

## Moorland Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025

At 5.30pm

Held online via Microsoft Teams

### Attended:

**Chair-** Oliver Heathman

**Parent Governors-** Lynda Cooper (Hennock)  
Rosie Stamp (Ilsington)

**Staff Governor-** Vicky McDonald

**Academy Headteacher-** Kat Williams (Ilsington)

### In attendance:

**DCEO-** Matt Matthew

**Governance Professional-** Charlotte Roe

**Academy Headteacher for Wolborough-** Tracy Hoare

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

No	Item	ACTIONS
1.	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> The Chair opened the meeting with a warm welcome to the Governors and introduced: TH (Academy Headteacher for Wolborough), KW the new Academy Headteacher for the Moorland LAC and Matt Matthew (DCEO)	
2.	<b>Declarations of interest</b> There were no new declarations of interest brought forward to the meeting.	
3.	<b>Approval of meeting minutes from 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025</b> The minutes were <b>approved</b> as a true record and were signed accordingly.	
4.	<b>Matters arising from 12<sup>th</sup> March 2025 (not on the agenda)</b> 4.1 Governors to review the responses to the questions raised at the previous LAC and confirm if any supplementary questions.  The GP added that the Trustees had recognised how important it was to have local Governors.	
5.	<b>Clerk Update</b> <b>5.1 Appointments/nominations-</b> The Clerk advised that there was a vacancy for a Parent Governor at Wolborough and that election nomination forms had been sent to the AH for circulating to parents and carers. The Clerk also raised that the recruitment process for a PG for Bearnes (Charlotte Vicary-Ward) was still in progress, with paperwork almost complete. The Clerk updated the meeting on the Foundation Governor role and explained that due to personal circumstances, the FG had stepped back and so the vacancy was now open again. The GP said Sharon Lord had advertised the role again. <b>5.2 Clerk to Local Board Committee to update the governors on any local or national issues-</b> The GP said she had attended the Clerks briefing the previous day, she noted that there were some changes being made to the Complaints policy but was in hand between the GP and the DCEO. <b>5.4 Significant changes within the Trust including key personnel-</b> The GP updated the meeting on the CEO vacancy, following the email from Cheryl Mathieson that the Clerk circulated on 07.05.25 and advised the meeting that a new CEO had been recruited and would join the Trust in September 2025. <b>5.5 CEO letter to parents' feedback and current financial implications.</b>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DCEO said that the Trust was facing financial difficulties, therefore difficult decisions are being made, including changes to class structures in several schools. The Trust was considering everyone's concerns and aiming to do what's best for both individual schools and the Trust as a whole. The DCEO said there was a significant deficit expected next year, requiring the use of reserves. The DCEO raised that pupil numbers were declining, which was corroborated by local authority data, he added that the Trust was working to ensure its long-term sustainability despite these challenges.</li> </ul> <p><i>The Governors asked what the reasons were behind the Trust's deficit?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DCEO said firstly pupil numbers was the key reason, there was a downward trend in pupil numbers, as well as a downward trend in income and the national insurance pay awards that just came in on April 1<sup>st</sup> had impacted too, and said the Government had promised full funding, but the Trust ended up with a £90,000 shortfall. Additionally, the pay awards were set at 3.2% for support staff, which was unfunded, and for teaching staff, the initial figure was 2.8% unfunded, but it later increased to 4%, with only 2.8% possibly funded. With rising utility costs and other expenses, the Trust's expenditures were increasing while its income wasn't keeping up, causing the gap to grow larger and larger.</li> </ul> <p><i>The Governors asked if the Trust had overexpanded?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DCEO responded that he did not believe so, and added the Trust operated on small margins.</li> </ul> <p><i>The Governors asked if the DCEO could provide some details on the time frames involved? When did it become clear that this financial situation was developing, and what was the current status? Were the changes that were being planned part of a two-year plan, a five-year plan, or something else? What was the strategy for implementing these changes—would it be a gradual process or more of a sudden shift?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The DCEO responded that when the Trust looked at the financial forecasting, the year two position always showed the deficit getting worse. There was a belief that money would come from somewhere, but with the change in Government, that was no longer the case. The strategy involved a quick reshuffle to set things up for the future. The Trust became aware of the situation around January or February and started informing the heads. They hoped for a government solution, but it didn't appear.</li> </ul> <p>The meeting had a robust discussion around the challenges that one of the schools was facing, in particular staffing. There was also a discussion around the issues raised on central communications. The DCEO said the Trust were taking on board all of the Governor's comments and said that communications would improve over the next few weeks. The DCEO invited Governor's feedback on how the next communications should look. The Governors agreed that next communications should be more tailored to the individual school's situation. The Governors raised that it could be useful for the Trust to have a panel of people to review any sensitive news, before it was shared wider. The Clerk raised that it could be beneficial in the next communications to remind parents/carers that their school Governors were there to raise any issues, concerns, or successes at the LAC meetings. The GP reinforced that Parent Governors were important, and it would be useful for AHs to point parents/carers to their Governors.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Focus: Provision and impact for SEND (Due to GDPR and confidentiality, please refer to visit notes for further information and clarification)</b></p> <p><i>Governors raised highlights from their reports. The following notes are taken from those reports:</i></p> <p><b><u>Hennock</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>34% of pupils had special needs, with 2 having EHCPs and 1-2 more likely to start the process soon. Most support came from OAIP, and parents had no concerns.</li> </ul>	

