

**Minutes of a Meeting of the STEP Board of Trustees
Held on Wednesday, 14 December 2022 at 5.00pm (Virtual)**

Name	Position	Attendance
Trustees		
Ben Bartlett (BB)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Kate Chhatwal OBE (KC)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Angela Farrell (AF)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Ross Gardner (RG)	Non-Executive Trustee (Vice Chair)	Present
Paul Glover (PG)	Chief Executive Officer	Present
Peter Lilford (PL)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Rory Nath (RN)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Ursula Norbert (UN)	Non-Executive Trustee	Absent (Apologies accepted)
Navdeep Sanghara (NS)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Shelley Stuart (SS)	Non-Executive Trustee	Absent (Apologies accepted)
Rama Venchard (RV)	Non-Executive Trustee (Chair of Trustees)	Present
Attendees		
John Halliwell (JH)	Executive Director of Primary	Present (for items 1-12)
James Hooper (JHo)	Director of Operations	Present (for items 1-12)
Philippa Jackson (PJ)	Senior Governance Clerk	Present
Claire Majumdar (CM)	Director of Quality Assurance, Data and Governance	Present (for items 1-12)
Ben March (BM)	Chief Finance and Operations Officer	Present (for items 1-12)
Tim Mills (TM)	Executive Director of Primary	Present (for items 1-12)

1	<p><u>Welcome, Apologies and Housekeeping</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received and were accepted from SS (sickness) and UN (travel issues).</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> <p>Trustees confirmed they had updated their personal and pecuniary interests on the Trust Governor system.</p>

4	<p><u>Minutes</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on 12 October 2022 were approved. The Chair confirmed he would sign a copy of the minutes at the end of the meeting.</p>
5	<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	
6	<p><u>Chief Executive Officer’s Report</u></p> <p>The CEO Report for the Autumn term was noted and the following updates provided.</p> <p>PG reported that some very positive discussions had taken place at the Finance and Operations and Education Committees this term. He was very supportive of the positive challenge and the new way of working with the Executive Team and Trustees.</p> <p>At the Education Committee, a deep dive had been conducted on the Hailsham Academies. This had been particularly helpful in focusing on the key risks across the Trust and how these were being managed by the Executive Team. This had provided the Committee with a deeper understanding of the issues and the overall strategy taken.</p> <p>Some key risks had been identified at the Education Committee including the quality of education, pupil outcomes, attendance, Ofsted inspections and local governance. These risks would be considered further by the Committee at future meetings.</p> <p>CM provided some detail on these risks. The local governance risk was around stakeholder engagement. The most recent AC Chairs’ and Trustees forum had gone well and there had been a strong contribution from the AC Chairs on stakeholder engagement. The quality of education risk related to the need to further align the curriculum across the Trust. Attendance had improved across the Trust and the work on improving persistent absence continued. 3 Ofsted inspections had gone well and 4 inspections were due, expected shortly. Focus continued on improving outcomes across the Trust and looking at a range of strategies to prepare the academies and pupils.</p> <p>Q: Who would be the trustee representative at future Ofsted inspections? A: BB would represent the Board of Trustees. The Education Committee recognised the value of trustee visibility within the schools and academy visits would be mapped in line with the inspections.</p> <p>The STEP Standards were noted.</p> <p>Q: There was a reference to School Led Tutoring, what was the impact of this targeted intervention? A: The tutoring funding had provided online Maths tutoring facility across KS2 for all STEP pupils. A report on uptake and additional Maths access would be prepared for circulation to trustees.</p> <p>Q: Is there a date for EDI training for trustees? A: A date would be set in the Spring term.</p>

	<p>Q: In relation to the work on leadership behaviours and culture, it was good to see that this had been embedded in the Autumn term. It was positive to see that conversations had been held with the Executive Team and staff.</p> <p>A: There had been a lot of preparation for this. We had first embedded the new leadership behaviours into the Senior Leadership Team which was rolled out through the SLT conference. They will run alongside the appraisal process. Tailored 360 evaluations would be completed for the Executive Team in the new year. The behaviours would then be rolled out further across the Trust and into all academies from September 2023. An update on the roll out and progression with these behaviours would be provided throughout the year.</p> <p>Q: The information within the CEO report was really helpful for trustees but there is clearly a lot of time spent by the Executive Team producing the report. Would it be less time consuming to produce a short report on the areas that the CEO had focused on rather than the full Executive Team? There were lots of celebrations recorded in the report. It may be worth us discussing whether such an extensive report was required for the Trust Board.</p> <p>A: The feedback from trustees has varied. My intention was to keep the same report format for the Autumn term and revise for the Spring term onwards.</p> <p>Q: Where does the report go?</p> <p>A: The CEO report was a combined summary of the Executive Team meetings and current agenda.</p> <p>Q: Do CEO communications go out to the Trust from the CEO? Could the CEO report go out to the wider Trust as a quarterly CEO report?</p> <p>A: Currently, Trust wide communications go out weekly. A tailored version of the CEO report could be sent termly. The CEO report to the Board could include a short summary and a progress update to focus discussions at the meeting.</p> <p>Q: Was the impact of persistent absence discussed in detail at the Education Committee?</p> <p>A: Yes.</p>
7	<p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the termly safeguarding report.</p> <p>CM raised the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new style of report contained lots of detail and data on safeguarding, behavior incidents, mental health issues, suspensions and permanent exclusions; • Detailed discussions had been held on these matters at the Education Committee; • The Education Committee had looked at the data in detail and has asked testing questions around the sub groups; • Trust wide attendance had increased to 94.2%; • Persistent Absence remained high. This was a national picture not specific to STEP and continued to be reviewed; • A Trust wide safeguarding audit would be reviewed in the Spring term; • Further training for Heads on attendance, exclusions and suspensions would be delivered in the Spring and Summer terms;

