

Totnes Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

Thursday 12th March 2026 at 6pm
 Held online via Microsoft 'Teams'

Attended:

Parent Governors: Nanya Coles (Broadhempston)
 Caroline Lucas (Sparkwell)
 Lucy Gibson (Landscape) (**Chair for this meeting**)
 Jonathon Nicholls (Diptford)

Staff Governor- Kate Wilson
Foundation Governor- Kate Burch
Academy Headteacher- Thomas Cole

In attendance:

Governance Professional- Charlotte Roe

Minutes: Nicol Bush- **LAC Clerk**

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies The Chair for this meeting, opened with a welcome to JN- the new parent governor for Diptford. The Governors each introduced themselves to JN. Apologies were received and accepted from CR and the CEO.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of interest There were no new declarations brought forward.</p>	
3.	<p>Approval of meeting minutes from 27th November 2025 For approval: The part I minutes were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters arising from 27th November 2025 (not on the agenda) There were none.</p>	
5.	<p>Clerk Update 5.1 Appointments/nominations- The Clerk advised the meeting of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was still an open vacancy for a Chair in the LAC. • A sustainability Governor was still required for the LAC. The Clerk noted that the role did not need to be filled by a parent governor and could be taken by someone from the wider Totnes LAC communities. • A Vacancy was now open for a Foundation Governor for Diptford. • Jonathon Nicholls had filled the role of Parent governor for Diptford. <p>5.2 Training The Clerk raised that all new Governors were expected to attend the “Introduction to school Governance in an academy trust”, which would be held online on the following dates and times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 Apr 2026 16:00-18:00 • 10 June 2026 10:00-12:00 <p>The Clerk noted that the session was open to all Governors, she highlighted that all training slideshows and recordings would be filed into the SharePoint folder.</p> <p>5.3 Clerk to Local Board Committee to update the governors on any local or national issues</p>	

	<p>Risk registers had been temporarily removed from LAC agendas while updates were being made but would continue to appear on the Board committee agendas. It was also noted that the CEO and governance professional would review the visit note template focus questions together each cycle.</p> <p>5.4 Governors Audit The Clerk reminded for any outstanding Audits to be completed and returned as soon as possible.</p> <p>5.5 Support for SATS Governors were invited to volunteer for SATs invigilation during the week of 11th May and were asked to speak with their Academy Heads in the first instance, to confirm what support was needed in their schools.</p>	
6.	<p>Feedback from Ethos Committees and Community Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Governor asked why it was important to ask questions about the CofE model and why this work needed to be implemented across all schools in the Trust?</i> <p>The Governance professional explained that, as a Trust, 13 of the 23 schools were Church of England schools. She said that, under the Trust's articles, all governors and staff signed a commitment to uphold Christian distinctiveness. The GP noted that this applied to everyone across the Trust.</p> <p>The Governance professional explained that she had developed the questions with support from SL (SIAMS Lead), as she was still developing her own understanding through Diocese training. She said the purpose of the questions was simply to encourage curiosity about Christian distinctiveness and how it was expressed in Church of England schools. The GP clarified that governors in non-Church of England schools were not expected to apply these practices in their own settings, but to recognise and respect that the Trust had 13 Church of England schools, including 3 within the Totnes LAC.</p> <p><i>The Following questions were asked:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In what ways is the worshipful life of the school inclusive and invitational?</i> • <i>Has the monitoring and evaluation of CW been useful to the school - will it help to bring improvement?</i> • <i>What do we know about or have learned about spiritual flourishing and what it might look like - how are our schools supporting this through CW?</i> <p>It was reported that the ethos group meeting at Diptford had taken place on Tuesday with parent members in attendance. The focus was collective worship, and the group gave very positive feedback on how this was delivered in the school. Some questions were raised about staffing and ensuring that all staff were given the opportunity to attend collective worship where possible. Aside from this, the ethos group felt that the school explained and modelled its values well through collective worship and across the wider school environment.</p> <p>Harbertonford: As Harbertonford remained without a Foundation Governor, copies of the Collective Worship monitoring and Ethos Group minutes were shared. The meeting was productive, identified some areas for improvement in Collective Worship, and a clear plan had been put in place to address these issues.</p> <p>Landscove: Received a very positive SIAMS inspection report just before half term, with only two points identified for improvement, both of which were already being addressed through an agreed plan. The report was now available on the school website and reflected that the inspector was highly impressed. Collective Worship monitoring took place prior to the inspection, with no significant issues identified, although one point in the SIAMS report related to this area. Minutes from the recent Ethos Group meeting were shared, and it was noted that additional members were needed due to two resignations, with the AH planning to approach potential new members. A monitoring plan for the current half term was also in place.</p>	
7.	<p>Focus: Provision and impact for SEND</p> <p>Sparkwell: Under the new Ofsted framework, SEND provision was RAG rated green within the Inclusion strand, reflecting strong inclusive practice and pastoral care alongside areas for further development. SEND needs mainly related to communication and language, social interaction, and autism pathways, with one</p>	

