

Minutes of a Meeting of the STEP Board of Trustees
Held on Monday, 30 September at 5.30pm
At Angel Oak Academy

Name	Position	Attendance
Trustees		
Kate Chhatwal (KC)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Mark Ducker OBE (MD)	Executive Trustee - CEO	Present
Angela Farrell (AF)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Ross Gardner (RG)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Rory Nath (RN)	Trustee Candidate (Observer)	Present
Navdeep Sanghara (NS)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Rama Venchard (RV)	Non-Executive Trustee (Chair of Trustees)	Present
Attendees		
Jennese Alozie (JA)	Director of Effectiveness and Performance	Present (for items 1-10)
Tom Garry (TG)	Head of STEP Ahead Teaching School Alliance	Present (for item 7)
Paul Glover PG)	Deputy CEO	Present
Philippa Jackson (PJ)	Governance Clerk	Present
Ben March (BM)	Chief Finance and Operations Officer	Present

1	<p><u>Welcome, Apologies and Housekeeping</u></p> <p>RV welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>
2	<p><u>Quorum</u></p> <p>The Clerk declared the meeting quorate.</p>
3	<p><u>Election of Chair and Vice-Chair 2019/20 and Appointment/ Retirement of Trustees</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the resignation of STEP Trustee and Chair, Isabelle Dennigan, as of 30 September 2019.</p> <p>Trustees approved the appointment of Rama Venchard as STEP Trustee for a four-year term.</p> <p>The Clerk invited nominations for the role of Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees for 2019/20.</p> <p>RV was nominated and elected as the Chair of the Board of Trustees for 2019/20. It was noted that RV would be elected to the position of Chair, subject to the receipt of the countersigned DBS, and would act as 'Interim' Chair until that point. The receipt of the countersigned DBS and confirmation as Chair would be confirmed at the next meeting.</p>

	<p>Action: Confirmation of RV's countersigned DBS and position as Chair of Trustees to be confirmed at next meeting.</p> <p>RG was nominated and elected as the Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees for 2019/20.</p> <p>Trustees approved the re-appointment of Kate Chhatwal as a STEP Trustee for another 4 year term.</p>
4	<p><u>Review of Pecuniary and Conflicts Interests</u></p> <p>There were no pecuniary or other potential conflicts of interest declared.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed they had updated their personal and pecuniary interests on the Trust Governor system.</p> <p>The annual attendance record for 2018/19 was noted.</p>
5	<p><u>Minutes</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on 11 July 2019 were approved.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed he would sign a copy of the minutes at the end of the meeting.</p>
6	<p><u>Matters Arising from the Minutes</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the actions from the previous meetings as set out in the agenda.</p>
STEP First – We are all one team	
7	<p><u>STEP Ahead Teaching School Alliance</u></p> <p>TG joined the meeting and gave a presentation on the STEP Ahead Teaching School Alliance (TSA). The presentation included an update on staffing, strategic partnerships, areas of work, Initial Teaching Training, Continuing Professional Development and Leadership Development, School to School Support, funding, KPI's, objectives and the test and learn pilot.</p> <p>Following the presentation, Trustees raised the following questions:</p> <p>Q: Who sets the KPI's? A: They were set nationally by PGL. The KPI's had not changed in a number of years. We had not been asked to report on the KPI's last year but still continued to collect the data against the KPI's. The future of TSA's was very uncertain.</p> <p>Q: What if there was no funding in the future or if the Government changed? Could we prepare to fund this ourselves? A: STEP had invested in the teaching and learning team this year which was intended to be both inward and outward facing. The aim was that it would be partly financed by the STEP First fund, with increasing contributions by external partners over time.</p>

