Standards and Curriculum Committee

Meeting minutes
7th July 2026
At 5pm
Held on Microsoft Teams

Invited: Christine Cottle (**Chair**)
Rachael Sharpe (**CEO**)
Kate Evans (KE)- **Trustee**
Cheryl Mathieson (CM) - **Trustee**
Max Thomas (MT)- **Trustee**
Alwyn Harries (AH) **- ETHOS Trustee**
Todd Chenore (TC) – **Mid Devon LB Representative**
Oliver Heathman (OH) - **Moorland Hub LB Representative**
Corinna Tigg (CT) – **East Devon Hub LB Representative**

In attendance: Charlotte Roe (**Governance Professional**)

Challenge Partners – Jack Pemberton (JP), Hannah Bancroft (HB), Pete Halford (PH), Alex Waterman (AW) (Item 8)
Inclusion Partner - Vicky Gillon
RE Lead – Sharon Lord (Item 7)

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

No	Item	ACTION
1.	**Welcome and apologies** The Chair opened the meeting with a warm welcome to all attendees. Apologies were received and **accepted** from MT, CT and OH. **Reflection –** Vision and Values *"Flourishing schools for all at the heart of our communities"* A short reflective moment to ask ourselves the following question: - *'How is the Trust vision driving policy, practice and all decision making'* The Ethos Trustee said that, reflecting on the Trust's values of belonging, curiosity and collaboration, he had been considering the importance of teamwork. Using the example of a football team, he noted that while attention is often focused on those visible on the pitch, success depends on the many individuals working behind the scenes towards a common goal. He drew a comparison with the Trust's schools, where pupils are at the centre but are supported by a much wider community, including administrators, premises staff, support staff, teachers, leaders, governors and directors. He commented that, whilst individuals may hold different views and perspectives, all work towards the same shared vision and values. Referring to the Christian principle of different parts forming one body, he highlighted that every role is valued and has an important contribution to make. He expressed his sincere thanks to all staff across the Trust for their ongoing commitment and hard work in supporting children and young people, particularly during the final weeks of term and the recent period of very warm weather.	
2.	**Declarations of interest**	

	• Kate Evans is Director for Education of the Good Shepherd Trust, Diocese of Guildford and a Governor at Boscastle County Primary School. There were no new declarations of interest brought to the meeting.	
3.	**Any other business** In discussing concerns raised regarding the Sports Grant, the Governance Professional noted that the matter would be the subject of further discussion by the Board. The CEO reported that she had sought to engage with the organisation expected to lead the new national PE support arrangements, with a view to showcasing the Trust's existing model and exploring how it could contribute to PE provision across Devon. Whilst no response had yet been received, she remained keen to promote the strengths of the Trust's approach.	
4.	**Approval of last meeting minutes** **For approval:** • The part I minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2026 were **approved** as a true record and were signed accordingly. • The **part II** draft minutes were circulated privately via email to those who had attended the meeting, **approved** as a true record and signed accordingly	
5.	**Matters arising from minutes of 12th May 2026 (not on the agenda)** • There were no matters arising.	
6.	**Trust Risk Register** The CEO confirmed that improvement, standards and achievement would all be discussed during the meeting. She noted that assessment and data systems were also identified as an area for consideration, although discussion would focus primarily on assessment, as Key Stage 2 assessment data was not yet available. The CEO suggested that external assessment data systems may warrant further discussion.	
7.	**Christian Distinctiveness and Ethos Committees (Reports circulated to Trustees before the meeting)** SL (SIAMS Lead) gave an overview of the shared reports and invited Trustees to ask any questions they may have: SL reported that arrangements were in place to ensure the continued development of Christian distinctiveness across the Trust. She advised that Anne Pelosi would assume responsibility for this area and support schools in preparation for SIAMS inspections. In addition, four RE and Collective Worship Leads, one assigned to each cluster, had been appointed to support RE leads within schools. SL outlined the Trust's rigorous approach to recruiting and supporting leaders in Church schools. Recruitment processes included consideration of candidates' understanding of Christian vision and values, observation of collective worship and Church of England-specific interview questions. Diocese representatives were involved in appointments wherever possible. The CEO advised that opportunities were being explored to strengthen links with local clergy during recruitment and induction. Where leaders were appointed without previous Church school experience, bespoke support, training and diocesan links were provided. Trustees noted that robust arrangements were in place to sustain and strengthen Christian leadership across the Trust. *A Trustee queried the variation in the format of ETHOS minutes relating to Christian distinctiveness and asked whether greater consistency and opportunities to share best practice could be developed.* The Governance Professional clarified that the documents referred to were produced at school level. It was agreed that the consistency of reporting could be reviewed as part of future work, with consideration given to sharing effective practice across schools. SL said that she was keen to see Ethos Groups continue to flourish, recognising the positive contribution they make to schools and the strength identified through SIAMS inspections. She reported that, whilst some groups	

