

Mid Devon Local Advisory Committee (LAC)
Minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams
Monday, 10 March 2025 at 5 pm

Name	Role/Type of Governor	School	
Joanna (Bidly) Hooper (JH)	Chair – Foundation Governor	Morchard Bishop/across the LAC	P
Bruce Abbott (BA)	Parent Governor – Vice Chair	Yeoford	P
Mat Boulton (MB)	Parent Governor	Cheriton Bishop	P
Catherine Cozens (CC)	Parent Governor	Morchard Bishop	P
Rebecca (Beki) Richards (RR)	Staff Governor	Across the LAC	P
Tom Woodley (TW)	Parent Governor	Tedburn St Mary	Ap
Vacancy	Trustee Appointed Governor	Across the LAC	
Vacancy	Staff (Academy Head) Governor	Across the LAC	
Pam Down (Clerk)	Clerk	Mid Devon LAC	P
Charlotte Roe (GP)	Governance Professional	Link Academy Trust	P

Present/Apologies/Absent

		ACTION
1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES JH, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. TW had apologised in advance, advising he may not be able to attend the meeting.	
2	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: As logged on the Register of Business Interests - nothing further to add in relation to this meeting's agenda.	
3	APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2025 The P1 Minutes were approved and were signed by the Chair. They will be forwarded to HR to be uploaded onto the Trust website. The P2 Minutes of the same meeting (not circulated) were approved by the GP and the Chair. They will be held on file.	Chair/Clerk
4	MATTERS ARISING (not covered elsewhere in the Agenda)	
4.1	Governors' review of responses to the questions raised at the previous LAC and to confirm satisfaction with the answers received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A governor stated the AH had not received a response from MM, DCEO, regarding school site security/fencing or the pre-school. The GP will follow this up. Staff wellbeing (discussed in Part 2). The Chair confirmed this had been discussed by the S&C Committee at length, also in Part 2. The GP will talk to the Chair of S&C to enquire how this is being followed up. The Staff Governor mentioned the staff survey had been referred to at a leadership meeting with a question about how autonomous it was and the level of honesty within responses. The Staff Governor asked what training AHs received regarding wellbeing. It was acknowledged by all this is a difficult area with everyone under so much pressure – no money and a lot of need! 	GP to follow up GP to follow up
4.2	Were AHs happy for visit reports to be shared with all staff across the LAC? (Mid	

<p>4.3</p>	<p>Devon LAC mins 20.01.25, item 10): The AHs who had been asked were happy to share. It was suggested governors check at the beginning of each meeting to determine what was off record conversation and what would be recorded and shared. Discussion would need to take place with AHs about whether the visit report would be printed for the staffroom or emailed. When reports are agreed by individual AHs, the Clerk will share with the AHs/Administrators as appropriate.</p> <p>Update re governors checking the name/s of the mental health lead staff (Mid Devon LAC mins 20.01.25, item 10): The GP advised that Sue Howard, HR, was the Trust's Mental Health/Wellbeing Lead. It was believed this may now be more of a central role. <i>A governor asked who would respond within each school as there would need to be a point of local contact; SH would be very removed.</i> It was assumed the AH would be the first point of contact. Governors will follow this up during their next visit. <i>The question was raised about who, on site, would be there to support the AH?</i> There may be a support network within the school. Previously, with standalone governing boards, the Chair would be in a position to support the Head of School. Foundation and Parent Governors, by visiting, may naturally fall into this role, in addition to the central HR support. It was recognised that long term sickness absence creates further pressure for existing staff. <i>A governor evidenced a situation when a school had made a request via HR and had been able to get cover to support the situation.</i></p> <p>4.4 Governor visits – a reminder about seeking Assurance from the AH and Reassurance (evidence by talking to staff and children – digging deep) Mid Devon LAC mins 20.01.25, item 13 Two governors mentioned they had felt the Data focus this time had not lent itself to being able to do this in depth.</p>	<p>Governors to check content of visit reports with AHs before sharing. To discuss with AHs method of sharing (ie email/ staffroom)</p> <p>Governors to follow up who is the first point of contact as a mental health lead within each school – the AH?</p>
<p>5</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p>CLERK'S UPDATE</p> <p>Vacancies:</p> <p>a) Trustee Appointed Governor: The person JH had previously mentioned has now joined the Ethos Committee and is delivering class worship but did not have the capacity to take on an additional role. BA suggested a person he would approach with a view to discussing this vacancy. He was asked to follow this up.</p> <p>b) AHT Governor Representative: The Clerk had written to the three AHs in post – the new AH will not be starting at Morchard Bishop until after Easter. The Clerk had reiterated SB's suggestion that AHs do not need to have been in post long or have previous experience. He had become the AH governor representative soon after starting at Morchard Bishop and found it a useful insight/good CPD. The AH governor representative role is usually on a one-year rota basis. The Clerk will follow this up, outlining the role further and giving a deadline of 31 March 2025 for a response. The GP advised that if nobody comes forward, ND, the CEO, would intervene. A conversation about the role had taken place between a governor and an AH but there was reluctance due to the unknown, but potential need, for AHs to pick up additional duties following the admin restructure.</p> <p>Training:</p> <p>a) Update from CC & MB re the 'Intro for local board members' training session on 28 Jan 2025. Both were thanked for attending this DES session. MB and CC both commented that during the 'break out room' discussion, they felt they knew where they were and that they were on track. MB had been aware of a lot of things that were shared but the reassurance was useful. CC agreed. Although she felt relatively new, she was the most experienced</p>	<p>Trustee Appointed governor vacancy – BA to follow up potential candidate</p>