	<p>Q: Would STEP run the NQT programme? A: Just for the STEP schools. In future years, we could open the programme to external partners and train other schools' NQTs.</p> <p>Q: Our vision around STEP Ahead TSA was to develop capacity in East Sussex. How many partners were in East Sussex? A: Currently the alliance membership was STEP and one other school in Kingston. However, it was noted that little marketing had taken place. The programme was available in South London and East Sussex.</p> <p>Q: Were there any plans to develop and expand the programme to a masters level? A: We would look into this in the future.</p> <p>Q: The financials show that the STEP Ahead TSA broke even with or without funding. A: The Finance and Operations Committee would review the accounts and check that there were no outstanding liabilities to mitigate any loss.</p> <p>Action: TG, KM and BM to review the business plan for STEP Ahead TSA in readiness for the Finance and Operations Committee.</p> <p><i>TG left the meeting.</i></p>
8	<p><u>Chief Executive's Report</u></p> <p>The CEO updated Trustees on developments within the Trust since the last meeting.</p> <p>MD provided an update on the recent Ofsted inspection at White House Academy. This was the school's first inspection since joining STEP in January 2017. Following the two-day inspection, Ofsted judged White House Academy to be Good, with Outstanding for leadership and management. MD praised Alun Evans, and his senior team, for their outstanding leadership. He also thanked Tim Mills who had supported the school as Executive Head.</p> <p>Trustees were very pleased to hear the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection at White House Academy and congratulated the staff and children at the school.</p> <p>MD reported that his appraisal had been held with RG and NS. Sir David Carter had supported the performance management process as an independent consultant. A set of objectives for 2019/20 had also been agreed and had been closely linked to the STEP Compass. MD advised Trustees that he had also joined a business mentoring programme for MAT CEO's.</p> <p><i>Item on the Trust's Growth Strategy recorded in confidential minutes.</i></p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for his report.</p>
9	<p><u>STEP Compass Priorities</u></p> <p>Trustees considered and agreed the 2019/20 STEP Compass Priorities.</p>

STEP Ahead – We invest in our future

10 MAT Summary Evaluation and Performance Data Update

JA presented some slides on the MAT summary evaluation and performance data.

A summary of how Ofsted inspects a MAT was provided. The new approach would involve a number of inspections of individual academies from a MAT, which would take place over a period of up to two terms. The main focus of the inspection would be on the quality of education. JA explained that it was important for Trustees to understand and to be able to explain that the quality of education across the Trust was strong and the governance around this. Trustees would also be expected to show how they used the strands of information presented to ensure that every academy worked effectively.

JA added that a paper and some questions would be delivered to the Education Committee in preparation for the MAT inspection. She would also be working with the Academy Committees to prepare the Governors for the inspection. Trustees felt that it would be useful to identify key areas to help focus the discussion and to ensure consistency and a shared message across the Trust.

Trustees thanked JA for her presentation.

STEP Up – We all succeed together

11 Financial Management and Monitoring

STEP Management Accounts

Trustees noted the 2018/19 year end management accounts.

BM outlined the proposed changes to the management accounts format for 2019/20. He explained that the format of the management accounts had been reviewed and some changes had been made in line with the new Scheme of Delegation. This would enable Trustees to continue to scrutinise and challenge the financial data.

Trustees requested that staffing costs as a percentage of the total costs be included in the management accounts to show a more accurate figure in relation to the income. Trustees also requested that specific items on the accounts be RAG rated (e.g. staff and agency costs). BM confirmed that it was the plan for performance data to be included in management accounts going forward.

Q: Was the 'net fund position' new?

A: No. This was previously the 'overall net position'.

2018/19 Year End Financial Reports

Trustees noted the briefing paper which outlined the timetable for the 2018/19 outturn and reporting. BM provided an update on the 2018/19 end of year financial reports. The financial accounting process for the year had now closed and the audit was due to commence this week. Trustees would be provided with draft figures by end of October 2019 with an explanation of any significant changes. It was anticipated that the cash flow remained positive but the payments expected from the Local Authorities had been difficult to resolve.

BM reported that the Finance and Operations Committee would be presented with the draft annual accounts and reports for review in early November. The full annual accounts and reports would be submitted to the Committee on 9 December 2019, along with the auditor's management report. The Committee would be asked to recommend the accounts to the Board for consideration at the December meeting.

2019/20 Budgets

Trustees noted the update on the changes to the 2019/20 Budgets, including the net fund positions of Phoenix and Whitehouse Academies.

Academies Financial Handbook 2019

BM summarised the key changes to Academies Financial Handbook from September 2019 and how STEP would meet those requirements and remain compliant with ESFA requirements. Trustees noted the key changes including the impact on compliance, additional reporting by the ESFA, integration with the curriculum and financial planning. BM added that the remit of the Director of Finance and Operations role, had changed to an advisory role to the Executive team and would focus more on finance and compliance.

Trustees formally adopted the Handbook.

