

Mid Devon Local Advisory Committee (LAC)
Minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams
Monday, 09 March 2026 at 5 pm

Name	Role/Type of Governor	School	
Joanna (Bidly) Hooper (JH)	Chair – Foundation Governor	Morcharad 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	P
Catherine Cozens (CC)	Parent Governor	Morcharad Bishop	P
Tom Woodley (TW)	Parent Governor	Tedburn St Mary	Ap
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

		ACTION
1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES JH, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Rachael Sharpe, CEO. Apologies received from TW who has no WiFi – approved.	
2	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: Nothing pertaining to the Agenda of this meeting.	
3	APPROVAL OF THE P1 & P2 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2026 The Minutes were approved and will be signed electronically by the Chair. The Part 1 Minutes will be forwarded to HR to be uploaded onto the Trust website.	Chair/Clerk
4	MATTERS ARISING from 19.01.2026 (not covered elsewhere in the Agenda)	
4.1	Governors to review the responses to the questions raised at the previous LAC and confirm if there are any supplementary questions (email forwarded 24.02.26). The actions that had been agreed by the Trustees were noted; particularly the items raised by the Mid Devon LAC re staff absence insurance (quotes will be sought) and staff wellbeing (to be a standing item at AH meetings with a focus on sharing and developing supportive approaches). <i>Regarding the additional responses received to questions asked, the Chair enquired if there was a timescale and what that might look like.</i> The CEO replied that for IT related questions Morcharad Bishop staff will receive recycled devices in the second half of the summer term, when the new IT provider will also look at the server. For Tedburn St Mary, staff will receive recycled devices in the first half of the summer term. Trustees are aware of tech issues at a few schools and work continues through and outside the Digital Strategy Group. The Trustees recognised the Trust is experiencing a period of change, including restructuring and a shift of certain responsibilities from central services to individual schools, which may have an impact on some staff and their wellbeing. The CEO had advised AHs last week that the restructuring period of consultation had been extended until the 19 March 2026. The aim is to get more money going back into schools. The outcome of the planned restructuring will mean the top slice taken from	

	<p>each school will be in line nationally. There will be further discussion with some schools regarding budgets. The CEO had noted the concern about staff on temporary contracts not yet knowing whether they will be retained in the new academic year and the unease that brings with the fear good staff would look for employment elsewhere. Everything will be considered as part of the Trust-wide restructure, and the CEO hoped to be able to deliver positive news in the near future – as soon as possible after the 19 March 2026. The CEO was aware that communication had needed improvement and feedback received suggests communication is now much better with more clarity, understanding and transparency. The CEO has tried to hold people when she has been aware they are concerned.</p> <p><i>Regarding SEND/a possible restructuring of classes/staff, a governor noted that Morchard Bishop had requested a meeting with the CEO: had that been actioned?</i> The CEO confirmed two dates had been suggested (one cancelled due to the imminent SIAMS Inspection) but another date will be set as soon as possible. The Chair remarked that as the AH is covering most of the staff absence, flexibility of her time is limited. The AH reported some parents were not happy about supply teacher cover. The CEO will address concerns directly in order to allow the AH to concentrate on the SIAMS Inspection. Regarding long term absence, the CEO confirmed the AH should go ahead and get supply cover which will support consistency.</p> <p><i>A governor noted the increased workload for the AH, particularly due to covering and supporting staff through the long-term absence. The governor asked who is looking after the AH.</i> The CEO advised the AH could reach out to her directly and also to Sue Howard, HR Operations Manager, who leads on staff wellbeing. The CEO stated she is desperately trying to get stable structures in place. The Chair commented it is definitely an area of concern. There has been a sequence of absence events; all genuine, which has been difficult to manage.</p> <p>4.2 Update re CEO’s suggestion of a Chairs’ meeting prior to each round of LAC meetings: The CEO advised no structure has yet been proposed.</p> <p>4.3 Central Team review: As outlined in 4.1 – the extended consultation period with conclude on 19 March 2026.</p> <p>4.4 Wraparound care at Morchard Bishop: An appointment had been made, and the person had already started. Wraparound care is provided until 5:30 pm.</p>	
<p>5</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>CLERK UPDATE</p> <p>Staff Governor Vacancy (since September 2025): The Clerk had followed up a potential expression of interest in this role and will update if/when there is further news. A parent governor had responded informally to some initial questions raised by the potential candidate, so it is hoped the vacancy will soon be filled.</p> <p>Training:</p> <p>a) Safeguarding L2: Due to rebranding with a system change, one governor had been unable to evidence recent L2 Safeguarding training. The governor will do as the GP suggested and ask a management member to email HR confirming training has been undertaken.</p> <p>b) Coaching training session by the CEO, 24.02.26: A governor had found the training a very useful tool but commented sometimes a person would be seeking direct guidance and needing the benefit of knowledge and help. The CEO confirmed that she would be available to offer suggestions, support and advice. Within the new structure, the aim is to provide a clearer path for AHs to find solutions themselves. Governors were reminded a recording of the training had been emailed to them.</p> <p>c) Governor training target from Sept 2026 – all governors to complete two training sessions per academic year (DES/Diocese/In-house): Most governors are already doing this. Two governors are teachers, so a lot of their training also supports their governor role. The biggest barrier was time with governors working during the day and committed to childcare/after-school activities late afternoon, early evening. All governors agreed that being able to ‘dip’ into recorded training sessions is the best way to enable governors to pledge to this target although it was acknowledged this reduces the level of interaction. The GP will speak to DES and</p>	<p>GP to ask DES/Diocese training providers to record/share sessions</p> <p>Governors asked</p>

