

**Minutes of the Academy Committee Meeting
held on Wednesday 3rd July 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	<i>Arrived Late</i>
Mrs L Purcell	LP	Appointed Governor	
Mr J Robertson	JP	Appointed Governor –video link	
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	A
Mrs J Leonard	JL	Principal	
Mr M Hoad	MH	Vice Principal	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional	
Mrs A Bellett	AB	Appointed Governor candidate - video link	A

Quorum required	4	Governor's present	5
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Item No	Item	Action/ by who/ when
AC/62/2324	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Mrs Saxelby who is attending the PixL MAT conference and these were accepted by the committee. No apologies were received from Mr Morgan and Mrs Ind and the governance professional agreed to follow up with them. [AP-NB]	NB 10/07/24
AC/63/2324	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/64/2324	Governor Candidate Election The governance professional confirmed that all references have been received and necessary checks have been returned. All governors also had the opportunity to meet Mrs Bellett at the last governors only meeting on 19 th June. Academy Committee governors unanimously agreed that Mrs Bellett would be elected to the committee for a four-year term of office. The governance professional will write to Mrs Bellett formally welcoming her onto the committee and begin induction. [AP-NB]	NB 10/07/24

AC/65/2324	<p>Training</p> <p>The chair asked all governors to confirm that they had viewed the Safeguarding recording sent via email ahead of the meeting. All governors present confirmed that they had.</p> <p>Governors were asked if they had any questions following the training and none were raised.</p>	
AC/66/2324	<p>Actions / Feedback from link governor visits</p> <p>Governors stated that they were aware that Mr Morgan has a Post 16 meeting scheduled. The governance professional will contact Mr Morgan for an update. [AP-NB]</p> <p>Mr Robertson confirmed that he will be holding his GDPR link meeting tomorrow and will feed back. [AP-JR]</p>	<p>NB 10/07/24</p> <p>JR 17/07/24</p>
AC/67/2324	<p>Minutes of the AC meeting dated 15th May 2024.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting that had previously been received were approved and signed by the acting chair.</p>	
AC/68/2324	<p>Matters Arising:</p> <p>AC/51/2324 Mrs Ind and Mrs Leonard to ensure a safeguarding link meeting is arranged with Mrs Dolby and Mrs Ind will include Mrs Purcell in her invitation [HI / JL] carried forward</p> <p>AC/51/2324 Mr Horsfield to arrange a Health & Safety visit with Katie Bagnall [JH] - Mr Horsfield confirmed that he would arrange a meeting before the end of term. carried forward</p> <p>AC/51/2324 Mr Hoad to arrange the next GDPR link meeting with Mrs Crerar and Mr Robertson [MH] complete</p> <p>AC/55/2324 carried forward AC/40/2324 Mr Hoad to share the minutes from the recent GDPR meeting with Mrs Crerar and Mr Robertson [MH] complete</p>	<p>HI 24/07/24</p> <p>JH 24/07/24</p>
AC/69/2324	<p>Principals Report</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Mrs Leonard referred to the safeguarding checklist shared before the meeting and asked if there were any questions</p> <p><i>The Governors asked</i> about a safeguarding report produced around this time last year and asked if something similar would be produced at the end of this year. Mrs Leonard said this could have been a recent audit at the time or a Link visit report. The governance professional checked back at documents shared in July 2023 and confirmed that a detailed link visit report had been shared. Mrs Leonard said that she is conscious that there hasn't been a link visit every half term and now as we move closer to the Ofsted window, these links need to be tightened up to ensure that regular visits are happening and being reported back to governors. Mrs Leonard went on to explain that there</p> <p>is concern that the volume of safeguarding requirements is increasing and ensuring the academy can keep on top of them is a challenge. Ideally, the academy would significantly benefit from having a full-time role but in reality the funding is not available. This isn't just a concern at Walton Academy and the Trust are looking to pilot something similar in another</p>	

academy, however cost will still need to come out of the current school budget.