	were well established and operating independently, others were newer and required ongoing support to strengthen participation and impact. SL explained that her work had focused on helping groups move beyond monitoring to evaluating the key areas of Christian distinctiveness, ensuring that all SIAMS themes were considered over time. She noted that Ethos Groups can provide valuable support and challenge to school leaders, particularly in relation to vision, values and collective worship. SL suggested there were opportunities to strengthen collaboration between Ethos Groups, governors and Local Advisory Committees, helping to improve communication, reduce duplication and further enhance the effectiveness of Christian distinctiveness governance across the Trust. The Chair and Trustees thanked SL for her hard work in underpinning Christian Distinctiveness across the Trust and attendance at the meeting.	
8.	**Focus: Cluster working** The CEO gave a brief overview of the purpose of the Challenge Partners and Clusters and invited each Challenge Partner to introduce themselves and give an overview of their Cluster: • JP introduced himself as the Challenge Partner for the Totnes Cluster and provided an overview of the schools within the cluster. He reported that leaders had responded positively to the new cluster model and were committed to greater collaboration, sharing expertise, and addressing common priorities. JP noted that key challenges would include aligning priorities across schools and supporting leaders to adapt to new ways of working. He advised that a strong focus would be placed on developing collaboration, shared professional development and leadership capacity, with Challenge Partners facilitating the sharing of effective practice and supporting school improvement across the cluster. • PH introduced himself as the Challenge Partner for East Devon Cluster and reported that the East Devon Cluster already benefited from strong existing relationships between schools and a shared commitment to collaboration. He highlighted opportunities to work together on curriculum development, make better use of specialist expertise across schools, and focus collectively on key priorities, including foundational skills and preparation for forthcoming Ofsted inspections. PH also noted the significant leadership experience within the cluster, which would support the development of the new collaborative model. • AW introduced herself as the Challenge Partner for the Moorland Cluster and reported that the Moorland Cluster would comprise six schools served by four Academy Heads. She noted that schools had historically worked within smaller groupings and that bringing these together into a cohesive cluster would be an important area of focus. AW also highlighted the geographical spread of the schools, which could present practical challenges. However, she advised that the cluster benefited from a mix of experienced and newer leaders, providing a strong foundation for collaboration and the development of the new cluster model. • HB introduced herself as the Challenge Partner for the Mid Devon Cluster, comprising four schools. She reported a positive relationship between leaders and a strong willingness to collaborate, with schools already supporting one another and sharing expertise. HB noted that the schools had many similarities, creating opportunities for joint work on curriculum development and foundational skills. She welcomed the move towards greater consistency in key school improvement documents and processes. Whilst recognising that geographical distance and developing greater openness between schools would present some challenges, HB advised that leaders were committed to building a culture of trust, sharing both strengths and areas for development. She concluded that the cluster was already working effectively together and was well placed to make the new model a success.	

	• *Trustees questioned how participation in enrichment activities was monitored and whether data was available to identify which pupils were engaging with provision and which were not, including any groups who may be self-excluding or otherwise not benefiting from enrichment opportunities. They also asked whether this data could be made available.* The CEO advised that participation data was held at school level but was not currently analysed across the Trust. She reported that the new system was expected to provide Trust wide tracking and reporting of enrichment participation. Trustees were assured that schools could provide this information if required, including for inspection purposes. The CEO added that the prominence of enrichment in discussions reflected the significant contribution of PE teams to the delivery of enrichment opportunities. **8.1 Update on focus visits from Local Advisory Committees**. LAC Chairs highlighted concerns regarding long-term staff absence across a number of schools, noting the impact on staffing capacity and staff wellbeing. It was noted that this issue had been raised at more than one Local Advisory Committee. The Governance Professional reported that Local Advisory Committees (LACs) had discussed the curriculum with Academy Heads, with a particular focus on enrichment opportunities. She noted that enrichment provision was found to be strong across schools, was widely celebrated by Local Advisory Committees, and was inclusive of pupils with SEND as well as the wider pupil population.	
9.	**Focus**: **Behaviour (Report circulated before the meeting)** The CEO welcomed questions from the Trustees and the following were raised: • *Trustees welcomed the significant reduction in suspensions and asked what factors had driven the improvement, including whether repeat suspensions had reduced or whether the data reflected the departure of a particularly challenging cohort.* The CEO reported that several suspensions were related to repeated incidents involving a small number of pupils. She advised that the improvement was likely due to a range of factors, including the continued development of relational practice and inclusive approaches across schools. • *Trustees asked how the Trust was using SEND data to inform future provision and whether opportunities existed to secure additional funding for in-school SEND support.* The CEO responded that SENCOs had analysed pupils' primary areas of need and that this work was being reviewed by the Trust Inclusion Partner to inform the inclusion strategy, external support requirements and the development of ordinarily available inclusive provision. The CEO also advised that Devon was experiencing significant pressures in alternative provision and was encouraging schools to consider developing additional provision where possible. **9.1 Update on focus visits from Local Advisory Committees** The Governance Professional reported that Local Advisory Committees considered behaviour to be strong across schools, with only isolated low-level concerns. • *Trustees asked how the impact of relational approaches could be measured.* The CEO advised that reductions in suspensions and behavioural incidents, alongside improved attendance, provided key indicators of success. The Governance Professional reported that attendance was generally at or above Trust targets, although figures in some smaller schools could be significantly affected by low pupil numbers. A LAC Chair confirmed that behaviour approaches were becoming embedded and that behaviour was generally being managed effectively across schools.	

