RUTLAND AND DISTRICT SCHOOLS' FEDERATION

MINUTES OF THE FEDERATION MEMBERS & TRUST MEETING

Thursday 2 July 2026, 3pm
The Gallery

PRESENT

Members
Andrew Holt (Chair)
Judith Gilboy
Sarah Sykes

Trustees
Andrew Holt (Chair)
Rob Guthrie
Guy Magrath
Mark Tinkler
Clive Norgaard Morton
Stuart Williams (Executive Principal)
Andrew Cross
Liz Birchall
Thomas Heath

IN ATTENDANCE
Kelly Jackson (Head of Catmose Primary), Oliver Teasel (Head of Harington School), Chris Wilson (Chief Finance Officer), Sheryl Wilson (Governance Professional).

1. WELCOME INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Andrew Holt welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Laurence Howard (Member), Rob Mulvey (Member) and Alex Mould (Trustee).

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST AND PECUNIARY INTEREST
There were no declarations of personal or pecuniary interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS
The minutes from the below meetings were signed to be a true and accurate record.

- Trust meeting - Thursday 11 June 2026
- Members meeting - Thursday 3 July 2025

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES
There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

5. CLERK'S BUSINESS
This was Rob Guthrie's final meeting as a Trustee. Rob has also served as Chair of the Harington School Local Governing Body, and the Board recorded its thanks for his valuable contribution and service.

Liz Birchall, who previously served as a Co-opted Director, will now be appointed to the Trust Board as the Director representing the Harington Local Governing Body. She will

continue as Chair of the Harington Local Governing Body until the first meeting of the new academic year, when an election for the Chair position will be held.

MEETING DATES

The meeting dates for 2026/2027 were approved by trustees.

APPOINTMENT OF AZETS

Following completion of the external audit retender process in March 2026, Members and Trustees considered the recommendations arising from the tender evaluation and approved the appointment of Azets as the Trust's external auditor.

The Trustees and Members were consulted throughout the process and agreed that Azets offered the best overall value and expertise to meet the Trust's audit and regularity assurance requirements. The appointment complies with the requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook, which requires academy trusts to retender their external audit contract at least every five years and for the appointment of the external auditor to be made by the Members.

GOVERNANCE STATEMENT RE SKILLS AUDIT

The Board Skills Audit confirmed that the Trust has a strong, well-balanced and highly effective Board, with no significant weaknesses identified. High scores across all governance domains provide assurance that trustees possess the knowledge, experience and capacity needed to fulfil their responsibilities and meet the expectations of the Academy Trust Handbook.

Key Strengths

- Strong strategic leadership, oversight and accountability.
- Effective challenge and support of executive leaders.
- Robust financial stewardship, supported by trustees with significant financial expertise.
- Well-established governance structures and a strong ethical culture.
- Positive, collaborative Board relationships and a culture of continuous improvement.
- Strong understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Broad and diverse expertise across primary, secondary and further education, alongside valuable business sector experience.
- A governing body that reflects and understands the communities the Trust serves.

Areas for Further Development

While the overall position is very strong, trustees recognised opportunities to strengthen the Board further:

- Risk, audit and assurance expertise was identified as the main area where additional skills would enhance oversight of internal scrutiny, audit and risk management.
- Succession planning remains a priority, particularly in light of governance leadership changes.
- Trustees discussed maintaining resilience through proactive leadership development and planning for future Board roles.
- Low trustee turnover provides stability but can limit opportunities to introduce new skills and perspectives, so future recruitment should be targeted where opportunities arise.

Agreed Actions

- Use skills audit outcomes to inform future trustee recruitment.
- Prioritise recruitment of trustees with risk, audit and assurance expertise when vacancies arise.
- Continue to focus on succession planning and future governance leadership.
- Provide targeted training and development to strengthen financial analysis and assurance skills across the Board.
- Repeat the Board Skills Audit annually and review the findings as part of governance effectiveness arrangements.

Conclusion

The Board remains a high-performing governing body with a broad range of skills, experience and perspectives. The audit provides reassurance that governance arrangements are effective and that the Trust is in a strong position. The focus for the coming year will be on refinement, sustainability, succession planning and targeted recruitment to ensure the Board continues to meet the evolving needs of the Trust.

