

**Minutes of the joint Academy Committee Board Meeting
held on Tuesday 12th March 2024 at 5.00pm at Bracken Lane Primary Academy**

Membership	Initials	Governor category	Absence
Mr A Murray	AM	Appointed governor	
Mrs C Wyles	CW	Appointed governor	
Mrs E Farrar	EF	Appointed governor	
Mrs F Simpson – Vice chair	FS	Appointed governor	
Mrs J Gawthorpe	JS	Appointed governor	
Ms M Malcolm	MM	Parent governor	A
Miss S Garnett – Chair of Governors	SG	Parent governor	A
Mrs S Willows	SW	Parent governor	A

In Attendance	Initials	Position	Absence
Mrs Lucy Spacey	LS	Executive Principal	
Mrs H Cawkill	HC	Principal for Bracken Lane	
Mrs R Hurley	RH	Principal for Thrumpton	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional	
Mrs K Cleary	KC	Appointed Governor Candidate <i>Observing</i>	

Quorum number	4	Governor's present	5
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Item No	Item	Action/ by who/when
AC/39/2324	<p>Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Mrs Garnett, Chair of governors and Mrs Malcolm and these were accepted by the committee. Mrs Willows sent retrospective apologies. It was agreed that Mrs Simpson, vice chair, would chair the meeting in the Mrs Garnett's absence.</p> <p>Introductions The vice chair invited all attendees to introduce themselves for the benefit of Mrs Cleary, Appointed Governor Candidate who was in attendance to observe the meeting.</p>	
AC/40/2324	<p>Declaration of interest and any changes to declarations made at the start of the year. 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.</p>	
AC/41/2324	<p>Training Effectively monitoring the quality of education Governors were sent a link to the Trust training delivered by Cat Thornton to view before the meeting. All governors confirmed that they had seen the training.</p>	

School Improvement model

Governors were sent a copy of the School Improvement Model for review prior to the meeting. All governors confirmed that they had reviewed the document.

Mrs Spacey began the conversation by saying that from the point of view of the academies and the governors, monitoring quality of education is a significant role. The Educational Review Meeting (ERM) being one of the many tools used along with the Academy Improvement Review (AIR). She went on to explain how the Deep Dive process being used in the individual schools mirrors the Ofsted inspections format and works with subject leaders to develop their skills. What this method of evaluation is looking to see in the classroom is that children are learning but also that they are remembering the information being taught and can apply it. **The governors asked** if this method of evaluation is working, and Mrs Spacey explained that the deep dive process is the most meaningful way of evaluating teaching and learning and enables staff and leaders to understand the end-to-end impact of teaching. **The governors then questioned further** whether the theory was being put into practice and Mrs Spacey confirmed that it is reviewed through classroom observations and discussions with children. Much work has taken place over recent years to think carefully about what is being taught and ensure that decisions being made are in the right context for each specific community.

The governors wanted to know if work is done to prepare children for an Ofsted inspection. Mrs Cawkill explained that children are not prepared for an Ofsted visit but that it is good practice to talk to children about what they are learning, what they have learned and what they have retained. The academies are very good at preparing children to be confident to communicate with a variety of groups of people about what they are learning and what they know. **The governors further questioned** how these types of discussion are conducted after one attempted a conversation with a child in their family who was unable to answer a question about who they would ask if they did not understand what they were learning (put into context this was because they feel that they always understand what they are being taught). Mrs Spacey reassured governors that Ofsted inspectors will allow members of staff, who know and understand the children, to accompany them when they are involved in discussions and that inspectors are trained to phrase their questions appropriately. If any trends or patterns are identified in the deep dive process they will be addressed.

Mrs Spacey added that in terms of governor roles and how they can feed into the process, they should talk to leaders in subject areas. If they come into schools and talk to the children, they should try to ensure that questions are open ended and not interrogatory. Mrs Cawkill added that Fridays are the deep dive activity days and governors are welcome to attend to observe and see the practice in action.

The governors were concerned that previous good practice might be forgotten now that this new deep dive process had been adopted and

