

Moorland Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

Meeting minutes

Wednesday 6th May 2026

5.30pm

Held online via Microsoft 'Teams'

Attended:

Chair- Oliver Heathman

Parent Governors- Lynda Cooper (Hennock)

Charlotte Vicary-Ward (Bearnese)

Anne- Marie Lewis (Wolborough)

Kate Bairstow (Widecombe-in-the-Moor)

Rosie Stamp (Illesington)

Academy Headteacher- Kat Williams (Illesington)

Staff Governor- Rebecca Barons

In attendance:

CEO- Rachael Sharpe **(For the first 10 minutes of the meeting)**

Governance Professional- Charlotte Roe

Minutes: Nicol Bush- LAC Clerk

No	Item	ACTION
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome to Governors. Apologies were received from RN and RST	
2.	Declarations of interest • LC is a parent representative for The Outdoors School, Exeter. • RN is a Teacher at Shipway Learning Academy There were no new declarations of interest brought to the meeting	
3.	CEO update The CEO confirmed that the central team restructuring process has concluded, with the establishment of a Business Support Team and an Education Support Team, which would be shared school improvement approach. The Education Support Team now formally included Claire Appleby (English Lead) and Richard Charlie (Maths Lead), alongside the Trust Inclusion Partner, Vicky Gillian, appointed following an externally supported interview process. Challenge Partners had been allocated by cluster, aligned with LAC groupings, to strengthen collaborative working. Initial meetings had taken place to shape the team's focus, followed by a Trust-wide leadership event facilitated by an external speaker, to promote collaboration and belonging across the Trust. Updates were also provided on continued Early Years improvement work led by Kelly Yeo, Christian Distinctiveness leadership and RE and worship hubs. The CEO highlighted that the restructuring had a positive impact on Trust finances, and the next phase of the financial recovery plan would focus on targeted support for the three schools with the largest deficits, with plans already in place. The meeting was also informed that the HR and Operations Lead would be relocating but would continue in post working largely virtually, with scheduled in-person visits agreed by the Board.	

	The CEO invited questions from Governors regarding the update, and the following points were raised: • <i>Would SEND now fall under VG- the Inclusion partner?</i> The CEO said that SEND provision sat within individual schools and was led by SENCOs and reported that she and the Trust Inclusion Partner had met with SENCOs earlier that day to clarify roles and responsibilities using the SEND Code of Practice. She explained that this had addressed misconceptions about the respective roles of the SENCO, class teacher, academy head, Trust Inclusion Partner and CEO, and emphasised that while responsibility for SEND remained in schools, SENCOs were supported through advice, mentoring and collaboration, including increased sharing of expertise across the Trust and access to support from the Trust Inclusion Partner, drawing on her experience as a SENCO and former headteacher. The CEO said that she had asked Headteachers to contribute views on future Trust-wide educational priorities and, while responses had not yet been reviewed, she expected inclusion to emerge as a key priority. This was linked to the SEND reforms, the new White Paper, changes at local authority level, increased inclusion funding, and the stronger emphasis on inclusion within the inspection framework. The CEO highlighted the importance of viewing inclusion more broadly than SEND alone and advised that this would inform Trust-wide priorities and CPD next year, alongside developing staff capacity, sharing expertise, and making effective use of the cluster model. • <i>A Governor reported that the increased empowerment at school level had been well received and welcomed by staff. It was noted that ongoing time constraints remained a significant challenge and highlighted complex, SEND cases could have an impact on staff wellbeing.</i> The CEO responded that newly appointed SENCOs would be supported through mentoring from the Trust Inclusion Partner, who brings significant experience. She explained that this support included robust monitoring and timely review of progress, noting that in some complex cases there had previously been insufficient pace and challenge. The CEO highlighted that planning and review needed to happen quickly and effectively to ensure the best outcomes for the child, whether within the school or through alternative provision, and confirmed that this approach would also provide stronger support for staff wellbeing, particularly for those new to the SENCO role.	
4.	Approval of meeting minutes from 11th March 2026. For approval: • Part I minutes- These minutes were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly. • Part II minutes (circulated to those that attended the meeting confidentially via email) - These minutes were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly.	
5.	Matters arising from 11th March 2026 (not on the agenda) 5.1 Governors to review the responses to the questions raised at the previous LAC and confirm if any supplementary questions. There were no comments or questions raised.	
6.	Clerk Update 6.1 Appointments/nominations- • Vacancy open for a foundation governor at Ilsington CofE school. • Vacancy for a sustainability governor- potential candidate. 6.2 Training- • Introduction to school governance- Wednesday 10th Jun 2026 10:00-12:00 online. 6.3 Clerk to Local Board Committee to update the governors on any local or national issues- The Governance Professional provided an update on a number of forthcoming policy and regulatory changes, including the School Food Standards Consultation, due to close in mid-May, which proposed stricter requirements around sugar, salt, processed foods, limits on cheese as a main ingredient, and a ban on deep fat frying; she noted that while primary schools were largely already compliant, secondary schools were expected to be more significantly affected, with pilot schools reporting increased costs and no current confirmation of additional funding to cover free school meal shortfalls.	

