



Mid Devon Local Advisory Committee (LAC)
Minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams
Monday, 24 November 2025 at 5 pm

| Name | Role/Type of Governor | School | |
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| Joanna (Bidly) Hooper (JH) | Chair – Foundation Governor | Morchar Bishop/across the LAC | P |
| Bruce Abbott (BA) | Parent Governor – Vice Chair | Yeoford | P |
| Hannah Bancroft (AH) | Staff (Academy Head) Governor | Across the LAC | P |
| Mat Boulton (MB) | Parent Governor | Cheriton Bishop | P |
| Todd Chenore (TC) | Trustee Appointed Governor | Across the LAC | Ab * |
| Catherine Cozens (CC) | Parent Governor | Morchar Bishop | P |
| Tom Woodley (TW) | Parent Governor | Tedburn St Mary | P |
| Vacancy | Staff Governor | Across the LAC | |
| Pam Down (Clerk) | Clerk | Mid Devon LAC | P |
| Charlotte Roe (GP) | Governance Professional | Link Academy Trust | P |
| Rachael Sharpe (CEO) | CEO | Link Academy Trust | P |

Present/Apologies/Absent

**Retrospective apologies received post meeting due to work commitments overrunning.*

| | | ACTION |
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| 1 | WELCOME AND APOLOGIES JH, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Rachael Sharpe, CEO. No apologies had been received. | |
| 2 | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Nothing pertaining to the Agenda of this meeting. | |
| 3 | APPROVAL OF THE P1 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2025 The Minutes were approved and will be signed electronically by the Chair. They will be forwarded to HR to be uploaded onto the Trust website. | Chair/Clerk |
| 4 | CEO UPDATE Along with Matt Matthew, Deputy CEO, and Lizzie Lethbridge, DoE, RS, CEO, had spent her first half of the term with the Trust visiting all 23 primary schools and had spoken with central staff, Governance (Board and Committees) and admins. This had enabled her to undertake a comprehensive 360-degree review of the Trust. She had referred to good quality trust descriptors provided by the DfE to RAG-rate the Trust. The CEO had taken her findings to the Board – it is the Board who is responsible for reviewing the Trust. The Board was provided with the results of the staff survey together with a write up from the AHs of each of the 23 schools. Five overarching priorities were identified which will span over the next three years. They will launch in January and form the Trust’s strategic plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High quality and inclusive education ▪ Finance and Operations ▪ People and workforce ▪ Culture ▪ Governance The CEO highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Celebrations and challenges – strategy meeting to consider how to move forward. ▪ Management Information Systems – identified as quite clunky and time- | |

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| | <p>consuming, needing work straightaway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finances – currently in deficit. AHs had raised how challenging this is on the ground, with less staff combined with more SEND ▪ First and foremost – pupils! ▪ Recharge review – RC explained that maintained schools give a percentage of their funding income to the Local Authority. Trust schools give a percentage to the Central Trust fund. Average national percentages had been reviewed and compared with the Link Academy Trust percentages. The CEO, the Board and SLT had felt they were too high. The recharge will be reduced which will give schools a little more money in their system. It will not be enough to clear the deficit for each school but will reduce it. It is the plan to provide a proposal regarding how to reduce the recharge before Christmas. <p>The CEO remarked on the local governance process which facilitates the collection of governor/AH visit notes which go to the sub-committees which feed directly to the Board of Trustees. It was the first time she had seen this system in action; she thanked everyone and was grateful for the successful flow.</p> <p>The CEO raised a question with governors: Did they see/speak with enough other people rather than just the AH? During a meeting the CEO had attended with the Governance Professional and clerks, she had detailed TED. It is a method used when children are disclosing: tell, explain (how to overcome), describe (the next step). It would be great if governors were able to use this language with AHs – it fulfils the role by holding AHs accountable whilst using safe and supportive language. In January, there would be coaching on developing a triangulating culture and encouraging everyone to be empowered in the best interests of the children.</p> <p>The CEO asked if there were any questions. She did warn she may not be able to answer all questions completely until the detail of the next steps had been fully finalised.</p> <p>The GP advised the triangulating culture training would take place online on 13 January 2026 at 6 pm.</p> <p>The Clerk referred to the CEO's positive comments on the flow of reports/feedback to and from the LAC → sub-committees → Board of Trustees. The Clerk advised the Governance Professional had been responsible for setting up and implementing this successful system. It had taken a lot of thought and time for it to be actioned but had given LACs a far greater purpose and impact which had been lacking prior to that point. The longer-standing governors agreed and the GP was thanked for her foresight and work on this.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the CEO for the useful, comprehensive update particularly as it had been delivered directly by her.</p> <p><i>A governor asked how best to respond to a parent stating they did not want their children to be in an academy school and wanted them educated at a non-academy school.</i> The CEO acknowledged that sometimes parents do not feel they are part of a Trust. Benefits to the children include opportunities to work collectively for sports and residential visits. Being part of a Trust provides a wider range of support and expertise for both staff and children. More and more standalone, non-academy schools are struggling. The governor thanked the CEO for providing an answer which could be relayed.</p> | <p>Governors to trial 'TED' when discussing barriers with AH/staff</p> <p>ALL: Online triangulating culture training – 13.1.26 at 6 pm</p> |
| <p>5</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> | <p>MATTERS ARISING from 29.09.2025 (not covered elsewhere in the Agenda)</p> <p>Governors' review of responses to the questions raised at the previous LAC and to confirm if there are any supplementary questions: It was believed that none of the questions had particularly definitive answers at this point but that they were being discussed would form part of the Trust's strategic plan.</p> <p>Minibus: Deferred – TC to update.</p> | |