- Provision included classroom setups, termly provision maps, and interventions like SpeechLink and Numberstacks, along with significant SEMH support such as mentoring.
- The loss of the Inclusion Hub was a big setback for Hennock, as it had benefitted several children.
- Since September 2023, 13 children left the Register, and 17 were added. Staffing and the suspension of the Inclusion Hub were major challenges.
- Pupil voice was noted on provision maps, while parent voice was gathered during three parent evenings and additional meetings for new or revised provision maps.

### **Widcombe-In-The-Moor**

- A new SENDCo started working with the Trust SENDCo and Academy Head, and the system worked well.
- 18% of pupils were on the SEND register, mainly needing help with communication and interaction. In Autumn 2023, 10% of children were identified as SEND. Three children had EHCPs, and two of them received alternative provision as they couldn't attend school.
- Two EHCPs were being assessed by Devon, with deadlines overdue, and three more were in the evidence-gathering phase. The school included SEND provision in their ASIP, focusing on OAIP.
- The school had improved their universal provision offer and created provision maps for all SEND children. These maps were a focus for CPD, with a new cycle, capturing pupil and parent feedback, and better SMART targets.
- Successful SEND consultation meetings and parent workshops were held, like the Autism and Us programme (4 weeks) and IIH Relational support (6 weeks).

### **Ilington**

- NW was Ilington's school-based SEND lead, supported by Becky. NW was given more time for this role and her additional role as EYFS lead.
- KW and TM recently attended PIPs training to support some pupils in school.
- There were 6 EHCPs in place with one pending for this academic year. Another one was expected for next year, making a total of 8 for AW 2025/26
- Ilington had strong inclusive practices: beneficial for all, harmful for none, and SEND was part of the daily routine for all children at school. Example measures included wobble cushions, ear defenders, and teachers using 'Widgit' resources for SEND children. The AH and staff had high expectations for SEND pupils. The calm school atmosphere and relational practice helped – SEND children did well and were given autonomy. Non-SEND pupils were equally supported, e.g., SATs help for all, not just those with needs
- Funding amounts depended on the level of need. The general provision included TAs in all classes, some allocated mainly to particular pupils or intervention roles. Staff had termly pupil progress meetings to address why some pupils might not be reaching age-related expectations, and interventions were put in place based on these meetings. Staff used precision teaching, e.g., spellings for Y3/4 and Y4 multiplication checks. They also used pre-teaching ('a sneaky peek') to build confidence for struggling pupils.
- Main barriers were funding and the time it took for the local authority to respond or take action. The Academy Inclusion Hub (Becky and Fran) was excellent.
- KW and the governors discussed the positive outcome of a pupil who secured a special school placement from Summer 2.

### **Bearnes**

- All necessary provisions and interventions were in place and working well. Bearnes did well in their SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) during the Ofsted inspection and had successful SEND audits.
- Bearnes and Wolborough were part of a successful project called the Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools. They were chosen due

