

**Minutes of the joint Academy Committee Board Meeting
held on Tuesday 20th May 2025 at 5.15pm at Bracken Lane Primary Academy**

Membership	Initials	Governor category	Absence
Mr A Murray	AMu	Appointed governor	
Mrs C Wyles	CW	Appointed governor	
Dr 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
Mrs S Willows	SW	Parent governor	
Mrs K Cleary	KC	Appointed governor	A
Mr M Wintle	MW	Appointed governor	A
Mr A Michael	AMi	Appointed governor – <i>appointed in meeting</i>	

In Attendance	Initials	Position	Absence
Mrs L Spacey	LS	Executive Principal	
Mrs H Cawkill	HC	Principal for Bracken Lane	
Mrs S Kahler	SK	Principal for Thrumpton	
Mrs N Benson	NB	Governance Professional	

Quorum number	5	Governor's present	6
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Item No	Item	Action/ by who/when
AC/47/2425	<p>Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Mr Wintle who is on holiday and Mrs Malcolm due to work commitments, and these were accepted by the committee.</p> <p>Mrs Cleary sent her apologies during the meeting having been held up at work.</p>	
AC/48/2425	<p>Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for any items of business on the agenda.</p> <p>The vice 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/49/2425	<p>Governor Membership Governor Candidate Elections - Mr A Michael Mr Michael was asked to step out of the room to allow the governors to discuss his appointment.</p>	

	<p>The governance professional confirmed that references have been returned satisfactorily and signed off by the acting Chair, Mrs Simpson. After a brief discussion, academy committee governors agreed that Mr Michael would be elected to the committee for a four-year term of office. The governance professional will formally write to Mr Michael welcoming him and will initiate his induction. [Action-NB]</p> <p>Mr Michael returned to the room and was welcomed to the committee.</p> <p>Discussion about the role of chair of governors</p> <p>The governance professional reminded the committee that a new chair of governors would need to be appointed at the July meeting. All governors were encouraged to think about whether they might be interested in the role and if they have any thoughts or questions to raise them with the governance professional. She added that training is available, and support will be provided for anyone considering the role.</p>	NB 23/5/25
AC/50/2425	<p>Training - Trust Governance Overview</p> <p>Some governors were confused about the Trust training shared and whether it was relevant to longer standing governors. The governance professional explained that the training has been designed for new governors to help them to understand the trust structure and scheme of delegation but that it also acts as a valuable refresher for those governors that have been the committee for some time. Governors commented that they were struck by how much work is involved that outsiders might not appreciate for executive principals and principals.</p> <p>Mrs Spacey asked those governors that watched the training if it shared information about what is expected in link visits or gave examples of good link governor visits. Mrs Wyles said that examples were given in that ad hoc visits for community events for example or visits in a parental capacity can also be a good opportunity to feedback to the committee and it doesn't necessarily have to be a formal link visit.</p>	
AC/51/2425	<p>Governance Report</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Mr Murray agreed to watch the cyber security training video [Action – AMu] and the governance professional confirmed that Mrs Willows has completed her GDPR training and now all mandatory training is therefore up to date.</p> <p>The governance professional reminded the committee that the Governor Conference will be taking place on 12th June at the Education Centre and encouraged governors to attend where possible. Mrs Spacey added that it is a good opportunity for governors to network with trustees and other committee members across the trust and listen to the keynote speaker who will talk about the future of governance. All executive principals will be there, many of the principals will also be there.</p> <p>Link visits</p> <p>In Mr Wintle's absence, Mrs Cawkill gave a brief review of Mr Wintle's recent visits at Bracken Lane explaining that he had been into school to observe and listen to some children read and had also volunteered on a</p>	AMu 09/07/25

