

Minutes – Hanham Woods Academy Council

Version: Approved
Meeting Date: Tuesday 7 October 2025
Location: HWA
Time: 5.30pm

AC Members		Attended	Apologies
Jon Gould	Sponsor 1 (Chair)	Y	
Kevin Hawthorne	Sponsor 2	Y	
Patrick Cottam	Sponsor 3	A	Y
Lisa West	Sponsor 4	Y	
VACANCY	Sponsor 5		
Azeem Haroon	Parent Councillor	Y	
John Bowman	Parent Councillor	Y	
Nick Tucker	Teaching Staff Councillor	Y	
VACANCY	Support Staff Councillor		
In Attendance			
Chris Ballard	Interim Principal	Y	
Kath Cooper	Senior Principal	Y	
Wendy Hellin	Clerk	Y	

Date and No	Action	Owner
22.04.25 02	RT to contact CAB to find out more information about their recent community engagement day. Ongoing	RT
24.06.25 01	WH will ask LT to contact JG to discuss the possibility of an extension to his term of office. Complete	WH

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	JG welcomed Academy Councillors and introductions were made. Apologies are recorded above.	
2	Declaration of Interest	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
3.1	The minutes of the meeting of 24 June 2025 were confirmed as a true record.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	The action table above has been updated.	
4.2	WH to check with KOn re the follow up on the actions from the stage 2 complaint.	
5	Academy Council Report – Questions from Academy Councillors and responses from CB unless stated otherwise	
5.1	Chair's update	
5.1.1	Jon Gould confirmed that the trust has asked him to continue in his role of Chair. The extension to his term of office is being confirmed. Lisa West agreed to remain as Vice Chair. Link roles will be reviewed at the next meeting.	
5.2	Results review – headline figures	
5.2.1	CB reported on a positive set of outcomes over the summer. This was the first year of results based on attainment alone. The results for basics 9 – 4 and basics 9 – 5 have increased from last	

	<p>year. Attainment 8 has improved and the average point score (APS) for English and maths has also increased, especially the number of 9 – 7 grades. The headline figures are strong and are showing an improving trend. There is a gap for PP students in terms of attainment, and that is mirrored in the attendance data. Students with SEND performed less well, as did PP and looked after children. That group of students come under the disadvantaged umbrella and attainment is a challenge. If a student has SEND or PP or both, they are likely to do less well than their peers. That will be the focus going forward.</p>	
5.3	Subject Level data	
5.3.1	<p>There have been particular successes for vocational subjects, including art and design and PE. There are some concerns for music and for food technology. The results for food technology were a way off the predictions as were those for DT and computer science. Staff are starting to unpick trends in certain subjects and are starting to work with those curriculum leaders. A number of subject review meetings have taken place where there is a concern around performance. Each subject has a different narrative and for DT and food technology the barrier is the student's ability to do the exam part of the course. A specialist food teacher has been in post for a while now and staff are working with schools across the trust to deliver the same exam board.</p>	
5.4	<p>Q: What is the PP gap for basics? It is 1.27 (APS) which is almost a grade and a half.</p>	
5.5	<p>Q: How does that compare to the trust and nationally? It is approximately in line to trust data; our performance is better than a number of schools across the trust. The data is also in line nationally. We reflect the trend in terms of the PP gap. The PP student cohort is quite small compared to some school across the trust and that can dramatically skew the data. We are not happy with that. We do not want any groups of students to perform less well than their peers. SEND is a huge priority for this school with regard to raising attainment. There is a significant meeting need agenda in the classrooms and outside, to lead to better outcomes for students with SEND.</p>	
5.6	<p>Q: If HWA is in line with the national trend, how much can you actually do to improve things and close the gap? What we cannot do is accept it, just because it follows the national trend. We can do things slightly differently. We need to be confident with our pedagogy and systems that support SEND students. There are lots of links between the PP gap and attendance and we need to ensure our wider systems are correct and ensure disruption free learning. We are making sure we are tailoring practice to meet need. We can only be content with our data being at the national average when we have those tight systems in place and have explored all other interventions. Our gap is closing but it is still there.</p>	
5.7	<p>Q: What do you do to systematically track students progress, particularly those with SEND? We assess KS3 twice a year against the age-related expectations and provide a holistic grade too. At KS4 for English, science and maths, we have mock assessments in February, and again in term 6 and then two further mocks in Year 11. The results are disseminated to curriculum leaders who analyse them and use them to inform interventions and next steps.</p>	
5.8	<p>Q: Are the interventions put in place immediately after each assessment point? Following any assessment there is a period of reteach and of class-level analysis. We have literacy and numeracy interventions for those that need most catch up, but the vast majority of intervention takes place in the classroom. For Year 11 that targeted intervention takes place after the academy day in period 7. The assessment calendar is in line with the trust assessment calendar, and this gives us school data and trust comparators. The key to this is not just that assessment cycle. It is the formative assessment that takes place in the classroom day in, day out. Staff work to address misconceptions in the moment and reteach where concepts have not been</p>	

