

Standards and Curriculum Committee
Meeting minutes
Tuesday 25th March 2025
At 5pm
Held on Microsoft TEAMS

Attended: Christine Cottle (Chair)
Cheryl Mathieson (CM)
Max Thomas (MT)
Joanna Hooper (JH) – Mid Devon LB Representative
Oliver Heathman (OH) - Chair of Moorland Local Board
Lynda Cooper (LC)- Moorland Local Board Representative

In attendance: Charlotte Roe (Governance Professional)
Lizzie Lethbridge (LL) – Director of Education- For item 10
Francesca McLoughlin (FM)- Director of Inclusion- For item 9
Andy Keay (AK)- Director of School Improvement- For item 8
Kelly Yeo (KY)- EYFS Lead- For item 10
Julie Simpson- (Westcotts Auditors)

Minutes: Nicol Bush- Clerk to the Trust

No	Item	ACTION
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a warm welcome and introduced the Internal Auditor (JS) The Trustees took turns to introduce themselves and their role within the Trust. Apologies from were received and accepted from Kate Evans and Nicky Dunford (CEO) CM informed the meeting that JS was attending the meeting as part of the internal audit as an observer, reviewing communication across the Trust. CM reassured everyone that JS would keep all discussions confidential.	
2.	Declarations of interest There were no new declarations brought to the meeting.	
3.	Any other business There was no business brought forward to the meeting.	
4.	Approval of last meeting minutes For approval: The minutes of the meeting held on 4 th February 2025 were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly.	
5.	Matters arising from minutes of 4th February 2025 (not on the agenda) 5.1 Staff wellbeing survey results- Part II was taken 5.5.1- PP Data- Was discussed under item 8.	
6.	Trust Risk Register – Trustees to consider report on the following risk categories: - CM raised that during previous meetings, the CEO and DCEO agreed to review the risk register due to concerns about the accuracy of the categories for each committee meeting. CM noted that the risk register had been moved higher up the agenda in this meeting. The focus should be on the categories first, as the risk register should guide the discussions. Instead of reviewing it line by line, the committee should concentrate on the areas marked red or amber and ensure these were covered in the meetings. CM explained that at the end of the meeting, the risk	

	<p>register should be reviewed to confirm the RAG ratings for each element. CM said this approach had been decided for other committee meetings but added that the CEO and DCEO have yet to complete their review of the categories. CM suggested that Trustees may like to wait until the review is done.</p> <p><i>LL asked where it was specified who was responsible for filling in the risk registers, asking if it was outlined in policy. She emphasised that school performance should be included in the risk register and that she should have input into it.</i></p> <p><i>LL suggested that the issue related to systems and processes, particularly in identifying who should review the risk register and when. She noted that while the CEO and DCEO could handle this task, they might lack the detailed knowledge of the schools that she possessed.</i></p> <p>The Trustees had an in-depth discussion around the Risk register and responsibilities.</p> <p>The Trustees agreed that forming a working party for the risk register would be beneficial. LL mentioned she would consider the details and report back to the meeting.</p>	DoE/DCE O/GP/CE O
7.	<p>Strategic Plan - School Improvement</p> <p>Trustees to update on their area of responsibility: - School Improvement- (Deferred to the next S&C meeting)</p>	CLERK
8.	<p>Focus: Mid-year progress check and national reporting of KS2 data (Report circulated before the meeting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress towards Trust targets What changes are in place that arose from the mid-year assessments <p>AK explained that the data was from the end of the autumn term, not the mid-year, and noted that the Trust collected data three times a year. He suggested adjusting the timing of data collection in the future. The GP reported that had been arranged for next year.</p> <p>AK explained that the autumn term data focused mainly on the end of Key Stage 2 across the Trust. For reading, the aspiration was 79%, but the autumn term data showed 65% of students were working at the expected level, with 13% just one sub-level below. The focus was on closing the gap for these pivotal children, aiming to achieve around 78-79%, which would be above the national average and an improvement from the previous year's 72%.</p> <p>For writing, the aspiration was 71%, but the actual data showed 54% at the expected level, with 11% just one sub-level below, totalling around 65%. Moderations were happening to ensure accuracy.</p> <p>For maths, the autumn term data showed 71% at the expected level, with another 14% just below, aiming to achieve 85% by the end of the year, which would be a strong improvement.</p> <p>EYFS data was collected at the end of the year, and phonics aimed for an aspirational 80%. There was a significant push in Year 4 for multiplication, aiming to align with the national average of 20 marks. Key Stage 1 data would be reviewed at the end of the spring term.</p> <p>AK mentioned that Power B.I was almost fully set up, with only one apostrophe issue remaining. Once resolved, all new schools would be included, providing a complete picture of the Trust.</p> <p>AK said he hoped to present the spring term data at the next standards and curriculum meeting and had conducted training with the governors.</p> <p>AK said the Trust hoped everyone would be able to use the data to understand the picture for their individual schools. He noted that small cohort numbers could significantly impact data within individual schools. AK said he felt the schools were in a good place and on track for most targets at the end of the autumn term.</p> <p>The following questions were asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Did the Trust have any data on how pivotal children have performed in previous years from this point to the end of the year, just to get a sense of how realistic it is to convert all of them into age-related?</i> <p>AK explained that the data came through as numbers, not as individual children. He noted that individual schools held detailed information about specific children.</p>	

