



**Minutes of the Board of Trustees' meeting
Thursday 6 November 2025
Held at Hills Road Sixth Form College**

Present:

Jane Sterling (Chair)
Adrian Clark
Paula Heaney
Anthony Omo
Carrie Anne Philbin
Kevin Taylor
Jo Trump (CEO/Principal)
Richard Westcott

In attendance:

Rachel Hooper (Chief Operating Officer)
Tim Lomas (Vice Principal Student Progression and Support)
Ian Pryer (Deputy Principal)
Stuart Tinsley (Chief Financial Officer)
Linda Watkins (Governance Professional)
Katie Paton (Staff Observer)
Matthew Smalley (Staff Observer)
Alisiah Crawford (Student Observer)
Jasmine Tsai (Student Observer)
Kerry Caldicott (Data Analyst) left after item 5

1. Apologies for absence and formal welcome to student and staff observers

Apologies were received from Bruno Cotta and Jonathan Russell. The Chair welcomed everyone, particularly the staff and student observers and Stuart Tinsley. Ali Kirkman, (Vice Principal Staff and Student Learning) was representing the college at a recital. The Chair reminded the Board that this was Saira Hanif's last meeting following 3 years in post, initially as a Vice Principal before being appointed as the CFO. The Chair thanked Saira for her hard work and support and wished her well for the future. This was reiterated by all.

2. Declarations of interests

There were no new declarations of interests.

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Board agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2025 which were duly signed by the Chair.

Matters arising were noted including that Anthony Omo had been duly elected as Vice Chair and that Trustees are 100% compliant with safeguarding requirements for Trustees in accordance with KCSIE 2025.

A Trustee enquired whether there were any updates following the re-marking of certain subject exam papers. It was confirmed that there was an improvement up to 10 marks on some papers;

Action

despite this, a minimal impact is expected on the value-added score. There is a greater impact on subjects with small group sizes, such as Latin, where several students had grade changes.

A Trustee asked about the comparative national performance spread for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and whether any actions had been taken. The college explained that, all students are entered for the EPQ and this year's outcomes were the College's best ever performance in more than a decade of the qualification. Any comparison against national performance are therefore difficult to make as the comparison is not an equal one given there is full student participation in the EPQ at Hills Road.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair updated Trustees that LK Governance Services have been appointed as the Governance Professional bringing extensive governance experience. The vacancy for a new CEO/Principal is being advertised nationally and applications will be received until the closing date of 24th November 2025.

5. Strategic plan measuring tool

Kerry Caldicott (data analyst) presented the portal she had designed with the COO to measure progress against the strategic plan. By way of reminder, the strategic plan is structured around four pillars: People, Place, Planet and Progress. The tool has been developed in collaboration with the COO, outlining underlying measures for implementation. Staff are responsible for the measures, which are RAG-rated and include additional weightings agreed by CST. The model is designed to foster engagement and collective ownership of the strategic plan by staff and to provide transparency of information sharing for Trustees

Trustees were invited to ask questions with discussion.

Clarification of the relationship between the tool and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was requested. The QIP will be aligned with the toolkit to ensure timely and appropriate actions. Once the toolkit has been embedded the QIP will become more concise and focused on actions. The QIP will continue to be updated termly.

Qualitative measures will only be RAG-rated green when they have been fully achieved; however, some actions are time-driven such as student surveys which might mean that colours 're-set annually

There was discussion about how Trustees would engage with the tool with options mooted, concluding that specific areas could be reviewed at specific Board meetings through the year. The suggestion was that the summary scorecard headlines could be issued for meetings as a pdf document. The tool is in its infancy which will feature live updates available to Trustees in the future.

Moderation of weightings and underlying operational actions will not be visible within the tool; these will be managed separately by the CST which will fluctuate. By way of explanation, each area includes scoring boundaries which are weighted based on CST moderation.

A question followed about the justification of RAG ratings. CST moderated scores are shown as red if at least 50% has not been achieved, amber denotes material delivery, and green completion and closure of objectives. RAG ratings are broadly mapped across the expected lifespan of each Measure within the strategic plan; approximately 25% of Measures are expected to be completed per year.

In summary:

- The scorecard was praised for its transparency and centralisation to review progress of the strategic plan.
- Target dates were suggested; however, the RAG rating would give a degree of oversight. An additional column "Where Expected" was suggested to indicate progress against expectations with changes from previous reports which could be indicated with directional arrows.
- A PDF document of the scorecard will be provided once per term at trust meetings. The live tool could be available in the future to assist in deep dives into specific themes.
- The Chair thanked Kerry Caldicott for her contribution acknowledging the tool is impressive.
- Staff observers would be invited to provide feedback on the tool's implementation and impact.

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6. CEO's Report

The CEO presented her report for discussion drawing Directors' attention to key points. National negotiations on teachers' pay resulted in a ballot with a 4% increase accepted and further negotiations regarding workload. Support staff pay was already agreed at 4% and would be included in the November payroll.

There was discussion about student mental health and wellbeing and the effectiveness of the Artemis app to raise awareness and signpost students to appropriate resources. Tutors are also notified of students flagged as red or amber to ensure timely support. Student Observers commented that Artemis is user-friendly and non-intrusive. In response to a query regarding support for students with mental health needs, it was confirmed that wellbeing and counselling services are available. The student support team review attendance and cases with regular contact responding to students in crisis.

A Trustee emphasised the importance of communicating the support offer to current and prospective parents and students. Weekly student emails, and a video briefing is now sent home to

parents routinely to increase visibility of the information and support that students receive. The Mental Health Student Council rep also provides additional communications through student platforms.

