

Standards and Curriculum Committee

Minutes

14th October 2025

5pm

Held online via Microsoft TEAMS.

Invited: Christine Cottle (Chair)
 Rachael Sharpe (CEO)
 Cheryl Mathieson (CM)
 Max Thomas (MT)
 Kate Evans (KE)
 Corinna Tigg (CT) – East Devon Hub LB Representative
 Joanna Hooper (JH) - Mid Devon LB Representative

In attendance: Charlotte Roe (Governance Professional)
 Lizzie Lethbridge (LL) – Director of Education
 Andy Keay (AK) – Director of School Improvement (for item 9)

Minutes: Nicol Bush (Clerk to the Trust)

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<p>The meeting will open with the Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair The Chair and Vice Chair confirmed their continuation in their roles. The Committee approved the confirmation of roles.</p>	
2.	<p>Welcome and apologies Apologies were received and accepted from OH</p>	
3.	<p>Declarations of interest There were no new declarations brought to the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Any other business There was no other business brought to the meeting.</p>	
5.	<p>Approval of last meeting minutes For approval: The minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part I- were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly. • Part II- were circulated to those that attended the meeting (via email) and were approved as a true record and signed accordingly. 	
6.	<p>Matters arising from minutes of 8th July 2025 (not on the agenda) 6.5.1 Pupil Premium Crib Sheet The CEO advised that over a five-week period, she had been working with the DCEO and the DoE (Director of Education) to visit each school within the group. Although two schools remained, the CEO had already met with their headteachers. During these visits, the team conducted tours and reviewed each school using a format referred to as “school on a page.” A recurring issue that emerged was the topic of reach charges related to pupil premium funding. There were concerns about fairness, equity, and whether the funding provided good value for money.</p> <p>The CEO acknowledged these concerns and understood why a crib sheet had been requested. The CEO explained that the team was in the process of reviewing how pupil premium funds were being used and suggested that a crib sheet could help clarify current practices. She highlighted that pupil premium funding was not intended to be individualised for each child but rather used strategically across the school. The CEO referred to research from the Education Endowment Foundation, which recommended that schools allocate</p>	

	<p>the funding as follows: 50 percent to improving the quality of teaching, 25 percent to targeted interventions for pupil premium children, and 25 percent to other priorities identified by the headteacher, such as attendance. The Chair agreed that this breakdown was helpful and emphasised the importance of transparency so that parents and governors understood how the funding was being used.</p> <p>6.7.1 Strategic plan priorities</p> <p>CM noted that while the workforce group had been quite effective, most Trustees did not have the time to dedicate significant effort to their assigned areas. As a result, the plan gradually lost momentum, and the impact of the approach remained unclear. She explained that the Trust decided to refocus its efforts and planned an away day to review the Trust evaluation form and develop a more structured and purposeful strategic plan. CM explained that the earlier plan, which had assigned responsibilities to trustees based on their interests or experience, was being set aside in favour of addressing the core strategic issues facing the trust.</p> <p>6.8.2 Attendance</p> <p>The CEO updated that an attendance report had been compiled collaboratively, with PH leading the work as the named attendance lead. The report was shared as a link and included trends, strengths, and proposed actions for key areas. The CEO confirmed that she would speak about attendance at the upcoming board meeting.</p> <p><i>CM asked whether the term “PP” referred to pupil premium and whether it was separate from SEND. She also queried whether the part time curriculum affected attendance figures.</i></p> <p>The CEO confirmed that the data currently included all SEND children, regardless of pupil premium status. She explained that the pupil premium filter had not been applied separately, but it could be added in future to show SEND children with and without pupil premium. She also confirmed that the part time curriculum did affect attendance figures.</p> <p>6.17 Policies</p> <p>The Chair explained that a policy schedule was in place and reviewed regularly, but due to time pressures, the scheduled review on 8 July had not been fully carried out. As a result, a number of policies were currently incomplete or not ready for committee review. Some had track changes, others did not, and several were missing basic formatting such as headers and footers. The Chair noted that she had spoken with the GP, who agreed to review the policies before uploading and linking them. The Chair emphasised the need to stay on top of policy updates throughout the year to avoid a backlog, which could result in having to manage a high number of policies in a single meeting.</p> <p>The GP added that once the Trust’s vision and values had been agreed, there would need to be a board-level discussion about how policies should be presented. The intention was to embed the agreed vision and values into all policies, ensuring consistency and alignment across documentation.</p>	
7.	<p>Governance</p> <p>Annual Review of Constitution and Terms of Reference to check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership is appropriate • Duties remain relevant • All duties have been covered during the year, and it aligns with the Scheme of Delegation <p>The Chair noted that over the year, personnel matters had moved to the Remuneration committee and that a few minor adjustments had been made previously.</p> <p>As no concerns were raised, the Chair proposed and the committee agreed to adopt the standards again for the following year.</p>	
8.	<p>Trust Risk Register</p> <p>The CEO explained that the Risk Register had been reviewed in detail alongside the DoE and DCEO. Although the platform used for the register was helpful and supportive, it became clear that while individual schools had their</p>	

