

**Minutes of the Summer Term Local Academy Committee Meeting 5
held on Monday 19th May 2025 at 5.15pm in the library.**

Membership	Initial	Category	Absence
Ms J England	JE	Staff Governor	
Mr K Leckie	KL	Appointed Governor	
Miss K O'Hagan	KOH	Appointed Governor	
Mrs S Rhodes	SR	Parent Governor	
Mr G Roberts	GR	Appointed Governor	
Mr A Ward	AW	Parent Governor	A
Ms S Wilson	SW (Chair)	Appointed Governor	
<p>Quorum required: 4 Governors present: 7</p>			

In Attendance	Initial	Position	Absence
Mrs A Elway	AKE	Head of Governance	A
Mrs A Hewitt	AH	Governance Professional	
Mr T Jackson	TIJ	Vice Principal	
Mr T Reid	TER	Principal	
Mr D Vernon	DV	Executive Principal	

		Action
AC/54/2425	<p>Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Mrs Elway due to illness.</p> <p>No apologies were received from Mr Ward.</p>	
AC/55/2425	<p>Declaration of interest and any changes to declarations made There were no changes to declarations made.</p>	
AC/56/2425	<p>Minutes of the previous Academy Committee meeting held 17.03.25 The minutes of the previous Academy Committee meeting were received and approved as an accurate record.</p>	
AC/57/2425	<p>Matters arising from the previous meeting:</p> <p>AC/44/2425 Governance Report, page 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair to contact members regarding the H&S link vacancy (this item will be taken under AC/58/2425) Mr Roberts to feedback on Link Governor safeguarding briefing (27.02.25) at the next meeting in May (this item will be taken under AC/58/2425) 	

	<p>AC/45/2425 Educational Review Meeting (ERM) Report, page 26</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add 'MyAcademyApp Update' to the May and June LAC agendas (Actioned, see item AC/59/2425) <p>AC/46/2425 DfE Attendance Report for Secondary Schools, page 28</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Strategies to improving attendance' to be added to the agenda at the next meeting in May (Actioned – see item AC/59/2425) 	
AC/58/2425	<p>Governance Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local response following central training: Link Safeguarding (27.02.25) and Link Careers (05.05.25). Mr Roberts stated that the group had received a report from the Trust Standards & Outcomes committee regarding safeguarding and attendance. The filtering and monitoring system removes a lot of the 'noise' to enable DSLs to concentrate on the main safeguarding matters to be addressed. My Concern is now used across the Trust for reporting safeguarding issues. There is a heightened level of concern on the physical and verbal assaults on staff. 'Team Teach' is a commonly used method of positive behaviour support training across the Trust. It has been recommended that all academies review their lockdown procedures due to the national increase in knife crime. The Wiley Bisset Audit is checking the volume of safeguarding work in schools and noted the limited resources available from outside to support. There are increasing concerns over misogyny, sexualised language, racism and homophobia in schools, and this is a focus for the Department for Education. Attendance and safeguarding are intrinsically linked; poor attendance triggers a safeguarding concern. The recent internal audit ensured that academies were meeting their safeguarding demands, without impacting on the 'day to day' job of the member of staff. <u>The Chair commented</u> that although Mr Roberts is the link governor for safeguarding, we are all responsible for safeguarding during our visits to the academy <u>and asked</u> Mr Roberts if there is anything particular that we, as governors should be thinking about. Mr Roberts responded that in all governor visits we should be talking about the monitoring systems; systems shouldn't work in isolation, but altogether and most of this links to safeguarding. <u>The Chair asked</u> the Principal how this is considered to be working in the academy. The Principal responded that the academy has a very strong culture of safeguarding and often go above and beyond – but we do what we need to do to manage this ever-growing area. The academy has a strong pastoral team underpinning everything. The Chair reported that she was unable to attend the Careers link briefing on 05.05.25 so will catch up on the recording and report back at the next meeting in June. <p><i>Action:</i> Chair to report back on careers link briefing at the LAC on 30th June.</p>	Chair