The admissions report showed that the offer to enrolment rate has decreased compared to last year equating to an acceptance of 68.5% of places offered. Last year 72% of offers converted to enrolments. Some students had deferred acceptances based on grades and had enrolled on alternative subjects as a safety net. Market research will be commissioned to analyse underlying causes for the decline in acceptances.

Local Government reorganisation with Cambridgeshire councils anticipated for implementation in September 2028 may affect the college's admissions policy, access, travel arrangements, and the funding model. The Government has pledged £500m investment for Oxford and Cambridge development to support growth with £15m investment for Cambridge University innovation projects. This could potentially benefit students and create additional opportunities for EPQs, and industry collaboration.

7. **Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024-25**

The Deputy Principal invited questions from the impact summary. A Trustee referred to target 2: 'Quality of Education' querying if the green RAG rating should be amended as, although some subjects showed substantial improvement, progress of a minority was below expectation. The rating would be revised to amber in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR), with more specific wording to reflect improvements in practice and outcomes.

IPRY

Discussions have taken place with departments, including course leaders as part of their annual DDP conversations, which were positively received. Link Trustees were encouraged to initiate contact when DDP reports are issued.

The Board agreed:

- To note the impact summary and QIP 2024/25

8. **Equality and diversity equality report including 4-year objectives and progress report**

The Vice Principal Student Progression and Support referred to the narrowing of the attainment gap for SEND and for FSM students who had achieved positive results. There are concerns regarding Asian, BAME and lower-income households, where results were less positive. It was confirmed that measures have been implemented to address the disparities. A Trustee enquired if this performance related to the same students, or if they were distinct and different students. This would be verified and reported back to the Board. There has been an increase in students who have declared that they have specific learning needs and diagnoses.

TL0M

These may not necessarily be cases formally diagnosed; however, access to diagnosis has increased figures with some parents privately funding assessments.

The Board agreed:

- To approve the report and 4-year objectives.

9. Governance report

- I. The Articles of Association is the Trust's legal document outlining the Trust's purpose and defining the roles and responsibilities of Trustees and Members. The Members had approved the Articles which the Board were requested to formally adopt.
- II. Trustees were referred to the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) 2025 and the completed schedule of 'musts' which evidenced the Trust's compliance to the majority of requirements. There was discussion about the Articles of Association verses compliance to the ATH noting that the latter is updated annually. Compliance to the documents is paramount which can affect the conditions in the Trust's Funding Agreement.
- III. The Academies Trust Governance Code was developed specifically for academies incorporating best practice from the Charity Governance Code and Department for Education. Adopting a code is voluntary but would evidence compliance and signal commitment to transparent and accountable governance with continuous improvement. Compliance with the code would be reported annually in the Members' report.
- IV. Audit Finance and Risk Committee terms of reference were presented for approval; these will be reviewed further soon and incorporated in the governance procedures, byelaws and scheme of delegation.
- V. The Trust's cycle of business is a live calendar outlining timescales for governance activities. Its purpose to ensure responsibilities are managed in the academic year aligned with statutory requirements and the strategic plan.
- VI. Nominations were invited from parents for two Parent Trustee vacancies. Specific experience of finance, audit, law, sustainability and estates were requested. There was high interest with applications shortlisted based on the skills criteria, followed by an election. Some applicants may be approached to consider joining the Board as Trustees; this would be overseen by the Members of the Trust.
- VII. Terms in office for Trustees were noted; Trustees were encouraged to notify the Chair or Governance Professional of their intentions in order to assist with succession planning.
- VIII. There are two safeguarding designated Trustees with a recommendation to appoint a digital standards and technology Trustee based on the DfE requirement for Trusts to be compliant to the Digital Standards by 2030.
- IX. The Board were invited to consider options to appoint a Company Secretary agreeing that this role fitted with the

Governance Professional and would ensure distance from the senior team to avoid potential conflicts.

- X. The DfE has commissioned a financial management and governance audit in December 2025, which is common for a new Trust. Preparation has commenced.

The Board agreed:

- To formally adopt the Articles of Association.
- To note compliance to the 'must' schedule in the ATH.
- To adopt the Academies Trust Governance Code.
- To approve the Audit Finance and Risk Committee's terms of reference.
- To approve the cycle of business.
- To note progress to appoint Parent Trustees.
- To note terms in office and advise the Chair or Governance Professional of future intentions.
- To appoint Carrie Anne Philbin as the digital standards and technology Trustee.
- To appoint LK Governance Services LLP as Company Secretary.
- To note DfE has commissioned a financial management and governance audit in December 2025.

10. Any other business

- I. A paper was provided along with applicable policies, requesting the Board to authorise the Trust to register with the Fundraising Regulator. The Board agreed Hills Education Trust should progress its registration with the Fundraising Regulator.
- II. A Trustee proposed a document repository for Trustees; this would be progressed using Governorhub.
- III. The Chair reported that several Trust policies are being reviewed which will require the Board's approval.

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11. Date of Next Meeting

AGM: **Wednesday 4 February 2026 commencing at 5.30pm** before the Trustee's meeting which would allow opportunity for Trustees and Members to engage.

Trust Board: **Wednesday 10 December 2025** commencing at 6.30pm

Future Trust Board meetings: Wednesday 25 March 2026

Wednesday 13 May 2026

Wednesday 1 July 2026

All at 6.30pm.

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Signed as a true and accurate record:

Chair Date