

Board of Trustees/Directors

Minutes

20th October 2025

4.00pm

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

Invited: Cheryl Mathieson (Chair)
 Rachael Sharpe (CEO) Paul Waterworth (PW)
 Ben Thorne (BT) Dominic Course (DC)
 Kate Evans (KE) Christine Cottle (CC)
 Max Thomas (MT)

In attendance:

Charlotte Roe (GP)
 Matt Matthew (DCEO)

Minutes: Clerk to the Trust- Nicol Bush

No	Item	ACTION
1.	Welcome and apologies Apologies were received and accepted from GS	
2.	Declarations of interest There were no new declarations brought forward	
3.	Any other business There was no other business brought to the meeting.	
4.	Approval of meeting minutes For approval: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part I Minutes of the meeting dated 14th July 2025 were approved as a true record. Part II minutes of the meeting dated 14th July 2025 were circulated to those that attended via email and were approved as a true record. 	
5.	Matters arising from 14th July 2025 not on the agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation of approval of proposed term dates for 26/27 and 27/28 - circulated by email to Trustees in July 2025 <p>It was noted that the dates had been circulated via email in July for approval, and Trustees had confirmed their agreement via email.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCEO/GP to provide an update on status of training videos for AHs and Governors on the risk register <p>The DCEO explained that a first attempt had been made to create an eight-minute video explaining how to log in, access the risk register, add and delete risks, and review them. The video was intended as an initial guide and feedback was invited. The DCEO acknowledged that improvements might be needed, such as breaking the content into smaller sections for ease of use. Previously, Word or PDF documents with screenshots had been provided for Academy heads, and these remained available alongside the video. Further videos were planned depending on feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCEO to provide a report on in-year pupil departures <p>A report on in-year pupil departures was presented, which showed movement across schools and included a comparison with previous years. Trustees noted some schools had a number of high departures and agreed further analysis was needed to understand reasons and destinations, including whether pupils moved to special schools or opted for elective home education. Concerns were raised</p>	

	<p>that departures might indicate unmet needs, particularly for children with additional needs, and the importance of tracking these pupils was highlighted. The matter was scheduled for discussion at the upcoming Academy Heads' meeting, with a view to exploring patterns and ensuring appropriate support structures.</p> <p><i>A Trustee raised concern about the increasing number of pupils moving to elective home education. While current practice followed legal requirements by notifying the local authority and removing pupils from the roll, it was suggested that the Trust should consider a more proactive approach, including engaging further with families and the local authority. The upcoming SEND review was expected to have some impact, but the trend was worrying, particularly for small schools, as elective home education was generally not considered effective for pupils.</i></p> <p>The Trustees discussed the subject of elective home education at length. It was noted that the Department for Education intended to tighten regulations on elective home education, with a new Children's Wellbeing in Schools Bill currently progressing through Parliament.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCEO to confirm the two internal audit reports were shared with Trustees via email <p>The DCEO shared that two internal audits were completed last year, covering financial sustainability and communication. The DCEO had provided a draft management response for the financial sustainability review. The Audit Committee Chair provided some additional wording which was approved. It had previously been agreed that the management response for the communication review would be delayed until after the Trust Strategy Day. Although circumstances had changed since the review was carried out, it was acknowledged that there were areas for improvement, such as the timely circulation of meeting papers. Expectations had however now been clarified moving forward.</p> <p>Trustees agreed draft responses for both reviews which would be finalised and circulated for confirmation before submission.</p>	
6.	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>6.1 CEO/DCEO to provide update on Risk Register Working Party</p> <p>The CEO stated that the risk management portal was a useful tool when used correctly, but highlighted that while schools maintained individual risk registers, there was no clear set of Trust-wide risks across key areas such as quality of education, school improvement, finance and operations, people and workforce, and governance. The SLT (Senior Leadership Team) planned to review and restructure risks, assigning responsibility for specific sections to relevant teams, and then present a consolidated trust-wide overview for trustees. The CEO raised that financial sustainability was the most significant current risk, alongside risks relating to educational quality and pupil premium attainment. These priorities would be addressed in the upcoming away day and CEO report.</p> <p>6.2 Meeting to consider the risk categories highlighted for Board review with particular scrutiny of any amber or red risks to ensure they are discussed within the meeting</p> <p>Whilst the register was in the process of being reviewed, the Board agreed to review the risks as they currently stood. The Chair noted that there were six risks to be considered at the meeting – <i>Trust Growth; Reputation and Competition; Strategic Risks; Governance Risks; Policy Management; and Financial Management</i>. It was agreed that all of these risks would be discussed during the meeting.</p> <p>6.3 Meeting to consider any risk register issues brought forward from committee meetings</p> <p>No issues were brought forward.</p>	
7.	<p>Chief Executive Officer's Report - Circulated via email before the meeting.</p> <p>The CEO presented her first report and invited Trustees to make any suggestions or additions for future reports. It was agreed that the report was clear and concise. The CEO shared that the report was structured around the Department for Education's Trust quality descriptors, covering quality of education, school</p>	