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link governor vacancy update for Health & Safety: The Chair reported that an email request has gone out to governors regarding this vacancy but has not received a response as yet. The Chair reminded members that this is a statutory role that must be filled. The Principal added that the role is not too onerous due to the involvement of Mitie. <p>Post meeting Note: Miss O'Hagan will take on the link governor role for Health & Safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link governor visit reports: The Clerk confirmed that there were no link reports to receive at this meeting. • Review 2024/25 Governance action plan: The action plan was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting and the summer updates had been added. There were no comments from governors. • Clerk update on governance self-audit and skills questionnaire: The Clerk reminded governors that the Skills Audit had been circulated by email for completion by 13th June. The results from this will inform the governance action plan for 2025/26. The Clerk went on to explain that the Self-Evaluation document is completed by the Chair and Vice Chair and involves rating the LAC on effectiveness of roles and responsibilities. The results will be reviewed and confirmed by the LAC at the next meeting in June and the results will also help to inform the governance action plan for 2025/26. 	
AC/59/2425	<p>Principal's Report The Principal's report was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement The Pulse Survey Summary document was available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. <u>Governors asked</u> for some background information on how the survey was rolled out as this would be useful to get a better understanding of the outcomes. The Principal responded that the Trust rolls out a survey for staff to complete and there are different outcomes at different times of the year (as would be expected). The academy is now rolling out a weekly Pulse survey so it is more manageable, for example, this week the survey focussed on the exam warm up sessions. Rolling this out weekly enables Senior Leaders to get a continuous snapshot of what is going on in the academy and changes can be made according to feedback. The surveys are sent out every Tuesday and the Principal feeds back to staff every 4 weeks.</p> <p><u>Governors enquired</u> whether the survey is just for teaching staff and the Principal responded that it is for every member of staff. It is a useful tool to get a good idea of how everyone is feeling and make changes accordingly. The Principal gave examples of what feedback and improvements have been made regarding the day-to-day activities in school such as access to resources, reprographics issues, changes to the calendar for next year.</p>	

