

Board of Trustees/Directors
Meeting minutes
Monday 9th February 2026
4.00pm

Held in person at Landscope School House with some online participation via Microsoft 'Teams'

Attended:

Cheryl Mathieson (Chair)	Rachael Sharpe (CEO)
Paul Waterworth (PW)	Kate Evans (KE)
Dominic Course (DC)	Graeme Scott (GS)
Ben Thorne (BT)	Jill Larcombe (JL)
Matt Matthew (MM)	Charlotte Roe (GP)

Minutes: Nicol Bush- Clerk to the Trust

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with an introduction to Jill Larcombe as a new trustee, and a welcome to everyone. Apologies were received and accepted from CC.</p>	
2.	<p>Reflection – Vision and Values <i>“Flourishing schools for all at the heart of our communities”</i> The Chair reminded everyone of the Trust’s vision and values which should drive discussions and decision making during the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p>Declarations of interest Jill Larcombe declared her association with the Devon Association of Governance</p>	
4.	<p>Any other business Part II was taken</p>	
5.	<p>Approval of meeting minutes from 15th December 2025 For approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The part I minutes of the meeting were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly. • The part II minutes of the meeting (circulated via email) were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly. 	
6.	<p>Matters arising from 15th December 2025 not on the agenda 6.1 DCEO to update the meeting on the Charity Commission document for Bearnas Foundation - The DCEO presented the Charity Commission document for the Bearnas Foundation which Michelmores had obtained during the conversion of Bearnas in 2016. The document was discussed at length and it was agreed that it was the responsibility of the trustees of the Bearnas Foundation to ensure it was operating properly and that it was not a matter for the Trust. It was also agreed that the CEO of the Trust should not be a trustee of the Bearnas Foundation in order to preserve independence. It was however suggested that the DCEO, the Chair and the GP should discuss the document with the Bearnas Foundation Member to help guide him in the right direction. 6.2 DCEO to confirm that the audit documents had been submitted to Companies House within the required deadline. The DCEO confirmed that the audit documents had been submitted within the deadline. 6.3 CEO to update the meeting on persistent absence figures and appropriate benchmarks. The CEO said these figures featured in her CEO report, in agenda item 8.</p>	
7.	<p>Trust Risk Register 7.1 - The Trustees reviewed the risk register and agreed the risks highlighted for Board review would be covered during the meeting. It was agreed to re-visit the register at the end of the meeting to review the RAG ratings.</p>	

	<p>7.2 -The CEO said that there had been a change to a risk category within the Standards and Curriculum Committee. The data accuracy risk had moved from minor to possible due to challenges within the current data collation process and a high likelihood of human error.</p> <p>The GP noted that the risk register had been removed from LAC agendas and visit note templates for the time being.</p>	
8.	<p>Chief Executive Officer's Report (Circulated via email before the meeting)</p> <p>8.1 CEO report – The CEO invited any questions. The following comments and questions were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Chair commented that it was positive to see the CEO was reviewing with the English Lead the writing scheme used by the Trust to ensure that it was fit for purpose. The Trustees asked whether the English Lead had a sense of which elements of the data were driving the current outcomes?</i> <p>The CEO said that the issues in writing were linked to grammar and strong foundations. She explained that the Trust had been using a scheme called Book Writes, modelled on Pie Corbett's Talk for Writing. While the scheme identified grammatical elements within texts that teachers could draw on, it did not provide a structured sequence for teaching. She noted that handwriting was also emerging as a concern. Because the strong foundations were not secure, teachers were not adapting the scheme to address gaps, and pupils were missing the basic skills they needed. The CEO shared that she had a planned meeting with the English lead to discuss further and unpick data and current outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A Trustee asked whether Bug Club included a handwriting and transcribing skills programme that might offer a cheaper alternative.</i> <p>The CEO said she would check this with CA at their meeting the following day.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Chair asked for an update on the CAIRB at Littleham school.</i> <p>The CEO said that she had met with DCC to clarify the situation and updated the meeting on their discussion. The DCC were keen to support the Trust and the CEO reported that a plan had been requested to show the running deficit and the operational costs of the CAIRB. She also noted that she had signed the SLA for September 2026–2027.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>The Chair asked about staff absence levels and requested clarification on how the Trust's data compared with other trusts and with the national average.</i> <p>The CEO said she had been unable to find comparative national The CEO noted further that she had arranged a meeting with the CEO from the Ted Wragg Trust to explore how the Link Academy and Ted Wragg could work together to support alternative provision. or trust level data, so she had benchmarked staff absence against the Trust's own figures from previous years. However, she mentioned that the new MIS system the Trust was looking at would be able to compare data with other trusts' data.</p> <p>8.2 Workforce Action Plan</p> <p>The CEO said that as the next meeting of the Remuneration and People Committee meeting was not due to take place until March, she had included the updated action plan within her report. She noted that Sue in HR had completed substantial work with Pete Halford on induction, recruitment, probation processes ensuring alignment with the Trust's Vision and Values as part of the Diocese's flourishing network programme. The CEO said the next step for HR was to begin evaluating the Trust's appraisal system.</p>	
9.	<p>Deficit Recovery Plan and Final Recovery Plan (Both circulated to Trustees confidentially before the meeting)</p> <p>Part II was taken</p>	
10.	<p>Trust Growth</p> <p>10.1 Woodbury Management Partnership – update</p> <p>The CEO noted that this agenda item was covered in her report. She explained that the Regions Group had given permission towards the end of the previous term for Woodbury to apply to transfer to the Trust. The governors of Woodbury had subsequently met to discuss the matter and they had concluded that the management partnership had not yet been in place long enough for them to make a fair judgement about whether or not it was the right long-term arrangement for the school and would prefer the management partnership to continue for a further year before any final decision is made. The CEO noted that communication with the governors and the school had been open and positive to date. She considered that an extension to the management partnership would be beneficial for the Trust as well as it would provide us with more in-depth knowledge of Woodbury to enable a more informed decision. After some discussion, the Trustees agreed to extend the management partnership for as long as was considered necessary.</p> <p>Part II was taken</p> <p>10.2 Update following meeting with Regions Group:</p> <p>Covered in the above agenda item.</p>	