	<p>Schools knew which children made up the 20% and could tailor their strategies accordingly.</p> <p>The DoE noted that it would be useful to start looking at that data.</p> <p>AK added that during the school visits, they assessed the situation with the heads within their hub to identify pivotal children, determine their likely achievements, and evaluate what had been put in place for them.</p> <p>AK noted that two of one school's pivotal children had reached age-related expectations for the spring term, indicating effective efforts. However, progress varied year by year depending on the children and the numbers involved, making it difficult to gauge. Comparisons were made with children at similar levels, but not down to the individual level.</p> <p>The DoE highlighted that the EIT had been using the terms "aspirational data" and "predictions," which could cause confusion. To address this, they decided to change the language to "accurate" data. This year, the Trust had integrated data into head teachers' appraisals, holding them accountable for their national data points. The aim was to ensure predictions provided a clear idea of the year's end outcomes, avoiding disappointment or misunderstanding. This change was intended to prevent the issues, where some schools struggled to meet their targets due to the aspirational nature of the predictions.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked if writing, which has been a significant focus before, was going to remain a priority for next year, or what actions were being taken at the trust level to drive improvements in that area.</i></p> <p>AK explained that writing, which had been a significant focus before, was going to remain a priority for several years to come, considering the ongoing training for staff and the longer process required to achieve age-related expectations. He also mentioned the impact of these efforts, particularly for new schools that had recently come on board.</p> <p>The Trustees said the Claire Appleby training had been well received.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked if the deficit in aspirational targets and attainment was present across all schools, or if a few schools were skewing the data, while many others were on target for their original goals?</i></p> <p>AK said that the majority of schools were on target, while acknowledging that two or three schools significantly impacted the data. He also mentioned the effect of new schools joining, particularly those from the East Devon hub, and how their aspirational targets compared to their current performance. Additionally, he discussed plans to run final data with different scenarios, considering factors like significant SEND and PP, and how this would alter the overall Academy Picture Board.</p> <p><i>The Trustees asked if there was a story behind each target not being met or each child not achieving the expected outcomes, and if this was all backed up with provision maps, SEND, and other relevant documentation.</i></p> <p>AK explained that there was a story behind each target not being met or each child not achieving the expected outcomes, and that this was all backed up with provision maps, SEND, and other relevant documentation. He also mentioned the impact of student mobility, such as children leaving or joining, on the data and how this could cause significant shifts. Additionally, he discussed how the schools were addressing these changes and what measures were in place to meet their aspirational targets.</p> <p><i>The Chair asked if writing was a concern for the trust, even though there were measures in place to support it.</i></p> <p>AK said Trust recognised writing had been a concern for quite a while, attributing it to the lasting impact of COVID-19. He acknowledged the measures taken, such as training, to mitigate this issue.</p> <p><i>The Chair asked if AK and the CEO were going to provide the Committee with pupil premium data, as noted in item 5. matters arising, she raised that it had not been received for two or three meetings and requested it for the next meeting.</i></p> <p>AK responded that the plan was to meet with Kate Evans now that the systems were up and running, to clarify what data she wanted them to produce. He mentioned that while he could provide any information on pupil premium, it was important to compare the data to get meaningful insights.</p>	
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9.	<p>Focus: Provision for PPG and LAC (Presentation shared via email to the Trustees before this meeting)</p> <p>FM addressed the following questions submitted on the meeting question sheet (see appendix 1)</p> <p>Addressing the question around funding, FM explained that funding came in for children eligible for free school meals, and the Trust received the pupil premium grant for those children. The majority of the funding went into the Trust. FM stated that the funding was divided, with some allocated to the Improvement Inclusion Hub (IEA), as many children receiving the pupil premium grant also had special educational needs. This funding supported the work of the IEA. Historically, some funding also supported the Woodland Hub and related activities. The Trust's model allocated additional money to schools based on the number of children receiving the pupil premium grant. This money was intended for local priorities, although it was a very small amount. FM referred to the Parentkind survey that had recently been released, which examined disadvantage and parent views on how schools could support them more. The survey revealed that parents were struggling with day-to-day costs such as uniforms, clubs, and trips. Ideally, more funding would be allocated to these areas, but both the Trust and the government had to make do with limited resources.</p> <p>A significant portion of the pupil premium grant enabled the Trust to maintain a good amount of TA support in schools, in addition supporting other initiatives. Research indicated that supporting children with their oral language and phonics skills helped them become good readers and more articulate, setting them up for success in their education.</p> <p>FM said that the current funding allocation was supporting our disadvantaged children but recognised that in future, the Trust needed to be more transparent by explaining the funding distribution, including the amounts going to TA support and the EIT.