

Minutes of a Meeting of the STEP Board of Trustees
Board Development Day
Monday, 30 September 2019 at 1.30pm at Angel Oak Academy

Name	Position	Attendance
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
Claire Emery	Academy Ambassadors	Present (for items 1 to 4)
Kirsty Watt	Academy Ambassadors	Present (for items 1 to 4)
Jennese Alozie (JA)	Director of Effectiveness and Performance	Present
Mark Charman (MC)	Head of Pupil Engagement	Present (for item 7)
Paul Glover (PG)	Deputy CEO	Present
John Halliwell (JH)	Director of Leadership and Development	Present (for items 1 – 6)
Cathie Hewitt (CH)	Head Teacher, Angel Oak Academy	Present (for item 2)
James Hooper (JH)	Director of Operational Services	Present
Philippa Jackson (PJ)	STEP Governance Clerk	Present
Ben March (BM)	Chief Finance and Operations Officer	Present
Tim Mills (TM)	Director of Teaching and Learning	Present (for items 1 – 6)
Ricardo Oliveri (RO)	ICT Manager	Present (for item 7)

1	<p><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></p> <p>RV, Chair of the Board of Trustees, welcomed Trustees, Executive team members and guests to the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair extended a particular welcome to CA and KW, Regional Advisors for Academy Ambassadors, who had kindly agreed to facilitate the Trustee STEP Ahead session.</p> <p>The Chair also welcomed RN to the meeting. RN would be appointed as a Trustee at the Board meeting in December once the application process had been completed.</p>

STEP First – We are all one team

2 Presentation by STEP Pupils

CH and a group of Year 6 pupils from the school joined the meeting. CH talked about their approach to reading at the school and how this had significantly improved fluency and comprehension. The pupils talked about some of the books that they had studied at school and their thoughts and experiences. The pupils then recited a passage from Macbeth, which they recalled even though the text was covered over a year ago. CH explained that this demonstrated a benefit of the STEP Way at Angel Oak.

RV thanked the children and CH for joining them and for their confidence in their presentation.

STEP Ahead – We invest in our future

3 Summary of the MAT Landscape

RV shared some slides on the MAT Landscape. The presentation included an update on the environment that STEP operated within, some high level DfE statistics, the political landscape, school funding and MAT challenges.

Following the presentation, Trustees raised the following questions:

Q: You talked through the number of academies who moved trust in 2017/2018, was this a similar picture for 2016/2017?

A: Yes. The academies moved voluntarily or were forced.

4 Trustee STEP Ahead

RV welcomed and introduced KW and CE who had agreed to facilitate the Trustee STEP Ahead development session. KW thanked Trustees for inviting them to the development day and understood how much of a commitment the role involved for Trustees.

KW set out the objectives of the session which included an explanation of what constituted effective MAT governance, to consider the findings of the Board review and to draft a governance action plan for the Trust.

CE referred Trustees to the slides on effective MAT governance which had been circulated prior to the meeting. She provided an overview of the purpose of the MAT Board, the core functions, roles and responsibilities, statutory duties, effective governance, principles and personal attributes and effective board dynamics, characteristics of an effective MAT Board and compliance.

CE presented the findings of the Board review questionnaire that had been completed by the STEP Trustees prior to the development day. The following key results were highlighted:

- Trustees felt that they held a professional and appropriate working relationship with the Executive team
- Trustees and the Executive team felt that the Board was effective and creative in their decision making when operating under tight financial constraints

- The Board operated efficiently and professionally
- The development and succession planning opportunities for Trustees and the Executive team were always carefully considered
- The Board and the Executive team made decisions based on doing the right thing for the children and always acted in the best interests of the children
- There were some gaps in the trustee skill set including marketing/ communications and legal and HR
- A recruitment process should be considered to fill some of these gaps

Trustees raised the following questions in relation to the key results:

Q: What was envisaged from the legal trustee?

A: This role could cover law, HR, tribunals, processes and policies. A trustee with a logical mind set to provide legal objectivity and critical enquiry and also some knowledge of family and estate law.

Q: Was there an optimum number of trustees on a Board?

A: An odd number of trustees was useful for decision making. The number of trustees on the STEP Board was practical and seemed to operate well. Trustee performance was considered high.