	<p>wanted to know if approaches that had worked in the past were still being used. Mrs Spacey confirmed that there is a joined-up approach and those positive activities from the past have been included in the process to ensure the approach is more holistic.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> who came up with the system. Mrs Spacey explained that the deep dive process follows Ofsted and Mrs Cawkill added that this is the most productive model there has been in terms of school improvement. If Ofsted were to decide to stop using the model, the schools would continue to follow it because it is so productive. Many of the models previously have been solely data driven.</p>	
AC/42/2324	<p>Actions / Feedback from link governor visits There have been no recent visits and there were no reports to discuss.</p>	
AC/43/2324	<p>Minutes of the last Academy committee meeting on 24th January 2024 The minutes of the last meeting, having previously been received were agreed and signed by the chair following a brief discussion to clarify terminology.</p> <p><u>The governors asked for clarification</u> to the terminology on page 18 AC/33/2324 paragraph 2:</p> <p>“The Outstanding Teacher Programme Ward Rounds were hosted here. Students were working in the hub and came downstairs to Thrumpton and were very complimentary about the academy.”</p> <p><u>Governors wondered</u> if the Ward Rounds should have been Walk Arouds. Mrs Hurley confirmed that they are referred to as Ward Rounds but in effect are walk arounds.</p> <p>There followed some discussion around acronyms and the governance professional said that she will feed back that the acronyms document should be updated and re-circulated. [AP NB]</p>	NB/22/05/24
AC/44/2324	<p>Matters arising AC/29/2324 Mrs Benson will add an Overview on Prevent and the update on the School Improvement Model will be added to the agenda of the next meeting. Complete, prevent will be included in the May meeting. AC/33/2324 Mrs Cawkill to arrange a meeting with Mrs Wyles to discuss IRIS and demonstrate how it is used. It was agreed that this meeting is no longer necessary. AC/33/2324 Mrs Spacey will review the consent form and ascertain whether it needs to be amended with regards use of IRIS in school.</p> <p>Mrs Spacey explained that following the previous meeting she asked for advice from executive leaders within the Trust, Browne Jacobson (lawyers for the Trust) and Stacey Aisthorpe, Lead Practitioner with Iris Connect and full assurance was given that the system is safeguarding safe and that it does not require parental consent to be used in the classroom.</p>	

	<p>Mrs Wyles confirmed that she had also done her own research following the last meeting and felt reassured that the system was safe and being used appropriately.</p> <p>AC/34/2324 Mrs Benson will ensure the review of governor action plan is added to the agenda for the next meeting in March. NB complete</p>	
<p>AC/45/2324</p>	<p>Principal's reports</p> <p>Mrs Spacey referred to the screen displaying the Bracken Lane ERM. Mrs Spacey explained that the report looks slightly different following some tweaks to the format, but the same information is shared.</p> <p>Mrs Spacey explained the attainment figures reported at the top of the ERM report and relayed that the data is looking very positive for the current year 6 children and that work is ongoing to ensure that those children that are already looking secure continue to be developed to demonstrate that they can work at greater depth.</p> <p>Attendance figures, whilst good in relation to the national picture, are still lower than Bracken Lane would like to see them. <u>The governors asked</u> if there is still work to do with regards post-covid attendance and Mrs Spacey confirmed that the nationwide change in attitude towards attendance following covid has affected all schools within the Trust and therefore attendance is a significant focus for this year. <u>The governors then further questioned</u> what the reasons are for persistent absences (PA's). Mrs Cawkill explained that the reasons will be different in different schools. At Bracken Lane much of the PA comes from families taking holidays during term time, this isn't the only reason and anxiety appears to be more of an issue in the years following covid. <u>The governors wanted to know</u> if there is a range of strategies to deal with the issue and Mrs Cawkill confirmed that there are several strategies, and they can change from day to day and pupil to pupil. Mrs Cawkill added that in comparison to other schools, PA at Bracken Lane is very low.</p> <p><u>The governors queried</u> why writing always appears to show up as an area that needs to be addressed. Mrs Cawkill agreed that writing always scores lower than reading and children do take longer to catch up with writing than with reading which is a challenge. In terms of reporting, there is no test for writing and teachers tend to be more reserved when marking and reporting on work. It is very difficult to test and get clear data from writing activities. Mrs Cawkill added that there is significant focus at Bracken Lane on developing vocabulary which helps with writing as children progress through school. <u>The governors were interested to know</u> at what age cursive writing is taught. Mrs Cawkill confirmed that it starts in year 2 in terms of joined up writing and went on to explain that the writing pathway draws on experience across the entire trust and will be extremely robust when it is completed.</p>	

Mrs Spacey explained that the progress score is taken from the year 2 SATS scores to show whether the children have remained along the same trajectory, have fallen behind or have moved ahead. A positive figure shows that children are progressing ahead of expectations and a negative figure shows that they have fallen behind. Mrs Hurley added that there won't be a progress score to review this year as the current Year 6 did not complete SATS in year 2 due to covid.

Mrs Cawkill referred to the Ofsted comments from 2021 highlighted in the ERM and confirmed that the school are now better prepared to address those issues.

The governors acknowledged the standing item within the ERM regarding the PSHE curriculum **and asked** what had been wrong with the last PSHE package. Mrs Cawkill said that the curriculum needs modernising and reviewing to make it better suited to the context of the local community. Mrs Hurley added that PSHE is not a national curriculum subject but that it needs to draw on lots of sources and staff need to have a good understanding of the important subjects, when to teach them and how to make the approach a holistic one. **The governors asked** if PSHE is interwoven throughout the curriculum or taught separately. Mrs Spacey and Mrs Hurley confirmed that both approaches are used.

Governors noted the school-to-school support section of the report **and queried** the relevance of dividing groups into 8. Mrs Cawkill confirmed that 8 works well at Bracken Lane as they use a colour system and already have 8 groups following the Read Write Inc phonics programme.