6. PRINCIPAL'S ANNUAL REPORT

Stuart Williams presented his Annual Report to Members and Trustees, highlighting another very successful year for Catmose College. Outcomes remain consistently strong, with sustained high academic standards, excellent attendance, strong behaviour and a continued focus on inclusion and student wellbeing.

Quality of Education

Members and Trustees noted that outcomes remain well above national averages, with strong progress achieved across subjects. All disadvantaged students are allocated mentors, with structured support and monitoring in place. Intervention strategies are consistent, data-led and regularly reviewed for impact. Key Stage 3 outcomes are at, or above target in most subjects, with remaining gaps clearly identified and addressed

Behaviour and Attitudes

Behaviour across the College remains a significant strength. Around 80% of students have fewer than five behaviour logs, representing continued year-on-year improvement. Suspensions have reduced significantly and the College continues to provide a calm and consistent learning environment. Attendance remains at approximately 95%, significantly above national averages, with particular improvements seen amongst disadvantaged students and through targeted work to reduce persistent absence.

Trustees discussed the positive relationships developed between staff, students and families, recognising the important contribution of the Client Services team, particularly in supporting attendance and student welfare.

Personal Development

The report highlighted the breadth of opportunities available to students. Participation in enrichment activities remains high across all year groups. Nearly 100% of students eligible for Free School Meals have achieved the Catmose Challenge Bronze Award. Students continue to benefit from a wide range of cultural, sporting, musical and international opportunities, including the French exchange programme, drama

productions, music performances and sporting activities. The College's personal development programme has further improved through enhancements to the PSHE and tutorial curriculum.

Leadership and Management

The College continues to benefit from high levels of stakeholder confidence, supported by strong parental and staff feedback. Data and operational systems have become more efficient, reducing duplication and workload. Professional development is now structured, tracked and aligned to identified need, with staff increasingly leading and delivering training. Inclusion systems have become more coordinated and consistent across the College. The report noted that 98% of students report feeling safe in College.

Looking Ahead

Members and Trustees received an update on key priorities for the coming year. These include:

- Introducing a phased smartphone ban, beginning with the new Year 7 cohort.
- Aligning College planning with the emerging Ofsted framework, with an increased focus on inclusion and support for disadvantaged students.
- Further strengthening support for students with SEND in response to increasing levels of need and the challenges posed by limited external resources.
- Expanding support for the most able students to ensure they are well placed to secure entry to highly competitive universities, apprenticeships and careers.

Trustees discussed the proposed smartphone policy and noted that parental feedback had been overwhelmingly positive, with very few concerns raised. Discussion also took place regarding social media, student wellbeing and rising levels of anxiety among young people. Trustees welcomed the continued focus on SEND provision and inclusion, recognising the increasing complexity of need being experienced by schools nationally.

7. HEAD OF HARINGTON SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT

Oliver Teasel presented his Annual Report, highlighting another highly successful year for Harington School, both academically and in the breadth of opportunities offered to students. The School welcomed its largest intake to date, with 192 students joining Year 12 in September. Members and Trustees were updated on proposals submitted to the Department for Education to increase student numbers to 175 within the current building and 200 following completion of the proposed expansion project.

Throughout the year, students achieved success across a wide range of enrichment and extracurricular activities, demonstrating that Harington's provision extends far beyond academic outcomes. More than 50 students successfully completed their Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award qualifying expedition and the Greenpower Team competed in the International Finals for the fourth consecutive year. Students also achieved a world record through the School's engineering and innovation activities.

The School continued to provide a rich programme of personal development opportunities. Highlights included the annual Autumn Ball, fundraising activities for charities including the

Hello Yellow campaign for Young Minds, which raised approximately £2,000, the annual British Warfare visit to Waterloo and Ypres, and strong participation in the Federation Christmas Concert. Students also produced Harington's first five-part drama series, *Lovestones*, welcomed Martin Cosser from Charlie's Promise to speak about knife crime awareness, participated in a Spanish cultural visit to Malaga, attended road safety presentations from the Fire Service, and enjoyed success at the annual Battle of the Bands competition. The School marked the departure of Year 13 students with a range of celebratory events including the Aquapark trip and Prom.

