

Minutes of a Meeting of the STEP Board of Trustees
Held on Wednesday, 1 May 2019
6.30pm at Heathfield Academy

Name	Position	Attendance
Trustees		
Isabelle Dennigan (ID)	Non-Executive Trustee and Chair of Board of Trustees	Present
Alan Armstrong (AA)	Non-Executive Trustee	Absent (Apologies accepted)
Kate Chhatwal (KC)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Mark Ducker OBE (MD)	Executive Trustee - CEO	Present
Ross Gardner (RG)	Non-Executive Trustee	Absent (Apologies accepted)
Navdeep Sanghara (NS)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Attendees		
John Halliwell (JH)	Director of Leadership Development	Present
Philippa Jackson (PJ)	Governance Clerk	Present
Angela Farrell (JF)	Trustee Candidate (Observer)	Present
Ben March (BM)	Chief Finance and Operations Officer	Present
Rama Venchard (RV)	Advisor to the Board of Trustees	Present

1	<p><u>Welcome, Apologies and Housekeeping</u></p> <p>PJ, STEP Governance Clerk, welcomed everyone to the meeting particularly AF, Trustee candidate, and JH, STEP Director of Leadership Development. JH would present the Well-Being report.</p> <p>PJ set out the fire evacuation procedures.</p> <p>Apologies had been received and were accepted from RG (work commitment) and AA (medical appointment).</p> <p>PJ reminded all Trustees to regularly check their STEP email accounts.</p>
2	<p><u>Quorum</u></p> <p>The Clerk declared the meeting quorate.</p>
3	<p><u>Review of Pecuniary and Conflicts Interests</u></p> <p>There were no pecuniary or other potential conflicts of interest declared.</p>

4	<p><u>Minutes</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on 17 December 2018 were approved.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed she would sign a copy of the minutes at the end of the meeting.</p>
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5	<p><u>Matters Arising from the Minutes</u></p> <p>Trustees received a progress update on the outstanding actions from the previous meetings.</p> <p>ID advised Trustees that the STEP Scheme of Delegation (SoD) had been reviewed. In line with the Committee Terms of Reference (ToR), the Chair of the Board of Trustees (ID) could not be a member of the Finance and Operations Committee. The ToR would need to be revised to state that the Chair of the Board of Trustees could be a member of the Committee but only in exceptional circumstances. The Committee had agreed at the last meeting that ID and RG would attend the next Committee meeting in June until a new Chair of the Committee had been appointed in the new academic year.</p>
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STEP First – We are all one team	
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6	<p><u>Chief Executive’s Report</u></p> <p>The CEO updated Trustees on developments within the Trust since the last meeting.</p> <p><u>Ofsted Inspection Update</u></p> <p>MD provided a report on the outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspections.</p> <p>Applegarth Academy had received a Section 8, one day inspection, to determine whether the school continued to offer a high quality education. Ofsted concluded, that Applegarth had “demonstrated strong practice and marked improvement in specific areas”. This was the best possible outcome under the current framework, ensuring that Ofsted would return within two years to conduct a full, two-day inspection.</p> <p>Tudor Academy was visited by Ofsted. This was the school’s first inspection since Wolsey Junior and Wolsey Infant and Nursery Schools were amalgamated in September 2018. Following the two-day inspection, Ofsted judged Tudor Academy to be Good in all areas. Inspectors recognised that the school had undergone significant changes since the previous inspection. Ofsted also recognised the impact of STEP Academy Trust’s values.</p> <p>Trustees were very pleased to hear the outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspections and congratulated the children and staff at the schools. Trustees also congratulated JH, Executive Lead, and the Headteachers at Applegarth and Tudor Academies.</p> <p>Hawkes Farm had received a Section 5, two day, inspection and the Trust awaited the outcome of the inspection.</p> <p><u>STEP Standards Heat Map</u></p> <p>Trustees considered the STEP Standards Heat Map, which showed the Academies’ performance against the Trust’s performance standards. The data showed that the</p>
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performance of the Academies within the Trust was strong and had moved closer to the STEP Standard.

STEP Academy Trust Performance

MD assured Trustees that the work being done to build on previous achievements remained strong and that the Trust continued to focus on performance and maintaining the STEP standard.