The governors then asked for clarity about what was meant by the statement 'refinement of current medium-term plans to ensure learning objectives are explicit and not activity based' Mrs Cawkill explained that it is important in the planning of the curriculum that there is no confusion in terms of what the learning is within an activity and with changes to staffing the plans must be explicit to avoid misinterpretation as to the planned learning outcome of a task. Mrs Spacey added that all decisions need to be based around what the children need to learn. The planning must detail the learning and the activity is the vehicle by which the learning is being delivered. For example, an activity to build a 3 little pigs house. The *activity* is building the house but the *learning* could be around design technology or storytelling or sticking and gluing etc.

The governors questioned the Agreed Actions and Additional Deployment section of the report and wondered how these bullet points are addressed as actions and what the timescales are to complete them. Mrs Spacey explained that this section of the report appears to have been completed differently and that some of the comments were not specific actions. Mrs

	<p>Cawkill confirmed that she will decide on timescales along with Mrs Spacey and that some of the actions identified are continuously ongoing.</p> <p>Mrs Spacey displayed the Thrumpton ERM on screen and explained that the report looks slightly different as Thrumpton did not have an ERM in the autumn term due to the flooding and relocation activity.</p> <p>Mrs Spacey drew governors' attention to the high percentage of year 6 pupils at Thrumpton with SEND and also to the high PA figures and reassured governors that a significant amount of work is ongoing to support both sets of children identified.</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> if BSquared software is used to manage progress for pupils with SEND and Mrs Hurley confirmed that it is.</p> <p>Mrs Hurley explained that there will be a change to staffing from the summer term which provides a good opportunity to have another look at the actions and additional development required.</p>	
<p>AC/46/2324</p>	<p>Policy/appendix ratification</p> <p>THPA – updated admission policies for 25/26 The above local appendices were updated by the Bracken Lane in January 2024 and are available on the Academy website. Governors were informed of these updates on 12th March 2024 and all were ratified in the governor meeting.</p> <p>BLPA – updated admission policies for 25/26 The above local appendices were updated by the Bracken Lane in January 2024 and are available on the Academy website. Governors were informed of these updates on 12th March 2024 and all were ratified in the governor meeting.</p> <p>Other policy updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relationship and Sex Education Policy ○ Provider Access policy ○ Supporting students with medical conditions policy ○ Early Careers Teachers policy ○ Levels of Authority ○ Filtering and monitoring appendix 2024 ○ Risk Policy <p>The above Diverse Academies policies were updated by the Trust on the 30th of January 2024 and are available on the Trust website. Governors were informed of these updates on the 12th of March 2024.</p>	

AC/47/2324	<p>Review of Governor Action Plan – Priority 4</p> <p>The governance professional reminded governors that they had been asked to review priority 4 of the plan for discussion at the meeting. It was agreed that all governors now have access to the school newsletters and that greater attendance at school events where possible should continue to be encouraged but not expected.</p> <p>While discussing stakeholder engagement a concern was raised following an event last summer at Bracken Lane. There appeared to have been some confusion amongst staff as to the number of governors attending and whether they should have been expected to send apologies so that accurate numbers could be catered for. Mrs Cawkill and Mrs Spacey confirmed and agreed that staff are aware that governors are volunteers and many of them work full time and are not always available to attend such events. The governance professional added that communicating with governors about events where timescales are short is difficult and suggested that a governors WhatsApp group for administration and sharing details of events such as this would provide governors with an easier method of receiving information and communicating responses without the need to log into SharePoint and governor email accounts. Governors agreed that they were happy for a group to be set up. A signup sheet was circulated and collected by the governance professional, and the group will now be set up. [AP NB]</p>	NB 22/05/24
AC/48/2324	<p>How has the AC held senior leaders to account?</p> <p>Challenges from the governors have included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Deep Dive process and how it works in practice - Attendance/persistent absences and the approach being taken to address this. - Writing progress, monitoring and measuring - Curriculum in terms of planning and refinement and PSHE 	
AC/49/2324	<p>How have the VMV of Trust / Equality been upheld?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was agreed that the VMV of the Trust & Equality has been upheld. The academy committee members felt that there had been a respectful and positive discussion, high expectations and aspirations. 	
AC/50/2324	<p>Complete report to Trustees</p> <p>The report to trustees was completed and noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governors have been impressed by how the various departments and schools within Diverse Academies Trust support one another. 	
AC/51/2324	<p>Determination of Confidentiality</p> <p>Equalities Act consideration</p> <p>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. 	
	<p>Date and time of next meeting:</p> <p>Academy Committee meeting Wednesday 22nd May at 5.00pm at Thrumpton.</p>	

	The meeting closed at 18:29	
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Signed by Chair: *F Simpson*

Date: *13/03/2024*

Fiona Simpson, Vice Chair of Governors