

**Standards and Curriculum Committee
Meeting minutes
Tuesday 24th March 2026
Held on Microsoft TEAMS**

Attended: Christine Cottle (**Chair**)
Rachael Sharpe (**CEO**)
Kate Evans (KE)
Cheryl Mathieson (CM)
Joanna Hooper (JH) – **Mid Devon LB Representative**
Oliver Heathman (OH) - **Moorland Hub LB Representative**

In attendance:
Alex Waterman (AW)- **Director of Safeguarding**- For item 7
Francesca McLoughlin (FM)- **Director of Inclusion**- For items 8 and 9
Pete Halford (PH)- **Director of School Improvement**- For item 10
Lizzie Lethbridge (LL) – **Director of Education**
Charlotte Roe (**Governance Professional**)

Minutes: Nicol Bush- **Clerk to the Trust**

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome, to Trustees and the newly appointed trustee AH, apologies were received and accepted from MT, OH and CT</p> <p>Reflection – Vision and Values <i>“Flourishing schools for all at the heart of our communities”</i> The Chair reaffirmed the Trust’s vision and values and reminded Trustees that all discussions during the meeting were expected to remain aligned with them.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kate Evans is Director for Education of the Good Shepherd Trust, Diocese of Guildford and a Governor at Boscastle County Primary School. <p>There were no other declarations of interest brought to the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>Any other business There was no other business brought to the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Approval of last meeting minutes For approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 03.02.26- Due to the meeting not being quorate, the minutes were reviewed and approved by the Trustees via email. The Part II minutes (were circulated to those who attended via email) Due to the meeting not being quorate, the minutes were reviewed and approved by Trustees that attended via email. 	
5.	<p>Matters arising from minutes of 4th February 2025 (not on the agenda) 5.1 DoSI to provide, alongside the next analysis, an evaluation that outlines what has been learned from the data and identifies any remaining</p>	

	<p>gaps if outcomes are still not on target- This will be covered in agenda item 12.</p> <p>5.1 CEO to confirm policy deadlines were discussed at AH meeting- The CEO explained that she and the GP had now reviewed all policies due in the summer term, allocated staff to support their review, and informed those staff. The policies would be shared and added to the Academy Heads agenda as usual.</p> <p>5.3 Unanswered question from previous S&C meeting Q sheet- This was answered on the question sheet- see appendix 1.</p>	
6.	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>The CEO noted that the first key risk related to a possible decline in educational standards. This was currently judged to be unlikely, with a moderate impact, and she referred to the countermeasures in place. She then highlighted the risk associated with the potential restructuring of school improvement, which could result in schools not receiving appropriate support. This risk was currently rated as unlikely, with a minor impact, and the relevant countermeasures were outlined.</p> <p>The CEO said that the next risk on the register related to inclusive practice. She reminded the committee that this linked to the earlier discussion led by the DoI. The register stated that if inclusive practice across the Trust was poor, it could lead to poor outcomes for children. The CEO reported that this risk was currently rated as possible, with a moderate impact.</p>	
7.	<p>Focus: Safeguarding Trust wide analysis (Report shared with Trustees before the meeting)</p> <p>The DoS gave a detailed overview of her safeguarding report and invited the meeting to ask any questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Chair reported that a governor had raised a query about allergy training and the use of self-injecting pens, which were required to be in place for 2026-2027.</i> <p>The DoS confirmed that she had already noted the upcoming requirement for allergy training and the use of self-injecting pens, and that she expected it to fall within her safeguarding remit. She explained that there was currently no formal government guidance available, only press coverage, but had added the matter to her action list. The DoS added that she anticipated producing a short training resource, which could be incorporated into the Trust's annual compliance training. She suggested this would sit alongside existing September modules such as safeguarding level 2, Prevent, GDPR and health and safety.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the DoS for her report and attendance at the meeting.</p> <p>8.1 Update on focus visits from Local Advisory Committees.</p> <p>There were no comments or questions raised at the meeting.</p>	
8.	<p>Focus: Provision and impact for SEND- Data and analysis report shared beforehand</p> <p>The DoI gave a detailed overview of her report and invited the meeting to ask any questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A question was raised about the high level of persistent absence, which was almost double the national figure of around 18%. The Chair asked whether there was a threshold that triggered national intervention and whether anyone outside the trust monitored their attendance data.</i> <p>The CEO said that the national persistent absence figure discussed previously referred to all pupils, not specifically pupils with special educational needs. She explained that the Trust's persistent absence rate for pupils with special educational needs was around 30%, which was broadly in line with the national figure. She added that national persistent absence for pupils eligible for pupil premium was between 20 and 25%.</p> <p>The CEO also said that Trust wide attendance data was not currently reviewed nationally. However, Ofsted would examine attendance closely during school inspections and expect clear actions to support vulnerable groups. She noted that Trust wide inspections were expected from 2027, and these would likely include analysis of Trust wide attendance.</p>	