	<p>school trip to the library. Mr Wintle's full report has been shared with all governors and is available on the governance portal. Mr Wintle will visit again in July with a focus on enrichment.</p> <p>Mrs Kahler added that Mr Wintle had also visited Thrumpton to talk to the reading lead and listen to readers, again his report is available to view. Mrs Kahler added that Mr Wintle, Mrs Wyles and Mrs Gawthorpe had all been into Thrumpton to observe SATS and thanked them for their support.</p> <p>Mrs Wyles said that it was good to see how well prepared the children were and how calm they were, especially the children that had been unwell the day before. Mrs Spacey thanked Mrs Wyles for her feedback and agreed that preparation is vital to ensure the children are calm and don't feel distressed.</p> <p><u>The governors asked</u> what can be done to keep children calm and Mrs Spacey said that it is important not to put pressure on the children but also to ensure that parents do not put pressure on their children to perform well. Mrs Cawkill added that from as early as year 5 staff begin to talk to parents about SATS to ensure that they understand that it's important that they don't add pressure to the children. <u>The governors wondered</u> how the staff in school identify when a parent is putting too much pressure on their child. Mrs Cawkill explained that some parents in the past have expressed that they are expecting their children to work on practice papers at home for hours at a time and this is not necessary or acceptable. Mrs Spacey also noted that the language that we all use when talking about SATS can have an impact on children and that she had noticed a lot of chatter on social media around this where parents are opting their children out of completing SATS to protect their wellbeing and mental health. Mrs Cawkill added that it's important to get the message across to parents that SATS will only tell you some things about how well a child is doing and they don't cover all elements of learning and emotional and social development that are as important. <u>Governors asked</u> when the results would be available. Mrs Cawkill said that results will be received by academies on 8th July.</p> <p>Action Plan All governors were reminded to upload their pen portraits for the website and to ensure that they complete the skills audit when they receive it by the deadline as this will enable a more accurate self-evaluation which will form the basis of the governance action plan for next year. [Action – Govs]</p> <p>Events Attention was drawn to the list of summer events being held at Thrumpton and to the newsletters containing all details of events at Bracken Lane. Both principals expressed an open invitation to governors if they would like to visit either school during the summer term and attend any of the events planned.</p> <p>Policies The governance professional explained that all updated policies had been approved by trustees and shared with governors for information. Governors</p>	<p>Govs 13/06/25</p>
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	wondered what the capability policy is as this was not clearly visible on the website. Mrs Spacey explained the purpose of the policy using the example that it provides a clear structure to enable support for staff to meet the teaching standards and provides a structure as to what will happen if, with support given, standards are still not being met.	
AC/52/2425	Minutes of the last Academy committee meeting on 19th March 2025 The minutes of the last meeting, having previously been received were agreed and signed by the vice chair.	
AC/53/2425	Matters Arising: AC/36/2425 NB to contact AL regarding non-attendance complete AC/38/2425 NB to find out if training at Normanton was available for DAT governors. complete AC/39/2425 AM and SW to complete all outstanding mandatory training complete AC/39/2425 All Gobs to review action plan and feedback suggestions / updates. ongoing AC/39/2425 All Gobs to complete pen pictures for website ongoing AC/41/2425 All Gobs to consider whether they might be interested in taking the role of chair of governors. ongoing AC/42/2425 NB to share Thrumpton SEND in a nutshell document with govts. Complete	
AC/54/2425	Thrumpton Principals Report Attendance and Admissions Mrs Kahler referred to her report and told the committee that attendance shows a slightly improved picture which demonstrates the impact the plan written at the beginning of the year is starting to have. She added that she is hopeful that progress will continue but explained that we will be moving into the holiday season and there had been a recent chicken pox outbreak at the academy which will impact on figures. The approach remains rigorous with regards attendance. <u>Governors asked</u> what the protocol is with chicken pox outbreaks and Mrs Kahler explained that the schools follow Public Health England guidance which is that all spots must be scabbed over before they can return to school. <u>Should I keep my child off school?</u> Mrs Kahler went on to share that SEND attendance had increased last half term and was better than the national average. Mrs Kahler said that admissions numbers have been very positive, and Mrs Spacey added that considering the dipping birth rate that figures are picking up is very good news. <u>Governors questioned</u> the appeals process <u>and asked</u> if 30 places have been offered and an appeal is accepted, could the additional pupil be accommodated. Mrs Kahler explained that the school cannot exceed 30 in a class and so the appeal will not be successful. <u>Governors then wondered</u> if	