MD provided an overview of some of the recent work:

STEP had recently received a letter of congratulations from Lord Agnew and The Rt. Hon. Nick Gibb MP, regarding the strong performance of the Trust;

The CEO had recently attended a dinner at the Houses of Parliament hosted by The Secretary of State for Education and Lord Agnew. The purpose of the dinner was “to bring together a leading group of practitioners to celebrate the successes of academy status and discuss the Government’s ongoing commitment to the academies and free school programmes”;

STEP would also be involved in a DfE Case Study on raising performance in rural schools, with a particular focus on culture, recognising the Trust’s positive impact in East Sussex;

STEP had been asked to work with a number of other leading MATs to deliver executive development programmes for Ambition Institute (formerly Ambition School Leadership and the Teaching Institute);

STEP would be hosting a Round Table event at Heathfield Academy with Lord Agnew and a number of MAT CEO’s. KC and PG would attend the event on behalf of STEP to help raise the profile of the Trust;

STEP had received a request from Toby Greany, Professor of Leadership and Innovation at the Institute of London, to host a visit from a number of education academics from the University of Amsterdam.

RV commented that he had recently attended the School’s Academies Show and Dominic Herrington (DfE) talked about STEP in his key note address. He used Angel Oak as a case study of the positive impact a MAT can have.

Trustees were pleased to hear that STEP’s excellent rates of progress, backed up by positive recent Ofsted outcomes, had led to wider recognition and a growing reputation in the sector.

STEP First CEO Visits

MD advised that he had now completed STEP First CEO visits to all fourteen schools. He had met with a wide range of staff, pupils, governors and parents, who have shared their experiences and perceptions of STEP. He expected to complete one more round of visits before the end of the academic year, focusing on key messages from the STEP First survey.

	<p><u>STEP Conference</u></p> <p>MD reported that just before half term, over 700 staff, governors and trustees attended the second STEP First Conference at the Copthorne Effingham Hotel, near Gatwick. The Conference clarified the STEP Compass Priorities, how the Compass drives individuals and the challenges and next steps for the Trust.</p> <p>Feedback from members of staff and governors had been very strong. The Conference had helped to create a consistent understanding of the STEP Compass and its key role in driving our “one team” culture.</p> <p><u>STEP Executive Team</u></p> <p>MD provided a summary of the recent changes within the STEP Executive Team.</p> <p><u>Ofsted MAT Summary Evaluation</u></p> <p>MD reported that STEP could be subject to an Ofsted MAT summary evaluation and the Trust had begun making preparations for the evaluation.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for his report.</p> <p><u>2019/2010 STEP Compass Priorities</u></p> <p>Trustees considered and agreed the 2019/20 STEP Compass Priorities.</p>
7	<p><u>Links with Other Academy Trusts</u></p> <p>It was agreed that this item would be deferred to the next Board meeting. (Action: Clerk to include on the July Board agenda)</p> <p>MD reported that STEP had recently become a member of the Confederation of School Trusts. The CST was a national organisation for school trusts that had been set up to connect and support executive and governance leaders. Further information would be sent to Trustees.</p>
STEP Ahead – We invest in our future	
8	<p><u>STEP Training and Events</u></p> <p>Trustees were pleased to hear that the annual STEP Safeguarding training session held for Trustees and Governors in January had been a success. The training session had included Safeguarding, On-line Safety, SEND, Ofsted Framework and SGB Academy visits. Some relevant case studies had been provided which helped Governors to carry out their roles and monitoring visits within the Academies.</p> <p>Trustees felt that it would be a good opportunity to record the STEP training and to make the sessions available for the Governors and Trustees that were unable to attend the training events.</p>

9 Financial Management and Monitoring

Finance Report

The STEP Financial Report for March 2019 was noted. BM provided a summary of the monthly update on STEP’s in-year financial positions as at 31 March.

STEP Finance and Operations Committee – 1 April 2019

The minutes of the STEP Finance and Operations Committee held on 1 April 2019 would be available once approved.

Significant Items of Expenditure

There were no significant items of expenditure to be approved by the Board of Trustees.