	<p>improvement, finance and operations, and people and workforce. It linked to the Trust evaluation framework that would be reviewed at the upcoming strategy day. Key updates included demographic data showing that, despite having 23 primary schools, pupil numbers totalled only 1,714, with the majority in Key Stage 2 and lower numbers in early years. The CEO stressed the importance of marketing early years and nursery provision to secure enrolment and support long-term growth, noting that some pupils attended nursery but later moved elsewhere, prompting questions about convenience and parental choice.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked if the schools have the physical capacity to offer space for other community services, such as health, dental, or pre- and postnatal support. If so, would Academy Heads be open to exploring this as a way to generate income and increase family engagement with schools.</i> The CEO said that recent conversations with Academy Heads had highlighted a growing concern about the increase in special educational needs, which was also reflected in the strategy day priorities and in her report. She explained that schools were seeing children entering settings who were very different from those five or ten years ago, yet schools were still operating a traditional model with a teacher and a teaching assistant in every classroom. This approach was financially unsustainable, and she encouraged schools to think differently and consider bringing in external services available in their communities.</p> <p>She gave examples such as health visitors, local GP surgeries offering drop-in sessions, and speech and language specialists. The CEO noted that some Academy Heads were open to these ideas, while others were reluctant. She referenced a research report that showed positive outcomes when a school nurse worked across schools, funded by Devon, which improved attendance and parental engagement. The CEO stressed that services like school nursing were keen to explore new models because many nurses were dissatisfied with remote working and wanted to be on-site with children. She concluded that schools needed to be proactive and innovative, and mentioned that the Trust was already considering restructuring to include roles such as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists to better meet current needs.</p> <p><i>The Trustees noted that the majority of pupils suspended had some form of SEND and asked if there were common factors and common needs that the Trust were not meeting.</i></p> <p>The CEO responded that while there was no definitive data analysis yet, discussions with Academy Heads suggested most behaviour issues appeared linked to social, emotional and mental health needs. However, she questioned whether some cases might actually stem from communication, language or cognition difficulties. She highlighted the need for a stronger focus on OAIP (ordinarily available inclusive provision) in classrooms and confirmed that the inclusion team was working on this.</p>	
8.	<p>Trust Growth Woodbury Management Partnership – update</p>	

	<p>The CEO shared that she had recently visited Woodbury and Woodbury Salterton schools and had met Gillian Pyle, the head teacher of Woodbury. Woodbury was considered strong with capable practitioners and aspirational leaders. During the visit to Woodbury, the CEO observed classrooms and met staff, accompanied by the DoE, while the DCEO focused on estates. The CEO highlighted that Gillian was supporting Woodbury Salterton as Executive Head and was providing much needed capacity to the school. Gillian had high expectations and had already made significant improvements in the school's use of space. She felt confident that Woodbury Salterton would progress quickly under Gillian's guidance. A management partnership meeting was scheduled for the 24 October with the CEO and the Chair together with the governors of Woodbury and representatives from the Diocese and local authority. Gillian had expressed interest in Woodbury eventually joining the Trust.</p> <p><i>Trustees asked the CEO what the advantages were to Woodbury joining the Trust.</i></p> <p>The CEO said that the Trust had explored collaboration opportunities and confirmed that Woodbury was a strong school with capacity and leadership to support growth. Gillian, the head teacher, had already improved provision and expressed interest in joining the Trust and supporting other schools. Discussions had taken place about Woodbury providing pastoral support for Farway.</p>	
9.	<p>Admissions Committee</p> <p>The Chair shared that the Admissions Committee had continued to meet weekly to consider a number of applications. Nursery numbers were increasing in some schools, but more were needed in others, as highlighted in the CEO's data.</p> <p>Terms of Reference - the Terms of Reference had been reviewed by the Committee and were approved by the Board of Trustees.</p>	
10.	<p>Audit Committee</p> <p>10.1 There were no minutes to note as the next meeting was scheduled for 4 December 2025</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit committee shared that decisions on audit focus areas would be made later in the year, likely next term. Tender returns for the external audit had been received and were being compiled into a document for review.</p> <p>10.2 Terms of Reference- were deferred due to Audit Committee not meeting until December.</p> <p><u>ACTION- Clerk to add Terms of Reference to the Audit committee agenda for December.</u></p>	Clerk
11.	<p>Finance & General Purposes Committee</p> <p>11.1 Minutes from 26th September 2025 – as the minutes were not available for the meeting, the Chair of the Committee provided a verbal update.</p> <p>Part II was taken</p> <p>11.2 Terms of Reference for approval - the Committee had reviewed the Terms of Reference which were largely unchanged except for the proposal to move HR responsibilities to the Remuneration Committee to enable a greater focus on HR matters. The Trustees approved the revised Terms of reference for the F&GP committee.</p>	
12.	<p>Remuneration Committee</p> <p>12.1 Minutes from 26th September 2025 – as the minutes were not available for the meeting, the Chair of the Committee provided a verbal update.</p> <p>Part II was taken</p> <p>12.2 Trustees to discuss the proposal of changing the committee to Remuneration and People Committee</p> <p>The Chair explained the proposal to move HR matters from the F&GP Committee to the Remuneration Committee to allow a greater focus on HR matters which would also support alignment with the Trust evaluation criteria, particularly around workforce and people development. As part of this it was proposed to change the name of the Committee to Remuneration and People. The Board approved the proposal to move HR matters and to change the name.</p>	Chair/GP