The governors then wanted to understand how parents are communicated with and engaged with regards safeguarding. Mrs Leonard explained that community events are held at the academy that parents are invited to, the specific focus this year has been around safeguarding and online safety. Parents also receive newsletters and other forms of communication. Mrs Leonard added that one of the Academy Improvement Plan (AIP) objectives for next year is around positive parental engagement. Mr Hoad expanded that the style and format of the community meetings will be changing to a workshop model rather than a feedback type of session to try and help upskill some parents and this continues to be a work in progress. *The governors recognised that* parents of new year 7 Walton students would be a good starting point for this approach and Mrs Leonard explained that parents of new entrants are invited to 2 sessions. One, in March, just after National Offer Day and the other during transition week. The second one, led by Mrs Dolby explains safeguarding processes, identifies the safeguarding team and explains all about pastoral support etc. Students have specific sessions during transition and there is dedicated assembly time throughout the year as well.

Academy Improvement Plan for 24/25

The 4 objectives have been set.

Aspiration and Belonging will remain a key focus.

Ofsted areas for improvement are twofold:

1. The embedding of the personal development curriculum and in particular tackling how students articulate themselves when spoken to about such things as protected characteristics, equality diversity and inclusion, British values etc. within the yearly cycle there will be dedicated time to going over these subjects for students and embedding it in a systemic fashion to ensure greater understanding and sensitivity around these issues.
2. Ensuring the correct challenge for all students, particularly that lower prior attainers are delivered the best curriculum for their engagement. Thinking about some of the SEND students.
3. Reducing suspensions and permanent exclusions and linking this activity with objective 2.
4. Positive parental engagement (positive student engagement).

The plan has been developed by senior leaders and has been shared with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and all staff. It will be discussed at the Middle Leaders Conference next week. The middle leaders will then have 3 objectives on their team plans. The first 2 objectives and then a selection of what they consider is relevant for their faculty. They will have the autonomy to decide what they will focus on to deliver their plan. There is dedicated time for teams to come together and look at that during INSET days in September.

DM joined the meeting at approximately 07:50

Governors asked if it can be identified where things fall down with regards parental engagement having been to the recent open evening where parents are all keen to engage, but then children start school and parental engagement seems to drop off.

Mrs Leonard shared her thoughts that secondary parental engagement is different to primary parental engagement and initially it can be hard for parents which has been more noticeable in recent years. However, what happens quite quickly in most cases is that students settle quite well, parents feel more comfortable that they are happy, and the children start to become more independent and then parents tend to sit back because there are no issues. Also, many parents are very busy full time working parents. Everyone is still dealing with barriers caused by the covid pandemic. Some parents are happy with the provision and will sit back, some are apathetic, and some will only have something to say when their child is sanctioned for poor behaviour. Mr Hoad added that some don't engage when they don't need to, some engage in a supportive sense, some in an unsupportive sense and some don't engage when they are needed to.

The governors shared that from the recent open evening parents had asked about the social media comments from last years disruption and comments had been very negative. Mrs Leonard agreed that social media had a significant impact on the issues experienced and unfortunately it is difficult to control. However, a couple of months ago intel was provided about a similar attempt and the academy were able to deal with it quickly, the attitude of some of the older students helped to ensure this was shut down quickly. Mrs Leonard added that the local press had exacerbated the issue significantly.

The governors asked if there is any value in formally asking for parental views at touchpoints. Mrs Leonard and Mr Hoad confirmed that feedback is requested at open evenings and parents' evenings throughout the year, there is also a parent survey as part of the Academy Improvement Review (AIR). Mrs Leonard said that she would much rather get parents in to talk to them rather than sending out a survey. Governors expressed that having a survey does enable comparative results year on year. Mrs Leonard said that there should always be at least one of those that can be used in that way but one of the things the academy is trying to do is create more opportunities to get parents on site. Meet the tutor evenings had an overwhelmingly positive response from both parents and staff. Having the opportunity is almost more important than the number that attend as it makes the academy feel open and welcoming. Governors asked if there is something in catching the year 7 students and work through moving forwards. Mrs Leonard and Mr Hoad agreed that attendance from parents is naturally greater in the earlier years.