Trustees discussed the possibility of recruiting a trustee with a legal background and felt that this would not be necessary for the Board at this particular time. They agreed that if legal advice and expertise were required, the Trust would use their firm of Solicitors, Winckworth Sherwood. However, Trustees agreed that it may be worth considering a trustee with experience in overseeing processes and procedures.

CE had reviewed the STEP Board of Trustees meeting agendas and minutes as part of the Board review. She highlighted the following points in relation to this:

- Trustees should consider what evidence was required from the Executive team in order for them to challenge the strategic decision making and direction
- Trustees should consider what evidence was required from the Executive team in order for them to independently triangulate the data and request external sources of data to conduct an independent review of the data reports
- Trustees should consider including the review of CEO pay in the decision making matrix as part of the Scheme of Delegation
- Trustees should consider how the Scheme of Delegation was delivered practically across the Trust
- Trustees should consider how they challenged the Executive team and held them to account and how this could be recorded in the meeting minutes

CE asked Trustees to create two activity groups to discuss and draft a Board action plan for 2019/20 which would address the board review findings. The Clerk would collate the actions for circulation with the minutes. **Action: Collate governance action plan for circulation with the minutes. (Clerk)**

	<p>RV thanked KW and CE for giving up their time to lead Trustees' discussions today, explaining that a follow up meeting would be held to discuss the outcome of the Board action plan. KW and CE thanked Trustees for their time.</p> <p><i>KW and CE left the meeting.</i></p>
	<p>There was a break in the meeting for refreshments.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p><u>STEP Successes and Challenges</u></p> <p>The Executive team gave a presentation on the successes in 2018/19 and the challenges in 2019/20. Each member of the Executive team presented on the different areas of success and challenges. The following points were highlighted:</p> <p><u>2018/19 Successes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Ofsted inspections (3 good, 1 outstanding and 1 progressing towards outstanding) • KS2 attainment (Maths - 87 %, Reading – 79%, Writing – 83% and Combined – 73%) • KS1 and KS2 progress continued to be above national • Strengthened links between education and business strategies • Increased capacity for Academy leaders by refining the STEP Way for Premises and Catering to ensure consistency and streamlined processes • Streamlined governance structure and communication to governors on the role of the Academy Committee • Leadership changes across the Academies managed in-house through succession planning, training and Executive team support • Challenges with Academy budgets and finances managed in-house through savings and economies of scale from the streamlined approach to services • Succession planning for Trustees and a strengthened Board for 2019/20 • STEP Ahead Teaching School (ITT, 16 teachers trained across STEP on PGCE (90% stayed within the Trust), 55 days of CPLD delivered, teaching and learning roles expanded and partnerships in Maths Mastery, Ambition Institute and Kingston School) • Staff development (CPD, 21 teaching staff on Masters, staff retention and development, STEP ML, SL, HQ – 44 in total) • Increased teaching and learning consistency, reading and personal development at the heart of the Trust and Executive team oversight on developments in Academies. <p><u>2019/20 Challenges</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment benefits in teaching and learning managed through STEP Standards • Embed new governance structure and processes and support Governors in the transition to Academy Committees • Support new Trustees as they join the Board with training and Academy visits • Work with Trustees and Governors to ensure their work was aligned with the Trust's performance and development • Improve the external understanding of STEP and how the Trust was perceived • Ensure the Trust was recognised for our achievements and how this could be communicated

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support senior leaders to develop outcomes within budget and creative ways to create budget savings and sustain leadership • Consider different opportunities and pathways to develop leaders and be prepared to lose some leaders outside of the Trust • Consider how the STEP Ahead Teaching School could support the Academies and make the best use of the Executive team • Consider the budgets and responsibility to the children as part of the growth strategy • Upcoming Ofsted inspections in East Sussex and shared experience with other schools • Maintain the increased trajectory with teaching and learning outcomes • Put in place the structures to prevent dips in outcomes and support the growing schools to ensure strong outcomes at KS2 • Consider how the Trust deals with issues and challenges within the sector, including teacher recruitment and pension contributions <p>RV thanked the Executive team for their presentation.</p> <p>Trustees raised the following questions:</p> <p>Q: From STEP’s perspective, how well was the Trust prepared for a possible change in the political environment?</p> <p>A: It was important for the Trust to be prepared for changes in the sector and potential political events. There were a number of possible challenges to the political environment and we would need to consider how the Trust reacted to these changes. We would like to review how the political environment could impact the Trust’s growth and consider how this could affect the Mission, Vision and Values.</p>
	<p>Trustees were shown the STEP ‘I Do’ video.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>STEP Growth Strategy</p> <p>MD referred to the Board’s mission and vision. He explained that the Trust had always placed a strong emphasis on school improvement and improving the life chances of children where we were morally bound to do so. He reminded Trustees that STEP placed the children at the heart of all decisions and this was critical to the vision. This helped to remind ourselves and all staff of what we do and how we could make a difference to the children. He also drew Trustees attention to the significant challenges of the Academies which were part of the Trust, particularly in East Sussex. The Trust was morally bound to improve the life chances of the children where we had the capacity to do so.</p> <p>MD provided some background to the Trust’s current mission, vision and values and how these had been set. He believed the mission and values, of which the Members were the guardians, had been set and were unlikely to change. The PUPAC values had been put in place within all Academies across the Trust and the Central team. The remit of the Board was to set the vision. He explained that the vision had been written 4/5 years ago and explained where we wanted the organisation to go. The vision had driven and led to the success of the organisation.</p>