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| | <p>on work settings, some employers offer release time – governors were unaware of this. Those in settings where this may be applicable were wary about how this would work, particularly due to already stretched funding. The GP advised they look at their establishment’s Leave of Absence Policy. Release leave would be particularly useful in times of emergency such as Ofsted/Complaints or Exclusion Panels. Governors were thanked for the time they already give in their volunteer role.</p> | |
| 7 | <p>STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOCUS: Personal Development/Wellbeing – Relationship Education, PHSE & RHSE</p> <p>Governors were thanked for providing reports from each of the four schools. Feedback from governors re their focus visits invited.</p> <p>Points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Chair had enjoyed reading the children’s responses regarding vision and values at Cheriton Bishop, particularly the ones regarding protected characteristics – always so interesting to hear children’s interpretations and views. ▪ The Chair had watched a lovely, creative RE lesson/worship at Morchard Bishop and there were very good comments and insight when talking with the children which evidenced their understanding about vision and values. ▪ A governor had noticed that three of the Reports mentioned systems moving away from Jigsaw with ‘1 Decision’ and ‘KAPOW’ being used. It was noted that both were a cheaper option but had not been chosen on that basis alone, and schools were happy with the change. <i>The governor asked if the Trust was promoting the use of any particular package.</i> The CEO responded there was not currently one system being promoted across the Trust. She expects there will be one within the next two to three years. Outcomes of current packages would be reviewed - they are being monitored within individual schools. ▪ A governor had supported school visit transport in a parental role – vacant seats were oversubscribed. The governor had thoroughly enjoyed the fun and interaction the children had enjoyed in the back of the vehicle. It had been a great visit for children to experience. ▪ The clerk referred to a lovely paragraph within a visit report whereby children had filed by the governor on their way to a coach. Most of the children waved and said ‘hello’. This evidenced how well the children knew the governor from his time visiting and supporting the school and their friendly approach was heart-warming for the governor. | |
| 8 | <p>STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOCUS: Discussion around the new Ofsted Framework and how prepared the AH feels. Are there any barriers/concerns, what support does the AH need?</p> <p>Feedback from governors invited.</p> <p>It appeared overall there is quite a bit of the ‘unknown’ which will only become clearer as Ofsted Inspections take place within the new Framework. The following points from Reports were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It was noted that language within the new Framework does not make expectations clear and is subjective. There is room for interpretation. ▪ Inclusion is now more explicit and a separate judgement. ▪ The focus is broader and not as predictable (creating uncertainty for the AH and staff and time-consuming when first encountering a new system). ▪ <i>The Chair asked if there are any schools within the LAC that have experienced an Inspection under the new Framework.</i> The CEO replied there were none as yet. Everyone is keeping an eye on Inspection Reports to gain a better insight. A significant change is that schools need to achieve every point in all five areas to achieve green. Based on this, the CEO remarked it will be interesting to see how people respond to an amber judgement. ▪ It is difficult to determine what words and phrases in the Framework such as, ‘on the whole’, ‘majority’ will actually mean, particularly in smaller schools when there could be, for example, 10 children in the cohort. How would ‘on the whole’ / ‘majority’ be applied? | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deep dives appear no longer included – to what extent will Ofsted be looking into subjects, and how? ▪ A governor remarked the language and judgement had always been vague – satisfactory could be interpreted as good or otherwise. | |
| <p>9</p> | <p>STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOCUS: Christian Distinctiveness/SIAMS (for CofE schools) – Vision and Values for non CofE schools - with a Learning Walk.</p> <p>Feedback from governors invited.</p> <p>The Chair believed Morchard Bishop (CofE) was in a good place for the pending SIAMS Inspection. There had been a revamp of the Vision and Values to ensure they are biblically rooted and easier for the children to understand. A worship led by a Youth Worker from the local Methodist Church had made regular reference to the values and how being deeply rooted in God would encourage a person to have strength and stability in their life. When the governors had spoken to the children, they had all agreed that people can still have values if they're not Christian and that other countries and religions have values too.</p> <p>A governor from a Community School was impressed that while speaking with five Reception aged children they readily knew the values! They are displayed in every classroom and in the hall way. The Chair asked how the values had been delivered so successfully. To be investigated and shared!</p> | |
| <p>10</p> | <p>FEEDBACK FROM ETHOS COMMITTEES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS</p> <p><u>Ethos Group at Morchard Bishop CoE School</u></p> <p>The Chair/Foundation Governor advised that following the previous positive Ethos Committee meeting, the next one will take place on 27 November 2025.</p> <p>Meanwhile, in addition to the Governor/AH Visit, the School had undertaken an Ethos Group Monitoring Enquiry on 13.11.25. The Enquiry Focus was: How does the School's theologically rooted Christian vision enable pupils and adults to flourish? The Report would be filed with the Minutes – key points highlighted:</p> <p>As outlined item 9 – the School vision has been enhanced and is being embedded. <i>A governor asked in what way the values been changed to ensure they are biblically rooted.</i> Previous statements that exemplify Deeply Rooted, Individually Nurtured and Inspired to Flourish had been enhanced, including a new Bible verse to support this (from Jeremiah – when he had been called by God at a young age).</p> <p><i>A governor asked how examples of flourishing could be evidenced.</i> It was evident the enhanced vision and values would enable all to flourish being based on a theological understanding, incorporating the School's longstanding vision 'Christianity is at the heart of all we do'. A group of Year 4 children were able to clearly explain the four key words; courage, kindness, resilience and curiosity. When asked, the children had been able to provide an answer about their favourite value and the reason why it was their favourite (as detailed in the Monitoring Enquiry document). The children had also been able to give examples (ie courage at rugby, kindness by helping others and curiosity at Brownies by exploring various badges).</p> <p><i>A governor asked about the development of spiritual flourishing.</i> Ideas had been discussed relating to building the journey. It was acknowledged the four values promote spirituality but development is needed for staff to share language and understanding of what spirituality means. This will be explored within worships and continue to be developed within the curriculum. Staff had been positive and supportive about the changes, explaining their work within staff meetings and encompassing everyone's views.</p> <p><i>A governor asked if there was alignment between the Trust vision and the School's vision.</i> The School vision is in keeping with the Trust vision – now collated into one document. The SEF has been updated.</p> <p><u>Community Groups</u></p> | |

