had swept through the academy, and it was decided not to go ahead with the evening and risk a high number of complaints from parents that many of the staff were</p>	

	<p>not there. The parents evening is now planned for the summer term. The options evening for year 9 went ahead after February half term and this was one of the best attended to date. <i>The governors then asked</i> what was meant by the comment in the report relating to the cost incurred around the request for further information. Mrs Leonard explained that the FOI request is still ongoing, the requester has had to narrow down their search to reduce the cost but it is likely that they will be charged because of the number of hours that it takes to gather and prepare the data.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> why the top section of the ERM now looks different to previous reports. The governors find the document confusing, acronyms are not easy to follow and the data is difficult to read. Mrs Saxelby agreed to feed the comments back. <i>The governors suggested</i> a glossary of terms be included at the head of the report to explain the acronyms. <b>[AP-CS]</b></p> <p><b>Admissions</b></p> <p>Mrs Leonard explained that places are allocated by the local authority and all applications are ranked in line with the academy’s oversubscription criteria. The local authority will try to place all children into their first-choice school. This year Walton have been allocated 152 young people, the PAN is 180. The academy has worked closely with the local authority throughout the process and there is no particular reason why the allocation has reduced. A factor that may have played a part is that in recent years, most appeals have not been won and some parents could have felt there was no point in applying. 100 offers were made to parents who put Walton as first preference (65.8%), 32 second preference (21.1%), 17 third preference (11.2%) and 3 local authority allocated (2%). Within this new cohort there are 76 boys 76 girls, 43 are siblings and 2 staff children. There are 2 students with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) and 3 looked after children. The students will be coming from 31 feeder schools which has been a shift from recent years with students coming from further away, as far as 9.5 miles compared to the 1.5 miles in recent years. More are coming from Belton Lane, St Sebastian’s and Belmont schools. The process is now into the second round which includes late applicants, appeals and new applicants that may have just moved into the area. At the time of meeting there have been 11 new applications in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round so far (some are from out of county) and 144 places have been accepted. When everything has settled down, 160 will be a realistic estimate for September 2024. Mrs Leonard went on to express her gratitude to Jo Green for the work she has been doing with families, the community, and the local authority. This year a meeting was held at the academy last Monday to follow national offer day very quickly rather than waiting until transition week. It was exceptionally well attended with around 95-100 students with their parents. The first part of the meeting was delivered by Mrs Leonard welcoming everyone into the Walton family and talking through the Walton journey and legacy. The second part involved a tour of the site delivered by some of the older students. The response from parents was that the event was very reassuring, particular for those who hadn’t selected Walton as first choice. Mrs Leonard said that this is something that the academy will continue to do moving forwards as it was so positively received.</p>	<p>CS 28/03/24</p>
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	<p>Next steps will be for Jo Green to contact all feeder primaries to arrange for staff from Walton to visit all the children in their current primary schools. Any that come through in the second round will also be visited. There will be 3 transition days in July which will include a parent meeting. The SEND team also visits all students where required.</p> <p>Mrs Leonard explained that sustaining a PAN of 180 in every year group is a challenge. 150 feels more comfortable in terms of the physical space within the academy but not being full does make mid-year and fair access requests more challenging as the cohort progresses through the school. <u>The governors questioned</u> the PAN of 180 <u>and asked</u> what the process is around getting the PAN reduced. Mrs Leonard explained that it is a conversation with the local authority who are aware that issues around space are significant. They have visited Walton and came away better understanding the challenges. There are lower birth rates coming through within the area in the coming years and conversations with the trust will continue around the long-term plan for the site. <u>The governors further asked</u> if the PAN is set by the local authority and Mrs Leonard explained that it is the school's choice but is impacted by the funding agreement. <u>The governors noted</u> that the temporary building base only has a life of 4 or 5 years and with admission numbers working 3 years in advance, a decision may need to be made this summer. <u>The governors then asked</u> what the rationale was for the 180 PAN. Mrs Saxelby explained that 180 was agreed to secure the stability of the academy when acquiring the funding agreement to move to a co-educational academy serving the local community. <u>The governors then asked</u> if the PAN could be slightly reduced, for example by 10. Mr Hoad explained that to be financially viable schools generally work in multiples of 30 students (a class size).</p> <p><u>The governors wondered</u> if the use of external sites had been considered and Mrs Leonard said the logistical difficulties involved with moving students and staff between sites are too great and as discussed in previous meetings, it is important to keep Post 16 on site to develop aspiration. On that note, the Post 16 is expected to grow as the larger 180 cohorts move through the academy. <u>The governors asked</u> what had been different in reality as the larger numbers have moved through the academy compared with the planning. Mrs Leonard acknowledged that she had not been involved at the planning stage as she was not the principal at the time but identified there had been an element of protection through the first few years of significant growth due to covid restrictions. The impact has been felt over the last couple of years on the ground. Mr Hoad added that the initial planning done was focussed on the number of classrooms and seats in classrooms and did not take into consideration social spaces and students moving around the site.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if it would be helpful if the year 7 evening during transition week had a governor present. Mrs Leonard agreed to ensure the calendar of summer events is shared with governors to enable better planning for governor attendance. [AP-JL]</p>	<p>JL 28/03/24</p>