	<p>own risk assessments, there was no overarching strategic view of Trust wide risks. These included areas such as finance, operations, premises, quality of education, school improvement, and workforce.</p> <p>To address this, the CEO, DCEO, DoE and HROM were working together to develop a Trust wide Risk Register. This would be informed by their knowledge of all schools across the Trust and the recent Trust evaluation. The completed register was expected to be presented to the board at the meeting on 4 November and would then be included in future meetings.</p>	
9.	<p>Focus: Analysis and evaluation of pupil outcomes and targets for the year.</p> <p>AK presented a positive overview of the Trust's performance, highlighting improvements in early years, phonics, reading, and maths. Early years outcomes were in line with national averages, and phonics results were above national levels when excluding newly joined East schools. Key Stage 2 combined scores rose by 13 percent. Support was provided through the Ilsham hub and targeted programmes, including the PINS project for inclusion. Writing remained a strategic priority, and CPD was planned to address specific challenges. <i>Trustees asked questions about the barriers in writing and how targeted CPD was being used, especially as writing had been a priority in the previous year. They also sought clarification on how progress was monitored for SEND pupils, noting the absence of national progress data from Key Stage 1.</i></p> <p>AK explained that the Trust used an internal tracking system and was exploring platforms like SIMS and Arbor to improve progress monitoring, particularly for pupils not working at age-related expectations. He acknowledged the difficulty of capturing small steps of progress and noted that some SEND pupils made better progress than their peers despite starting behind. Concerns were raised by Local Advisory Committees about SEND pupils, especially those joining mid-year, were discussed. The Director of Education highlighted stretched capacity across the Trust and a national shortage of special school places. Around 10 to 15 pupils had needs that could not be met in mainstream settings, and 5 to 10 percent required additional support. Admissions remained challenging, with funding often delayed, but the Trust continued to provide support. Despite pressures, the Trust had strong staff expertise, although capacity was stretched. Targets for 2025–2026 were approved following detailed cohort reviews with headteachers. AK reported that realistic targets had been set and outcomes closely matched expectations across most schools. At the time of reporting, 75 percent of children were on track for a good level of development, a 7 percent improvement from the previous year.</p> <p>Phonics results for Year 1 reached 82 percent, a 4 percent increase. Fourteen children did not meet the expected level, mostly due to communication and speech needs. AK noted that support for phonics beyond Year 1 was limited. Key Stage 1 results showed progress: reading rose to 75 percent (up 8 percent), maths remained steady at 72 percent, and overall attainment increased to 65 percent (up 14 percent). In Key Stage 2, reading was at 76 percent (down 3 percent), writing at 65 percent (down 5 percent), and maths at 72 percent (down 3 percent), with overall attainment holding at 65 percent. AK stated that the improvement team would meet to review individual school data and plan targeted support, including deploying experienced staff to assist with moderation and teaching.</p> <p>AK explained that the team had set targets for the year and met with all Academy Headteachers (AH's) to carry out a detailed review of the children in each cohort. They aimed to establish realistic targets for each class, and last year's predictions had proven to be largely accurate across most schools. The final outcomes closely matched the initial expectations set at the beginning of the year.</p> <p>At the time of reporting, they had identified approximately 75 percent of children expected to achieve a good level of development, which was a 7 percent increase compared to the previous year.</p> <p>For Year 1 phonics, the expected achievement rate was 82 percent, representing a 4 percent improvement from the previous year. This increase</p>	

was seen as a reflection of the schools' efforts, despite limited support in phonics for Year 2.

The Trustees asked what the cumulative percentage would be of pupils leaving Year 2, or Key Stage 1, having met the phonics standard. They also asked about the aspirational target for that measure.

AK responded that over the past two years, around 30 children entered Key Stage 2 without passing the phonics screening. Schools provided targeted support, either continuing phonics or addressing other learning needs. Although the children were not formally retested, most received focused help with the aim of passing early in the autumn term, depending on their individual level of need.

Trustees asked questions around the Trust's improvement targets.

