**Lotus Academy Council**
**Friday 21 November 2025 at 13:00**
**Via MS Teams**

| **Those Present:** | **Role** | **Initials** |
|---|---|---|
| Lisa Suter | Chair | LS |
| Chris Evans | Headteacher | CE |
| Steve Hall | Deputy Headteacher | SH |
| Holly Whitehead | Head for Quality of Education | HW |
| Leanne Ashton | Non-Teaching Staff Governor | LA |
| Chelsie Eccles | Teaching Staff Governor | CE |
| Aaron King | Community Governor | AK |
| Sarah Mulhall | Governor | SM |
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| **Apologies:** | | |
| None | | |

| 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE | Actions |
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| 1.1. To receive apologies for absence<br><br>None. | |
| 1.2. To accept apologies for absence<br><br>None. | |
| 1.3. Confirmation of Vice Chair<br><br>SM offered to be interim chair should be needed.<br><br>Vice chair to be discussed at the next AC meeting. | |
| **2. OUTSTANDING ACHEIVEMENT AWARD – BEST WE CAN BE** | |
| 2.1. Presentation to staff nominee(s)<br><br>LS announced the presentation of the **"Best We Can Be" Award** to Holly and Steve in recognition of their exceptional commitment and leadership during the absence of a headteacher. Both were commended for ensuring stability and continuity in challenging circumstances, with appreciation extended to the wider staff team for their resilience and collaborative spirit. | |
| **3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS** | |
| 3.1 Chair to determine any items of urgent business to be considered.<br><br>None. | |
| 3.2. Confirmation of Resignation – June Williams (Chair)<br><br>JW resignation was discussed and agreed. | |
| 3.3. Confirmation of new Community Governor – Aaron King<br><br>It was agreed unanimously for AK to be appointed as the new Community Governor.<br><br>AK provided a detailed introduction, outlining his extensive experience in education, outreach, and special educational needs, as well as his commitment to supporting the school community.<br><br>HW joined the meeting during this discussion and introduced herself as Deputy Head for Quality Education. | |
| **4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS** | |
| 4.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda.<br><br>None. | |
| **5. LOTUS ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNANCE MINUTES** | |
| 5.1. To approve the minutes of the following meetings: | |

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| The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2025 were approved as a true record with no amendments.<br><br>5.2. Review of Action Tracker<br><br>The outstanding actions on the action tracker were reviewed and updated. | |
| 5.3. Matters arising from the Minutes<br><br>None. | |
| **6. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED** | |
| 6.1 Headteacher Report<br><br>LS explained that the Headteacher's report was unavailable; updates were provided by senior leaders.<br><br><u>Quality of Education</u><br><br>HW (Deputy Head) outlined priorities:<br><br>• Reintroduction of the Quality Assurance Strategy (lesson monitoring, learning walks, subject reviews starting with English, Maths, Reading).<br>• Weekly personalised feedback for teachers via SLT links.<br>• Half-term review cycle to identify development needs.<br>• Differentiated support for diverse teaching experience.<br><br>Council commended clarity and ambition; monitoring and support will continue this term.<br><br>SH added:<br><br>• Focus on consistent lesson delivery and subject leadership development.<br>• TA training led by Becky Allard.<br>• Positive staff response to renewed expectations.<br><br><u>Behaviour and Attitudes</u><br><br>SH reported:<br><br>• Improved behaviour management: suspension figures projected to fall.<br>• Graduated response system for hate-related behaviours reducing exclusions.<br>• External partnerships (police involvement) for safeguarding and education.<br><br>LS emphasised importance of external support (Police and Crime Commissioner engagement).<br><br>LA raised concerns about staff perceptions of suspension decisions; council reaffirmed commitment to education over exclusion. | |

LS discussed the importance of external support, including engagement with the Police.

Leadership and Strategic Support

LS highlighted:

- Stabilising leadership; Chris to join as Headteacher in January.
- Targeted support in HR, behaviour strategy, business oversight and leadership development.
- Staff wellbeing remains a priority.

SH noted cultural shift regarding hate language; incidents decreased significantly. Data: 24 pupils (22% of population) account for most incidents; targeted interventions planned.

