



Lotus Academy Council
Friday 11 July 2025 at 13:00
Via MS Teams

Those Present:	Role	Initials
Leanne Ashton	Non-Teaching Staff Governor	LA
Chelsie Eccles	Teaching Staff Governor	CE
Viki Drew	Executive Headteacher	VD
Sarah Mulhall	Governor	SM
Sacha Schofield	Executive Regional Director/Officer	SSc
June Williams	Chair	JW
Also Present:		
Rebecca Horne	Governance Clerk	RH
Apologies:		
None		

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Actions
1.1. To receive apologies for absence None.	
1.2. To accept apologies for absence None.	
2. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS	
2.1 Chair to determine any items of urgent business to be considered. None.	
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS	
3.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda. None.	

3.2 Confirmation of new Teaching Staff Governor – Leanne Ashton The Academy Council unanimously approved the confirmation of new Teaching Staff Governor, LA. 3.3 Confirmation of new Teaching Staff Governor – Chelsie Eccles The Academy Council unanimously approved the confirmation of new Teaching Staff Governor, CE.	
4. LOTUS ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNANCE MINUTES	
4.1. To approve the minutes of the following meetings: First Meeting	
5. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED	
5.1 Headteacher Report VD highlighted that she had been in post since 1st June. She noted that the Headteacher's Report had been compiled collaboratively by several members of the school's leadership team. The report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting, allowing them time to review it. Members were offered either a brief overview of key items or the opportunity to raise questions on any aspect of the report. JW emphasised the importance of members reading the report in advance of meetings, noting that any questions raised will be discussed during the session. <u>Leadership & Management</u> VD explained she has now taken on the role of Executive Headteacher from the 01 June 2025, across Bader Academy and Lotus Academy. Recruitment has been reviewed, and the teaching team is expected to remain stable for the next academic year. Additionally, a new Early Career Teacher (ECT) will be joining the school. A review of current roles and responsibilities has been undertaken and an internal advertisement was issued inviting one of the Assistant Headteachers to apply for the role of Second Deputy Headteacher, in order to replicate the leadership structure across both schools. The current Assistant Headteacher was successful at interview and will be promoted to Deputy Headteacher. The start date for this role was brought forward to 1st July to allow sufficient time to complete the work required. A further review is also being undertaken regarding the wider distribution of roles and responsibilities across the Assistant Headteachers, the Pastoral Team, and the new and developing Intervention/Care Team. VD highlighted that the School Performance Dashboard was also included in the report. This dashboard assesses a range of areas, with ratings spanning from "inadequate" in some aspects to "good but insecure" in others. In response, the school is urgently implementing an online assessment system called <i>Earwig</i>. Baseline assessments in	

English, Maths, and Science were conducted this week to ensure that there is a clear starting point for all pupils as they move into the new academic year.

VD reported that there has been significant instability and change within the leadership of Lotus. As a result, it is important to secure staff engagement and ensure their 'buy-in'. VD is actively working to support this by maintaining a visible presence across the school.

SM asked, appreciating that you have only been in post for five weeks, what has the reception from staff been like?

VD responded that staff have been very receptive, supportive and welcoming.

SM explained that is really encouraging to hear.

VD reported that the school is working with the Local Authority (LA) to secure sufficient funding. The school currently has several pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. Connections have been established with the exclusions team to develop tailored support packages for these students.

Significant work and capital expenditure have been undertaken to ensure the school complies with fire regulations. This includes installing fob-controlled doors for entry and push release mechanisms for exits in key areas. Additionally, considerable planning and investment have gone into the installation of CCTV cameras in classrooms and corridors. This project is ongoing and is supported by the Trust alongside external providers.

SSc added that Sheffield LA is currently in a transitional period. Referring to the recent Sheffield Council Ofsted report, SSc explained there are significant systemic failings in SEND across the city. While meetings are being arranged as part of the ongoing restructure, this process presents challenges for all Sheffield schools. SSc highlighted that VD has done an exceptional job in bringing the relevant people together, which has been a notable achievement given the difficulties involved.

SM asked, what support are you receiving for your wellbeing?

VD responded that she is receiving very good support from the Executive Regional Directors and also has peer support from fellow Headteachers within the Trust.

SM asked, from your own perspective on leadership and management, have you identified three potential successors within your first five weeks? If so, could you pinpoint who they are?

VD responded that her key leadership successes within the first five weeks include: securing a leadership team with greater capacity through the appointment of two Deputy Headteachers; building strong relationships with key individuals within the Local Authority; and setting a balanced budget for the next academic year. She also shared that the Stocksbridge Hub is due to open in September, with two successful transition visits already completed. Two teachers have been secured for the hub, and everything is progressing well.

SM stated that this was excellent progress and emphasised the importance of celebrating these successes and taking time to reflect on them. SM acknowledged that,

in a short space of time, VD has made significant strides while managing two schools, and this has been recognised and appreciated by the members.