Academy Improvement Review (AIR) feedback

The AIR gives the academy an opportunity to test itself against the Ofsted process to ensure that the middle leaders and senior leaders are prepared for the process. This is a supportive approach in preparing staff.

Initial feedback was shared with governors from Mrs Leonard's notes from the meeting. The result of the meeting was very positive and the feedback from staff and students demonstrated development and improvement since the last AIR and Ofsted in November 2022 with a clear plan to move forwards.

Curriculum strengths were identified, particularly in science. There were some points of action within English and a piece of work is ongoing across the trust around assessment and professional development of English leads and teams moving forwards. They noted that there is work to be done around behaviour and attitudes. This is currently a challenging landscape. *Governors were interested to know* how strategies are evolving on behaviours. Mrs Leonard said that the trust have a structure of strategic development groups where leaders from those particular areas in academies come together and share best practice, look at current research and take that back into academies. There is one for behaviour and attitudes and safeguarding, Patrick Knight leads on this across the trust.

On the ground, systems at Walton have been developed around ensuring that communication and awareness of complex young people works effectively.

There has always been an outcomes critical cohort (those students not looking like they will make the progress they should be making). This process has been mirrored with regards behaviour for the last year. Mrs Leonard explained in detail the process by which the critical cohort of students is identified which requires heads of all faculties and year groups and the senior leadership team to work collaboratively. Once established, the list is reviewed 3 times each year. Mrs Leonard said that the result of this piece of work has been very positive and gives staff the opportunity to share ideas and best practice and has brought heads of faculty and heads of year together to work more collaboratively whilst also ensuring that the right steps have already been taken. Another piece of work that will come into fruition next year will be to bring in a better sense of a Fresh Start /Clean Slate. Whilst there will be a cumulative record on behaviour, each half term students will be given a refresh and a chance to start again at zero, this approach will also be used to manage attendance to address persistent absences.

Mr Hoad told the committee that from a teaching and learning point of view, behaviour in classrooms is generally very good and explained the vast majority of suspensions come from outside the classroom. Mrs Leonard went on that Permanent Exclusions and suspensions have been high this year but they have all been for the right reasons and such sanctions do help to maintain good behaviour.

The governors wondered if there is more support that they can offer at an informal level earlier within the process. Mrs Leonard explained that Mrs Dolby is currently formalising a "Walton ladder of inclusion" and this could be something she may consider as it is another supportive intervention. *The governors then questioned* whether the language used by staff when recording behaviour points on student records should be reviewed and referred to their own observations from having assisted with

discipline panels at other academies. Some academies use basic descriptive words such as ‘good’ ‘poor’ etc whilst others use ‘great’ ‘confident steps’ ‘positive’

Mrs Leonard explained that while different schools will use different terminology, the use of the reporting tool (SIMS) is consistent for Walton. The terminology and categories on SIMS are reviewed regularly. There is the ability for staff to use free text within the reporting tool. Mr Hoad explained that students would not see this detail.

Mr Hoad shared that when students need to carry a behaviour report with them, they will normally contain 3 targets specific to them. Staff are required to grade them A-D against the targets and are being encouraged to appreciate that C is what is expected of them with A and B showing that they have exceeded expectations. More needs to be done to achieve consistency here.

The chair of governors confirmed that she had been interviewed as part of the AIR process and fed back that the trust was very complimentary about the positive way the Local Academy Committee is working currently with the extra meetings and collaborative working with other committees within the trust. Mrs Leonard confirmed that the full report will be shared when it is ready.

Mrs Leonard referred to the **Behaviours and Attitudes data** shared with governors prior to the meeting and confirmed that this will be provided as a regular report to governors.