</p> <p><i>A LAC Governor asked if the Inclusion Hub was being moved from Hennock?</i></p> <p>FM explained that the decision was made to move it from Hennock to East Devon to ensure that more children were able to access the amazing program. FM added that the new sites had to trim back their offer, due to staff absences.</p> <p>FM added that the Trust needed to have discussions around value for money, which might lead to some changes for September.</p> <p><i>A Governor asked if the intention was to rotate back towards a hub more accessible for the Moorland schools?</i> FM said she had intended to run a course for each of the hubs, one per term for South, Mid, and East. However, due to upcoming changes, she was uncertain if this would happen in September. She noted that families who attended found it very useful but emphasised the need to evaluate how the programme would be developed in the longer term.</p> <p>A Governor noted that the pupil premium question was a difficult one to answer as a governor. While some funding was allocated to central services and TAs, the mentioned school had lost discretionary funding and easier access to the inclusion hub and courses.</p> <p><i>A Trustees asked if it would be helpful for Governors, Parents etc. if there was a written document regarding pupil premium and the whole area that could really articulate what the Trust were trying to do, and help heads and parents understand further.</i> LL agreed that it would be helpful to provide Governors with a written explanation from FM.</p> <p>LL said Governors might be struggling with understanding the impact on individual schools, the nuances of each school, and what was happening for those pupils. LL noted that pupil premium funding was always challenging because it wasn't exclusive.</p> <p>LL emphasised the importance of pupil premium funding impacting pupil premium children and the need for schools to clearly identify these children and the funding's impact. She acknowledged the challenges of achieving equity across the Trust as it grew, and courses became less accessible. LL mentioned discussions about having staff travel to different sites but noted the current unavailability of the required skills. She expressed a willingness to collaborate with the AHs to find solutions.</p>	FM
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	<p>The meeting agreed the PP report would be a good starting point, and it would be useful for schools to have a crib sheet to address any questions.</p> <p><i>A Governor raised an issue around PP spending at one of the schools and requested it be addressed during this meeting.</i></p> <p>FM acknowledged that she was aware of the concerns and explained that this particular school had more senior staff, SENCO hours, and assistant head staffing, which were funded by the pupil premium grant. She noted the difficult financial situation both locally and nationally, making it impossible to allocate additional discretionary funds. FM suggested that the DCEO could break down the costs to show how the funding supported the school's structure.</p> <p>CM raised that PP was being escalated to the Board meeting the following week for further discussion.</p>	<p>FM</p> <p>DCEO</p>
10.	<p>Focus: Curriculum subject focus- EYFS (report circulated to the Trustees via email before the meeting)</p> <p>KY presented the EYFS PowerPoint and the highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In March 2024, the EYFS was identified as a key priority across the Trust during EIT strategy meetings and Academy Head collaboration meetings. KY was asked by LL to be involved in the planning stages of this priority. • Since then, milestones were set for Autumn, Spring, and Summer, with progress being RAG rated. As part of the early years' improvement vision, two rounds of audits were conducted. The first round included visits to Ilsington, Widecombe, Mortonhampstead, Broadhempston, Cheriton Bishop, and Diptford. An Early years team was established to identify good practices. • By December, the goal was to complete visits, map quality provision, strengths, milestones, check and RAG rate, and identify next steps. In Spring, audits targeted Harbertonford, Wolborough, Broadhembury, Drake's, and Littleham, covering a mix of schools from the Mid East and South. • LL and KY conducted audits across schools, focusing on various aspects such as organisation, adult roles, environment, pupil engagement, phonics, and curriculum. They identified strengths and areas for improvement, noting well-established programs and knowledgeable staff. Key personnel were involved in establishing early years hubs to deliver CPD updates and share best practices. They aimed to provide a model of excellence in provision, linking early years to year one, and emphasised continuous provision, clear assessment systems, and effective use of adults. Regular auditing and a focus on communication, language, and SEND were also highlighted. • Different pre-school and early years settings across the trust handled administration and marketing differently. LL and KY identified CPD needs and created an overview during their last meeting. They planned a whole trust training day in September to set a gold standard of excellence and arranged external CPD. • Academy head meetings and hub meetings were scheduled, focusing on curriculum, proficiency, assessment techniques, and excellent provision. These sessions were planned to be face-to-face, held in different regions. The training cycle included in-house CPD, online Academy head meetings, and face-to-face sessions. • For 2026-2027, improvements were to be driven by early years hubs. They aimed to provide moderation across the trust, exemplary materials, and anchoring teams to improve outcomes. Early learning goals and predicted outcomes were outlined, including GLD and phonics percentages for year one. <p><i>A Governor asked if LL and KY were planning to conduct audits at additional schools, or do they feel that the selected schools have provided a comprehensive overview for their assessments?</i></p> <p>KY responded that they had selected a good range of schools to audit, aiming to include examples from all schools in the hubs across the three areas. She mentioned that they were not currently planning to revisit any schools but might</p>	