MD asked Trustees to consider whether the vision was still relevant now the organisation was different to what it was 4/5 years ago when the vision was set. He emphasised the need to revisit the vision with the new trustees joining the Board and to consider whether it was still relevant for the Trust's next stage of development. He explained that society and the political environment had changed and it was vital that the Board considered significant issues, such as cyber bullying, mental health and safeguarding, when setting the vision to ensure that the Trust was still equipped to educate the children.

RV thanked MD for his introduction. He reminded Trustees of the mission statement. "STEP Academy Trust is committed to improving the life chances of all children. Where we have the capacity to make a difference we are morally bound to do so".

He reminded Trustees of the current vision statement. "To build a family of outstanding academies where world-class leaders place the children at the heart of what they do". He asked Trustees to consider whether the overarching vision was still relevant for the organisation that STEP had now become. He also asked Trustees to discuss whether STEP's vision needed to be amended or changed and, if so, how could this be done.

Trustees shared some initial thoughts including:-

- The establishing phase had been done, was the vision now more about delivering community engagement and to incorporate growth if the opportunity came along
- Could we capture the idea of growth/ building the Trust
- We are close to establishing our vision (a family of outstanding academies) but there was still some work to be done to achieve this
- Growth should be included in the vision if this was the Trust's strategic intent
- It now felt more like a 'team' or community than a 'family'
- Consider setting our own standards if the political environment/ Ofsted changed
- Outstanding could be replaced with Excellence, as Excellence was more closely aligned to STEP
- Consider whether we could still be 'world-class leaders' if the Trust grew
- Question the extent to which we still accept the mission, vision and values
- First we need to consider the next phase of the organisation (take on more academies, turn them around, continue to move the current academies forward or create something exceptional for disadvantaged communities)
- Consider whether the PUPAC values were still relevant in the well-established schools
- Consider the context of the communities that we operate in and how we prepared children (more about learning, communities and preparing the children for secondary education and their future)
- Change 'establish' for 'growth' (in cultural capital and development of leaders and schools)
- Consider 'community support' and "partnership" work – not just about improving our own schools and supporting the needs of the wider community
- Link words or phrases in the vision statement with the STEP Compass
- Could replace 'outstanding' with 'achieving the STEP standard' (it doesn't have to be linked with Ofsted)

	<p>RV thanked everyone for their input into the session. He advised that the vision would be revised and presented at the Board of Trustees meeting in December.</p> <p>TM and JH left the meeting.</p>
7	<p><u>STEP Website</u></p> <p>MC and RO joined the meeting and provided a demonstration of the new STEP website.</p> <p>Trustees shared some thoughts on the website including;-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees liked the transparency on the Trust and the connection to social media which was now highly important • Consider incorporating the story of how the schools had grown/ improved • Consider tracking footfall on the website and gathering analytics (location information and number of clicks on each page was measured) • Ensure inclusivity and accessibility for people with disabilities (the font size may be challenging for some users) • Concerned about the branding and the image of linking MATs with corporate organisations – It was important to also acknowledge the education partners <p>Trustees thanked MC and RO for the work they had done to develop the STEP website.</p> <p>RV thanked everyone for attending the meeting. Trustees took a short break for refreshments ahead of the Board of Trustees meeting.</p>

Action	Responsibility
Collate governance action plan for circulation with the minutes.	Clerk

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