Audit Plan 2019

Trustees noted the audit plan overview report provided by Hacker Young for year end 31 August 2019. BM reported that the audit field work started today and the draft annual accounts and reports would be sent to Trustees to consider in November.

Trustees accepted the audit plan for 2019.

Income and Expenditure in MATs

Trustees noted the report on income and expenditure in MAT's which had been prepared for the new trustees joining the Board. BM explained that the document would be updated as funding and the education changed over time.

Q: How did the investment capital work?

A: STEP met the criteria to qualify for School Condition Allocation (SCA) funding in 2017/18. Whilst positive, there was a significant time lag between successful bids for funding under the Condition Improvement Funding scheme and SCA. This had resulted in SCA funding being prioritised on immediate works in academies to bring them to an acceptable standard, rather than traditional investment and improvement works. It was likely that from 2019/20 an increased amount of investment and improvement works would be undertaken, however this would be balanced with the need for STEP to develop a programme of rolling replacements for plant items.

STEP Finance and Operational Services Update

Trustees noted the paper which provided an overview of the changes made within the finance and operational services teams during this year and how the STEP Standards would be revised accordingly.

STEP Pay Policy

BM provided a brief update on the STEP Pay Policy. Trustees approved the additions to the Pay Policy, as set out in the paper, with effect from 1 September 2019. BM reported that the full revision of the Pay Policy would be shared with the Finance and Operations Committee in the Autumn term.

The Chair thanked the CFOO for providing excellent reports to the Board of Trustees.

12 Educational Standards and Performance

JA provided a brief update to the evaluations following the validated EYFS, KS1 and KS2 results. The provisional results for 2018/19 indicated that the attainment for the majority of the Trust's academies was above or well above the expected standards.

JA explained that the progress data was used as the headline measure for MAT's from KS1 to KS2. The progress data for the Trust was expected to be significantly above the national average for 2018/19. The results demonstrated the high quality education for a wide range of pupils across the Trust, as the cohort of pupils increased.

JA provided a brief update on the attainment gap between disadvantaged, including SEND children, and non-disadvantaged children across the Trust. She reported that the KS2 progress measures for this group were significantly above the national average. The results demonstrated that the teaching and learning across the Trust had focused on this group of children and clearly showed the impact of the Pupil Premium funding.

Q: It was good to see that the cohort sizes were included in the data. Could you include the cohort size at the beginning of year 6 to provide Trustees with the assurance of the off rolling process?

A: This data was reported to the Education Committee in the Summer, including the details of the work that had been done to oversee off rolling in the academies.

Q: Do we have any gender statistics?

A: Yes. This data was also presented to the Education Committee and the Academy Committees.

STEP Education Committee Minutes

To note the minutes of the STEP Education Committee held on 15 July 2019.

On behalf of Trustees, RV recorded thanks to everyone at each of the STEP Academies for their excellent achievements.

JA left the meeting.

13 STEP Governance

STEP Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees' Programme of Works for 2019/20 was noted.

The Board of Trustees' skills audit analysis for September 2019 was noted. Trustees confirmed they had updated their skills audit on the Trust Governor.

Trustees noted that the Trustee and Governor Code of Conduct had been updated as part of the new Scheme of Delegation and in line with any changes to STEP governance structure.

STEP Committees

NS was appointed Chair of the Education Committee for 2019/20.

RG was appointed Chair of the Finance and Operations Committee for 2019/20.

The proposed membership of the Committees for 2019/20 was noted. The committee membership would be approved at the next meeting in December following the appointment of the new trustees. RV advised that the membership of the Finance and Operations Committee would be reviewed later in the year.

Trustees noted that a Chair's action to establish the Pay Committee for 2018/19 and to approve the Terms of Reference had been taken prior to the meeting. The Pay Committee had been held on 30 September 2019. PJ advised that the pay recommendations for the CEO, Executive team, Headteachers, Teachers and support staff had been agreed by the Committee. The Committee had requested that a review of TLR distribution and the staffing model for the Trust was shared with the Finance and Operations and Education Committees.

RV reported that the Executive Pay Policy would be reviewed in the Autumn term and shared with the Executive team and Trustees.

Action: TLR distribution and the staffing model for the Trust to be shared with Committees. The Education Committee would be asked to review the allocation in light of the context of each academy and equity of distribution, and whether STEP was now able to implement a more strategic approach. The Finance and Operations Committee would review the financial strain on academies going forward.