	<p>consider it in the future. She felt confident that they had a good mix of schools within the Trust for their assessments.</p> <p>Lizzie added that they had indeed selected a diverse range of schools to audit, ensuring representation from all hubs and areas within the Trust. She agreed with KY that they were not planning to revisit any schools at the moment but acknowledged the possibility of future audits if needed. LL also expressed confidence in the current mix of schools providing a comprehensive overview for their assessments.</p>	
11.	<p>Local Advisory Committee</p> <p>11.1 Committee to note any additional updates from local board Chairs and from LAC minutes including Ethos Committee Minutes</p> <p>The GP noted that a recurring theme across the Local Advisory Committees (LACs) was staff wellbeing, particularly in the context of the Trust's restructuring. Additionally, there were concerns about the finance and transparency of the Pupil Premium.</p>	
12.	<p>Receive External Reports and review Tier 3 Action Plans (Circulated via email before the meeting)</p> <p>The GP asked that in future meetings Trustees should ask questions or make comments upon reading the LAC Ethos minutes, which would provide evidence of their involvement and commitment to the school's values.</p> <p>There were no other comments brought forward.</p>	
13.	<p>Due Diligence</p> <p>Trustees to consider the S&C aspects of the Due Diligence for potential joining schools</p> <p>There were no updates for the meeting due to the absence of the CEO.</p>	
14.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>CEO to give any safeguarding updates</p> <p>There were no updates due to the absence of the CEO.</p>	
15.	<p>Policies</p> <p>15.1 Suspension and Exclusion Policy- The Trustees recommended the Suspension and Exclusion policy for review and approval at the Board of Trustees meeting.</p> <p>15.2 Curriculum policy 2024-25- The Trustees approved the Curriculum policy, subject to minor adjustments to the language used in the policy.</p> <p>15.3 Children in Care- The Trustees approved the Children in Care policy, subject to minor adjustments to the language used in the policy.</p> <p>15.4 Teaching and Learning Policy- The Trustees approved the Teaching and Learning policy.</p> <p>15.5 Accessibility Policy- The Trustees approved the Accessibility policy.</p>	
15.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact</p> <p>One sentence from the Committee to encapsulate the effectiveness of the meeting and the impact on the pupils, staff and other stakeholders.</p> <p>A Governor shared that the meeting had been very effective. She raised concerns about recent changes approved by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) rather than the Executive Improvement Team (EIT), and how these changes align with the governance structure. She questioned how well-informed the Trustees have been, noting her own feelings of being uninformed.</p> <p>The Governor felt the meeting provided an opportunity to address complex and sensitive issues. She appreciated the chance to share her thoughts and thanked LL for representing the academic side, acknowledging the importance of her presence and feedback.</p>	