10.	**Verbal report on first unvalidated data outcomes** The CEO reported that curriculum reports had been produced by Trust subject leads, who were demonstrating strong ownership of and engagement with the data. She noted that the introduction of the BromCom system would further strengthen consistency and access to data across the Trust. Trustees were advised that a Key Stage 2 update could not be provided as the data release had been delayed. • *Trustees asked whether the strong multiplication outcomes within the Totnes Hub reflected specific practice that could be shared more widely across the Trust.* The CEO advised that outcomes could be influenced by cohort size, but also highlighted the impact of strong leadership, effective practice and targeted curriculum improvements. She reported that effective practice would be shared across the Trust and that schools with less favourable outcomes would be supported through collaboration and coaching. Trustees welcomed the use of data to inform school improvement planning and noted the benefits of improved access to data for school leaders.	
11.	**ATSIP review and sharing of draft ATSIP for next year** Trustees reviewed progress against Trust priorities and noted that a number of areas remained Amber rather than Green. The CEO advised that this reflected greater ownership by Academy Heads and confirmed that a revised approach to Tier 3 planning would be introduced next year. • *Trustees asked how Academy Heads' confidence in using data to inform school improvement planning would be developed.* The CEO confirmed that this had been included as a key outcome, supported by the implementation of the BromCom system. • *Trustees asked whether school improvement plans would align with the Trust framework.* The CEO confirmed that schools would use the same streamlined approach, adapted to their local context, and emphasised the importance of self-evaluation and data analysis in identifying priorities.	
12.	**Local Advisory Committees** (LAC meeting documents circulated beforehand – see above) • Committee to note any additional verbal updates from local board Chairs • LAC Chairs to share successes from their LAC meeting. This item was addressed throughout the LAC's feedback under each of the focus areas.	
13.	**Receive External Reports and review Tier 3 Action Plans-** **Part II was taken**	
14.	**Safeguarding** The CEO reported that consultation on the Relationships and Sex Education Policy had been undertaken with parents to support the delivery of this area of the curriculum. She reported that the process had been led effectively by the Headteacher at Tedburn, who had also supported Academy Heads and provided guidance to ensure compliance The CEO noted that this leadership role had been enabled through the support of the Director of Safeguarding.	
15.	**Due Diligence** The CEO said there were no issues to raise at this meeting	
16.	**Risk Register RAG review** Trustees noted that the risk relating to educational standards remained Amber, reflecting the absence of Key Stage 2 outcomes data. Trustees acknowledged the positive progress seen in Early Years and phonics but agreed that it was not yet possible to assess whether similar improvements had been achieved at the end of Key Stage 2. • *Trustees asked whether declining pupil numbers should be included on the Committee's risk register, given the potential impact on school sustainability and finances.* Trustees were advised that pupil numbers were already monitored through the Finance and General Purposes Committee risk register and received regular scrutiny.	

17.	**Policies** Trustees and Governors to review the following policies, propose any amendments, and approve or recommend for approval at the Board of Trustees meeting on 13th July 2026 **17.1 RSHE Policy 2026-** This policy was reviewed and **approved** by Trustees. **17.2 Behaviour in Schools-** This policy was reviewed and **approved** by Trustees. **17.3 Positive Handling-** This policy was reviewed and was **approved** following minor amendments to wording in the policy. **17.4 Early Career Teachers-** This policy was reviewed and Trustees agreed to revisit the policy once it had been finalised. (Deferred to the September S7C meeting)	
18.	**Evaluation of governance impact** Trustees reflected that pupils had remained at the heart of discussions and decision-making throughout the year. They noted significant improvements across the Trust, including in attendance, pupil outcomes and the wider school culture. Feedback was welcomed from Local Advisory Committees regarding improvements within schools and recognised the positive impact of challenge and support provided through the Trust's governance structure. They further welcomed evidence that previously identified priorities were translating into tangible improvements for pupils and schools. Trustees concluded that it had been a positive year for the Trust and welcomed the progress achieved across its schools.	