Action: Trustees to engage with the Executive Team in Autumn 1 on the proposed Pay Policy.

STEP Academy Committees

The minutes of the Summer term 2 SGB meetings had been noted on the Trust Governor system.

Trustees approved the Governor appointments and the Chair of Governors for the Academy Committees for 2019/20, as set out in the paper.

The Academy Committees' Programme of Works 2019/20 was noted.

	<p><u>Trust Governor</u></p> <p>Trustees confirmed they had updated their Trust Governor profiles over the summer and ticked the boxes to confirm they had complied with Eligibility checklist and Code of Conduct.</p> <p><u>STEP Training</u></p> <p>Trustees provided feedback on the training session held on 18 and 25 September 2019 on SoD, Safeguarding, Ofsted Framework, Academy Strategic Improvement Cycle. The Chair thanked the Executive team for their excellent presentations at the governor training session.</p> <p>RN had not been able to attend the training session and advised trustees that he would complete the on-line safeguarding training as part of his induction.</p> <p>Action: Send NSPCC on line training link to RN.</p>
14	<p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p>Trustees confirmed they had read and understood 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019' and noted the key changes.</p> <p>Trustees noted the safeguarding training report.</p> <p>Q: Was there a safeguarding lead across the Trust? Was this published anywhere? A: Yes. The safeguarding lead for each school was published within the school. The trust wide lead was not published, although JA was the Executive team member overseeing safeguarding, supported by a STEP Headteacher, Jeremy Meek. We were currently looking to extend the performance management of Headteachers to include other lead roles across the Trust.</p> <p>Q: Could the statutory duties of the Board of Trustees be included in the Safeguarding updates. A: This could be included in the next Safeguarding update.</p> <p>Action: Trustee statutory duties to be included in safeguarding report.</p>
15	<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"> • Agreement with Buckingham University in relation to STEP PGCE contract.
16	<p><u>Correspondence to the Chair</u></p> <p>There had been no correspondence received by the Chair since the last meeting.</p>
17	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the Brexit report which provided an overview of the potential impacts, risks and opportunities resulting from Brexit. BM confirmed that there were no major impacts on the services of the Trust and this would continue to be monitored.</p>

	<p>Q: Had there been any central government advice received on Brexit? A: There had been a very limited survey received but the generic guidance had been received from Lord Agnew.</p> <p>Q: Had there been any advice received on immigration issues for families and children? A: No. There had been no additional data received on this, only ethnicity.</p>
18	<p><u>Meeting Impact</u></p> <p>Trustees felt very positive about the discussions held on the vision, mission and values. It had helped Trustees focus on the longer term and they looked forward to progressing this later in the year.</p> <p>Trustees were pleased to receive the presentation on the STEP Ahead TSA and were reassured that it would improve the quality of education and teaching.</p> <p>Trustees were supportive of the possible future partnerships with other schools and felt it was a good fit with STEP's mission to improve the life chances of the children.</p> <p>Trustees felt very positive about the new trustees joining the Board, which would provide the Trust with the capacity to prepare for the next stage of its development.</p>
19	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>The next Board of Trustees meeting would be held on Monday, 16 December 2019 at 6.30pm at Heathfield Academy.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.</p>
20	<p><u>Confidential Matters</u></p> <p>Discussions on strategic and financial matters were recorded in the confidential minutes.</p>

Action List	
Action	Owner
Confirmation of RV's countersigned DBS and position as Chair of Trustees to be confirmed at next meeting – Include on Board agenda.	Clerk
TG, KM and BM to review the business plan for STEP Ahead TSA in readiness for the Finance and Operations Committee.	Head of STEP Ahead TSA, CFOO
TLR distribution and the staffing model for the Trust to be shared with Committees. The Education Committee would be asked to review the allocation in light of the context of each academy and equity of distribution, and whether STEP was now able to implement a more strategic approach. The Finance and Operations Committee would review the financial strain on academies going forward.	CFOO
Trustees to engage with the Executive Team in Autumn 1 on the proposed Pay Policy.	Chair

Send NSPCC on line training link to RN.	Clerk
Trustee statutory duties to be included in safeguarding reports.	Director of Effectiveness and Performance

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