Members and Trustees noted the continued strength of academic outcomes. Results in 2025 were above national averages across all key measures, including A*-C grades (83% compared with 77.7% nationally), A*-A grades (33% compared with 28.2% nationally), average points score and average grade. Performance across subjects remained consistently strong, with students achieving excellent destinations following completion of their studies.

Trustees discussed student destinations and noted that many students continue to progress to highly regarded universities across the country, alongside a growing number pursuing degree-level apprenticeships. The School reported that two students secured places at Oxbridge, six progressed to medicine or veterinary science, sixty-nine moved on to Russell Group universities and three secured prestigious degree apprenticeships.

Oliver Teasel also provided an overview of the emerging Ofsted framework and discussed priorities for the coming year. These will include maintaining a focus on disadvantaged students, strengthening support for students applying to Oxbridge and competitive degree apprenticeships, and addressing emerging areas of underperformance once the current examination results have been analysed. Trustees welcomed the School's ambitious approach and continued commitment to securing outstanding outcomes for all students.

8. HEAD OF CATMOSE PRIMARY ANNUAL REPORT

Kelly Jackson reported that the focus this year has been on maintaining high standards despite significant staffing challenges. Leaders have concentrated on keeping a 'steady ship', ensuring continuity of provision and sustaining strong outcomes for pupils. Overall, the school has maintained good standards and continues to deliver positive outcomes for children.

Quality of Education

Despite staffing pressures, teaching has remained strong across the school, with provision maintained to a high standard.

Children continue to achieve well, with:

- Good Level of Development (GLD) outcomes above national figures
- Phonics outcomes remaining strong. In Year 1 and Year 2, all but one pupil successfully passed the phonics screening check, providing a strong foundation for later learning.
- KS1 SATs outcomes in reading, writing, maths and science in line with national expectations.

- Strong Year 4 Multiplication Check outcomes, with results above national averages. KS2 SATs outcomes are still awaiting confirmation following issues with Pearson marking; final results are expected from 17 July. Predicted outcomes remain broadly in line with national figures.
- There is evidence of exemplary practice across the school, including:
    - Strong support from teaching assistants.
    - Effective workload-led approaches.
    - High-quality phonics and spelling provision.
    - Inclusive practice ensuring all learners are supported appropriately
- SEND pupils continue to be well supported through a wide range of interventions.

Behaviour and Attitudes

Attendance remains a significant strength at 97%, well above national averages.

- Behaviour and relationships across the school continue to be strong, with the majority of observed lessons demonstrating effective/exemplary practice.
- First aid provision is fully up to date and pupils with healthcare needs are well supported.
- The focus going forward is to embed and sustain these strengths.

Personal Development

Personal development remains a key strength.

- There has been high participation in trips, visits and sporting events, with every pupil accessing at least one educational visit during the year.
- The PSHE and Relationships Education curriculum has been updated in line with 2026 guidance and shared with parents.
- Pupils have engaged strongly with community-focused initiatives, including:
    - Activity Passport awards
    - VAR (Voluntary Action Rutland) projects
    - Community volunteering opportunities.

Leadership and Management

- Leadership has successfully maintained standards despite staffing challenges and has ensured children continue to learn in a safe environment.
- The school continues to enjoy a strong local reputation:
    - 79 applications were received for Reception.
    - 43 families selected the school as their first choice.
    - Places remain capped at 30 despite the wider context of declining birth rates.
- Safeguarding continues to be a strong thread running through all aspects of school life. Staff training and systems remain robust.

Looking Ahead

Key priorities for the next academic year include:

- Sustaining strong academic outcomes.
- Continuing implementation of the Writing Framework, with a particular focus on tracking KS2 writing progress.
- Refining assessment and tracking processes.
- Ensuring planning aligns with the developing Ofsted framework, with a continued emphasis on inclusion and support for disadvantaged pupils.
- Further strengthening SEND provision and support for more able pupils.

Additional Discussion

Residential visits for Years 3 and 5 were reviewed due to rising costs, which were approaching £350 per pupil. Concerns were raised regarding affordability for families and the need to consider alternative models that maintain valuable enrichment opportunities while remaining accessible.

9. CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT

Current Financial Position

The Federation's finances remain in a strong position, with a small surplus currently forecast and reserves expected to increase to approximately £1 million by year end.

- Additional SEN income has been received this year, with further growth expected due to increasing numbers of pupils with EHCPs. However, this additional income brings increased staffing costs through the recruitment of Teaching Assistants to support need.
- Catering income has improved significantly following the appointment of a new Catering Manager and the introduction of revised menus which have proved popular with students. Increased student numbers have also contributed to income growth.
- Catering surpluses have funded improvements including replacement flooring in the Orangery. The Federation is planning to purchase new ovens next year to meet changing government guidance around healthier food preparation.

Budget Management

Staffing costs, which account for more than 80% of Federation expenditure, have been tightly controlled and are currently below budget.

- Premises costs continue to rise, with repairs and maintenance currently over budget. This reflects the pressures associated with ageing buildings and infrastructure.
- Capital balances brought forward were approximately £970k, with a target to carry forward around £1 million into the next financial year despite planned capital expenditure.

Lagged Funding Challenges

A significant challenge remains the impact of lagged funding.

- Catmose College has expanded by admitting an additional 30 students per year over a five-year period. Staffing costs must be incurred immediately, whilst funding follows

a year later. This creates a temporary funding shortfall of approximately £180k next year.
- Harington School has also taken additional students, creating a further lagged funding gap of approximately £135k.
- Collectively, the growth in student numbers creates an income timing deficit of more than £300k, despite the schools already carrying the associated staffing costs.

Members discussed whether the future receipt of this lagged funding would strengthen the Federation's financial buffer. Management confirmed that while some of the funding supports staffing already put in place, the additional income should provide greater flexibility and resilience in future years. This reflects the fact that standards have been maintained despite being temporarily underfunded.

Forecast and Future Outlook

Figures presented represent a snapshot position as at the end of May, and final reserves may reduce slightly depending on capital expenditure completed before year end. The expected receipt of approximately £300k in lagged funding income over the coming years should improve financial flexibility and strengthen reserves.

School Capacity and Growth

- Catmose Primary is expected to be full next year with approximately 210 pupils.
- Catmose College will take its final enlarged intake of 240 Year 7 students and is expected to reach full capacity of approximately 1,200 students.
- Harington School increased from 332 to 356 students and is expected to maintain these numbers. Plans for an extension have been submitted through a Significant Change Request to the Department for Education.

Staffing and HR

Recruitment remains positive with all key staffing positions filled across the Federation.

- There are currently no outstanding HR issues.
- Additional teaching and support staff are being recruited where required to meet growing pupil numbers and increased SEND demand.

Key Messages

Finances remain robust despite significant lagged funding pressures.

- Strong financial controls have enabled standards to be maintained while absorbing growth-related costs.
- Reserves are expected to remain around £1 million, providing financial stability for future years.
- Future financial pressures are likely to come from ageing buildings and increasing premises costs rather than staffing concerns.
- The Federation is well placed for the next phase, with all schools operating at or close to capacity and no further planned expansion of Catmose College.

10. TELEPHONE MAST UPDATE

The agreement for the telephone mast to be erected on the College site has been finalised.

11. HARINGTON SCHOOL EXPANSION UPDATE

A significant change form has been submitted to the Department for Education to increase numbers to 175 per year group, within the current building and 200 per year group following completion of the proposed expansion project. The DfE requested for a further document to be submitted which has been actioned.

12. POLICIES

The below policies were shared with trustees prior to the meeting with details of the amends.

- Federation Exclusion Policy
- Federation First Aid Policy
- Federation Student Allergen Policy – new policy connected with Benedict's Law
- Federation Student Technical Qualifications and Apprenticeships
- Federation Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

Trustees discussed:

- The distinction between whistleblowing and safeguarding concerns
- Reporting routes where concerns relate specifically to the Executive Principal
- Recent updates concerning sexual harassment disclosures and staff training requirements

Trustees confirmed that concerns relating to the Executive Principal would be directed to the Chair of Trustees.

The Board reviewed the above polices and ratified them.

13. A.O.B

Stuart Williams will arrange to meet with the Responsible Officer and agree the programme of internal scrutiny for the next academic year.

The Chair thanked the senior leadership team and staff for another very successful year.