	<p>to two new pupils identified each term. Provision was robust, with high staffing levels, targeted interventions, specialist services, and effective use of regulation spaces. Progress for some pupils was measured through wellbeing and engagement as well as attainment. An Assistant SENCO was appointed to increase capacity. Parental engagement was strong, and no exclusions or complaints were reported.</p> <p>Landscove: SEND provision was colour graded Amber, reflecting a report card style judgement and indicating the need to strengthen consistency rather than concern. A key focus was ensuring a consistent approach across classes, including timetables, six-week intervention plans, and measurable progress, while maintaining flexibility to meet differing needs. The school prioritised quality first teaching and ordinarily available inclusive provision, using interventions where gaps were significant. Teachers adapted practice and resources where teaching assistant support was limited.</p> <p>Strong systems were in place, including shared inclusion folders, class level documentation, intervention plans, and Education, Health and Care Plans.</p> <p>Diptford: The SEN Coordinator attended school one day every two weeks, and it was noted that this time needed to be carefully planned or increased to ensure effective delivery of assessments, meetings and training. Provision was embedded within classroom practice and supported by teaching assistants. While a SEN register was in place, the lack of a single formal list for pupils with emerging needs limited early identification and referral. The main barrier identified was long waiting times for external assessments, largely due to the county council. Parent and pupil voice was positive, with strong engagement and trust, which was reflected in favourable feedback from the school's November 2024 Ofsted inspection.</p> <p>Harbertonford: The school was able to evidence clear use and impact of Pupil Premium funding, particularly in widening access to opportunities through the School Pledge, although further understanding was needed of how Trust wide spending directly benefited pupils at Harbertonford. Need was identified quickly, with a strong focus on early intervention, timely external agency involvement and additional SENDCo capacity for referrals and Education Health and Care Plan applications. Inclusive, wave 1 classroom provision was a whole school priority, with lessons carefully pitched so most pupils progressed together, supported by adaptations for SEND and Pupil Premium pupils and appropriate challenge for higher attainers. Since September 2024, new pupils had increased the SEND cohort by around 5. SEND attainment remained significantly below that of non-SEND pupils, particularly in writing, though leaders were confident gaps were closing. Parent feedback on SEND provision was largely positive, with appreciation for support, alongside some concerns about challenging behaviours within an inclusive school environment.</p> <p>Broadhempston: There were currently 10 pupils identified as having SEND, representing 22% of the cohort. It was felt that, if judged by Ofsted, SEND provision would be rated as needs improvement, as it was moving towards the expected standard but still had gaps. Needs were identified well and a graduated approach was used, but gaps in provision remained a barrier to meeting all requirements. Pupils on the SEND register were generally working below age related expectations and, although progress was being made, it was often limited to around 2.1 to 2.5 points across criteria. The school used an Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision approach that included all pupils and provided appropriate challenge. It was unclear how many pupils had moved on or off the SEND register, although numbers were thought to have increased. Engagement with parents was reported to be positive, with good communication and satisfaction with the support provided, alongside some areas identified for early help.</p>	
8.	<p>Focus: Provision for Pupil Premium Children (PPC), Children in Care (CIC) and the impact.</p> <p><i>(Due to GDPR and confidentiality, please refer to visit notes for further information and clarification)</i></p> <p><i>Governors raised highlights from their reports) The following notes are taken from those reports:</i></p>	