	Part II was taken	
11.	<p>Audit Committee</p> <p>11.1 - There were no questions or comments made.</p> <p>11.2 Internal audit programme – The Chair of the Audit Committee gave an overview of the proposed internal audit programme. After consideration of the Trust’s risk register, Westcotts had identified two areas for audit: review of capital strategy; and review of financial sustainability. After discussion, the Trustees agreed to the two areas.</p> <p>The DCEO said he would ask the auditors if they could move both audits back to the summer one and summer two terms, although it was noted that the greatest impact of this change would fall on the finance and estates teams.</p>	
12.	<p>Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <p>The Chair of the F&GP Committee summarised the meeting.</p> <p>There were no questions raised.</p>	
13.	<p>Remuneration and People Committee</p> <p>The Chair of the Remuneration and People committee shared an update on:</p> <p>13.2 CEO objectives - following the meetings with Mark Blackman, draft objectives had been developed and agreed with the CEO (these had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting). The Trustees confirmed their agreement to the objectives.</p> <p>13.3 Staff Wellbeing – comments from governor visit notes and LAC minutes had highlighted that staff wellbeing was currently causing concern in some schools. It was recognised that the Trust was experiencing a period of change, including restructuring and a shift of responsibilities, which understandably may have an impact on staff and their wellbeing. It was noted that there was mixed feedback as in other schools staff wellbeing remained positive and resilient. It was agreed that it was important for those schools to share some of their practices with the schools where wellbeing appeared to be more challenging. The GP had agreed to send a response to the LACs and would follow up as required. The Remuneration and People Committee would continue to monitor the situation and the CEO noted that she had arranged for staff wellbeing and the sharing of good practice to be added as an agenda item at the upcoming Academy Heads meeting, to support collaboration and promote staff wellbeing across the Trust.</p>	
14.	<p>Standards & Curriculum Committee</p> <p>14.1 The Chair of the Standards and Curriculum Committee gave an overview of the recent meeting, noting that it had been positive and that several actions had been identified.</p> <p>14.2 Local Advisory Committees</p> <p>There were no other points to raise.</p>	
15.	<p>Governance</p> <p>15.1 Update of changes or appointments of Trustees and Governors</p> <p>The Chair outlined the proposal to appoint a new Foundation Director. Because of their experience and interest, it was also proposed that the candidate would take on the role of Diocesan Liaison Director. The Trustees noted that the candidate would bring valuable skills to the add to the Board, and agreed to the appointment. The papers would be forwarded to EDEN and the YMCA for Foundation Member approval.</p> <p>The GP confirmed with the Trustees responsibility for the following areas:</p> <p>Graeme Scott- Safeguarding Trustee Kate Evans- Attendance Trustee Christine Cottle- SEND Trustee Jill Larcombe- CIC and PP Trustee Cheryl Mathieson – HR and People Trustee New Foundation Trustee - Diocesan Liaison Trustee</p> <p>The GP highlighted the vacancy for an Estates Trustee and asked JL to consider whether any additional responsibilities should be included.</p> <p>15.2 External review of governance- the Chair noted that best practice recommended that external reviews be carried out every three years. Whilst another review was due – the Trust’s last one had been carried out in 2022 – she suggested delaying commissioning any review until the following year to allow the CEO a full year to settle into the role and provide time to update the scheme of delegation and the Articles of Association. This would also provide more timely support in preparation for forthcoming MAT reviews. The Trustees agreed.</p> <p>15.3 Local Advisory Committees update- The GP noted that a Chair was still required for the Totnes LAC.</p>	
16.	<p>External Inspections</p> <p>16.1 Cheriton Bishop Ofsted</p> <p>The CEO reported that Cheriton Bishop had had an Ofsted inspection on 2/3 February. She noted that the inspector had recognised clear progress since the last inspection and</p>	