2018/ 2019 Return

Trustees noted that the August 2018/19 Return was submitted to the EFA by 18 January 2019

Internal Audit Role

Trustees received a summary of the proposed Internal Audit procedures for the Trust. BM reported that the proposed new Internal Audit role would be appointed from September 2019.

Trustees approved the role.

Q: Who would the internal audit role report to?

A: The Chief Executive Officer.

Q: Who does the external audit?

A: Hacker Young.

ESFA Academy Trust Financial Management Good Practice Guide

Trustees noted the ESFA Academy Trust financial management good practice guide and how these would be used by the Trust going forward.

10 Educational Standards and Performance

KC reported that the STEP Education Committee had been held at Applegarth Academy on 28 March. Prior to the meeting, the Committee members had undertaken a learning walk of the Applegarth museum, led by some of the children.

The Committee looked at KS1 and KS2 targets across the Trust.

The Committee looked at how the Trust continued to support high performing academies with the expectation of continuous school improvement.

	<p>The Committee also focused on the achievement of SEND pupils across the Trust. Evidence showed that SEND pupil progress was well above national. The Committee were assured that these pupils made a strong positive progress and the pupil premium funding had been correctly allocated.</p> <p>Trustees requested a report on the attainment gap between disadvantaged, including SEND children, and non-disadvantaged children across the Trust. This would be presented at the next Board of Trustees meeting. (Action: Deputy Chief Executive Officer).</p> <p>KC advised that that it would be her last term as Chair of the Education Committee. NS would be appointed Chair of the Education Committee from September 2019, subject to vote and nomination.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p><u>Well-Being Report</u></p> <p>JH presented the Well-Being report. The report provided an overview of the provision currently in place to support and monitor well-being in academies across the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees noted the Headteacher recommendations for strengthening well-being. JH advised that the information had been gathered from the STEP well-being survey completed by Headteachers.</p> <p>Trustees were pleased to hear about some of the provisions that were already in place to support staff and children in the Academies and considered the recommendations for strengthening well-being across the Trust. Trustees requested a further report in the new academic year. (Action: Director of Leadership Development).</p>
<p>STEP Way – We agree to do things like this</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p><u>STEP Governance</u></p> <p><u>Committee Appointments</u></p> <p>Trustees approved the appointment of RG as Chair and ID as Vice Chair of the STEP Finance and Operations Committee until September 2019. ID reminded Trustees that the Committee ToR would be revised to state that the Chair of the Board of Trustees could be a member of the Committee but only in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p><u>Trustee Recruitment Update</u></p> <p>The Chair provided an update on the Trustee recruitment process to support financial governance and succession planning. ID reported that Academy Ambassadors were currently carrying out a search for suitable candidates and would provide a shortlist of any potential candidates after the 10 May.</p> <p>Two potential Trustee candidates had also been identified through Inspiring Governance and initial interviews were currently being arranged. ID advised that she would discuss the Trustee role with AF following the meeting.</p>

	<p>MD advised that the Committee membership would comprise of three Trustees, not including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees. This would ensure strong governance and that the Committee was still quorate if one Trustee was unable to attend a meeting. Careful consideration would be given to the skills required before recommending trustee appointments to the Board.</p> <p><u>Governance Review and STEP Scheme of Delegation</u></p> <p>BM presented the final recommendations to Trustees in relation to the revised STEP Scheme of Delegation (SoD).</p> <p>BM advised a detailed revision of the SoD would be prepared during the Summer Term, made available to Governors, before being presented for approval by Trustees at the July Board meeting and rolled out in the new academic year. Training on the updated SoD would take place in the Autumn term.</p> <p>A letter would be sent to Governors from the Board of Trustees confirming the outcome of the Governance review, the recommendations and the timeline of events. (Action: Chief Finance and Operations Officer).</p> <p><u>Strategic Governing Body Minutes</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the minutes of the Spring term SGB meetings.</p> <p><u>Governor Appointments</u></p> <p>Trustees ratified the governor appointments, as listed in the Governor Appointments Report for April 2019.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p><u>Executive Pay Policy</u></p> <p>ID provided an update on the Trustee review of the Executive Pay Policy, which had been conducted by Chair and Chair of Finance and Operations Committee, with guidance from RV.</p> <p>It was noted that the current policy, whilst allowing for robust decision making, was in danger of being complex. As such, a more focused policy would be developed. It was agreed that the proposed changes would be discussed firstly with the CEO and CFOO, and then with all Executives affected. It was also agreed that any changes would be from the 2019/20 performance cycle, unless Executives volunteered individually to have performance assessed under the new policy.</p> <p>Trustees noted that the Executive Pay Review for 2017/18 had been completed in the Autumn term and approved by Chair's Action in consultation with the Finance and Operations Committee Chair.</p>
<p>14</p>	<p><u>Admissions 2020/2021</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the 2020/21 STEP Admissions Report and the consultation responses.</p>