	<p>8.1 Update on focus visits from Local Advisory Committees. There were no comments or questions raised at the meeting.</p>	
9.	<p>Focus: Provision for disadvantaged pupils- (Data and analysis shared beforehand) The DoI gave an explanation of the report and invited the meeting to ask any questions. There were no comments or questions raised. The Chair thanked the DoI for her report and attendance at the meeting</p> <p>9.1 Update on focus visits from Local Advisory Committees. There were no comments or questions raised at the meeting.</p>	
10.	<p>Attendance The DoSI gave an overview of the latest attendance trawl and invited the meeting to ask any questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Governance Professional and DoSI discussed ensuring that the correct Attendance Trustee, Kate Evans, was included in school policies. The DoSI explained that some schools had uploaded the policy to their websites without adding the required highlighted information. He confirmed that schools had now been told to update this. <p>The Chair thanked the DoSI for his report and attendance at the meeting.</p>	
11.	<p>Year 6 Data Analysis The CEO updated the meeting on the data analysis.</p> <p>The CEO said that the EIT (executive improvement team) had collated the available attainment data for the end of the spring term. She explained that they did not yet have the early years good level of development measure, but they did have year 1 phonics data and key stage 2 data. Times table data was not available for this meeting but would be provided at the next one. The CEO said that the dataset included last year's Trust results, last year's national figures, the current predictions, and the outcomes from both the autumn term and the spring term.</p> <p>The CEO said that the Key Stage 2 data followed the same layout as previous reports, showing last year's Trust and national figures, predictions for all pupils and pupil premium pupils, and the current autumn and spring data. She explained that the reading and maths data was based on standardised tests and that writing was teacher assessed, with a combined measure also provided. She reported an improvement in reading, although the Trust had not yet met its prediction. Writing had also improved, which she attributed to a strong Trust wide focus, recent moderation meetings, and detailed analysis of pupils' work by the English lead and the EIT. The CEO highlighted that maths was a concern, as there had been no improvement from autumn to spring. She said she had asked the maths lead to investigate further, noting her view that lower outcomes in year 4 multiplication tests were likely affecting later arithmetic and number work in year 6. The maths lead agreed and would work with targeted schools.</p> <p>The CEO also noted that pupil premium outcomes were below the expected level. Although writing had improved and was now in line with predictions, this still meant that 41% of disadvantaged pupils were not meeting the expected standard. Reading, maths, and combined scores for this group were lower. She said her analysis showed the need for a sharper focus on the teaching and support of pupil premium pupils, particularly as head teachers had not previously written their own pupil premium strategies, which had limited strategic thinking around the needs of this group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A question was raised about the assessments used on entry to school. It was noted that the Trust already used the welcome assessment to evaluate children's language on entry and asked, in the context of multiple disadvantages and barriers faced by some pupils, whether the Trust also used the Boxall Profile.</i> <p>The DoE explained that although the inclusion hub had previously used the Boxall Profile when supporting schools, it was not currently used within individual schools or led by head teachers.</p>	<u>CEO</u>