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| | <p>The Chair referred to the section in Reports entitled, 'Parents' Forum/Community Meeting/Parents' Evening/PTA - there was considerable community reference within this section from all schools. One school is looking at funding/grants to develop the Sensory Garden. Another school is inviting members of the community to read and help with the library (subject to safeguarding checks).</p> | |
| <p>11</p> | <p>SUCSESSES AND SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Morchard Bishop referred to the 'Vision and Values' section within the Christian distinctiveness/SIAMS section of the Governor/AH report: The AH and staff have completed a large body of work on adjusting the Vision and Values to be more biblically rooted and easier to understand – they underpin everything that is done. Staff had spoken positively about the changes explaining the work undertaken in staff meetings which had encompassed everyone's views. ▪ A governor from another school stated during his visit it was apparent things were more settled and sustained and moving towards consolidation. Things were much more consistent. There is more to do but conversation within the school is much more positive. ▪ (Item 9) The governor from a community school was impressed that while speaking with five Reception aged children they readily knew the values! They are displayed in every classroom and in the hall way. ▪ A governor from another Community School had noted that classes are using individual learning journals to demonstrate their understanding and document their learning journey through personal, social wellbeing. Weekly assemblies related to personal development and PSHE. ▪ One school, with a large hall, had been able to reintroduce the Toddler Group back into the school with them being able to use the kitchen for refreshments. This had led to a new family discovering the school which helps to sustain the intake. | |
| <p>12</p> | <p>SCHOOL UPDATES</p> <p>Governors to consider and discuss feedback on any issues/successes from their school visits or visit notes completed by the AH.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAN (to include pupils joined/left) • Pupil wellbeing • Staff wellbeing and workload • Attendance (Trust target is 96.5% with an aspirational target of 98%) • Suspensions and permanent exclusions • Feedback on any parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA • ASIP update • Sustainability Strategy • Pre-school update <p>The visit reports had covered quite a bit of the above. In addition, the following points were raised:</p> <p>PAN and Attendance sections of the MBS visit report had been updated since circulation of the original report and forwarded to governors. Yeoford reported an additional pupil arriving. The PAN was discussed at one of the Community Schools. <i>A governor asked if there was a reason that forecasted numbers were lower than expectation.</i> The governor from the school advised that Pre-School numbers within the village were low, hence the drop in the expected intake. The governor confirmed the school had a good relationship with the Pre-School. Promotion of the school to attract a higher intake is being addressed by an active social media campaign and positive word of mouth. Another governor completely understood the issue of a decreasing roll and had previously been in a situation where negative comments about the school had been detrimental. However, the governor wanted to encourage by stating Yeoford school had now exceeded PAN! The CEO added that birth rate is nationally lower and the increased intake at Yeoford was bucking the trend. The national drop in numbers will naturally extend to secondary settings in ten years' time.</p> <p>Attendance The AH stated that figures early in the term can look skewed due to</p> | |