Quality of Education

SM explained that she found the *Quality of Education* section particularly useful and appreciated how it was broken down into clear sections. She specifically highlighted the phonics learning walks and the identified areas for development. It was noted that there are gaps in subject knowledge among the teachers in phonics. SM asked what actions have been taken to address this issue.

VD explained that one of the key plans is to address phonics development through the Support and Challenge Board, which will help streamline the school improvement planning process. A health check had been scheduled recently but has now been re-arranged. However, as part of this process, a Trust-level meeting on school improvement and its future direction has already taken place. Looking ahead to the next academic year, targeted support will be put in place to strengthen phonics teaching and improve subject knowledge among staff.

SM asked, how are the strengths feedback to the teachers? What is teacher morale like lately?

CE explained that teacher morale is generally okay, though there is a sense of uncertainty among staff regarding the longer-term direction of the school. Feedback is being received from learning walks and staff remain focused on the transition period and preparations for the next academic year.

VD added that securing the teaching team has been a significant achievement, especially given the high number of supply staff and ongoing uncertainties, which have understandably affected staff morale. To help address this, VD has recently held one-to-one meetings with the Assistant Headteachers to explore ways to strengthen communication and improve how key information is shared with staff.

VD also noted that there is currently a lack of clear systems and processes in place, which makes it difficult to effectively share information, such as outcomes from learning walks and lesson observations. To address this, a consistent system has been introduced across both schools to support tracking and to provide structured feedback to teachers.

Attendance Data

JW highlighted that the current attendance data is concerning and requires additional focus. She requested clarification on the percentage of pupils classified as persistent absentees.

VD explained that the attendance figures were initially provided by another member of staff who is currently off sick. She noted that the graduated response and attendance policy from Bader School is being adopted at Lotus. Staff responsible for attendance at Bader will meet with the attendance officers at Lotus before the end of the academic year to review cases and determine which families need to receive attendance letters.

SSc added that Joanne Cliffe from Nexus MAT has completed an attendance report in collaboration with a member of staff from Lotus. Joanne has identified a number of actions that need to be addressed.

SM asked, what audits have been conducted across all areas to help you, as Headteacher, identify the most significant priorities?

VD explained that the members already have a clear overview of what LC, the Interim Executive Headteacher, has achieved regarding school improvement planning, including the identified priorities and the rationale behind them. VD is using this as a scaffold, supported by a team of individuals who are well acquainted with the school. Additionally, the Trust has completed the School Performance Dashboard and conducted audits to further inform the improvement process.

VD added that what is needed is an exciting and engaging curriculum. She provided a detailed analysis of the specific improvements required within the school to achieve this.

SM sought clarity on significant priorities and the curriculum offer?

VD explained that children in the classroom deserve the best possible curriculum and currently, the curriculum does not meet that standard.

5.1.1 Appendix 1 – Updated SIP

VD explained that the School Improvement Plan (SIP) is likely to be re-written.

5.1.2 Appendix 2 – School SEF

This was circulated for information.

5.2 Draft School Dashboard Summary

This was circulated for information.

5.3 Budget Report

VD explained that the school is currently operating with a budget deficit. Ongoing work is taking place with the finance team to plan the budget for the next academic year.

5.4 Next Year's Budget and Staffing Structure

This was circulated for information.

6. TRUST MATTERS

6.1. Trust verbal update of key issues

SSc informed the members that a Trust-wide letter was sent out regarding a consultation on a potential merger with Ebor Trust, proposed to take effect from September 2026. EB emphasised that there will be no changes to how the Trust currently operates. The

merger is intended to enable greater collaboration and the ability to utilise expertise across both Trusts to benefit all schools involved. JW queried the letter that was sent out explaining the merger, stating that she has not received a copy. Action – Clerk to ask Adam Cloney, Corporate Governance Manager if this was sent. SSc explained the Trust is growing, noting the addition of three new schools: Bents Green, Seven Hills and HHELC, a Nottingham Hospital School, starting in September 2025. 6.2 Register of Interests – Annual Review Instructions on how to complete the Register of Interests on Governor Hub was circulated to members prior to the meeting. This should be completed as soon as possible. Action – All members to complete Register of Interests on Governor Hub.	Action: Clerking Services 11/07/25 Action: All Members 18/07/25
7. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS	
7.1. To consider any other urgent business JW queried the parent contribution and trying to get parent governors. VD explained register of interests will be sent out in due course. Action - JW to send out register of interests in relation to Parent Governors. JW added that, regarding Community Governors, she will contact Adam Cloney, Corporate Governance Manager, to see if he has any suggestions for potential candidates. Action – JW to contact Adam Cloney in relation to Community Governors.	Action: JW 21/11/25 Action: JW 21/11/25
8. CONFIDENTIALITY	
8.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting None raised.	
9. DATES OF NEXT MEETING	

Friday 21 November 2025	13:00 – 14:30	MS Teams
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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June Williams		
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