	The Governance Professional noted the changes under the Children's Wellbeing Act aimed at reducing uniform costs, limiting schools to three branded items (including bags but excluding ties) and requiring schools to highlight cheaper alternatives, prompting a review of the school uniform policy. The GP also advised governors of a new policy relating to pupils with medical needs accessing school, increased estates reporting responsibilities now falling more formally within governance oversight, and the introduction of additional funding through the Inclusive Mainstream Fund to support the SEND White Paper, with further updates to follow as guidance becomes available. <i>A Governor asked whether the increased estates reporting requirements were a national change or specific to the Trust.</i> The Governance Professional confirmed that this reflected a national change in governance expectations, with a clearer requirement for Trustees to have formal oversight and reporting of estates, rather than a local or Trust specific initiative.	
6.	Focus: Analysis and evaluation of pupil outcomes and targets for the year <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> • Hennock- (Please see visit notes for data) Overall outcomes were positive, although there was challenge around monitoring progress from Reception to Year 6 following the removal of statutory Reception tracking during Covid. Reporting therefore focused on attainment, although progress continued to be tracked internally through end of term assessments. Writing remained a concern and was part of a 3-year Trust improvement cycle, with this continuing as a priority next year. Further school improvement priorities were to be agreed during the May planning day. • Ilington- (Please see visit notes for data) The Academy Headteacher discussed further adaptations in response to data analysis, with a strong focus on securing quality first teaching. This was recognised as more challenging within the mixed Year 1 and Year 2 setting due to limited space. To address this, staff made effective use of areas outside the classroom, with the teacher delivering core input in class while teaching assistants supported pupils in practising tasks in additional spaces. There was an increased and adapted focus on writing across Year 1 to Year 4 using a sentence stacking approach. While the approach continued to be used, it was adjusted as the existing curriculum was moving too quickly for some pupils. This allowed staff to revisit prior learning, retrace steps and strengthen foundations, including key skills such as letter formation. • Widcombe-in-the-Moor- (Please see visit notes for data) End of term assessments were completed each term to monitor individual pupil progress. Writing remained an ongoing priority, with a continued focus on embedding consistent writing skills across the school. • Wolborough- High pupil mobility had impacted outcomes, with more able pupils leaving and being replaced by pupils with higher levels of disadvantage and SEND, skewing the data. Pupils were assessed on entry, but limited access to one to one support meant teachers needed to adapt classroom provision, including for a pupils with high needs. By the end of Year 6, pupils were making positive overall progress, with data used effectively to inform the school improvement plan. Writing remained a key ASIP priority, with a continued focus on securing foundational skills, closing gaps and using ready to progress criteria, particularly for lower attaining cohorts. <i>The GP asked for clarification on whether the reported trend of more able pupils leaving and less able pupils joining was coincidental or driven by a specific reason, and whether this pattern itself was a factor influencing why more able pupils were choosing to leave.</i> The Governor explained that, overall, pupils had made strong progress by the end of Year 6, but attainment data in some year groups had been affected by in-year pupil mobility rather than pupils leaving because of their ability. It was noted that pupils had left during the year for a range of reasons, including home education, family relocation, or transfer to specialist provision, while a number of pupils had joined mid-year from other schools, often with lower starting points or higher levels of disadvantage. This had particularly impacted cohorts such as Year 5 and Year 2, with possible ongoing effects from COVID also noted in relation to Year 2 data.	