	<p>the appellant is made aware of this when they initially appeal. Mrs Cawkill said that this will probably not have been made clear.</p> <p><u>Referring back to attendance, governors asked</u> if persistent absence figures are decreasing. Mrs Kahler confirmed that the number is coming down and staff have worked very carefully with the families involved to ensure that the right people are being targeted and the results on this work are positive. There has been a raft of ideas for how to approach this from September with support from across the trust. <u>Governors then wondered</u> if children are awarded in school for good attendance and Mrs Kahler said that there is a celebration assembly every half term and those with 100% attendance during that half term are recognised adding that there were 34 children with 100% attendance last term. Governors then reflected that there might be an expectation that as we move into summertime there might be a reflection in the figures as children are taken on holidays. <u>Governors questioned this further</u> asking if such an issue would likely be reflected in the national average figures and Mrs Kahler confirmed that it would be.</p> <p>Safeguarding checklist. Mrs Kahler told the committee that the school have been seeing a lot more instances of poor mental health with children and have been seeking support. The Speak out Stay safe online assembly with Ant and Dec was delivered by specially trained people within NSPCC to years 5 and 6 to give children positive language about how to talk about how they are feeling and the family support advisor is there to help with families.</p> <p><u>Governors referred to the safeguarding checklist</u> and noted that domestic violence, welfare, home issues, lack of parenting capacity has increased and that things have been set in motion. <u>They asked</u> what evidence there is to show that the interventions are working. Mrs Kahler explained that when something is registered on My Concern, the chronology continues to be updated, and all further incidents are recorded on the log which includes things like who has attended workshops etc. Conversations with staff and teachers are ongoing to help identify and share what responses there has been which can often lead to further identification of other needs. Also input from young carers can sometimes lead to identifying other needs like bereavement support for example and she added that it is difficult to provide hard data on such things.</p> <p>Community Engagement Mrs Kahler told the committee that the Mother's Day breakfast in the hall was a lovely experience and had been a great success and a Father's Day one will be held in June.</p> <p>Mrs Wyles wanted to share that on her recent visit to support with SATS she had noticed that Thrumpton has a very positive atmosphere.</p> <p>Bracken Lane Principals Report Mrs Cawkill apologised for not linking the AIR report within the principals report as she had been waiting on the final version. The report was displayed</p>	
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	<p>on screen and Mrs Cawkill talked through the highlights. The governance professional will distribute the full report to all governors following the meeting. [Action – NB]</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> who was involved in the process from outside of Bracken Lane and Mrs Cawkill said that the following were involved</p> <p>Cat Thornton - Chief Education Officer (Primary)</p> <p>Neil Holmes - Chief Education Officer (Secondary)</p> <p>Charlotte Adams - SENDCo for some trust schools</p> <p>Ellie Kerr - English SDG Lead</p> <p>Gareth Letton - EP</p> <p>Mrs Cawkill explained the background to the AIR and the areas of focus and shared that children know more, remember more, are able to communicate better and speak about learning with greater confidence. The work in books matches content. An area that requires further attention is presentation of work. The academy is now in a position to move this forward and changes to books for next year will help with this. With regards provision for children with SEND, work was well planned, further refinements should continue to be made on how children can access learning and on making the right adaptations. Much is being done well but there's still more can be done. Good progress has been shown in phonics with Read Write Inc phonics looking good, where to go next is Fresh Start which is a post year 2 phonics programme to support children who struggle with reading. <u>Governors asked</u> where Fresh Start has been picked up from and Mrs Cawkill clarified that it is part of Read Write Inc. Bracken Lane have purchased the starter pack which allows them to support those children that still struggle. <u>Governors then wanted to know</u> if the package was expensive and Mrs Cawkill said that it was not too expensive, <u>governors then questioned</u> how it will be used with children, in small groups or on a 1 to 1 basis. Mrs Cawkill said it can be used in small groups and one to one and will generally be work that is done outside of the classroom.</p> <p>Mrs Cawkill went on summarising the AIR and shared that writing is good but again, presentation needs work. <u>The governors wondered</u> if this is something that is a regular area of concern. Mrs Cawkill said that handwriting is an easy fix. It has been established that all staff know how to teach handwriting, and this is something that just needs to be focussed upon and addressed consistently. Governors wanted to know at what age children are taught cursive handwriting and Mrs Cawkill said that it starts in year 2, she added that all children have now been given a handwriting book, this was something previously taken away but has now been reinstated. <u>The governors wanted reassurance</u> that appropriate support was in place for children with dyslexia when it comes to teaching handwriting. Mrs Cawkill told the committee that a programme called IDL is used to identify needs of children that require additional support, and this helps identify the appropriate supporting materials for them to use.</p> <p>The Voice 21 project was evident in the AIR in terms of how happy children are to speak and how they do so confidently and, in an age-appropriate way. Mrs Cawkill went on to say that there is a lot more chat around school where</p>	NB 23/05/25