	<p>Sparkwell: There were 10 pupils in receipt of Pupil Premium funding and no Children in Care on roll. There was no identified attainment gap between Pupil Premium pupils and their peers, with most working in line with age related expectations (ARE). One pupil had persistent absence, which was being closely monitored and supported by the Headteacher. Funding was used to remove financial barriers by supporting trips, uniform, resources and enrichment, rather than providing separate provision. Staff focused on high expectations, inclusive curriculum planning and pastoral support to raise aspiration and confidence. Overall, Pupil Premium pupils were well supported and fully included.</p> <p>Landscove: There were 11 pupils in receipt of PPG. Autumn term data showed that 54.6% of PPG pupils were working below the age-related expectation in reading, writing and mathematics, with 45.4 per cent working at or above it. When PPG pupils were excluded from the whole school data, outcomes were significantly higher across all subjects. This highlighted a clear attainment gap, with over half of PPG pupils also identified as SEND, including some with highly complex needs.</p> <p>All pupils had intervention plans in place to address identified needs and support progress. Pupil groups were identified at the start of each academic year, and support strategies were planned collectively by staff through regular meetings. Additional support was provided through enrichment opportunities, music lessons, subsidies linked to free school meals, and support from the Friends of the Learning School.</p> <p>Diptford: The majority of pupils in receipt of the Pupil Premium were also identified as having special educational needs, with needs primarily linked to attainment. There were 8 Pupil Premium pupils out of a total of 51 on roll. Funding was used to support access to residential visits and school trips, with additional support from the parent teacher association, ensuring no pupils missed opportunities due to financial barriers. The Totnes Food Bank also provided support by delivering food directly to the school. All staff were aware of which pupils were eligible for Pupil Premium, ensuring support and understanding were applied fairly and consistently.</p> <p>Harbertonford: Current expected outcomes for Key Stage 2 in 2025-2026 indicated attainment gaps between Pupil Premium and non-PP pupils, with reading at 50% for PP compared to 70% for non-PP, writing at 50% compared to 65%, and mathematics at 50% compared to 75%. The school was able to clearly evidence how its Pupil Premium allocation was used to widen access to curriculum opportunities that supported pupils' self-esteem and sense of belonging, although it was less straightforward to evidence the impact of central Trust spending, which would be reviewed following the restructuring of the Inclusion Hub. Inclusive practice was a key driver, underpinned by the principle of provision being harmless to none, helpful to many and essential for some. Staff were aware of Pupil Premium pupils and how they were supported to access all wider activities. During continuing professional development, teaching and learning strategies focused on understanding and addressing barriers for Pupil Premium pupils, including reduced cultural capital, and their work was prioritised during marking and feedback.</p> <p>Broadhempston: Those who were not achieving ARE were also identified as having special educational needs. Support strategies were driven by a Trust wide approach and then directed at school level. Barriers to progress were consistent with those affecting SEND pupils more broadly and were linked primarily to complexity of need and limited resources.</p>	
9.	<p>Focus: Safeguarding Trust wide Audit <i>(Due to GDPR and confidentiality, please refer to visit notes for further information and clarification)</i> <i>Governors raised highlights from their reports) The following notes are taken from those reports:</i></p> <p>Sparkwell: The annual Section 175 Safeguarding Audit was completed and reviewed with the Academy Head, with no Red RAG ratings identified. A small number of Amber areas reflected procedural improvements rather than compliance</p>	