The meeting ended at 7pm

Signed by the Chair of the Committee..... on 19th May 2025

Report/ Attachment	Question	Answer
EYFS	It is stated that 'best practice is seen when leaders drive the vision'. It is a concern that so many Academy Heads are 'not yet an expert' and therefore not driving the vision or improvement: Why is this?	We are addressing that through this priority and – as was with the phonics which is now – AH development is very much part of the EY priority in order that we have a common standard. - they are being trained in how to set and articulate the vision, and we are building their understanding of EY. Heads don't always teach in EY and therefore have not built the skill set through their career – this is what we are working to address.
	The data presented: is this data showing 'on track for the end of the year', 'at expectations', or aspirational targets?	This is data was uploaded by Heads at the December 2024 following their autumn data drop. Validity and accuracy of data is being checked by DoSs termly through their school review and predicted outcomes (National testing) are an appraisal target for heads. The data may of course change, and we are moving away from the language of 'aspirational' to 'accurate' for clarity.
	Although it is good to see that the overall Trust outcomes in Phonics and GLD will be higher this year, there are more concerns school by school for outcomes in Phonics than for GLD at EYFS. With the Trust priority for Phonics over recent years, what is EIT's understanding as to why this is?	The concerns for phonics are mainly with the new schools who have joined the trust this year and not had the benefit of training that other schools have had. This training is now being delivered across these schools and will hopefully see the outcomes improving over time.
	'Not consistently Good Enough': do academy heads and EYFS leaders know and understand what 'Good' looks like, and how do we know? What are the timescales for expected improvement set out in the AFI column?	We know that there is a spectrum of 'good' in an Ofsted judgement. This comment: <i>'In most settings, provision is "good enough" (in Ofsted terms) but not yet consistently good enough against trust expectations/what the 'gold standard' will be"</i> refers to that. Some settings may achieve an Ofsted 'good' whilst not meeting the high standards we hold as a trust. The 'gold standard' work will set that out, exemplify what trust expectations are and identify where exemplary practice can be seen.
Curriculum Policy	There isn't much emphasis on achieving the best academic progress and outcomes, and pupils being fully equipped for their next phase in education: it features in a bullet point on p4, but not in the diagram for Intent. Should this have a higher profile?	Useful thank you, will take back for review.
Children in Care Policy	Should the aims of the policy not include high quality teaching to	