- Parent conduct and behavior had also dropped and this had impacted the complaints process for Heads and the Trust.

Q: Does the safeguarding audit replace the Local Authority audit?

A: It would be as well as the LA audit but would not duplicate work.

Q: How are staff supported during the complaints process?

A: The layered approach to leadership ensures that a clear structure of support was in place for staff and Heads. All complaints were discussed at the wider Executive Team meetings and support and best practice was shared.

STEP Ahead – We invest in our future

8 Risk

The Trust Risk Profile report was noted.

STEP Up – We all succeed together

9 Financial Management and Monitoring

Finance and Operations Committee Update

The minutes of the Finance and Operations Committee meeting held on 5 December were noted.

RG provided an update on the key areas to note from the meeting.

The Committee commended the audit report and confirmed that there were no significant issues for the Trustees to be made aware of. The Committee considered STEP to be a Going Concern and as such recommended the Trustee Report and Financial Statements for approval. He thanked the Auditors, CFOO and the wider Finance Team for the continued improvement in audit outcomes and increasingly robust process.

STEP Management Accounts

The Committee noted the STEP Management Accounts for Period 2, 2022. The high level summary on STEP's in-year financial position as at 31 October 2022 was noted. BM reported that income was on track since the re-allocation of the contingencies. The Report for Period 3 would be circulated to Trustees this week.

2021/2022 Annual Report and Financial Statements

Trustees had received the Annual Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31 August 2022. The Trust's Auditors, Hacker Young, had taken the Finance and Operations Committee through the Report and Accounts in detail at the meeting on 5 December 2022. The Committee had reviewed the Annual Report and Financial Statements and considered STEP to be a Going Concern. As such, the recommendation was for Trustees to approve and sign off the Trustee Report and Financial Statements.

The Chair thanked everyone involved for the huge amount of work that had gone into producing the Annual Report and Accounts, particularly the Head of Compliance and Finance, for redesigning the report. Trustees confirmed they had no questions to raise.

Trustees confirmed that they considered STEP Academy Trust to be a Going Concern and as such approved the Trustee Report and Financial Statements for 2021/2022.

	<p><u>Significant Items of Expenditure</u> There were no significant items of expenditure to approve as recommended by the Finance and Operations Committee.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p><u>Educational Standards and Performance</u></p> <p>BB provided a brief update on the Education Committee meeting held on 12 December 2022. At the meeting, a deep dive had been conducted into the Hailsham academies’ context and how they were being managed by the Executive Team. The Risk Profile had been reviewed and the Committee agreed to focus on specific areas such as attendance, persistence absence, the new STEP academies, Ofsted inspections, school websites and SEND. Reports were also provided on PPG, the Anti-Racism Roadmap and those academies due an Ofsted inspection. The safeguarding report and data were reviewed in detail and an update received on the work of the Educational Welfare Officers.</p> <p>Q: What reassurance would you give the Board of Trustees that the schools due an Ofsted were ready for the inspections? A: The schools were waiting for the calls and ready to host the inspections. There had been a huge amount of preparation supported by the Executive Team. The Education Committee could receive a deep dive into the Academies awaiting an Ofsted inspection so we could review where we could further support leaders.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p><u>Academy Engagement</u></p> <p>AF had recently visited Gonville Academy. She had met with some of the staff and the SENCO who had talked about the benefits of being part of the Trust and the wider support they had received from STEP. She had also met with the Pupil Parliament children and they had been very happy and shared some positive stories on what had been implemented at the school.</p>
<p>STEP Way – We agree to do things like this</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p><u>STEP Governance</u></p> <p>Trustees acknowledged the hard work of the CEO and Executive Team this term to drive the Trust forward. A lot of work had been done to pull the team together, evolve the culture and leadership behaviors. They recounted that the transition to the new CEO had been incredibly smooth and a positive move forward. Trustees were very appreciative of all of the support they had been given by the CEO and supported the new ways of working.</p> <p><i>The Executive Team left the meeting.</i></p> <p><u>Board Development Session</u> The Board Development Session would be held on 19 January 2023. The discussions on the vision statement and growth statement would be facilitated by the NGA and a briefing document would be circulated in due course.</p> <p><u>STEP Members Meeting</u> The minutes of the annual STEP Members meeting held on 24 November 2022 and the recommendations for some proposed governance changes were noted. Members would provide feedback on the Governance Action Plan which would be discussed further at the Board</p>

