



**Heatherwood Academy Council Meeting  
Thursday 12 March 2026 at 14:00  
at Heatherwood School**

| <b>Those Present:</b> | <b>Role:</b>                                | <b>Initials:</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Liz Nowell            | Chair                                       | LN               |
| Amy Brownsend         | Community Governor                          | AB               |
| Kath Coates           | Staff (Support) Governor                    | KC               |
| Suzanne Fulwood       | Staff (Teaching) Governor                   | SF               |
| Cy Goucher            | Parent Governor                             | CG               |
| Sam Macdonald         | Executive Headteacher                       | SM               |
| <b>Also Present:</b>  |                                             |                  |
|                       |                                             |                  |
| <b>Apologies:</b>     |                                             |                  |
| Lisa Suter            | Nexus MAT Executive Regional Director/Chair | LS               |

| <b>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Actions</b> |
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| 1.1. To receive apologies for absence<br><br>Apologies were received from LS.                                                                                                                                                                                 |                |
| 5.1. To accept apologies for absence<br><br>Apologies were accepted from LS.                                                                                                                                                                                  |                |
| <b>2. OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                |
| 2.1. Presentation to staff nominee<br><br>Sam presented the new staff led nomination system for the 'Best We Can Be' awards, which replaces previous leadership led approaches. Staff submit nominations through an anonymous Microsoft Form used Trust wide. |                |

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| Members of staff each received two nominations, highlighting their positive contributions and colleagues' appreciation. A small recognition treat will be awarded to recipients.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                    |
| The Council noted the value of peer recognition in promoting positive staff culture and morale.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                    |
| <b>3. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                    |
| 3.1. Chair to determine any items of urgent business to be considered<br><br>LN was ratified as new governor and Chair of Academy Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                    |
| <b>4. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                    |
| 4.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda<br><br>None declared.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                    |
| <b>5. HEATHERWOOD SCHOOL LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MINUTES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                    |
| 5.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting<br><br>The minutes of the meeting held on 04 December 2025 were approved as a true record.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                    |
| 5.2. Review of Action Tracker<br><br>All outstanding actions on the tracker were reviewed and updated.<br><br><b>Action: SM will verify whether formal thanks were issued to former staff (Gary, Mel and Mark). Confirmation is required from the Trust.</b><br><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informal governor sessions have not yet taken place. SM proposed integrating opportunities for classroom visits, curriculum presentations and learning walks into future council meetings to strengthen governor insight.</li> <li>• Staff wellbeing survey reviewed. Strong staff voice regarding the need for staff room refurbishment. Funding secured; improvements to include repainting, new flooring and updated furniture.</li> <li>• Governor training discussed. Some modules issued by the Trust are lengthy or teacher focused. Possibility of delivering safeguarding/pupil premium training during council meetings to reduce barriers for governors.</li> </ul> | <b>Action:<br/>SM<br/>25/06/26</b> |
| 5.3. Matters arising from the Minutes<br><br>None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                    |
| <b>6. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                    |

## 6.1 Headteacher Report

A comprehensive written report was presented. Key sections summarised below:

- Pupil roll stands at 98, increasing to 99 next week with a new starter. One recent pupil bereavement noted. One student has moved to an EOTAS package but continues to attend one day per week for continuity and safeguarding.
- Increase in demand from local authorities (Doncaster, Rotherham, Barnsley) due to shortages or unsuitability of specialist provision elsewhere.

### Inclusion

- Inclusion remains a significant strength, supported by on site NHS physiotherapy, occupational therapy, specialist assistants and nursing staff.
- Plans underway for enhanced postural management training to ensure therapeutic approaches are embedded daily rather than being add on interventions.
- Discussion held around staffing models for sensory and communication interventions, with consideration given to specialist external staffing to avoid draining classroom ratios.

### Teaching and Learning

- Core curriculum pathways continue to be highly bespoke and a major strength of the school.
- Significant pace noted in the development of RSE and PSED, led by John. Introduction of the 'Mirrors' project aims to develop pupils' sense of self and body awareness, particularly for pupils with profound needs who may have limited exposure to self image.
- Training delivered on explicit teaching methods (I Do → We Do → You Do). Focus now on strengthening the 'I Do' modelling stage within PMLD settings.
- Strengthening of communication systems is a key ongoing priority.

### Assessment and Achievement

- Current assessment system focuses only on EHCP linked targets, creating an overly narrow picture of progress. Missing middle step indicators means pupils who are 'nearly there' appear as not achieving.
- Ruby is exploring alternative systems (Evidence for Learning, Solar, B<sup>2</sup>) with implementation planned for September 2026.
- Governors will receive a demonstration of the chosen system.