Year 11/13 exams feedback

Mrs Leonard expressed thanks to the exam team and year 11 and year 13 team who have worked very hard with students and told the committee that the year 11 and year 13 exams had been a positive and successful period with some very positive comments on social media from parents about the support provided to students. Another positive was the daily email to all parents, students and staff sent by Mrs Owen returned some positive feedback from both parents and staff. There has been success this year as well in supporting the students that don’t study full time at Walton Academy to be able to come back on site to sit their final exams and much of that success is down to the piece of work being done about alternative learning pathways.

Year 11 prom at Belton Woods was a success, and final assemblies for year 11 and 13 have been held. The Year 13 prom is next week. Now working towards results days in August.

The governors asked if there had been any learnings this year with it having been the first co-ed cohort sitting GCSE’s. Mrs Leonard said that there had been lessons learned around the resilience, stamina and emotional capacity of young people but that co-ed did not bring up any specific learnings. There was strong engagement from the year 11 cohort which was very positive. But they were met with a challenging exam timetable in terms of the placement and timings of exams. *Governors then asked* if the split of the exam timetable either side of the half term had brought up

issues with motivation. Mr Hoad explained that the placement of maths at 9am on the Monday after the half term demonstrated the challenge for students in trying not to lose motivation over the half term and not to let the break change their sleep patterns and this is something that is very difficult to manage. Mr Hoad added that the staff also need the half term break and whilst it is hard for them to not feel the obligation to keep offering extra revision sessions during half term and weekends, staff are not pushed to offer this. Mrs Leonard added that the mantra is that all staff make to most of the time that they have their students in lessons in front of them and focus their energies there.

Update on pupil place planning / Pupil Admission Number (PAN)

This year the academy and the trust have started to look at pupil place projections. In September the academy will welcome around 125-130 students into year 7 which comes with both benefits and risks. The benefits will be an alleviation of the pressures on space around the site, however the risks come in terms of funding and budgets but also having spaces means that Walton becomes open to mid-year admissions or fair access requests. The data shows that over 40% of young people that have come via mid-year admission or fair access have been suspended at least once, permanently excluded or have ended up on an alternative learning pathway. Governors asked if this is because they are coming over on managed moves. Mrs Leonard explained that a managed move is something separate, but the reality is that a lot of the students moving schools mid-year come with behavioural issues.

The Trust are now doing a piece of work around pupil projection numbers across all schools. In Grantham there is currently a need for around 900 places and there are around 900 places available. In 10 years' time this is likely to drop to around 600. Governors asked if it likely that a change in government and the proposed changes to independent schools in terms of VAT will have an impact on numbers. Mrs Leonard said that it is unlikely to have a significant impact. Priory will always over offer and then accept more on appeal and West Grantham are becoming more of a parental preference. This all means that Walton is unlikely to get anywhere near 180 in the coming years when this year it's looking at 125-130 after appeals. Mrs Leonard and her team are now putting together a Business Case to reduce PAN to 120. From a staffing point of view, there would be no need to reduce staffing. And would enable proactive planning, looking at two teachers fewer per year over 5 years which can be managed through natural attrition. The governors asked if this would offer sufficient savings to allow the safeguarding role to be created. Mr Hoad said that there would be a couple of impacts on safeguarding pressures, the financial saving would allow for some of the role but also the reduction in the number of students would potentially reduce the need for a role on that scale. The timeline is to have the business case ready before the summer, decision by November 24, consultation in the next cycle to enable the change from September 2027. This should help the see some balancing out of the demographic. The governors wondered if Mrs Leonard had been involved with the improvements made at West Grantham. Mrs Leonard confirmed that she meets with all the heads in Grantham every half term, there hasn't been any formal support, West

Grantham are now part of the Southwell Minster MAT who have stuck with the school and made a difference. There is a good relationship between both principals and hopefully their improvement will continue which will support Walton moving forwards.

Governors asked when was the last time PAN was at 120 and this was back in 2018 before the academy went co-ed.

Trips / visits

Educational visits calendar for 2024/25 has been shared. Jo Lee has put together a useful calendar and analysis. The governors asked what the disparity was between boys and girls having access to trips and visits. Mr Hoad explained that the reference was to do with uptake rather than access and the error would be amended.