	<p><i>had personal, positive experience of the benefits with a Y7/Y8 child at a local secondary school. There, it is used in Reading, Maths and Science. The AH advised it was early days but so far, they were really pleased. The trial also means the school will benefit from a few years of free use. The current Accelerated Reader programme costs about £1800 per annum and one of the flaws can be that it is a memory exercise; although the AH added that opinion is contentious. The AH is meeting with other AHs and will pass on the contact details to anyone interested.</i></p>	
7	<p>FOCUS: Provision for PPG & LAC and the impact:</p> <p>It was agreed that a lot of PPG children also have SEND. Reports include a lot of positives with most making good progress. A governor noted the difficulty in capturing evidence; funding is low and so measuring robust impact is hard. The CEO believed that with the planned shift to AHs receiving more money directly rather than the percentage now held centrally, this should empower them (ie prioritising what is most needed in their setting, how best to use low-cost measures with high impact, seeking support from the Educational Endowment Fund). The AH agreed - the current PP statement for her school was written by somebody else and includes attendance which is not actually an issue. The AH welcomed the opportunity to write her own statement. The AH stated that due to the size of her school, the grant was £1,000 but she was aware that smaller schools receive much less which is more restrictive.</p>	
8	<p>FOCUS: Safeguarding Trust wide Audit to be reported to Board of Trustees:</p> <p><i>The Chair noted good feedback and asked the governor who had written the Yeoford report what the 'one minute' weekly reminder to all staff looked like. The governor replied it was two pages, well presented in a friendly way which addressed key points to keep everyone up to speed. Another school referred to the 'one minute' guides from Babcock which they used in staff meetings (ie recently covered Ramadan which was very timely and useful).</i></p> <p>Points and actions highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring all staff-related safeguarding concerns are securely recorded, robust and court-ready ▪ Strengthening online safety and AI awareness ▪ Strengthening monitoring and filtering in school settings ▪ Developing more consistent CPOMs posts (also, how audited and checked) ▪ Proactive multi-agency working and early information sharing ▪ Need for more robust evidence of training impact (particularly across mental health and RSHE) ▪ Site security (raised with two schools) ▪ Displaying DSL posters in communal areas 	
9	<p>FEEDBACK FROM ETHOS COMMITTEES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS</p> <p><u>Ethos Group at Morchard Bishop CoE School 26.02.26</u> – minutes previously circulated.</p> <p>The AH informed the meeting that Morchard Bishop had received the SIAMS Inspection call. As expected, there is a clear line of enquiry in connection with Governance: why are there no more governors/how do governors feed to the Trustees? A governor who had previously chaired a C of E governing board remarked how different this LAC was in comparison, with no Diocesan representative or Vicar. The AH reminded governors that unfortunately the Parish does not currently have a vicar although the School has been well supported by the Methodist Youth Worker, Chris Boyles, who attends the Ethos Group and also leads weekly worship and holds mentoring groups with the children. The GP advised the previous LAC structure included more governors, yet governance was not as targeted. The decision had been made to make LACs smaller and more targeted. In a larger Committee, it tends to be a few governors doing the bulk of the work, yet the current structure works effectively with every governor being accountable for different roles. The CEO advised the Inspector will want to see the minutes to check the voice of Morchard Bishop is coming through and evidence there is robust monitoring and monitoring for impact. The AH confirmed she had made the</p>	