	<p>governor within the group and felt reassured by the knowledge she had already gained (ie, aware of QCards which she had already been sent and used). MB had noted that organisations were set up differently, each unique. Whilst it is good to attend induction training early on, MB and CC both felt in some ways it had been useful at this point as they had been able to put information into context in a better way.</p> <p>b) Update from JH & BA who attended the Data Training with Andy Keay on 12 Feb 2025 – governors were reminded that a copy of the recorded session is available on request. JH and BA reported quite an intense PowerPoint session. Both were experienced in data processing/school data but it was a lot of information to listen to and absorb. They believed it was aimed at people not involved in the school environment although JH found a recap about what she had learned throughout her career useful. It would have been useful to receive practical advice about how to use the information to produce reports: how do we dig deep or identify gaps – what would we do to inform the S&C Committee of relevant information? The session was not well attended. JH and BA were thanked for attending and giving feedback.</p> <p>c) Future Link Academy governor training: Internal Trust training for governors is a new and evolving concept. The GP believes the bespoke Trust training should be very useful so it is hoped to find more convenient times and dates for governors to attend other sessions. Following a discussion about times that best fit, it was apparent this was a challenge as all governors are busy most days after school and early evenings. It was noted the next training, as detailed below, will commence at 6.30 pm. The GP suggested waiting to see how well that is attended before setting a start time for the 3 June training session. <i>A governor asked if the training will be recorded.</i> The GP confirmed it would be available on request.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wednesday 2 April 2025 at 6.30 pm - SEND Training with Fran ▪ Tuesday 3 June 2025 – ‘Asking pupils’ questions’ – training by Lizzie (time to be confirmed) <p>d) Please see the bite size training sessions available in the Governance Today Magazine (emailed to governors on 3.3.25). The Clerk mentioned no governor briefings are currently listed.</p> <p>e) Governor training record to be kept by the Clerk – governors asked to confirm when training sessions have been completed to keep the Clerk informed.</p> <p>f) Cyber training – all governors were thanked for completing this training so promptly.</p>	
5.3	<p>Clerk to Local Board Committee to update the governors on any local or national issues:</p> <p>a) <u>Governor bios</u> - the Clerk thanked governors for the ones received. They had been sent to each school’s AH and Administrator for notice boards and newsletters and to HR or the relevant school’s website. Some governors confirmed this had already been actioned in their schools.</p> <p>b) <u>Standards & Curriculum meeting 25 March 2025</u> – JH confirmed she would be able to attend.</p>	
5.4	<p>Significant changes within the Trust including key personnel: Various staffing changes ahead were discussed and the uncertainty regarding Government funding – GAG (general annual grant) statements, PP, etc was acknowledged within the</p>	