	<p>12.3 Terms of Reference for approval – the Chair noted that the Terms of Reference would now be updated to include the name change and addition of HR matters. Updated Terms would be presented for approval at the December Board meeting.</p> <p><u>ACTION: Chair and GP to update Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>12.4 CEO Objective Setting Process</p> <p>Part II was taken</p> <p>12.5 DCEO Pay Review – (DCEO to leave the room for this item)</p> <p>Part II was taken</p>	
13.	<p>Standards & Curriculum Committee- To follow</p> <p>13.1 Minutes from 14th October 2025 - as the minutes were not available for the meeting, the Chair of the Committee provided a brief overview of the meeting; no comments or questions were brought forward.</p> <p>13.2 Terms of Reference for approval</p> <p>The Terms of Reference had been reviewed by the Committee and were approved by the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>13.3 Local Advisory Committees - There were no comments brought forward.</p>	
14.	<p>Governance</p> <p>14.1 Update</p> <p>The Chair, the CEO and the GP had met with Christina Mabin of the Diocese to discuss Governance in general. The Chair shared that it had been agreed that as Marjons had stepped down as a Member of the Trust, an additional Member was needed. Christina agreed to help identify a suitable Member. It was also agreed that the Trust's Articles of Association and the Scheme of Delegation required updating. The Chair, CEO and GP would take this forward with support from Christina Mabin.</p> <p>14.2 Trustee recruitment</p> <p>Two applications had been received from potential trustees. The GP and Chair had met informally with both candidates and more formal interviews with the CEO and the Chair were scheduled shortly. Christina Mabin had also agreed to help identify further candidates.</p> <p>14.3 DCEO to provide update on the Bearnas Educational Trust</p> <p>The DCEO noted that he had not been able to find out any further information on the Bearnas Educational Trust. The Chair advised that this had also been discussed with Christina Mabin who said she had also not found any details. However, she planned to review the Diocese's historical records to see if she could find anything. It was agreed that it was not the Link Academy Trust's responsibility to find a new trustee for the Bearnas Educational Trust but it was acknowledged that the Trust should try to understand more about the objective of the Bearnas Educational Trust and in particular clarify whether any restrictions existed or obligations needed to be met in relation to the operation of Bearnas school. Christina Mabin suggested contacting the Charity Commission.</p> <p><u>ACTION: DCEO to follow up with Charity Commission</u></p> <p>14.4 Compliance paperwork – The GP reminded the Trustees of the need to complete the compliance paperwork and said she would contact Trustees via email for any outstanding paperwork.</p> <p>14.5 Directors – identity verification</p> <p>The Chair noted that Trustees and Directors were required to complete identity verification, which would be mandatory after November. Some members had successfully completed the process using biometric passports and digital ID checks, while others had encountered issues requiring additional trust information. The Chair advised that alternatives such as in-person verification at the Post Office were available. It was agreed that the GP would resend the email containing the instructions to those that needed it. Once verification was complete, the codes generated should be shared with the DCEO.</p> <p><u>ACTION: GP to resend email</u></p> <p>14.6 Academy Trust Handbook – Summary of changes</p> <p>Trustees acknowledged the summary of changes to the Academy Trust handbook.</p>	<p>DCEO</p> <p>GP</p> <p>GP</p>
15.	<p>Trust Evaluation and Strategy Day</p>	