	<i>The GP asked whether the Trust-wide focus had begun to show an impact and whether Academy Heads continued to view this as a concern. She queried whether, although it remained an area of focus, leaders were now seeing positive outcomes as a result of the work being undertaken across the Trust, and would it be beneficial for writing to remain as a focus for another year.</i> KW (Academy Headteacher) responded that there had been a positive impact, particularly following training from Claire Appleby on strong foundations, which had allowed schools greater flexibility to revisit and strengthen teaching approaches, especially in Years 1 and 2. It was noted that earlier teaching sequences had pushed pupils on too quickly and that recent changes had led to quicker gains once schools were able to adapt their approach; however, this flexibility had come later in the year than would have been ideal. She highlighted that frequent changes to approaches over recent years had affected consistency and emphasised the need for stability going forward. Governors noted that writing sat within a three-year Trust priority cycle and that it was appropriate for it to remain a focus to allow time for full embedding, with further discussion planned at the June Trust meeting and Academy Head input being sought to inform next steps. • Bearnes- Had significant improvement in outcomes, it was noted that current Year 6 SATs predictions were approximately 65%, compared with 30% the previous year and 0% the year before. Phonics outcomes were also reported as strong; however, data continued to be affected by small cohort sizes and a higher-than-average pupil turnover. Pupil mobility could skew performance data, for example where pupils working at expected levels left and were replaced by pupils with lower starting points, particularly in Early Years. Despite this, it was confirmed that overall progress and outcomes were positive.	
7.	Focus: EYFS <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> • Hennock- EYFS was part of a 3-year ASIP cycle, with Hennock currently in Year 1, supported by a training day at the start of the year. For 2026 to 27, projected numbers were 4 pupils in Reception, 8 in Year 1 and 1 new starter in Year 2. Preschool had moved downstairs to enable free flow between indoor and outdoor learning. In the mixed Reception to Year 2 class, careful planning supported teaching assistants due to limited handover time. CPD for preschool leads focused on up-to-date practice, creativity and progression of skills. SEND needs were often identified early, with evidence gathering in place. Strengths included high quality teaching and strong leadership, with effective collaboration between Hennock's EYFS lead and Widecombe. Recent SEND training was highlighted as particularly effective, with structured TA training delivered within contracted hours, multiple access points and recorded sessions, and a further Trust CPD offer due in May. • Ilington- EYFS provision was very strong, with effective collaboration between NW (Reception teacher) and CC (Nursery manager). CC was highlighted for her exceptional dedication and passion, including significant support for other schools within the EYFS hub. Challenges included increased paperwork due to part-time attendance patterns and the impact of supporting pupils with higher needs, which at times stretched staffing despite ratios remaining compliant. The introduction of 30 hours funding supported earlier identification of SEND, with CC proactively identifying pupils and initiating Nursery Plus and inclusion funding, although this placed a significant administrative burden on her role. • Widecombe-in-the-Moor- The focus was on year 1 of a 3-year development cycle, with Reception identified as a clear strength. The reception teacher was part of the senior leadership team and a Trust champion, bringing strong expertise and contributing to a positive and effective team, which had been recognised through audits. Reception provision benefited from a dedicated space with breakout rooms, capacity for up to 15 pupils and 13 expected to start next year. The curriculum model continued to be a strength, with flexible teaching adapted to individual needs and supported by milestone progression maps and matched resources. SEND needs were monitored carefully at this	