### Attendance and Behaviour

- National special school attendance average is approx. 86%. Heatherwood's long term trend is below this, impacted significantly by a small number of complex cases.
- New threshold based attendance monitoring system introduced with clear action triggers at 85%, 80–85% and below 80%.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviour incidents (217) largely linked to pupil need. One suspension issued for non needs led behaviour; reintegration handled positively.</li> </ul> <p><u>Personal Development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pupil Parliament focusing on improving access to outdoor learning following research showing children with profound needs spend significantly less time outdoors than their peers.</li> <li>Darts and Simon Music continue to provide highly impactful enrichment.</li> </ul> <p><u>Leadership and Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant leadership restructuring following departures. New Deputy Head (Louise) to start shortly; Sarah Morris appointed to Post-16.</li> <li>Appointment of new Family Engagement Officer (Ian Honeybone) expected to strengthen safeguarding and family liaison capacity.</li> </ul> <p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong safeguarding culture maintained. Work underway to improve confidence in reporting low-level staff concerns. Single Central Record audited as strong.</li> </ul> <p><u>EYFS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EYFS provision remains strong, with ongoing development in interaction quality and managing diverse needs within the same phase.</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>6.1.1. Appendix 1 – Updated SIP</p> <p>SIP actions are progressing. Monitoring updates will be embedded in Perspective to support clearer oversight by the Governor.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| <p>6.1.2. Appendix 1 – Updated SEF</p> <p>This was circulated for information prior to the meeting.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |
| <p>6.2. Draft School Dashboard Summary</p> <p>The Dashboard was reviewed. Leadership self-evaluations have been updated and now align with Trust expectations.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
| <p>6.3. Budget Report</p> <p>School finances remain strong with a healthy surplus. Capital investment is required in several areas, including outdoor accessibility, staff room refurbishment, hoisting systems and IT infrastructure.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |

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| <p>6.4. School Calendar</p> <p>This was circulated for information prior to the meeting.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |  |
| <p>6.5 Pupil Premium</p> <p>The school presented its updated Pupil Premium Strategy, noting the relatively small number of pupils eligible for PP funding.</p> <p>Governors discussed the challenges of demonstrating measurable impact within a highly complex needs cohort where progress is often non linear.</p> <p>The Headteacher explained that many pupils who qualify for Pupil Premium also have profound and multiple learning difficulties, meaning traditional PP interventions used in mainstream settings are not appropriate.</p> <p>The following key areas were discussed as current priorities for PP funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhancing communication systems and AAC access for eligible pupils.</li> <li>• Strengthening sensory regulation resources and interventions.</li> <li>• Increasing family engagement support to reduce barriers to attendance and readiness to learn.</li> <li>• Investment in staff training specifically linked to meeting the needs of disadvantaged learners with complex SEND.</li> <li>• Ensuring disadvantaged pupils have full access to enrichment and wider curriculum opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>Governors highlighted the importance of clearly articulating barriers for disadvantaged pupils and ensuring targeted spending aligns with these.</p> <p>A review of the PP strategy will take place in the summer term to evaluate impact and adjust priorities ahead of 2026/27.</p> |  |
| <p>6.6 Cabinet Member &amp; MPs' Feedback from Pupil Parliament</p> <p>The Headteacher provided an update as part of the Personal Development section. School continues to prioritise meaningful pupil voice for all learners, including those with complex communication needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work is underway to expand participation so every pupil can contribute through an appropriate communication method.</li> <li>• This year's Pupil Parliament focus is on improving access to outdoor learning and well being spaces.</li> <li>• Pupils will help identify current barriers to outdoor access and propose solutions (e.g., improved surfacing, canopies, better accessibility).</li> <li>• The aim is for pupil voice to lead to real, visible changes in the school environment.</li> <li>• Governors acknowledged the importance of ensuring Pupil Parliament input results in meaningful action.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |

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| <p>6.7 Skills Audit – Governor Self-Assessment</p> <p>Members were reminded to complete via GovernorHub, paper versions are available.<br/><b>Action: All members to complete their Skills Audit and return to Clerking Services.</b></p>                                                                                               | <p><b>Action:<br/>All<br/>Governors<br/>25/03/26</b></p> |
| <p><b>7. TRUST MATTERS</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                          |
| <p>7.1. Trust Verbal Update of Key Issues</p> <p>Nexus merger work continuing.</p> <p>Seven Hills (Sheffield) scheduled to join imminently.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                          |
| <p><b>8. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                          |
| <p>8.1. To consider any other urgent business</p> <p>If Governors could let SM know whether they would like to hold the next meeting at the Bridge, that would be helpful. Please share your thoughts so we can see what the consensus is. <b>Action: Governors to let SM know if the next meeting is to be held at the Bridge.</b></p> | <p><b>Action:<br/>Governors<br/>25/06/26</b></p>         |
| <p><b>9. CONFIDENTIALITY</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                          |
| <p>9.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting</p> <p>None.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                          |
| <p><b>10. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                          |

|                       |               |                    |
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| Thursday 25 June 2026 | 13:00 – 15:00 | Heatherwood School |
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### Minutes approved

| CHAIR | SIGNATURE | DATE |
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|       |           |      |