	<p>The CEO said that the Trust inclusion partner had been asked to work with the new MIS (management information system) to review all assessments used to track vulnerable pupils. This work would help the Trust to monitor both progress and attainment more effectively. She confirmed that the inclusion partner had already been connected with a Director of Inclusion from another Trust so they could collaborate on developing this approach.</p> <p><u>ACTION- CEO to provide times table data for the next S&C meeting.</u></p>	
12.	<p>Spring phonics</p> <p>The CEO said that the Trust had predicted an 83% phonics outcome, which was above the national figure, and the spring term data was already showing 84%. She explained that this improvement was due to a fully aligned and well embedded phonics approach across the Trust. The English lead had worked closely with the EIT team and Head teachers to ensure systematic and synthetic teaching, regular assessments, and effective keep up and catch-up interventions, all of which were benefiting pupils.</p> <p>She noted that pupil premium data for phonics was not yet available and would be gathered as a priority. She also highlighted the schools requiring additional focus. The CEO said that one of the schools did not use the Bug Club scheme and was now receiving tier 3 support, as it appeared repeatedly across multiple areas of concern including attendance, special educational needs, pupil premium, and outcomes. Early work in the school was already showing positive signs. She confirmed that the English lead was working closely with schools to ensure pupils achieved the expected outcomes.</p> <p>The CEO invited Trustees to ask any questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A question was raised about the predicted 92% pupil premium outcome for year 1, and asked where the prediction had come from, explaining that the absence of earlier data made the figure confusing.</i> <p>The CEO said that the prediction of 92% for pupil premium pupils in year 1 had been based on the good level of development outcomes at the end of reception, alongside discussions with head teachers and the executive improvement team, including directors of school improvement and education. She explained that the system did not yet allow easy tracking of this group, but this could be added for the next data set.</p> <p>She emphasised that the prediction was highly aspirational and very strong for disadvantaged pupils, and that it was therefore important to check progress with urgency to ensure the trust remained on track.</p>	
13.	<p>TEF review</p> <p>The DoE reported that early years remained a key Trust priority. She explained that she and KY (Early Years Lead) had begun auditing early years provision across the Trust last year and had developed a yearlong programme of professional development. The work started with training led by Alistair Bryce Clegg, and since then they had visited a range of schools, including priority schools and those known for strong practice.</p> <p>This term they had returned to carry out follow up reviews. The DoE said she was in the process of handing the work over to KY and the wider team, including colleagues who led early years settings within the Trust, so that progress could be sustained. The team had been collecting evidence and were seeing positive improvements, particularly in schools with tier three plans. She noted that leadership in these schools was now clearer, with head teachers more involved in shaping the early years vision rather than leaving decisions solely to early years specialists.</p> <p>The DoE highlighted improvements in learning environments, communication and language strategies, and in the quality of adult pupil interactions. Leaders of the early year's hub had been modelling good practice to ensure approaches were tangible and relevant to Trust schools. A newly appointed teacher had also made a strong start.</p> <p>She confirmed that the main remaining areas for development were in the eastern schools. Overall, the priority was progressing well, and the structures being put in place would support long term sustainability. The hub would continue to run and share good practice, with head teachers increasingly taking responsibility for ongoing improvement within their own schools.</p>	