	<p>Development Session. There were currently 3 Members and a recruitment process would be held to increase this to 5.</p> <p><u>Chair 360</u> The outcome of the Chair 360 was noted. A personal development plan would be created.</p> <p><u>Pay Committee</u> The minutes of the Pay Committee held on 17 October 2022 were noted.</p> <p><u>Academy Committees</u> The minutes of the Autumn Term 1 Academy Committee meetings (available on TTG) were noted.</p> <p>The minutes of the Bi Annual Chairs’ and Trustees’ Forum held on 1 December 2022 were noted.</p> <p>The STEP Governor appointments and Chair of AC’s were approved.</p> <p><u>Training</u> The governor training session will be held on 25 January 2023 (topics to be agreed).</p> <p><u>Trustee Recruitment</u> It was noted that AF would step down as a trustee at the end of April 2023. RN would also step down as a trustee at the end of his term in December 2023. Discussions had taken place with some potential trustees and a formal recruitment process for trustees was underway with the Guardian and Governors for Schools.</p> <p>Q: What was the identification and recruitment process for new trustees? A: The need for recruitment had been identified through the skills gaps analysis and the need for succession planning, specifically in the areas of legal, finance and risk. The recruitment process would start in early January with a full induction process.</p> <p>Q: Was it worth having a Nominations Committee for the trustee appointments? A: This would be considered when we document the process?</p> <p><i>Action: Trustee recruitment process to be documented and circulated to trustees. (Chair)</i></p>
13	<p><u>Policies and Procedures</u></p> <p>Trustees approved the following statutory policies subject to the amendments set out below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Policy • Governor Visits Policy • Complaints Policy • Appraisal Policy • Staff Wellbeing Policy <p>Action: Curriculum Policy - Page 1: Dates of review and approval to be corrected. Wellbeing Policy - Page 5: Confirm with Head of HR that the commitments to staff are achievable. (Clerk)</p>

	<p>Trustee ratified the following policies approved by the Finance and Operations Committee on 5 December 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEP Financial Handbook 2022 (and all policies contained within) • Leaders (Academy) Pay Policy • Staff Pay Policy • Working from Home Policy • Cyber Security Policy <p>Trustees ratified the following policies approved by the Education Committee on 12 December 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote Learning Policy • Curriculum Policy
14	<p><u>Term Dates</u></p> <p>Trustees approved the 2023/23 term dates.</p>
15	<p><u>Complaints</u></p> <p>The termly complaints report was noted.</p>
16	<p><u>Signing of Legal Documentation</u></p> <p>No legal documents had been signed by the Company Secretary, CEO or Chair of Trustees since the previous meeting.</p>
17	<p><u>Correspondence to the Chair/ Chair's Actions</u></p> <p>The following correspondence had been received by the Chair since the previous meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter received from DfE in relation to La Fontaine Academy (circulated to trustees by email) <p>The following actions had been taken by the Chair since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of CEO mileage expenses
18	<p><u>Papers circulated in between Board meetings:</u></p> <p>The following papers circulated between Board meetings were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair 360 Evaluation Report
19	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Trustees commended the CEO for his leadership in the first term. They thanked him for all his hard work and success in leading the team. They also thanked the wider Executive Team for their commitment in driving the Trust forward and for all the positive changes to the team. Trustees were very supportive of the new ways of working and the team felt stronger for this. The values of the wider Executive Team were evident and created a strong and consistent message across</p>

	the Trust. They appreciated the CEO's positive approach and for creating the opportunity to raise challenges where appropriate.
20	<p><u>Meeting Impact</u></p> <p>Trustees felt that the honest discussions at the meeting had been very positive. The discussions around the growth opportunities had been very informative and they were reassured that the current STEP pupils and communities were at the forefront of the decision making.</p> <p>It was noted that discussions at the Board meeting had not repeated the discussions at Committee level and the delegations to the Committees had moved forward in a positive way.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Executive team for all their hard work in preparing the reports to the Board. He wished everyone a Happy Christmas.</p>
21	<p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>The Board Development Session would be held on Thursday, 19 January 2023 at 2.00pm at Tudor Academy. The Board of Trustees Meeting would be held on Wednesday, 29 March 2023 at 5.15pm (Virtual).</p>
22	<p><u>Confidential Matters</u></p> <p>Confidential discussions on financial and strategic matters were recorded in the confidential set of minutes.</p>

Action List	
Action	Owner
Trustee recruitment process to be documented and circulated to trustees.	Chair
Curriculum Policy - Page 1: Dates of review and approval to be corrected. Wellbeing Policy - Page 5: Confirm with Head of HR that the commitments to staff are achievable.	Clerk

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