AK identified the Trust's improvement priorities as sustaining progress in schools already showing strong outcomes and providing continued support to the East schools. A key focus remained on quality first teaching, with targeted support for identified schools. The OAIP was being used to support pupil premium and SEND pupils, and writing continued to be a strategic priority across the Trust. Phonics support was also being delivered to specific schools through the Ilsham hub, including Bearnese, Wolborough and Littleham.

The Trustees questioned why the Trust was targeting lower individual outcomes in reading, writing, and maths for the next year, particularly writing, given that it remained a strategic priority and the overall aim was to sustain improvement.

They noted that the combined Key Stage 2 target was set to improve and hoped it would exceed the new national average but found it inconsistent that individual subject targets were lower.

AK explained that while the Trust aimed to sustain improvement overall, some schools had weaker writing outcomes, which influenced the lower individual targets for writing. He noted that five to seven schools had writing as a key area of weakness, and support would be tailored to either Year 6 teachers or specific cohort needs.

The Trustees questioned the 11 percent gap between reading and writing targets, which AK confirmed was consistent with the previous year's 10 percent gap and also asked about the process for setting targets. AK clarified that targets were set during school visits, where data from the previous year was reviewed with Academy Heads. Schools identified key pupils who were expected to make progress, and targets were based on their Year 5 outcomes and potential for improvement.

The CEO acknowledged that targets had been agreed through meetings between the DoSIs, DoE, and academy headteachers, but noted that there had not yet been a collective review with herself and the EIT. She proposed that while the committee could approve the current targets, they should revisit them at the next meeting to ensure alignment with national expectations for individual subjects.

A Governor asked whether there might be a correlation between very small schools with combined Key Stage 2 classes and lower outcomes. This suggested a potential area for further analysis, particularly in relation to how class structure might impact attainment.

AK responded, noting that outcomes varied. He highlighted that some newer schools in the East had recently adopted the model, while others like Drakes and Otterton had used it longer and showed strong results. AK suggested it would be useful to observe how the model influenced data over time.

ACTION-

- **Committee to revisit targets at the next S&C meeting- Clerk to add to matters arising on the next S&C agenda.**

CLERK

10..	<p>Focus: Academy Improvement Planning (ATSIP) (Presentation with plan(s) circulated before the meeting)</p> <p>The DoE shared the ATSIP document, which outlines the school improvement strand of the Trust’s strategic plan. She explained that the improvement priorities were shaped through collaboration with heads, DoSI visits, challenge days, moderation exercises, and data analysis. Early years was identified as the top priority, with a Trust-wide INSET day launching the initiative. Other key areas included digital strategy development, quality first teaching, assessment systems, and cultural development through sustainability planning and the flourishing network for church schools. The DoE also highlighted the OAIP’s role in curriculum implementation and training for heads, noting strong practice in some champion schools. She emphasised the importance of measuring impact, including assessment and gap-filling, and raised the idea of exploring broader trust-wide metrics, such as pupil and staff wellbeing, to inform future planning.</p> <p>The DoE outlined key objectives linked to quality first teaching, drafting and editing, and self-regulated learning. Moderation was reintroduced across schools, now taking place through cross-hub collaboration, with Directors of Improvement leading these sessions. The English hub continued to develop through twilight sessions. Other priorities included early years, OAIP, assessment and tracking systems, sustainability, and embedding writing. Milestones had been clearly laid out to guide termly progress.</p> <p>10.2 S&C Committee to approve ATSIP for 2025-2026 The Committee approved the ATSIP for 2025-2026</p> <p>10.3 Update on focus visits from Local Advisory Committees The Chair acknowledged the visit notes and there were no comments brought forward.</p>	
11.	<p>Focus: British Values and preparing for life in modern Britain</p> <p>11.1 Update on focus visits from Local Advisory Committees The Governance Professional invited Trustees to raise any questions or comments regarding British values, based on the LAC minutes that had been circulated.</p> <p>11.2 Trustees to ask any questions regarding this focus <i>A Governor asked whether there was a Trust-wide expectation or framework for teaching plans and classroom displays, or whether schools were independent in how they approached this.</i></p> <p>The DoE explained that currently, schools develop their own teaching plans. She had delivered training on professional development and Ofsted expectations, and there was a shared approach to collective worship or assemblies for non-church schools. This included guidance on linking themes to children’s lived experiences. While there was no Trust-wide standard for teaching plans or displays, schools were encouraged to interpret expectations in their own way. The DoE added that during Learn, Support, and Challenge Days, pupil engagement with British values and protected characteristics had noticeably improved, reflecting the work schools had done in this area.</p>	
12.	<p>ETHOS Minutes</p> <p>12.1 Committee to confirm the receipt of ETHOS minutes and to raise any questions from them.</p> <p>The GP mentioned the Trust’s involvement in the Flourishing Network, which would help support governors and trustees in understanding and promoting ethos across the Trust.</p> <p>The CEO suggested that moving forward, the Trust might benefit from developing a shared understanding of what spirituality means and how it presents in children. This topic had come up repeatedly and could be important for shaping ethos and curriculum discussions.</p>	