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	<p><b>Year 11</b></p> <p>Mrs Owen circulated data and the pre-exam plan for governors to view based on recent mock exam results. Mrs Owen explained that the faculties will be refining their plans after the Easter break to drill down into the mocks and assessment data so that they can push for progression towards the next grades. Work is ongoing to develop roles and responsibilities to ensure exams are running as smoothly as possible. This will allow for contact home from a faculty level for specific students where necessary along with wholesale communications from Mrs Owen to inform parents of expectations.</p> <p>Mrs Owen said that it was important to note that malpractice went up significantly last year across the country to 43%. <u>The governors asked</u> what the sanctions are for students when malpractice is identified. Mrs Owen said that repercussions can vary, some students will receive a warning, others can be disqualified from all exams. A Walton student lost all their marks for talking in an exam last year. Mrs Owen went on to explain that because of the notable increase, further checks were carried out during the mocks. Spot checks revealed more incidents of banned items being left in pockets. The communication home will be much firmer to try and make it more personal for students and parents.</p> <p><u>The governors were interested to know</u> if the academy had experienced issues where artificial intelligence (AI) had been used in coursework and if so, how that was dealt with. Mrs Owen said that new advice has been given from exam boards around the use of AI which now states that where AI has been used by a student it must be referenced. Because coursework is monitored throughout the process and feedback is given regularly, teachers will be able to spot the use of AI and question students about it.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> if the data has identified any successes or concerns. Mrs Owen explained that the data was only produced early this week and she had not looked at it in depth yet. Governors were viewing the figures before most of the staff. She added that the SEN data shows that performance is lower than previous years but many of the SEN students in this cohort have very complex needs. <u>The governors then shared concerns</u> that parents getting sight of results after Easter might be too late to enable them to have some impact at home. Mrs Owen said that students have all seen their papers and results and although they are not able to take them home, they are able to respond to feedback immediately.</p> <p><b>Staff and pupil wellbeing</b></p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> how they can acquire a view of student voice. Mrs Leonard invited governors to come into the academy to do it. <u>The governors then asked</u> if there is a platform to use. Mrs Leonard said that staff do this through curriculum areas and suggested that governors follow the same format in pairs to make sure they are getting student and staff voices. She added that the Academy Improvement Review (AIR) is the second week back after Easter and student views will be taken as part of the review. Governors might want to select a specific year group or subject area to home in on.</p>	
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	<p><b>Cat C trips</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spain trip is currently ongoing.</li> <li>○ France trip is going out in the summer term.</li> <li>○ Geography field work (residential) in October for post 16 combined with 2 other academies within the trust.</li> <li>○ Christmas truce – Belgium 24 hours there and back on a coach</li> <li>○ The academy has been given provisional permission to continue with the Borneo challenge plans.</li> <li>○ Iceland trip has been reapproved for next year.</li> <li>○ Disney trip expected to run again next year.</li> </ul>	
<b>AC/44/2324</b>	<p><b>Policy Updates / Appendix Ratification</b></p> <p><b>Admission policies for 25/26</b></p> <p>The admission policy local appendix for 25/26 was updated by Walton in September 2023 and is available on the Academy website. Governors were informed of these updates on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and all were ratified in the governor meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024.</p> <p><b>Other policy updates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Relationship and Sex Education Policy</li> <li>○ Provider Access policy</li> <li>○ Supporting students with medical conditions policy</li> <li>○ Early Careers Teachers policy</li> <li>○ Levels of Authority</li> <li>○ Filtering and monitoring appendix 2024</li> <li>○ Risk Policy</li> </ul> <p>The above Diverse Academies policies were updated by the Trust on the 30th of January 2024 and are available on the Trust website. Governors were informed of these updates on the 18th of March 2024.</p> <p><i>The governors asked</i> if the filtering and monitoring packages are performing as expected. Mr Hoad replied that Watchguard is doing what it was expected to do but that SENSO is under review.</p>	
<b>AC/45/2324</b>	<p><b>How has the AC held senior leaders to account?</b></p> <p>There was significant discussion and challenge from governors in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post 16 curriculum, offer, delivery, evaluation and targets</li> <li>- Student / Staff wellbeing</li> <li>- ERM report (format and content)</li> <li>- Admissions, PAN and transition</li> <li>- Year 11 exams support and expectations</li> </ul>	
<b>AC/46/2324</b>	<p><b>How have the VMV of the Trust / Equality been upheld?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust &amp; Equality has been upheld.</li> </ul>	
<b>AC/47/2324</b>	<p><b>Complete report to Trustees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report completed.</li> </ul>	



<p><b>AC/48/2324</b></p>	<p><b>Determination of Confidentiality</b>  <b>Equalities Act consideration</b>  <b>7 Nolan Principles</b>                  AC members considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no confidential items discussed</li> <li>• There had been no Equalities Act implications</li> <li>• Attendees were content that all decisions made adhere to the 7 Nolan Principles.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting:</b>                  Academy Committee meeting <b>Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May at 07:30am</b> at Walton Academy                  The meeting closed at 18:40pm</p>	

Signed by Chair: L Crerar

Date: 26/03/2024