	<p>had praised the Academy Head and his team for their work. It was stressed that the report had not been finalised yet and the results were therefore for Trustees only. The CEO thanked the DoE and her team for their hard work and support around the school. Part II was taken</p> <p>16.2 SIAMS: Branscombe CofE school (Report circulated to the Trustees before the meeting)</p> <p>- The CEO noted that Branscombe's recent SIAMS inspection had been very positive and the final report was now available which read well. Broadhembury had also since been inspected, receiving another positive outcome, although their final report was not available and so the information must currently remain with Trustees only. She noted that Landscope School was due to have its SIAMS inspection the following Wednesday. There were no questions raised.</p>	
17.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>17.1 Safeguarding report (Circulated to the Trustees before the meeting)</p> <p>GS gave an overview of the Safeguarding report and invited Trustees to ask questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The CEO asked the trustees whether they felt the report provided stronger data and a more effective review than previous versions.</i> <p>The Trustees raised that the report was easier to access and digest, and it was useful to see the overview of the Trust's internal safeguarding audits vs DCC's (Devon County Council).</p> <p>The Chair explained that whilst safeguarding would remain a standing item on all committee agendas, the overall safeguarding report and detailed discussion thereof would be taken to the full Board meetings.</p> <p>17.2 CEO to highlight any specific matters to note</p> <p>The CEO said that a few safeguarding matters were being managed, but there were no significant issues to report to the meeting.</p>	
18.	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>The DCEO said there was nothing to report at this time.</p>	
19.	<p>Sustainability</p> <p>The DCEO updated the meeting on sustainability across the Trust, noting that all schools had climate action plans in place and were working through them. He said a sustainability survey had been issued to all schools and that the results would be included in the report for Trustees to review. He highlighted the strong work at Landscope school, where sustainability had been effectively embedded within the curriculum. He also reported that a LAC governor from the East Devon Hub had taken on the role of Sustainability Lead to support schools with their climate action plans.</p> <p>The DCEO said he had spoken with the climate ambassadors (funded by the DfE), who were interested in linking school clusters with climate ambassadors in their local areas. They had also asked whether the Trust would be willing to act as case studies to showcase the actions being taken.</p>	
20.	<p>Policies for approval</p> <p>The following policies had been reviewed and updated and were presented for approval:</p> <p>20.1 Standards & Curriculum Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aid Policy - This policy was not available for the meeting, but the Trustees agreed for this policy to be approved via email. • Missing Pupil Policy and Procedure- The Trustees approved this policy. • Equality and Diversity Policy-The Trustees approved this policy. • Online Safety- This policy was not available for the meeting, but the Trustees agreed for this policy to be approved via email. • Parents Code of Conduct-This policy was not available for the meeting, but the Trustees agreed for this policy to be approved via email. <p>20.2 Admissions Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2027-28 Link MAT admissions policies- The Trustees approved the 2027-28 Admissions policies. <p>20.3 Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretion Policy-The Trustees approved this policy. <p>20.4 Remuneration and People Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No policies for approval <p>20.5 Audit Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No policies for approval <p>20.6 Full Board Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20.6 Exclusion Policy (Minuted by Governance Professional) - The CEO requested that this policy be reviewed by the Board of Trustees outside of the usual policy schedule to propose amendments. The proposed changes were intended to provide Academy Heads with greater autonomy in making decisions regarding exclusions. This followed an incident at one of the schools where, due 	

	to the time-sensitive nature of the decision and the unavailability of the CEO and DCEO, an exclusion was not implemented. Trustees asked questions regarding the implementation of the revised procedure and the potential risk of an increase in exclusions. The CEO assured Trustees that the proposed changes represented an improvement to the current process and would enable a more effective and timely response to incidents of challenging behaviour. The CEO also expressed confidence that the changes would not lead to an increase in the number of exclusions. The Trustees approved the Exclusion Policy.	
21.	<p>Review of Risk register RAG ratings</p> <p>The Trustees agreed, following the committee's discussions, that the assessment of data risk should change from likelihood "possible" to "moderate". It was also agreed that the educational standards risk needed close monitoring as progress towards targets had been slow. The CEO said this should be reviewed again at the next data drop.</p> <p>The Trustees noted that under the Safeguarding impact section, the rating of "almost none" was not appropriate and should be amended to "major." Trustees also raised that the organisational culture should change from "rare" to "major".</p> <p>These changes would have an impact on the overall RAG ratings.</p>	
22.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact</p> <p>The Trustees agreed that the meeting had been positive, discussions had been impactful and had demonstrated curiosity, collaboration and belonging.</p>	

The meeting ended at 6pm

Signed by the chair of the Committee on.....30th March 2026.