	stage, with a few pupils on a pathway and others on a watch list for possible neurodiversity. The main challenge identified was staffing next year, as the reception teacher also held the SENCo role, requiring careful planning to ensure sufficient support and cover. • Wolborough- Reception and Nursery were due to be separated after half term, with a manager appointed and a deputy appointment underway. SEND provision within EYFS was described as exceptional. Outcomes showed a clear difference in attainment, with 71 % of children from the nursery predicted to achieve a Good Level of Development (GLD) compared to 33% of children who joined at Reception, with around a third of the cohort not having attended the nursery. • Bearnes- The Governor reported that there were no significant additional issues to highlight but reiterated that small cohort sizes meant individual pupils could have a disproportionate impact on overall data. GLD currently stood at 62.5%, however all pupil premium pupils were working at the expected level. Despite the impact of small numbers, issues were being identified early and addressed, and overall provision and progress were positive.	
8.	Focus: Attendance Overview <i>(Due to GDPR and confidentiality, please refer to visit notes for further information and clarification)</i> Governors raised highlights from their reports) The following notes are taken from those reports: • Hennock- No official complaints received; The Academy Headteacher and staff work with parents directly to resolve anything lower-level ahead of escalation. Attendance was 95.1% • Ilington- No complaints had been received. Current attendance – 93.3% (including pupils on part-time timetables) The AH and team were trying to get the data with the PT timetable pupils removed. School Admin asked for advice on this. • Widcombe-in-the-Moor- No official complaints had been received. Yearly attendance: 92.7%, Term time holidays were a slight issue with parents taking children out of school. • Wolborough- Current attendance figures: 92.7%. There were no formal complaints. • Bearnes- The Governor said that attendance had fallen towards the end of the period to 92.65%. It was noted that while the overall trend had declined, the school understood the reasons for this and were working to improve attendance and provide appropriate support where needed.	
9.	Focus: Ethos Committees and Community Groups KW noted that official visit notes had not yet been received; however, Sharon Lord had shared additional documentation to support evaluation of the RE curriculum, including tools aligned to an Ofsted-style RAG rating. It was also reported that Ilington school had completed its first Church of England framework-linked parental survey, with a small number of responses received, which were currently being analysed to determine whether this approach was an effective way of gathering evidence and feedback in the absence of a Foundation Governor.	
10.	Staff Feedback (to be reported to the Remuneration and People Committee) Ilington- Governors continued to raise serious concerns about ongoing technology issues, which were having a significant impact on staff morale. Although pupil devices were now functioning with a temporary fix and improvements were gradually being made, staff time was still being lost to troubleshooting, contacting Baytek and adapting	

	lessons when technology failed. It was hoped that staff would receive new devices by the end of the academic year, but progress remained a concern. Governors also remained concerned about staff wellbeing following a particularly challenging SEND case that had recently resulted in a suspension. The new Link Academy structure was discussed, with the AH supportive of increased school empowerment but concerned about capacity and timing, particularly in the summer term. This included the impact on staff who were new to expanded roles, such as the SENDCo. The AH noted that increased involvement in a small number of complex cases reduced her visibility to the wider parent body. While support within the Moorland Hub remained strong and the new cluster model was welcomed for its potential to reduce workload, governors reiterated the need to closely monitor academy head workload and evaluate the impact of structural changes on staff and schools. Widcombe in the Moor - On the whole very positive and very good at supporting each other if needed. • Staff Governor Update: The Staff Governor advised that she would be moving permanently to Landscope from June and noted that this would require the staff Governor position for the Moorland LAC to be advertised. The Clerk confirmed she would make arrangements for a new Staff Governor. The Staff Governor raised concerns about staff wellbeing and workload, noting difficulties in her role as Staff Governor in engaging staff to share feedback, as no direct responses had been received despite outreach. She queried whether an alternative approach was needed to better capture staff voice across teaching, support and administrative roles. Suggestions included providing a short, structured opportunity at staff meetings for wellbeing discussion or using a direct, anonymous survey or form to enable staff to give feedback more openly and efficiently. The GP confirmed that she would speak with the CEO, and report back to the meeting. Governors discussed concerns that staff time and workload continued to be a significant issue, noting that increasing responsibilities were limiting capacity, sustainability of practice, and delivery of school ethos, with insufficient clarity on priorities or tasks being removed. Governors referenced repeated governance feedback on staff wellbeing, workload and SEND pressures, and advised that governors should remain alert to emerging issues and respond quickly if concerns arose. KW confirmed that SENCO capacity and equity of time had been discussed at a recent SEND meeting, with SENCOs encouraged to seek additional release time where needed and some improved flexibility enabled through budget changes. Governors agreed on the importance of ongoing monitoring to prevent staff burnout, particularly for those holding multiple roles. A Governor raised concerns that staff burnout and capacity pressures were affecting not only pupils with SEND or additional needs, but also those pupils who do not meet SEND thresholds, who may be receiving less attention as a result. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that all pupils benefit from teachers working at full capacity and noted that this risked being overlooked due to competing demands, funding limitations, and staffing pressures. The Governance Professional agreed with these concerns and confirmed that this perspective would be reflected in governor visit notes, recognising that all children are important. Governors acknowledged that this is a wider national issue and agreed on the need for continued awareness and monitoring. ACTION- • <u>Clerk to recruit a new Staff Governor for the Moorland LAC.</u> • <u>GP to discuss alternative approach to the staff governor feedback.</u>	Clerk GP
10.	School Updates <u>PAN (to include pupils joined/left)</u> • Hennock- 3x pupils had joined pre-school/no leavers • Illington- Reception – 10, with one potential addition Y1 - 12, with one joining shortly Y2 - 10 Y3 - 13 Y4 – 7 (with x2 potential new joiners in September) Y5 - 10 Y6 – 16 • Widcombe-in-the-Moor- 1 joined and 1 EOTA's	