Health and Safety

Information shared around the investment into the site from the trust but in areas within the academy that are unseen, such as pipework, wiring etc.

Data Protection (breaches/SARs/FOIA/Police requests)

2 SARs currently in progress

Complaints/claims (No's/overview)

One recent complaint investigated by Mr Robertson has now been resolved and a new complaint received this week is being investigated by the strategic lead for SEND, Sally Truseler with agreement from the complainant.

Mr Hoad delivered an update around curriculum and options:

Business is now being offered as an option in year 10 for the first time.

Some changes of course in exam board with subjects staying the same, getting ahead of the game in terms of moving from vocational to academic courses before the courses disappear over the coming years.

Year 9 options are going out today, 50/50 history/geography uptake with around 20 students choosing both. Languages uptake has gone up again with 2 classes studying French and 1 Spanish which is 30% studying languages which is a positive impact of the curriculum changes lower down the school.

There has been a lower uptake on performing arts and this is a result of the move to a more academic approach rather than an extracurricular activity.

Arts overall there are over 40% studying an art subject.

There is a narrowing of the subjects being chosen from the broad offer of for Year 12. In terms of cost efficiency, 12 students in an A level class is cost neutral but historically Walton have never hit 12 in any subject. It is expected that a good number of subjects are now cost balanced subjects with at least 15 students (Chemistry, biology, criminology, English, geography, maths, history and psychology). At the moment there are 3 subjects that will not run,

	<p>(Food, ICT, Dance) Religious studies, French and Art will continue with low numbers. Induction next week will help with planning for year 12 but some decisions will have to be made in September. <i>Governors asked for clarification</i> that a student could start in September and not get to study the subjects that they want to do. Mr Hoad explained that there may be conversations between results day and September if it becomes clear that some students have not achieved the grades required to study a particular subject and this could impact on the class size significantly.</p> <p><i>Governors asked about</i> the Post 16 induction asked if this is different to last year. Mrs Leonard explained that there are two events, the open evening which gives year 11 students a chance to consider what they might want to do in year 12 and then the induction which is an opportunity to test the lessons and subjects they are considering helping them to make a decision. This is run in a similar way to transition for year 7 in that student attend during the day and parents are invited in the evening to receive the operational information.</p> <p>Mr Hoad wanted to thank Mrs Hardy for her help with the community week work that she has been helping with.</p>	
AC/70/2324	<p>Governance Housekeeping 2024-2025 Action plan</p> <p>It was agreed that this would be the main focus of the final Teams governor meeting on 17th July.</p>	
AC/71/2324	<p>Appoint committee chair and vice-chair for 2024/25 w.e.f autumn term meeting</p> <p>Due to time constraints and some committee members not being present. This decision will be made formally at the September meeting and discussed beforehand by governors at the Teams governor meeting on 17th July.</p>	
AC/72/2324	<p>Complete Annual Summary Template on the effectiveness of governance 2023/24</p> <p>It was agreed that the chair and governance professional would produce the report and share a draft with the committee members to finalise before returning it to Trustees [AP-NB/LC].</p>	<p>NB/LC 10/07/24</p>
AC/73/2324	<p>How has the AC held senior leaders to account?</p> <p>There was significant discussion and challenge from governors in relation to:</p> <p>-</p>	
AC/74/2324	<p>How have the VMV of the Trust / Equality been upheld?</p> <p>It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust & Equality has been upheld.</p>	
AC/75/2324	<p>Complete report to Trustees</p> <p>It was agreed that the chair and governance professional would produce the report and share a draft with the committee members to finalise before returning it to Trustees [AP-NB/LC].</p>	<p>NB/LC 10/07/24</p>

<p>AC/76/2324</p>	<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 18th September 2024 at 17:00pm at Walton Academy</p> <p>The meeting closed at 09:09</p>	
<p>Signed By: Chair: Date:</p>	<p><i>L Crerar</i> Linda Crerar 26/07/24</p>	