	<p>concerns. All staff had completed mandatory safeguarding training, and safeguarding procedures were well embedded, with staff confident and clear in responding to disclosures. Actions arising from the audit included strengthening documentation, recording drills, updating medical plans, and enhancing oversight. These were not considered immediate risks but would be completed within agreed timescales. Safeguarding practice was described as secure, compliant, and embedded, with strong leadership and governor oversight.</p> <p>Landscope: Section 175 was completed with supporting documentation provided by the Trust safeguarding lead, Alex Waterman. An action plan was shared and was referenced at the end of the notes. Actions were reviewed and built into the continuing professional development and Trust wide training schedule. A learning walk was completed, with clear safeguarding information visible in the staff room. A teaching assistant was spoken to about safeguarding procedures and demonstrated a secure understanding of processes, including how to record concerns using the blue form, capture a child’s words, discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, and record information on CPOMS before taking appropriate next steps.</p> <p>Diptford: The Section 175 audit was reviewed, and it was noted that, due to the current absence of the Safeguarding Lead who was also the Headteacher, safeguarding leadership roles may need to be addressed. The CPOMS system was working well and enabled staff to record and link concerns effectively. It was identified that the planned online safety and AI safeguarding learning with parents had not yet taken place. As this was a specialist area, it was agreed that the Trust should commission external expertise to deliver training for staff, pupils and parents.</p> <p>Harbertonford: The Section 175 audit was completed and shared with the Trust safeguarding lead, Alex Waterman. Agreed actions included the creation of a rag rated register for pupils identified as being at risk, with clear systems to ensure this information was shared effectively with staff through diary briefings. Monitoring of information technology use was strengthened by sharing responsibility with the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. Work with the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads also focused on developing a clear plan to evidence where safeguarding education was taught, enabling pupils to better protect themselves and confidently articulate their understanding.</p> <p>Broadhempston: An action plan had been completed, and a copy had been shared, although it had not yet been fully reviewed. Feedback from the report identified a small number of areas for improvement, some of which were Trust wide or not straightforward to implement. These included points relating to safer recruitment, Prevent training and the neglect toolkit. Overall, the findings were viewed positively. The Headteacher was responsible for completing the evidence and achieve sections of the action plan to confirm actions had been met. While staff had not been directly questioned about disclosure procedures, safeguarding information was clearly visible in the staff room, including CPOMS guidance, blue forms for escalation and posters outlining procedures.</p>	
10.	<p>Staff Update</p> <p>The Staff Governor reported that staff across the Trust were working to capacity, and that the challenge for small schools lay in functioning as a full school with very limited staffing. Ensuring that all pupils’ needs were met while also making staff feel valued was identified as a key pressure. From a staff governor perspective, she shared that despite repeated requests for feedback ahead of meetings, no responses had been received, meaning contributions were based solely on personal experience and perspective rather than wider staff voice.</p> <p>The GP confirmed that the CEO had spoken with staff previously and agreed that she would follow this up with the CEO again to reiterate the message and encourage feedback.</p> <p>It was suggested that a lack of staff feedback may be due to staff not fully understanding the purpose of the process or the role of the staff governor. It was also agreed that the role of the staff governor would be explained more clearly at class level and raised at the academy head meetings, so that academy heads could in turn explain this to their staff. In addition, it was suggested that parent</p>	