	<p>The Chair commented that the survey seemed to be a positive action taking place and could see from results that the scheduling of parents' evenings around exam periods was an issue.</p> <p>The Principal responded that the academy tries to strike the best balance possible to alleviate some of these issues around scheduling.</p> <p>Standards</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> why the decision had been made to reduce the number of GCSE option choices from 9 to 8. A discussion took place, and this has been minuted under the agenda item AC/60/2425 below.</p> <p>MyAcademyApp update: The Principal commented that some improvements had been made and there were more to come. The system was moving towards a more useable software. <u>Governors asked</u> if these improvements were visible to staff or staff were aware and the Principal responded that some have been seen by staff (such as with attendance) and he has personally seen the updates to recording/logging behaviour, which are promising. <u>Governors enquired</u> whether the staff have an understanding that these updates are developing and the Principal responded that he will not take anything to staff until it is nailed as more reassurance is needed. The Executive Principal added that many areas of the system continued to be developed such as instant data, visual graphics, filters, contact details. <u>The Chair commented</u> that these improvements sound positive and it would be good for staff to understand that these improvements are coming. The Principal stated that staff have been assured that it is being looked at but doesn't want to over promise – we want to get a bit further down the line. The Principal has seen a roll out which looks good. The Executive Principal added that the development team are working in partnership with the educational users and keeping the culture of each academy is important (without having multiple systems). Next half term should see key features of the previous system coming on-line and ELA can tweak to suit (which couldn't be done before). <u>The Chair stated</u> that it has been a painful year for the staff involved with this system and it is hoped that the Trust are reflecting on this process. <u>Governors felt that</u> a consultation should have taken place for such a large change to a MAT system. Governors will receive further updates at the next meeting.</p> <p>Strategies to improving attendance: The Principal suggested that Mr Berry (Assistant Principal – Designated Safeguarding Lead & Pastoral Support) attend the next meeting to present to governors around strategies used to improve attendance. Academies can put forward families for a fixed penalty notice (FPN) when attendance is low, but this is not then supported by the local authority, despite evidence submitted by the school. This is a difficult situation. Work is happening to improve where we are and we are moving in the right direction, however there are key areas that need addressing.</p> <p><i>Action:</i> Mr Berry to present to governors 'Strategies to improving attendance' at the next meeting in June.</p>	<p>CB</p>
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	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Governors made reference to the NSCP document that had been circulated prior to the meeting and asked if there was a timeline for the follow up actions to take place. The Principal responded that these have already been actioned.</p> <p>The safeguarding checklist had also been circulated prior to the meeting and there were no questions from governors.</p> <p><u>The Chair enquired</u> whether there was anything to add that was not in the Principals Report. The Principal stated that consultation with staff was taking place regarding changes to the Behaviour Policy and the academy would seek parent views after half term. An updated policy should be with governors for the next meeting in June.</p> <p>There were no further questions from governors regarding the report.</p>	
AC/60/2425	<p>Changes to Year 9 Options - discussion</p> <p>This discussion took place under item AC/59/2425 above and has been minuted here.</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> why the decision had been made to reduce the number of GCSEs from 9 to 8. The Principal responded that the biggest issue has always been the lack of time for non-core subjects. The staff team reviewed multiple timetable options and for a while it looked like a 2-week timetable could work and the staff were investigating how other schools had managed this. However, there are many flexible working staff at ELA and we embrace this. The next model that schools are moving to is the 9 to 8 GCSE's (this has reduced from 10 to 9 and now to 8 over the years). The staff team came to the decision that the best option was the 8-subject model, however, the option choices had gone out to year 9 already so it was initially discussed whether to hold off the change for another year. In the end, it was decided to make the change now to give the staff more time to work on the model. This will not narrow student time.</p> <p><u>Governors commented</u> that they recognise Universities (including Russel Group) look at the quality of the GCSE grades and not the quantity.</p> <p>The Principal admitted that, in hindsight, the communication to parents and governors should have been better. <u>Governors commented</u> that they were surprised this had not been through a Local Academy Committee meeting before today. The Principal explained that the staff team were committed to making the change now and that it was the right thing to do.</p> <p>Mr Jackson stated that for the past 2 years, students have been choosing their options early, with more open choices (November time rather than February) as this gives the academy time for planning. After researching, it was decided that the students should reap the benefits in 2027 rather than 2028. Option subjects will get an additional 30 hours.</p>	