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| | <p>perhaps a few early term absences which level out throughout the term – the first part of a term is not the best indicator.</p> <p><u>Staff wellbeing and workload</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In one school, the AH is currently having to teach three days a week to cover sickness which clearly takes a toll on her workload. The governor confirmed it was not a long term sickness absence cover situation. ▪ The CEO reminded governors to try and ask all staff about wellbeing, to get a wider view than just the AH perspective. 150/300 staff had responded to the wellbeing survey. The CEO emphasised that all voices are valued, the Trust is a collective. A governor thanked the CEO for sending the detailed survey results. It was interesting to review. Governors confirmed they received the weekly update from the CEO. <p><u>Parent forum/parents'evening/PTFA</u> partially covered in item 11. A governor reported some negativity during a parent forum but conversations had been followed up and issues addressed. A governor from a different school stated the parents are very active. A Christmas Fayre will take place this weekend and Hot Chocolate Friday continues to be a success.</p> <p><u>ASIP</u> In hand within all schools, being adjusted to align with the new Ofsted Framework – no specific barriers raised.</p> <p><u>Sustainability Strategy</u> All schools are working on this including completing Climate Action Plans, appointing a sustainability lead and involving children in various ways. Time was flagged as a barrier in one school with immediate priority being given to inducting two new teachers. Cheriton Bishop is exploring incorporating sustainability into the Civic Awards – a successful initiative with Year 6 last year.</p> | |
| 13 | <p>STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM TRUSTEES' MEETING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The draft minutes of the meeting held on 14.10.2025 (confidential until approved) had not yet been received. The Minutes will be forwarded when available. <p>Meanwhile, the Chair gave a brief summary of the main content of the meeting: Key discussion had centred around analysing pupil outcomes and data, including how to pinpoint certain groups (ie children joining the Trust at a later point). The meeting had considered how to use data more effectively. Actions would then form part of the Trust priorities and be part of the ASIP, providing a better offer for children.</p> | |
| 14 | <p>NEXT S&C FOCUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding Audit with a <u>Learning Walk</u> • Mid-year attendance overview • Parent and Community Engagement • Curriculum subject – EYFS <p>(Visit note Spring 1 previously circulated along with supportive paperwork and suggested questions)</p> <p>There were no questions about the focus.</p> | |
| 15 | <p>SELF-REVIEW OF THE LAC GOVERNOR ROLE, INCLUDING:</p> <p>Frustrations – what needs to be better and the best way to make that happen Successes – reflection on the impact of your governor role</p> <p>Discussion evidenced that frustrations and successes were often intermingled (in some situations, frustrations had been overcome with good solutions)</p> <p>The Chair, having previously been a governing board Foundation Governor, had needed to grow into the role of a LAC governor. Initially, the structure had felt ineffective but with the system of reporting and feedback introduced by the Governance Professional, this had changed and ensures the Local Committee has a voice and impact.</p> <p>The Clerk apologised for the volume of emails and paperwork but governors</p> | |