	<p>learned; this leads to students seeing success when it comes to assessments. The classroom practice is the key; it is the lever needed to close the gap. Interventions alone cannot be relied on. They do have a role to play for some students but the teaching and learning in the classroom needs to be high quality for every lesson in every subject.</p> <p>(NT) What we are getting right this year, is holding teachers to account through getting into more lessons. This happens every other week and is not intrusive; it is done in a supportive way and one of the areas we consider is how we can meet the need for SEND students. There are also deep dives for specific departments where SLT go into every lesson across the week to check that SEND provision is on point. They check books and ensure that teaching and learning is in line with the expectations of the department improvement plan. Student voice is also collected as part of that triangulation. It is a piece of work that middle leaders have been empowered to do. It allows us to find trends across the school and so allows us to strategically target CPD.</p>	
5.9	<p>Q: Does the data from years 7 – 10 show a PP gap?</p> <p>Yes. We are already working on plans as to how to support the new Year 11 cohort particularly. We have a strong raising attainment strategy in KS4. The RA Lead is good at executing that, alongside the teachers. We hope to close the gap over the course of the year. There is a longer-term strategy needed in the classroom.</p>	
5.10	<p>Q: The data also shows a Year 8 PP gap. That PP cohort is quite small. Does that give you opportunities for targeted work with key students?</p> <p>It does. More often for our students, it is more complex than needing a single intervention. We have a holistic approach to support the wider contextual challenges at play.</p>	
5.11	<p>Q: Have you got anything in place to stop a pupil slipping through the net?</p> <p>Yes. We do this through the assessment data and quality assurance work. We look at attendance (both to school and to lessons) and consider behaviour logs. We have a plethora of data and information about each child and have a triage process in place to review that information each week. The core team looking at that consists of myself as Principal, the SENCo, safeguarding lead, raising attainment lead and attendance lead. We discuss all vulnerable children and agree any action needed.</p>	
5.12	KC joined the meeting.	
5.13	<p>Q: What is your approach to personalising the learning for students with special needs? How do you evaluate it?</p> <p>We do a lot of work around making sure the curriculum is working for everyone. We get into lessons and look at the quality of teaching and of the work being produced. We speak to students and look at the data. These are the things we do to measure the temperature of the learning, and we do this through the lens of disadvantage which includes SEND.</p>	
5.14	<p>Q: You have talked about subject level outcomes and the lessons learned. Has anything changed for the current year 11?</p> <p>No, not as yet. The exam cycle went well, and the raising attainment strategy worked well so we will follow that process through again. Exam access arrangements continue to increase each year and that will mean some logistical challenges. We have done some work around where we locate exams for the next set of mock exams. The first set of data from the mocks will be available at the end of November, for review at the December AC meeting.</p>	
5.15	<p>Q: Did you an analysis of what was coming into Year 11 in terms of needs? How strong is that year group looking?</p> <p>It is looking okay. There is a similar gap to this time last year and we can see some of the same trends. It is a very able year group and based on their ability can perform well if we get everything right. We need to ensure attitude to learning stays strong. After this round of mocks, we will look at the raising attainment data and put in place a plan for those key students.</p>	