Inspector aware of the separate Ethos Group which monitors Christian Distinctiveness.
The Scheme of Delegation had been discussed and forwarded, which is on the list to be reviewed, along with the Articles, following the appointment of the new CEO. The CEO advised the SIAMS Inspector will look at where the monitoring of Christian Distinctiveness sits within the Scheme of Delegation and speak to the CEO about this.

A governor asked in what way is the worshipful life of the school inclusive and invitational?

The Foundation Governor stated a long discussion had taken place at the Ethos Group about the different forms of whole school and class worship and they are all open to everyone, inclusive of all children and involve children's views. There are additional activities available for children with SEND who attend with their 1:1 TA and dip in and out as needed. They are free to worship in their own way. At the end of every worship, there is always an invitation to respond and reflect and for the children to think about life application; to refer it to themselves and what that might mean for them. This highlights how inspirational worship is and how much the children have understood. The AH added the School recently held a 'Morchard's Got Talent' which was a wonderful celebration of children's courage and resilience and highlighted a great encouraging spirit supporting all performers, especially SEND and vulnerable children. The Pre School children also attend once a week and wonder around the hall. They are a part of our whole school community and are given a sticker and a good welcome.

A governor asked if the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship had been useful to the school and whether it would help to bring improvement.

The AH remarked that school improvement had been a little halted due to staff absences. However, monitoring has taken place which highlights strengths in liturgy, Christian values, ethos, spirituality, British values and characteristics. Monitoring has also highlighted the need for children to be more involved in terms of planning and feedback, evaluating worship sessions. They have a role in terms of the implementation and volunteering to take part at the front, but the next step is to get them to observe the AH leading a worship. Another thing that was highlighted is that there is not enough singing, so there will be more!

Another governor asked about spiritual flourishing and what children know or have learned about it and what it might look like: how is the School supporting this through collective worship?

The AH advised spirituality had been the biggest focus of the last two Ethos Group meetings. Last term the Ethos Group had focussed on Vision and Values, this term the first thing to do was to create a shared definition of spirituality which had been done. A lot of schools use analogies such as windows, doors (looking out/what children are opening their world to). That was considered too big a step in the journey, so we have been working on what spirituality really is and they are really getting it. There had been a school visit to the Mosque in Exeter. On returning to School, some children described the moment when the Iman sang the call to prayer as giving them a 'prickly feeling on the back of their neck'. Staff were able to pinpoint that as a lovely spiritual moment. The next step on the spirituality journey is to embed what is known and what it is teaching us and our role in the world. We also need to look at the Curriculum and opportunities within that for spirituality. That is relatively easy in terms of Science, Geography, RE/awe and wonder and will be developed further as it is embedded.

All wished the AH/Morchard Bishop well in the forthcoming SIAMS Inspection and the GP offered to help if anything was needed.