13.	<p>Local Advisory Committee Minutes</p> <p>The GP invited Trustees to answer the following outstanding LAC questions: <i>How was AI currently being used by staff within schools to help reduce workload, and what safeguards and training were in place to ensure its safe use, particularly in relation to pupil data.</i></p> <p>The CEO confirmed that AI was being used by teachers to support planning and reduce workload but noted that the Trust did not yet have a shared agreement on which platforms were being used, when, and why. She explained that this would form part of a wider digital strategy, which would cover infrastructure, platform choices, curriculum delivery, and safe use of AI by pupils. A working party had begun developing this strategy. She also highlighted that outdated equipment in some schools was a barrier and would be considered during Trust evaluations and future planning.</p> <p>The DoE highlighted that some curriculum platforms, such as DoodleMaths, were AI-informed and adapted learning based on pupil responses. The DoE suggested that provision planning should remain a collaborative process between teachers, parents, and pupils, with AI used to enhance rather than replace professional judgement. She noted that this was an area the Trust needed to explore further.</p> <p>A Trustee raised a point about clarity when discussing AI, emphasising the importance of specifying what type of AI is being referred to. He noted that some tools, like Microsoft spell check, are now branded as AI for marketing purposes, despite not being true examples of advanced AI. He suggested distinguishing between types such as large language models or generative AI to avoid confusion and ensure accurate understanding.</p> <p><i>A LAC asked what marketing strategies were in place to address falling pupil numbers.</i> The CEO explained that the DCEO was leading marketing efforts, meeting with Academy Heads and supporting open events. The Trust was using extended Facebook advertising and connecting schools with strong community engagement to those with lower numbers. The DoE added that marketing was a standing agenda item, with strategies such as tagging community groups in posts and promoting positive stories. Both emphasised the importance of word-of-mouth advocacy and parent engagement. The Chair asked about toddler groups at the schools, and the CEO confirmed that while not all schools hosted them, heads maintained strong links with local groups to build relationships.</p> <p>Part II was taken</p> <p>13.2 Trustees to approve the Terms of Reference for the Local Advisory Committees</p> <p>The Trustees approved the Terms of Reference for the Local Advisory Committees.</p>	
14.	<p>Action Plans</p> <p>Part II was taken</p>	
15.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Part II was taken</p>	
16.	<p>Policies (to be circulated before the meeting)</p> <p>16.1 SEND Policy 2025- This policy was approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>16.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy MODEL JULY 2025 (Tracked Changes)- This policy was approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>16.3 Supporting pupils with medical conditions and administering medicines 2025</p> <p><i>Represented from previous meeting following review by Trustees and amendments asked for.</i></p> <p>16.4 Behaviour Policy 2025 and Intent Relational and Behaviour Approach- This policy was approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>16.5 LINK Attendance Policy 2025-26- This policy was approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>16.6 Positive Handling Policy 2025- This policy was approved by the Trustees.</p> <p><i>On previous agenda but not yet reviewed by Trustees</i></p>	

	<p>16.7 Teaching and Learning policy *Not written yet (non-statutory)- This policy was approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>16.8 Relationships Education Policy- This policy was approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>16.9 Early Career Teachers (ECT) Policy 2025-26- (Agreed by Remuneration committee in July 2025)</p>	
17.	<p>Trust Rag Rating Review</p> <p>Trustees agreed to defer this item until the Trust-wide review had been completed.</p>	
18.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact</p> <p>The Chair raised the idea of a discussion about the Children’s Wellbeing Bill and safeguarding. She questioned whether the board of Trustees should be aware of it. The Chair suggested it would be helpful for her and possibly others to understand what was happening.</p> <p>The Trustees agreed that any forthcoming national changes or new policies should at least be introduced briefly. The Trustees added that everyone should be informed. The Governance Professional confirmed that this would be discussed further to decide the appropriate forum.</p> <p>The meeting concluded with reflections on governance impact and effectiveness. Trustees noted improved engagement from Local Advisory Committees and praised the quality and accessibility of reports, the Safeguarding report was highlighted as an area needing attention.</p>	

The meeting ended at 6.53pm

Signed by the Chair of the Committee.....on 9th December 2025.