5.16	<p>Q: In terms of the outcomes, were there any particular outliers that skewed the data?</p> <p>There were some surprises in DT and food technology. The predictions were not close to the final outcomes. Staff overpredicted; this is a piece of work we are focused on.</p>	
5.17	<p>Q: Is that an ongoing issue you are seeing over the last few years?</p> <p>It is around the confidence of the staff and curriculum leaders to predict what level a student is at, and where they can get them to over time. It was a particular challenge in DT and food technology. Staff moderating the work thought it was right, but the examiner felt the grades were slightly off and pulled the grade down. This is the marking of coursework, not the examination part of the course. We are working with staff to upskill them, and the federation network nights are helping to strengthen that. We have started that work and have had some good reflections on how to address things. We are confident that work is happening, and we will be looking closer at the predictions so that we can be sure they are accurate and that we are putting the resources in the right places.</p>	
5.18	<p>Q: Are students told their predictions?</p> <p>Yes, they are – pupils and parents. They are discussed during parents evening.</p>	
5.19	Industrial Action	
5.19.1	<p>CB provided an update on the industrial action at HWA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When CB arrived in term 6 the staff body was unsettled due to the change in leadership and the various iterations of leadership support provided to the school. · • Prior to CB arrival, Some decisions needed to be made at the highest level around curriculum, staffing and budget. · • These decisions were made very quickly and were the right decisions at the time, however, the way they were communicated, and the lack of consultation was challenging for staff. • There had been an ongoing conversation with the substantive Principal prior to his period of absence, and the union representatives, over a period of time around concerns about student behaviour and proposed actions. · • Every member of staff is committed to the school being successful; for many union members it was an extremely difficult decision to strike, but they felt they it appropriate to take this action to be heard. · • Due to the timing of the proposed vote and the summer closure, there was only three days available to try to resolve the concerns that were presented to the trust. 11 of the 13 concerns were swiftly resolved. The 2 remaining were around curriculum review and directed time. · • Leaders and Executive Team members worked closely to negotiate to ensure there was no disruption, but the final two points were not resolved in time and there were 3 days of industrial action that took place. · • A resolution has now been agreed, and the academy, as always, is committed to reviewing curriculum to ensure there is equity for all subject areas over the 5 years, and continues to remain, broad and balanced. · • With all curriculum decisions, there needs to be a careful balance so that this is not to the detriment to the quality of education; the academy is not willing to put non-specialists in front of students regularly. · The curriculum model needs to be affordable, and the academy needs to be able to recruit to it and deliver quality education in every year group for every subject. 	
5.20	<p>Q: The escalation seems to have been very quick; it was not raised at the term 6 AC meeting. When did it start? Were the Executive Team aware of this in term 6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It began in term 6 and the Executive Team were aware and were working with leaders on resolving the concerns raised. 	

5.21	<p>Q: The strike action seemed to be targeted to disrupt the academy as much as possible. Have you lost Year 7s due to this?</p> <p>We have lost some students, but for a number of reasons; some of that may be around some misinformation about the curriculum and the industrial action, however we can directly link this to student retention in year 7. Industrial action is always, by its nature, designed to be as disruptive as possible. (NT) It could also be counter argued that we have the students that we do have, because of the industrial action and the curriculum work that is taking place. Those staff members that made the difficult decision to strike, did so to protect their working conditions. The working conditions are also the children’s learning conditions. Children need to be in the right environment with qualified staff and a full curriculum in order to be as successful as possible. (KC) From the union’s perspective, all demands needed to be met. The academy’s position was that the last two needed more time.</p>	
5.22	<p>Q: The Academy Council’s role is not to question the decision of the members to strike, but to challenge whether the academy and trust did everything reasonable and practicable to avoid strike action.</p> <p>We acted as quickly and efficiently as we could.</p>	
5.23	<p>Q: Will there be a further general communication to parents?</p> <p>We can share a communication to let parents know we have come through a time of difficult challenge, with some resolutions. We want the parents know that as a whole staff body, we want the best for every child in the academy.</p>	
5.24	<p>Q: Is there likely to be any more strike action?</p> <p>I would like to say no. We need to work with staff to make sure their voice is heard.</p>	
5.25	<p>Q: Are other academies in the trust having similar issues?</p> <p>(KC) Yes, some are. There are national budget constraints that are extremely challenging and that impact provision and staffing in schools. It is the same in Post 16.</p>	
5.26	Safeguarding	
5.26.1	CB reported that a Deputy DSL has been appointed to support CD in her DSL role.	
5.26.2	There is a current focus on child-on-child abuse, and this is being driven through policy and assemblies. A strategic agenda for the year is being put together and will be shared when complete. The LA is conducting an audit on 16 December.	
5.26.3	<p>Q: Are there any particular issues coming up through the new Year 7 cohort?</p> <p>We have the largest proportion of students on Child Protection plans in that new year group, so there is lots of multi-agency working going on. The triage processes in place feed into the safeguarding strategy and we are ensuring good decisions are being made by the right people. Having crossover between the DDSL and the Attendance Link worker is helpful. I line manage both those areas and that also helps.</p>	
6	Policies	
6.1	<p>The Academy Council approved the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Policy 	
7	Matters for the COAC/Board	
7.1	N/A	
8	AOB	
8.1	ACTION: CB will consider the use of Governor Hub to provide more regular updates for the Academy Council between meetings.	CB
8.2	<p>No other business was reported. The meeting closed at 6.40pm.</p> <p>Meeting dates: 9 December 25 20 January 26</p>	

	10 March 26 16 June 26	
9	TRAINING FOR NON-STAFF COUNCILLORS	
9.1	Non staff councillor completed training for Safeguarding and Governance Essentials.	

Actions to carry forward:

Date and No	Action	Owner
22.04.25 02	RT to contact CAB to find out more information about their recent community engagement day. Ongoing	RT
07.10.25 01	CB will consider the use of Governor Hub to provide more regular updates for the Academy Council between meetings.	CB