10	<p>STAFF UPDATE – staff wellbeing, workload and successes</p> <p><u>Staff wellbeing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The continuing concern about the unease connected with temporary contracts had been discussed in 4.1 and is in hand. ▪ At two schools in particular, supply staffing changes is having a negative effect. It was noted that having one member of staff absent, although unavoidable, makes such a big difference. ▪ The GP questioned if she was correct in thinking staff are feeling more positive? <i>A governor responded that on visiting and speaking to various support and teaching staff, there was still unease and speculation about what may be coming. Staff continue to work hard and focus on the children, but it is a difficult time.</i> The CEO wondered whether there was anything else she could do to support the unease without being able to offer definitive clarity at the moment. <i>The Chair stated that staff are aware the Central Team is being looked at and that is where the cuts are expected but there is unease about who will support staff in terms of curriculum and inclusion and what that will look like. The CEO confirmed there will be a support structure in place, although it would be slightly different.</i> The CEO thanked the Chair; it was good to know the current feeling which would help with forward planning. The deficit is not as big as it was initially; significant changes have already been made to avoid schools losing more people. There are some staff who are looking elsewhere for secure employment; she had tried to reassure staff as much as possible. A governor reiterated the unease in a different school due to the temporary contract situation and insecurity about future employment. The CEO had read the governor’s concern in the report and had taken it directly to SLT that morning. She had been in communication with the AH and advised she is hoping to be able to contact him with positive news next Friday. The CEOs aim all along had been to reduce the amount of change at school level, hence the restructure of the Central Team, particularly when she had looked at what the recharges were and how they did not benchmark against national. 	
11	<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 • 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 most of the above. There was nothing further to highlight.</p>	
12	<p>STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM TRUSTEES’ MEETING</p> <p>The draft minutes of the meeting held on 03 February 2026 had not yet been received. The Chair highlighted some areas of discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was a comprehensive EYFS presentation which outlined action plan priorities for the coming year and what that would look like in schools. AHs have had training days and that is being rolled out. ▪ Data – a discussion had taken place about how it is being analysed and the question why some data is a bit lower than other Trusts and how that will be addressed. ▪ Attendance (although not a problem within the Mid Devon LAC) ▪ Policies 	
13	<p>NEXT S&C FOCUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Analysis and Evaluation of Pupil Outcomes and targets for the year ▪ Curriculum Subject: EYFS 	

	<p>▪ Attendance Overview</p> <p>A governor noted that neither SATs nor Phonics Screening results would be available at that point. The GP stated EYFS is the Trust focus so it's being looked at again in order to review the EYFS action plan and monitor in individual schools including are targets being met – if not, why not, and what are the barriers. The CEO added this would include monitoring the impact as changes would have been implemented since September so there would have been almost two terms for actions to have been put in place.</p>	
14	<p>EVALUATION OF GOVERNANCE IMPACT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Governors had asked a lot of challenging questions of each other and reviewed all of the reports querying anything needing clarification. ▪ SEND provision and impact had been discussed and reviewed with AHs including progress data and actions needed to make further impact. ▪ Safeguarding procedures had been reviewed with AHs and points and actions highlighted within the governor/AH visit reports. ▪ The Church School's Ethos Group (including the Foundation Governor) had been strong in monitoring Christian Distinctiveness and, alongside the AH, ensuring collective worship is inclusive and driving development of spiritual flourishing. 	
15	<p>QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED AT LAC LEVEL (Governance Professional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>A governor raised the question written in his visit report: Would the Trust be providing additional funding and/or resources for the allergy training and self-injecting pens that will need to be in place for 2026/2027?</i> The CEO stated this was a good question, plans are yet to be put in place. Sourcing of EpiPens and support training is definitely something to be investigated at central level. Unfortunately, NHS Devon no longer have school nurses to lead the training. <i>A governor asked if the school was expecting a new child.</i> The governor advised it was a national initiative. ▪ <i>A governor asked after the top slice PP goes back into individual schools, what support would there be if the inclusion hub is no longer functioning?</i> The CEO believed with school's having more autonomy regarding use of PP, and Inclusion being part of School Improvement, this would be a more positive way forward. The CEO had reflected on what people were saying and had put in another role, as the AHs saw last week, which will be someone who facilitates coaching and working alongside other parts of the team to ensure inclusion is central and foundational to everything the Trust does (aligned with the Government's White Paper). Support will be there but will look slightly different – more of an overview. 	<p>Both questions raised were answered by the CEO – no further action required</p>
16	<p>QUESTIONS TO BE ESCALATED TO S&C:</p> <p>There were none.</p>	

The meeting closed at 6.24 pm

Signed as approved by the Chair, Joanna Hooper Date: 11 May 2026