14.	<p>Local Advisory Committee Part II was taken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Chair noted a further comment raised previously regarding top slicing. She added that if a school's budget was not in surplus, it might be necessary for the school to forgo some of that funding.</i> <p>The CEO said that concerns about top slicing also related to the wider issue of how schools were charged for central services. When she first joined the Trust and visited schools, several head teachers had questioned the fairness of the previous per-pupil charging model. She explained that this approach was unusual, as most Trusts used a percentage top slice, which allowed for national benchmarking. The CEO said she had asked the finance team to model a benchmark top slice in the autumn term. The results showed that the Trust had been significantly out of alignment with comparable Trusts, which prompted the subsequent restructure. As a result, the top slice had now been reduced considerably. From September, the Trust would move to a percentage top slice, bringing it in line with trusts of a similar context.</p> <p>The CEO added that PE funding continued to fund the PE team, and pupil premium money would now remain with schools. The new central top slice would apply from September, and individual meetings had been held with head teachers where budgets showed substantial surplus or deficit. The long-term aim was for all schools to move as close to a zero position as possible, ensuring a stable Trust wide financial picture and enabling future investment in areas such as professional development and supply.</p> <p><i>A question was raised by a LAC Governor, before the S&C meeting, using the circulated question sheet and a response was given- (see appendix 1 below)</i></p> <p>It was suggested, following advice from the GP, that Ethos should become a separate standing agenda item. While it would remain linked to the Local Advisory Committees, treating it as a distinct item would help ensure it did not become lost within wider discussions.</p> <p>The GP noted that this was especially relevant now that the Trust had a Diocesan Liaison Trustee, Alwyn Harries, and that she and Alwyn had already discussed how he would contribute to this area. As most schools in the Trust were Church of England schools, the GP felt it was appropriate for Ethos to have dedicated space on the agenda.</p> <p><u>ACTION- Clerk to add Ethos as a separate item on future S&C agendas.</u></p>	Clerk
15.	<p>Receive External Reports and review Tier 3 Action Plans Part II was taken</p>	
16.	<p>Due Diligence The CEO said this item would be discussed at the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting.</p>	
17.	<p>Safeguarding The meeting agreed this item was covered under item 7.</p>	
18.	<p>Policies 18.1 Children in Care Policy- The Trustees approved this policy, following some minor wording amendments. 18.2 Parents code of conduct Policy- The Trustees reviewed the policy and recommended the policy to go to BoT for approval.</p>	
19.	<p>Risk Register RAG review The CEO said that the risk relating to the restructuring of school improvement systems was currently rated as unlikely. However, due to staff absence within the Trust and the fact that those staff were not expected to return, she felt the likelihood should temporarily be increased to possible while the new team was being established. She emphasised that this would be monitored closely and mitigated. The Trustees agreed and noted that Local Advisory Committees had also raised concerns about staff anxiety linked to contract changes. The Trustees supported moving the risk to possible until September, explaining that reduced capacity naturally increased the risk level.</p> <p>The CEO noted that the Early years risk had previously been rated as possible due to inconsistent early years provision potentially leading to gaps in learning. Given the strong progress reported by the DoE, she questioned whether the likelihood should now be changed to unlikely.</p>	GP

	The Trustees agreed, explaining that most early years settings were now meeting the expected standard, although a small number remained priorities. <u>ACTION- The GP to review and amend the Risk Register following the RAG review discussion.</u>	
20.	Evaluation of governance impact It was noted that there continued to be close attention to detail and strong concern for pupils, staff welfare and wellbeing across the Trust, and the committee agreed that Trust values were being upheld. The meeting offer thanks and good wishes to the DoE, in her new role and highlighted her significant contribution to the Trust over many years.	

The meeting ended at 7.07pm.

Signed by the Chair of the Committee.....on 12th May 2026

Appendix 1

AGENDA ITEM	Question	Answer
5.3 Matters arising	LAC question- Homework strategies across the Trust: is there alignment in this/discussion of best practice?	Homework strategies are currently down to individual schools.
14. (LAC raised question)	Is there an assessment of the criticality of initiatives handed down to the schools? i.e. are they critical or nice to haves; do they have impact for student outcomes? With school resources stretched, do these pull resources from front line pupil facing roles, or fall to the AH or other staff who are already stretched?	<p>1. National and statutory requirements Some initiatives are driven directly by national updates or statutory expectations. In these cases, the level of criticality is determined externally, and schools are required to implement them. We ensure that any such updates are communicated clearly, with an emphasis on what is essential versus recommended. Heads are already used to sharing communications and reaching out for support from each other; moving forward, this will continue to be supported by both trust leadership and heads/clusters.</p> <p>2. Trust-wide priorities Other initiatives come from Trust-wide priorities that are designed to support improvement across all settings. These should link closely with, and be reflected in, each school's ASIP so that there is alignment rather than duplication. The expectation here is that these initiatives have a clear purpose and positive impact on pupil outcomes. This is what AH's have always done in response to Trust priorities.</p> <p>3. Optional or 'bought-in' initiatives There are also optional initiatives or resources that schools can choose to adopt depending on their context. Academy Heads have the professional autonomy to decide whether these are beneficial or manageable within existing capacity and priorities. We regularly discuss these distinctions at AH meetings, where expectations are highlighted and the rationale and anticipated impact are explored. This also</p>

		provides an opportunity to consider workload implications and ensure that we are not drawing capacity away from frontline, pupil-facing work.
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