	Trustees noted that the Admissions Arrangements for 2020/2021 had been formally approved by Chair's Action by ID.
15	<p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p>The Safeguarding report was noted.</p> <p>The Trustee safeguarding and safer recruitment training report was noted. The Chair confirmed that the annual Safeguarding training would be completed by ID and RG by the end of May.</p>
16	<p><u>Signing of Legal Documentation</u></p> <p>Trustees noted that the following documentation had been signed by the Company Secretary/ CEO/ Chair of Trustees since the previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDIF Monitoring Return to ESFA • STEP Accounts and Financial Statements • Phoenix Academy – Deed of Variation to Academy SFA (reflecting the closure of the nursery at Phoenix Academy) • Shared Use Agreement (for use of the car park and field at La Fontaine Academy)
17	<p><u>Correspondence to the Chair</u></p> <p>ID reported that a letter had been received from Eileen Milner, ESFA CEO, in relation to the financial returns requirements for 2019.</p>
18	<p><u>Any Other Urgent Business</u></p> <p>Q: How was Pupil Voice reported to Trustees? A: This was reported at local level and would be high up on the stakeholder agenda for the new Academy Committees. The Executive Team would consider ways of aggregating up key findings to the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>Q: In relation to the Trust's estate strategy, how was this reported to Trustees? A: An Estates report would be provided to the Finance and Operations Committee in the Autumn term. The report would look at the capacity of the Trust to meet sustainability. (Action: Chief Finance and Operations Officer)</p> <p>There were no other matters of business to report.</p>
19	<p><u>Meeting Impact</u></p> <p>Trustees were reassured by the decision to change the local governance structure and felt this would have a positive impact on the Trust and improve the outcome for children.</p> <p>Trustees were pleased to hear about the positive outcomes of the recent Ofsted inspections and noted that the hard work across STEP had a positive impact on the children.</p>

	<p>Trustees were pleased to receive reassurance from the Executive Team that the Trust was in a stable financial position. They noted that the Trust continued to be financially viable and recognised that that this was vitally important in the long term to ensure the best outcomes for the children.</p> <p>Trustees found the discussions around the STEP Way to be very positive and were pleased to be able to approve the STEP Compass Priorities for 2019/2020.</p> <p>Trustees were also very pleased to hear about the positive news and changes in Hailsham.</p>
20	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>It was agreed that the next Board of Trustees meeting would be moved to 11 July 2019 at 6.30pm at Heathfield Academy. The revised Board meeting date would be confirmed by the Clerk. (Action: Clerk)</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.</p>
21	<p><u>Confidential Matters</u></p> <p>Confidential strategic, financial and governance and staffing matters were recorded in Part B of the Minutes.</p>

Action List	
Description	Owner
Report on the links with other Academy Trusts to be included on the July Board agenda.	Clerk
Report on the attainment gap between disadvantaged, including SEND children, and non-disadvantaged children across the Trust, to be provided at the July Board meeting.	DCEO
Well-Being Report to be presented in the new academic year.	Director of Leadership Development
Letter to be sent to Governors from the Board of Trustees confirming the outcome of the Governance review, the recommendations and the timeline of events.	CFOO
Estates report to be provided to the Finance and Operations Committee in the Autumn term. The report would look at the capacity of the Trust to meet sustainability.	CFOO
The next Board of Trustees meeting to be confirmed for 11 July 2019.	Clerk

Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting	
Chair's signature	
Chair's name	
Date	