	ensure best academic progress and outcomes?	
	P4: 'inform parents and carers' where there are concerns about punctuality or attendance – as all our schools are primary I suggest this should say 'consult with' or 'ensure active support from...'	
PP strategy presentation	<p>The majority of funding is for staffing (mostly support staff) and the work of EIT and Improvement Team: how much PPG funding is dedicated to central services?</p> <p>What is the impact on PP pupils of this funding?</p>	<p>I don't have the answer to a specific amount given to central services as I am not sure what you are considering might sit outside EIT and improvement team? This would probably be best aimed at Matt Matthew.</p> <p><u>The Trust has operated a formula for a number of years that sees the total cost of the ITH recovered on a % basis from PPG with the remaining % nominally allocated to TA support. Schools are allocated a small amount to use at their discretion towards trips, visits etc.</u> <u>Given the current financial outlook, should schools be given an increased discretionary amount they would need to make compensating reductions elsewhere and most likely in TA support hours.</u></p>
	Why don't schools have 'direct choices on how funding is spent?' Is any delegated to schools to plan for local priorities?	Because the Trust top slice the majority of the funding and then allocate to schools, mostly for staffing, schools have the choice of who is appointed and where they place support staff but not the number of staff they can employ. As described (slide 3) they receive a small budget for local priorities and this varies depending on the number in receipt of PPG.
	Pupil Premium Plus for CIN and previously cared for pupils: is that retained by the Trust (bullet 4, slide 3) Ditto for Forces pupils. If it is retained by the Trust, how is it spent, and what is the impact on the CIN and Forces pupils?	PP+ funding for CiN pupils is managed by the virtual school and schools have Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and support with best ways to use this. However previously cared for pupils and forces funding is retained by the Trust and I am unable to give any specific breakdown on impact for this as the Trust numbers are very small (0.7% CiC and 1.2% Forces)
	What is EITs understanding of why there are more PPG pupils in KS2 – is this due to the introduction of Universal FSM? What can we do to redress this?	Yes UFSM and also changes to benefit structures a few years ago reduced the number eligible or claiming. Most schools share info on how to do this with parents and there is also talk about the govt making it automatic so parents don't have to claim, this would be a good move.
	Current national average for attendance for primaries (year to	I am unable to track back to 2020 on our system and it also must be

	<p>date) is 94.8%, so the attendance of our PPG pupils is below national average. Is the gap with non PPG peers narrowing or widening since 2020?</p>	<p>remembered that the size of the Trust has been growing and therefore comparable data may not be as accurate as it would be otherwise. 2020-21 figures were affected by Covid-19, and Wolborough and Bearnas joining in 2024 also skewed the stats as our number in receipt of the PPG increased rapidly. However in 2022-23 the gap between PPG/non PPG was 2.5%, in 23-24 it was 2.8% and so far this year it sits at 1.6% so is currently narrowing. This gap is a national trend and we generally have a smaller gap than in national and local data , e.g. in 2022/23 the absence rate for eligible FSM pupils was 11.1% compared with 6.1% for non-eligible pupils. However it is worth drilling down further into specifics when we have updated national data, e.g. our persistent absence data (children missing at least 10% of school) and unauthorised absence data is lower than for non-FSM children. Some of our schools are bucking the trend, others have a wider gap that then affects our overall data.</p>
	<p>The Trust outcomes for this current year, set out on slide 7 are aims rather than outcomes. At this mid point of the year, what are we expecting the outcomes for each aim to be by the end of the year?</p>	<p>I agree, sorry incorrect term used.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Attainment: Spring data is just being entered, focus on this aspect will be in the summer 2. Attendance: Pete Halford is DoSi with responsibility for attendance. Several Trust staff have attended emotionally based school absence (EBSA) and have access to a Devon toolkit 3. English & maths: RC and CA are working closely with schools to develop QFT for all, I am now involved in meetings with the SI Team so can bring a focus to FSM/SEND 4. Wider curriculum: this is evident in all schools but id a challenge on tighter budgets 5. Support for SEND/FSM pupils: 35% of our FSM pupils also have SEND). SEND is supported well by inclusion team.
	<p>The 'next steps' seem wholly appropriate – what progress has there been on improved insight of data for PPG and CiN?</p>	<p>Now being able to see all schools on the system is an improvement and allows me to see e.g. where the greatest area of need is (Littleham has highest FSM, Bearnas highest CiN). However I need a session with Andy to see how more filters can be applied, e.g. CiN who are also persistent</p>

		absentees or FSM children who are also EAL.
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