Staff Safety and Well-being

AC requested clarification on support mechanisms for staff following serious incidents. SH confirmed:

- Immediate follow-up and reintegration discussions.
- Cover arrangements for affected staff.
- Strengthened consultation to capture staff voice.

Additional Points

- Recruitment strong; positive, solution-focused culture evident.
- Recognition of staff commitment emphasised.
- Monitoring of RPIs agreed; comparative 24-month data to be included in next report.
- LS provided reflective overview: school environment calm and respectful; staff dedication commended.

**ACTION: SH Include RPI comparative data in next meeting report**

**ACTION: SH 13/03/26**

Budget and Financial Governance

- Budget constraints acknowledged; each area operates within defined allocation.
- Discretionary spending limited; trust working to identify efficiencies.
- Environmental improvements prioritised within available resources.
- Procurement process requires clearer detail in orders to avoid delays.
- Heating issues raised as priority for resolution.
- Sports Premium and Pupil Premium plans must be finalised and published to meet compliance deadlines.
- Chelsea to ensure sports-related purchases link explicitly to Sports Premium plan with detailed rationale.

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| • Governors informed of robust systems to monitor spending and prevent overspend.<br><br><u>School Improvement Plan (SIP) and SEF</u><br><br>• SIP streamlined to focus on high-impact priorities; full staff communication planned.<br>• Chris will lead update using Perspective model to align with Ofsted requirements.<br>• SEF to be reviewed as baseline upon Chris's arrival.<br><br><u>Appraisals</u><br><br>• Structured appraisal process implemented for all staff.<br>• HW and SH leading initial reviews before Christmas.<br>• Support staff will have one focused target linked to teaching and learning and behaviour.<br>• Pay progression will not disadvantage staff due to previous gaps in appraisal; HR overseeing consistency.<br><br>**ACTION: CE to confirm completion of all appraisals have been completed.**<br><br><u>Staffing and Recruitment</u><br><br>• Agency costs offset by vacancies, increased use of Nexus Bank for supply staff.<br>• Recruitment for SEMH-specialist staff ongoing.<br>• TA training programs aim to standardise practice across varying experience levels. | **ACTION: CE 13/03/26** |
| 6.1.1 Appendix 1 – Updated SIP<br><br>As discussed under 6.1. | |
| 6.1.2 Appendix 2 – School SEF<br><br>As discussed under 6.1. | |
| 6.2. Draft School Dashboard Summary<br><br>Document shared for information. | |
| 6.3. Budget Report<br><br>Document shared for information. | |
| 6.4. Teaching Staff Appraisal Outcome Report | |

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| LS discussed pay structures for teaching assistants, noting variations across Local Authorities which determine pay scales rather than the Trust. This results in differences between schools within the Trust despite equivalent roles.<br><br>• Members acknowledged national recruitment challenges, particularly in securing experienced and qualified staff.<br>• The Trust aims to position itself as an employer of choice by:<br>  • Offering clear progression pathways.<br>  • Providing opportunities for teaching assistants to train as teachers.<br>• This initiative is designed to improve retention and attract high-quality candidates**.**<br>• AC commended the introduction of Becky Allard's comprehensive TA training program**,** which will:<br>  • Ensure consistency in standards.<br><br>Support staff in delivering high-quality classroom practice. | |
| **7. TRUST MATTER** | |
| 7.1. Trust verbal update of key issues<br><br>LS provided an update on the proposed merger between Nexus and Ebor Trust. Consultation is ongoing, and the merger is expected to create a mutually beneficial partnership, combining Nexus's expertise in special education with Ebor's mainstream provision. It was confirmed that the merger will not impact the autonomy of individual schools, including Lotus Academy. | |
| **8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS** | |
| 8.1. To consider any other urgent business<br><br>None. | |
| **9. CONFIDENTIALITY** | |
| 9.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting<br><br>None.<br><br>LS thanked all members for their contributions, noting the richness of discussion and the value of challenge in driving improvement. | |
| **10. DATES OF NEXT MEETING** | |

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| Friday 13 March 2026 | 13:00 – 14:30 | MS Teams |
| Friday 26 June 2026 | 13:00 – 14:30 | MS Teams |

**Minutes approved**

| CHAIR | SIGNATURE | DATE |
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