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	<p>previously children thought that they should be quiet all the time when moving around in the corridors etc. Whilst they are now walking through corridors are talking, they are mostly able to do this in a calm and well-behaved way. Mrs Spacey agreed that initially the restraints needed to be taken away to then get the balance right.</p> <p>The quality of the new maths curriculum is high and adaptations for SEND pupils are good. There is more training to do with staff on maths to get to the greater depth targets that we are working to. The new Design Technology curriculum is better resourced and easier managed in the building since the refurbishment. <u>Governors requested</u> an example of the types of things children re doing in DT and Mrs Cawkill described a project whereby year 6 children have designed a water wall for the reception class</p> <p>The new PSHCE scheme to work on personal development is coming together now as a full personal development strategy. There is more for children to participate in and more pupil voice, the children have requested a leadership team to come to senior leader meetings. <u>Governors wondered</u> how much different the PSHCE scheme is to the old one. Mrs Cawkill replied that it is not significantly different however it is sequenced better and has additional units that can be adapted to relevant things to the community. Resources are regularly updated and easily available which are age appropriate and relevant which makes it much more accessible and gives staff the ability to tailor it better. Mrs Kahler added that she also uses this platform and finds it to be excellent in enabling her to pick out the elements that are relevant to the academy and community.</p> <p>In summary Mrs Cawkill said that the AIR was very positive and identified some areas for improvement in particular the academy improvement objectives need to be clearer and quality assurance can be improved. <u>Governors wanted to know</u> if the principals will support one another in those areas for improvement and Mrs Cawkill said that they continue to work together, Mrs Kahler will offer her expertise in maths and Mrs Cawkill hers in early years for example.</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> if a timeline is placed on the areas for development. Mrs Cawkill said that the AIR is a <i>check 'in'</i> rather than a <i>check 'up'</i> in the way that Ofsted would approach it. The AIR, look at where things are at and focusses on how the trust can help school to develop to where it needs to be.</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Mrs Cawkill displayed the attendance summary report and told the committee that attendance is above the national average and persistent absence is below the national average which looks good but there is still work to do to focus on the small number of children whose attendance is below where it should, and they are working very hard on that. Particularly the first and last weeks of every term needs to be a focus with regards the importance of attendance for parents to ensure that they understand the impact on children's learning and outcomes.</p>	
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	<p>Safeguarding checklist</p> <p>Mrs Cawkill summarised the safeguarding checklist and told the committee that like Thrumpton mental health, particularly online issues (WhatsApp) continue to be a concern. Staff have regular discussions with parents about children using WhatsApp on their parents' phone and the potential implications of allowing this. Mr Michael told the committee that he could recommend some technologies that the academy could sponsor and signpost to parents to help them keep their children safe online and went on to describe this further Qustodio is something that is available to help monitor and control the use of technology at home.</p> <p>Cat C trips for next year</p> <p>Mrs Cawkill told the committee that there are a number of Cat C trips that need to be agreed by the committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residential at PGL for year 6 – 2 nights 3 days at Kingswood at Dearne Valley • Bike-ability • Sleepover on the school field • Sleepover in school <p>All governors approved the Cat C trips subject to all relevant risk assessments being done.</p>	
AC/55/2425	<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"> - Questions around admissions and appeals - Challenge around attendance figures and what is being done to address attendance in particular persistent absences - Safeguarding and in particular an increase in mental health issues - Work presentation and handwriting - SEND and support for SEND pupils 	
AC/56/2425	<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 with all committee members involved in the discussions. 	
AC/57/2425	<p>Complete report to Trustees</p> <p>The report to trustees was completed and noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The report to Trustees was completed and submitted with input from all members of the committee. 	
AC/58/2425	<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 discussions. - There had been no Equalities Act implications. 	

	<p>Date and time of next meeting: Academy Committee meeting Wednesday 9th July 2025 at 5.15pm at Thrumpton.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 18:49</p>	

Signed by Chair  Date: 11/06/2025

Fiona Simpson, Vice Chair of Governors