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| | <p>believed it was needed in order for them to know the full picture.</p> <p>Lack of time was the key frustration issue. With Governor/AH visits, 1 to 1.5 hours to delve into all the questions raised on the report was very difficult. In addition, talking with other staff and completing a Learning Walk took a full afternoon. <i>Governors asked whether the volume of questions/subjects could be reduced to concentrate more on one focus.</i> The GP understood the difficulty but the Trustees needed the information requested. The GP advised the aim will be to become more strategic rather than operational so at some point the visit report template could be tweaked to enable smarter reporting with more pertinent questions. <i>The Chair asked whether the level of response governors were providing was too detailed: how is it being received?</i> The CEO thanked all governors for the standard of their reports; they were a shining example and the commitment of the Mid Devon LAC had been acknowledged by the Trustees as well as the CEO – governors were congratulated.</p> <p>The CEO returned to the subject of triangulation and being sure that what Governors were being told (mainly by the AHs) was actually what was happening. It was not a matter of trying to catch anyone out but more a question addressing, ‘show me how that works’. The CEO proposed filling out the governor visit report with another staff member rather than the AH. A governor stated that when it had been necessary to do this previously, it was apparent the information and overall understanding was not held or provided. The CEO asked how it would be possible to improve the ASIP if the AH is the only person who knows the detail within it. <i>A governor asked how this could happen logistically. For example, if the subject was attendance, that would mean speaking with each class teacher which would take a very long time and cover would be needed for the teacher.</i> The CEO suggested the AH could cover to enable this to happen but she understood the time this would take. She suggested asking administrators; involving other staff.</p> <p><i>In relation to the TED approach, whilst a governor understood the concept of evidencing information given by the AH, he felt there was a fine line in building a good relationship then potentially undermining that relationship. The governor would consider trying this approach.</i> The CEO acknowledged triangulation is not easy and understood the need to build good relationships. The GP added that work continued on changing the culture, with everyone being empowered to speak and be listened to – for everyone to work together to address any issue or problem. Another governor felt a good working relationship and trust had developed between him and the AH. The governor believed the AH was open and relayed information in a ‘warts and all’ manner. The AH was happy for the governor to walk around the school unaccompanied. The CEO promoted the psychological safety in having an open and honest culture. The Clerk added triangulation had been discussed at length previously with the GP encouraging governors to speak to as many people as possible to be reassured by evidence that the information provided by the AH was as stated. Governors nearly always spoke to a variety of staff and pupils to gather a wider range/perspective of information and viewpoints.</p> | <p>GP to consider reducing the number of questions in the visit report template – smarter reporting/more pertinent questions</p> |
| <p>16</p> | <p>SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED AT LAC LEVEL (Governance Professional)</p> <p>There were none.</p> | |
| <p>17</p> | <p>QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED AT S&C LEVEL</p> <p>Morchard Bishop – new server request – this is a desperate situation and has been escalated on the Risk Register.</p> | <p>S&C</p> |

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm

During the meeting, the AH expressed frustration that the Internet at Morchard Bishop had been dipping in and out. After the meeting she apologised that towards the end, she was unable to connect at all.

Signed as approved by the Chair, Joanna Hooper Date: 19 January 2026