	<p>governors could help promote the role by reminding staff during school visits that the staff governor could be contacted with concerns or feedback.</p> <p>Diptford- Please refer to the visit notes for more detail on staff wellbeing.</p> <p><u>ACTION-</u> The Governance Professional to follow up with the CEO to reiterate the purpose of the staff governor role and to confirm that this item had been discussed at the academy head meeting.</p>	GP
11.	<p>School Updates</p> <p><u>PAN (to include pupils joined/left)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparkwell- 96 • Landscope- 15 (0 children left, 2 children joined) • Diptford- 4 new pupils +1-2 new pupils joining after Easter • Harbertonford- 101 <p><u>Children on part-time timetables/Annex R</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscope- please refer to the visit notes for further information. • Diptford- 2 • Harbertonford- No pupils on Part-time although, are looking at ways to support high-needs pupils through possible reduced timetable and/or AP <p><u>Attendance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparkwell- 94.6% • Landscope- 95.01% • Diptford- 96.9% • Harbertonford- 96.8% <p><u>Feedback on any parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscope- Parents evenings were held • Diptford- High attendance at parents' evening. Active PTA (FODs); raffle/polytunnel activities progressing well and parent engagement was good. <p><u>Sustainability Strategy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscope- Have full CAP plan in place and have been working with Let's Go Zero for the last year. Regular staff meetings booked across the year: Climate Action Plan reviewed every half term. Pupils are very Eco aware and driven to be agents of change Action points included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Switch off campaign · Food waste · Biodiversity/wildlife surveys · Recycling (plastic reduction) • Harbertonford- The school had a Climate Action Plan in place, which guided the work of the Climate Ambassador group led by Sophie Heike. The group focused on reducing emissions and planned to run a series of green themed activities during Science Week in March. The school made a conscious effort to use public transport for trips where possible, reducing both environmental impact and costs for families. Plans were being explored to use Section 106 funding to install solar panels and provide public electric vehicle charging on site. The school garden project was progressing well, supported by a £10k grant from the Rural England Fund via South Hams District Council, with pupils taking part in weekly gardening sessions alongside the Forest School programme. • Diptford- The Climate Action Plan was due for delivery in 2026, although one did not currently exist for the school. This plan needed to be prepared and implemented, drawing on good examples already in place within other Trust schools. The school already demonstrated positive practice through a new classroom block built in 2023, heated by air source heat pumps, the installation of solar panels, and the introduction of a new polytunnel, alongside initiatives supporting ecology and biodiversity. <p><u>Pre-school update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diptford- Local nursery closing so school acting on opportunity to increase pupil numbers. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harbertonford- There were 9 first choice applications for the September Reception intake, with a further enquiry received but no application submitted at that time. Numbers in the preschool were expected to decline the following year, but action was being taken to address this through the Fledglings baby and toddler group. This group had been well attended, with up to 20 families participating, and was being successfully run by two volunteers who were keen to support the school. 	
12.	<p>Standards and Curriculum Trustees Meeting</p> <p>The GP confirmed that information shared by governors was now being systematically disseminated across the Trust's committees to ensure that trustees were fully informed. Staff wellbeing matters were being reported to the Remuneration and People Committee, safeguarding issues were being fed directly to the Board of Trustees, and estates, buildings and finance matters were being reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The GP explained that separate reports were prepared for each committee, ensuring that governors' voices were heard and considered across all areas of Trust governance.</p>	
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 • Attendance Overview <p>The Chair explained the next S7C Focus to Governors. There were no comments or questions brought forward.</p>	
14.	<p>Governor's reflection of their Spring 2 visit.</p> <p>Overall, the visits were viewed very positively. Governors described school's as well organised and well run environments, where visits consistently reinforced the sense that the school operated smoothly and effectively. There was strong confidence in leadership, headteachers were engaged, open and honest, creating a positive and trusting culture. Governors highlighted their school's friendly, supportive atmosphere, noting positive staff wellbeing, strong pupil experience and a good parent voice. Visits were welcoming and enjoyable, with opportunities to speak to staff, pupils and leaders across the school. It was also noted as a success that the Parents Association had recently achieved charitable status, reflecting the hard work and commitment of those involved.</p>	
15.	<p>Questions to be dealt with at LAC level (Governance Professional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Governors raised that, to achieve the Strong Standard for inclusion, a more secure understanding was needed of how Pupil Premium funding was spent on shared Trust services and the direct benefit this provided to pupils. Governors requested a clearer oversight of central spending and its impact at school level-</i> The GP raised this question with the DCEO and would respond to Governors with the answer via email. 	GP
16.	<p>Questions to be escalated to S&C for Trustee consideration (Clerk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Was a Trust wide policy on flexi schooling planned, and which committee would be responsible for overseeing this?</i> • <i>Could the Trust propose a more consistent approach for parents and staff, beyond signposting to external local authority resources for online safety?</i> 	CLERK

The meeting ended at 7.45pm

Signed by the Chair of the Committee.....on Thursday 7th May 2026