	<p><u>Governors enquired</u> whether this decision was in line with what is happening in other academies in the Trust and the Principal responded that already around five schools have changed to 8 over 9. <u>Governors asked</u> whether there had been an influence from the Trust Executive to change at ELA and the Principal responded that there had not. The Executive Principal noted that a lot of time had been spent researching the management of staff around the differing options. Driving option blocks around part-time staff was not feasible (this would result in split lessons and timetabling problems).</p> <p>The Principal stated that the parent emails that had been sent in (to him and governors) were mainly from parents of higher attaining students who were concerning about impacts on A-levels and university options, and reassured parents that there would be no impact for those young people. The Principal noted comments from parents that the academy were making this change for cost saving purposes and found this frustrating as this had not been part of any discussions. The Principal added that the most cost-effective model is to follow the EBacc model, with one free choice, which has led education policy for the last 15 years. At ELA we recognise that the arts and business are our strongest areas.</p> <p><u>Governors queried</u> how the change had been communicated to students and parents/carers. The Principal responded that student assemblies had taken place and a letter had been sent out to parents via Weduc. Mr Jackson commented that some changes had been made to option choices but this was normal and usually happened each year.</p> <p><u>Governors asked</u> if time allocated to Option subjects are the main concern, why are some Core subjects also benefiting from additional time. The Principal responded that the time allocation means some small changes for Core subjects based on the guided learning hours. The areas to benefit the most are the Option subjects which will have more hours allocated each week.</p> <p>The Executive Principal stated that Mr Jackson had completed a large piece of work on the curriculum that is currently in place (and had been since 2020) and examined whether it was still working. It was this that drove the changes.</p> <p><u>The Chair explained</u> that the parent emails received were not happy about the communication sent by the school. <u>The Chair added</u> that when this change was explained to her, it was the first time heard that some curriculum areas were struggling to complete content and needed more time and queried why governors had not been made aware of this before. The Principal explained that it is up to the Senior Leaders to bring identified areas to the LAC and we have talked about the curriculum model over time. However, it could have been picked up at the January 2025 meeting initially.</p>	
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	<p>After discussions drilled down, it became apparent that splitting groups would be very hard to manage with staffing; students need consistency and many struggle when they don't have this.</p> <p>Mr Jackson confirmed that the academy has considered the current guidance for the published guided learning hours across all key stages. <u>The Chair noted</u> that the parent group who had been in touch with the academy and governors had seriously questioned the rationale for change, fearing their child will miss out on opportunities in the future. The timing of communication also caused disruption to parents. The Principal responded that he completely understood why parents would be concerned about the timing of the change and the communication that was circulated. <u>Mrs Rhodes, Parent Governor, added</u> that the context of the letter that went out did go into depth regarding reasons and explanations for the change but did hear of worries amongst parents about what this would mean for their child. The Principal stated that he received 10 emails for parents/carers altogether and some of these were due to worries of the student themselves. <u>Miss England, Staff Governor, added</u> that she had spoken with some of those worried students who now felt reassured. <u>Governors noted</u> that there will be a pushback but a two-week timetable would be far worse. The Principal stated that in year 11 languages this year, 10 hours of lesson time had been lost due to Bank Holidays and school closure days and there had been real concern for teacher to get through the course content.</p> <p><u>Governors enquired</u> whether there were any staffing gaps for next year. Mr Jackson responded that all groups have a specialist teacher in front of them next year. The academy are currently interviewing for 3 positions.</p> <p>There were no further questions from governors.</p>	
AC/61/2425	<p>Policies</p> <p>The following Trust policies have been approved and summaries available on SharePoint prior to the meeting. There were no comments from governors.</p> <p>Finance and Resources Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenses and benefits • Charging and remissions <p>Standards and Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting students with medical conditions • Behaviour policy <p>Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levels of Authority • Governor allowances 	
AC/62/2425	<p>How has the Academy Committee held the Senior Leaders to account?</p> <p>Governors and staff held lengthy discussions around the change to year 9 options and My Academy App.</p>	

AC/63/2425	How have the vision, mission and values of the Trust been upheld? The governors agreed that these had been upheld, in particularly the discussion around staff Pulse Surveys with follow up by senior leaders and feedback to staff.	
AC/64/2425	Complete the report to Trustees The report will be completed online by the Clerk following the meeting and include items such as exam warmups, behaviour in exams, Barcelona trip and year 9 options. There are no items to be forwarded to the Trust Board.	
AC/65/2425	Determination of confidentiality of business and Equality Act consideration No items were deemed confidential. The Equality Act was considered throughout the meeting.	
AC/66/2425	Date and time of next Academy Committee meeting The next meeting will be held on Monday 30 th June 2025 at 5.15pm in the library. The Executive Principal shared the agenda and details for the governor's conference in June and encouraged as many to attend if possible.	
	The meeting closed at 18.36.	

Signed: *Sharon Wilson* (approved by Chair for circulation)

Date: 17.06.25

Signed: *Tom Reid* (approved by Principal for circulation)

Date: 09.06.25

Approved by LAC: 30.06.25