	The Chair advised the meeting that the Trust Evaluation and Strategy Day was due to take place on November 5 th . The CEO had shared the agenda for the day and outlined the objectives.	
16.	<p>External inspections</p> <p>16.1 New OfSTED Framework – what does the SLT think the new OfSTED framework will look like?</p> <p>The DoE presented an overview of the upcoming Ofsted framework changes. Key changes included the introduction of a report card, a five-point grading scale, and a stronger focus on inclusion, recognising SEND, disadvantaged pupils and those known to social care. The framework aimed to improve clarity and transparency, with greater collaboration between inspectors and school leaders and additional inspectors on day one to allow deeper contextual understanding. Smaller schools and mixed age classes were specifically acknowledged. Quality of education was split into inclusion and curriculum and teaching, achievement replaced outcomes, and leadership and management was renamed leadership and governance. Attendance and behaviour remained priorities alongside personal development and wellbeing, while early years retained a strong focus on phonics, reading and welfare. The new grading scale ranged from urgent improvement to exceptional, with schools required to meet all criteria for each level, replacing the previous best fit approach.</p> <p>The DoE explained that the new Ofsted report card would provide a colour coded overview of each evaluation area alongside detailed explanations and evidence. Monitoring visits would focus only on areas marked as needing attention rather than the entire framework, allowing quicker updates when improvements were made. Schools with critical concerns, usually linked to leadership and capacity to improve, would receive focused monitoring visits.</p> <p>This approach aimed to give parents a clearer picture of school performance and reflect variations in practice among schools rated as good.</p> <p>Inspections would follow a four-year cycle, with all schools receiving graded (two-day) inspections rather than short visits. Case sampling would replace deep dives, with inspectors tracking individual pupils to assess inclusion and adaptations. Learning walks and discussions with leaders would form the core of inspections, and the day would finish earlier to support wellbeing. Further training for Academy Heads would cover these changes in more detail.</p> <p>16.2 Ofsted: Which schools are expected to be inspected this academic year? This information was not discussed.</p> <p>16.2 SIAMS: Which schools are expected to be inspected this academic year? This information was not discussed.</p>	
17.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>17.1 Safeguarding updated</p> <p>GS had provided an update summarising activity since the summer term and setting out next steps. The Trustees agreed this was a useful report.</p> <p>17.2 CEO to update on any specific matters to note</p> <p>It was noted that the Director of Safeguarding had produced a report for the S&C Committee which the Trustees on the Committee felt lacked clarity and structure, making it difficult to interpret. The CEO agreed and confirmed she had a meeting arranged with the Director of Safeguarding to set expectations for improved reporting, emphasising that safeguarding was the most critical area for scrutiny and future reports must be clearer and more consistent.</p>	
18.	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>The DCEO said that there were no significant issues to note.</p>	
19.	<p>Sustainability Plan</p> <p>Discuss and agree the way forward from a Trust view and discuss the Climate Action Plan</p> <p>The DCEO reported that all schools now had a climate action plan in place, developed with support from Let's Go Zero through online sessions, and a named sustainability lead. A Trust-wide sustainability strategy had also been produced, alongside estate audits for energy efficiency. The next step was to strengthen governance by appointing a sustainability lead at Trustee level and a</p>	

	representative from each Local Advisory Committee. Sustainability would become a standing agenda item for the Board. Schools had responded positively, recognising existing efforts and integrating sustainability into the curriculum.	
20.	<p>Policies for approval The following policies have been reviewed and updated and are presented for approval as per the policy schedule:</p> <p>20.1 Recommended by Standards & Curriculum Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding – This policy was approved by the Trustees. • Behaviour Policy- This policy was approved by the Trustees. • Intent Relational and Behaviour Approach- This policy was approved by the Trustees. <p>20.2 Recommended by the Remuneration Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Career Teachers- This policy was approved by the Trustees. <p>20.4 Board of Trustee Policies Complaints Policy – new model policy- The Chair noted that the complaints policy had been updated using a new model policy. The Trustees reviewed and accepted the amendments, including clarification that stage two complaints would be handled by the CEO if the complaint involved a senior management team member. The updated policy was approved.</p>	
21.	<p>Review of Risk Register RAG ratings The meeting reviewed the current risk ratings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust growth - the Trustees questioned whether the green rating was appropriate given low pupil numbers and ongoing discussions with other schools. It was agreed to change the rating to amber. • Reputation and Competition – agreed this should remain amber, given previous challenges. • Strategic risks – agreed for this to remain amber • Financial management and going concern – agreed for this to remain red. • Policy Management – agreed that this should remain green. • Governance – agreed for this to remain amber, reflecting the need to recruit additional trustees. <p>It was agreed that pupil numbers should be included as a key risk indicator under both finance and trust-level considerations.</p>	
22.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact of meeting The Chair invited the Trustees to use the CST framework (based on the Seven Principles of Public Life) for good decision making to consider the impact of the meeting. Trustees reflected on whether their decisions met standards of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. Trustees concluded that all principles within the framework had been upheld and “good” decisions had been made.</p>	

The meeting ended at 6.35pm

Signed by the Chair of the Committee.....on.....