	<p>to their pupils' discipline and SEND needs. The project included weekly coffee mornings with parents and visits from various professionals- the sessions were well attended, and parents responded positively, the school's SENCOs and pastoral lead supported these sessions.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Focus: PE (Due to GDPR and confidentiality, please refer to visit notes for further information and clarification)</b>  <i>Governors raised highlights from their reports. The following notes are taken from those reports:</i></p> <p><b><u>Hennock</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE provisions were very strong, with two lessons per week.</li> <li>• Teachers always attended when PE staff delivered.</li> <li>• Wide range of sports, including tournaments and off-site activities.</li> <li>• Sports grant funding was ring-fenced.</li> <li>• Main barrier was space.</li> <li>• All pupils accessed the PE provision.</li> <li>• Accessibility was strong.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Widcombe-In-The-Moor</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A specialist PE teacher taught every child for one hour on Fridays, and the class teacher repeated the lesson later in the week. The PE team provided CPD for teachers, planning, resources, and bespoke support.</li> <li>• In the summer term, all pupils had a 10-week swimming block using the onsite pool, and teachers received additional CPD in first aid. They reviewed the sports grant and discussed four key indicators: frequency of PE, range of provision, CPD, and profile.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Illesington</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PE provision was really good – Taylor Pearce came once a week.</li> <li>• Sharing buses with Widcombe saved £200, hence the decision to use one coach rather than two minibuses recently.</li> <li>• Illesington were also using minibuses with Widcombe for frisbee event; plus, minibuses for swimming at Widcombe- careful planning / budgeting saved the budget and saved asking parents for financial contributions.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Bearnes &amp; Wolborough</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bought into the P.E programme and found it to be a great provision. Ofsted inspected last term and had no issues with it.</li> <li>• Wolborough didn't buy into the same programme but joined the South Devon Schools Partnership, which was run differently. All children participated in fixtures and festivals, and they received support from CPD in school. The AH said she believed it was worth the cost of about £5000, with additional funds spent on swimming, resources, and other activities, giving them some budget flexibility.</li> </ul>	
8.	<p><b>Focus: Complaints Policy (Due to GDPR and confidentiality, please refer to visit notes for further information and clarification)</b>  <i>Governors raised highlights from their reports. The following notes are taken from those reports:</i></p> <p><b><u>Hennock</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal complaints; all issues were dealt with at the school gate.</li> <li>• No pattern with low-level issues; they were presented as requests rather than complaints.</li> <li>• Previous concerns about food and access to Forest School were resolved or raised as minor issues.</li> <li>• Parents were sympathetic about focusing on the core curriculum and viewed outdoor learning as a future target.</li> <li>• The school had an open-door policy.</li> <li>• The Academy Headteacher (AH) saw people immediately and tried to resolve issues on the spot and covered for teachers so they could step out of the classroom to address issues.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Widcombe-In-The-Moor</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No formal complaints were raised</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many concerns had been raised with the lack of parking available at the school. The AH had been asking the council for parking permits for over a year and had requested support from local councillors. Parent consultation group have been looking into the feasibility of the school having a car park.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Ilsington</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two level two complaints i.e. formal forms filled out, matter needed to be investigated, which took place in autumn term; and was now resolved.</li> <li>Recurring complaints were SEND related; getting the provision right.</li> <li>All were usually easily dealt with / resolved.</li> </ul>	
9.	<p><b>Feedback from Ethos Committees and Community Groups</b></p> <p>There were no minutes available at the time of the meeting, however TH and KW highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RS agreed to support Ilsington with Curriculum monitoring from a spiritual point of view, in the interim period.</li> <li>TH mentioned the changes in the Wolborough Ethos committee - RN became the Foundation Governor, and Rev Gareth stayed involved as part of the Ethos committee, attended meetings and did monitoring. Sharon Lord helped improve their science governance, which was successful.</li> </ul>	
10.	<p><b>School Updates (Due to GDPR and confidentiality, please refer to visit notes for further information and clarification)</b></p> <p><i>Governors raised highlights from their reports. The following notes are taken from those reports:</i></p> <p><b><u>Hennock</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PAN (to include pupils joined/left)</b> 49+8 pre-school</li> <li><b>Staff wellbeing and workload-</b> (See agenda item 15)</li> <li><b>Attendance-</b> 99.7%</li> <li><b>Feedback on any parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA-</b> good communication with parents' day-to-day.</li> <li><b>ASIP update-</b> nearly all green</li> <li><b>Risk Register/Accident book-</b> Governor requested more support on monitoring the RR (<b>see agenda item 14</b>)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Widecombe-In-the-Moor</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>PAN (to include pupils joined/left)-</b> 93</li> <li><b>Pupil wellbeing-</b> Positive – recent survey showed pupil voice was above the Trust average on each question.</li> <li><b>Attendance-</b> 3rd Sept – 26th March: 93.7% 95.6% excluding part-time children.</li> <li><b>Feedback on any parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA-</b> Parent consultation meetings happening termly.</li> <li><b>ASIP update-</b> Progressing well.</li> <li><b>Risk Register/Accident book-</b> Discussed the financial risk to the school with the current climate and read the CEO's newsletter to parents. Talked through what this might look like in the near future for Widecombe.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Ilsington</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Suspensions and permanent exclusions-</b> Numerous fixed term exclusions for the same child.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Wolborough</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TH shared that the DCEO and the finance team had successfully secured funding from the DfE to extend the nursery provision. Only five other schools in Devon received this funding. They planned to transform an underused area into year-round provision for two and three-year-olds, from 8 AM to 6 PM. This was excellent news for raising the school's profile and attracting more people.</li> </ul>	
11.	<p><b>Standards and Curriculum Trustees Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Response to <b>draft</b> minutes (please be aware the minutes are draft and remain confidential until approved)</li> <li>Feedback on any issues raised from local board Chairs in S&amp;C Meeting</li> </ul>	
12.	<p><b>Next S&amp;C Focus:</b></p>	

	<b>Focus:</b> The Chair advised the Governors that the next S&C focus would be the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Overview of curriculum</li> <li>○ Attendance</li> <li>○ Behaviour and relational approach</li> </ul> The GP highlighted that Q cards would be circulated by the Clerk via email for the foci.	CLERK
13.	<b>Evaluation of governance impact</b> The Governors felt it was useful having the DCEO attend the meeting and said that it had helped contextualise the challenges and explain how the situation had evolved in a relatively short period of time.	
14.	<b>Questions to be dealt with at LAC level (Governance Professional)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Governor asked if training on the Risk register could be provided.</i></li> </ul> The DCEO confirmed he would lead the Risk register training. The GP raised that training would take place once the current work on the RR was complete.	
15.	<b>Questions to be escalated to S&amp;C for Trustee consideration (Clerk)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What was the Trust's solution to the issues raised around the recent central communications to parents/carers?</i></li> </ul>	CLERK

**The meeting ended at 6.30pm**

Signed by the Chair..... on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025.