	<u>Pupil workload</u> • Wolborough- Mental Health Ambassadors, Mental Health Support Team, - refer pupil to them for extra support. <u>Suspensions and permanent exclusions</u> • Ilington- 1 suspension • Widcombe-in-the-Moor- 1x fixed term for a day <u>Feedback on any parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA</u> • Ilington- Parents Evening took place last term and went well. ▫ Good parental attendance at Easter service. ▫ The AH recently sent all parents a religious questionnaire: awaiting results. <u>ASIP update</u> • Ilington- Christian distinctiveness was good ▫ Writing continued to be a focus – Trust-wide writing inset day planned. ▫ EYFS KS1 had Ilsham English Hub in school to do an audit for early reading to support next steps. ▫ Doodle Maths was going well, aside from tech issues. <u>Sustainability Strategy</u> • Ilington- Held a preloved uniform sale, tree planting, strong pupil participation in the Outdoors Club and Ground Force Club and reported very positively on the work of the new grounds' contractors, Countrywide. • Wolborough- An action plan had been written, although lack of time was identified as the main barrier and impact had not yet been seen. Pupils completed a project focused on monitoring energy use and the impact of actions such as switching off lights, although this was affected by ongoing building work linked to the nursery development. Work had also begun with pupils and on-site catering staff to explore food waste and ways to reduce it, but impact was currently limited due to time constraints. <u>Safeguarding (to be reported to Board of Trustees)</u> • Wolborough- Clinical supervision for safeguarding and individual coaching were in place. The staff team were highly committed and supportive, with a close-knit culture and low staff turnover, but was struggling to meet the current high level of SEND need without additional support. <u>Pre-school</u> • Wolborough- Strong nursery numbers at the moment – 25. Some on waiting list to join for September and some 2 year olds on waiting list.	
11.	Standards and Curriculum Trustees Meeting The Chair invited Governors to raise any questions or comments around the S&C minutes, there were no comments or questions brought forward.	
12.	Next S&C Focus: Focus: ○ Overview of curriculum ○ Behaviour and relational approach The Chair gave an overview of the next S&C focus; there were no questions brought forward. The Clerk confirmed she would re-share the Summer 2 visit note with Governors.	
13.	Evaluation of governance impact Governors reflected on the importance of recent discussion around staff wellbeing, workload and the impact of organisational changes, identifying this as a key area of concern. It was agreed that hearing consistent themes across schools helped governors align thinking and strengthened their role in effective challenge and support. Governors noted the need to feed concerns back appropriately, to be ready for future questions, and to monitor how changes work in practice, particularly in relation to staff capacity. Positive feedback was given on increased openness, transparency and psychological safety within governance and links with schools, with examples cited where staff feedback had directly informed trust action, reinforcing the value of collaborative governance.	
14.	Questions to be dealt with at LAC level (Governance Professional) • <i>Could the SEND CPD training model be used again?</i> • <i>Ongoing unsettled and uncertain atmosphere in one school, the impact affecting staff.</i>	

	• <i>Govs question to HR or Remuneration Committee, is salary banding looked at for non-teaching roles across the Link, and does that take into consideration people adding really value and impact (performance)?</i> • <i>The role of the staff governor- model needed a review (The GP said she would raise this with HR at the next Summer 2 Remuneration)</i>	
15.	Questions to be escalated to S&C for Trustee consideration (Clerk) • <i>Govs would like to flag a staffing stretch and potential challenge to providing a high-quality provision.</i> • <i>Govs would like to flag to S&C the Ilsington's nursery manager's continued hard work and excellent practice in EYFS.</i> • <i>How are the Trust monitoring the impact of the central team cutbacks on AHS? Yes, they have more autonomy and challenge partners, but often the central team (particularly Fran and Becky) provided much needed support and guidance for challenging and hard to manage situations.</i> • <i>What does Empowering Schools look like when staff are already at full capacity?</i>	

The meeting ended at 7.35pm

Signed by the Chair of the Committeeon 24th June 2026