	Trust and nationwide. It was recognised the budget situation causes unrest for all staff.	
5.5	Parental Engagement - 3 core roles – Role 3 – the Board has strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders. The Board involves parents, schools and communities so that decision-making is supported by meaningful engagement. The Chair commented that all reports evidenced parents’ forums or parents’ meetings. Good feedback regarding the ‘meet the new head’ gathering was received, there had been good attendance and interesting and useful information shared.	
5.6	Risk Assessments – reminder that Matt Matthews, DCEO, will be attending LAC meetings (attending the Mid Devon LAC on Mon 23 June 2025). The GP encouraged governors to continue asking AHs if any concerns raised were included in the Risk Registers which were such a useful tool if used properly. <i>A governor evidenced an occasion when the AH had confirmed an issue had been flagged on the RA.</i>	
6	<p>Focus: A detailed analysis of nationally reported data on EYFS, Y1 Phonic check, Y4 multiplication check, KS1 SATS and KS2 SATS, SEND and PPG analysis / Broad overview of other groups on their progress and expectations to targets</p> <p>Feedback from governors re their focus visits invited.</p> <p>Governors were thanked for providing reports from each of the four schools.</p> <p>The Chair remarked some data had been thin on the ground in terms of numbers due to the timing of the next data drop (due two weeks after the visit). Some Reports highlighted the impact of a high level of SEND/EHCP children and another stated there was evidence that since the December figures, pupils are making good or better progress. Year 6 children were preparing for SATs by completing past papers. Trust teacher moderation planned for 27.3.25. The GP advised the timing of the Data focus would change next year (it would be swapped with the SEND focus). The Trustees had originally wanted a mid-year progress check but the data drops were planned for the end of each term. The Chair added that discussion evidenced that provision maps were in place and the data proves (almost always) what the teachers already know – assessment backs that up. AHs were able to provide accurate information without the next set of data.</p>	
7	<p>FOCUS: Provision for PPC & LAC and the impact - clearly outlined in all reports. The Chair thanked governors for some very detailed information in this area, including examples of OAIP (Ordinary Available Inclusive Provision) and specific training, buddy systems, targeted invitations to join wider curriculum opportunities, regular engagement with parents/carers to keep them informed about enrichment opportunities, targeted interventions, attendance support, practical assistance (uniform, equipment and food), bespoke learning, nurture hub and a lot of other listed support. Barriers from schools included staffing – long term sickness absence and funding limitations meaning not enough support.</p>	
8	<p>FOCUS: Curriculum subject focus – EYFS: All reports showed positive outcomes with ELGs (Early Learning Goals) being met and GLD (Good Level of Development) discussed. Changes included Reception and Pre School working more closely together (good transition in place), gaps in learning identified and being addressed, developing EYFS provision with new staff, CPD, and classroom and outside areas being improved,</p>	
9	<p>FEEDBACK FROM ETHOS COMMITTEES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS</p> <p>The Foundation Governor at the CofE School reported the newly formed Ethos Committee had an introductory meeting with Sharon Lord, the Trust’s RE and SIAMS Lead. The staff had planned their Statement of Intent for spirituality within the School. Dates have been set for the Committee to meet again and work</p>	

	<p>through the termly strands with the new AH once she has settled in. The Committee now consisted of six people, including the School's RE Lead, the Foundation Governor and a member of the local church community. SL has prepared a letter for parents, carers and the wider community explaining the role of the Ethos Committee and encouraging new members. It was felt it was better to wait for the arrival of the new AH and then explore sending the letter and inviting more members once the Committee had become a little more established.</p>	<p>GP will liaise with SL re the letter/timing of circulation</p>
10	<p>SCHOOL UPDATES</p> <p>Governors to consider and discuss feedback on any issues/successes from their school visits or visit notes completed by the AHT.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAN (to include pupils joined/left) • Pupil wellbeing • Staff wellbeing and workload • Attendance • Suspensions and permanent exclusions • Feedback on any parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA • ASIP update • Risk Assessments/Accident Book • Pre-school update <p>The visit reports had covered quite a bit of the above. In addition, the following points were raised:</p> <p><u>Permanent Exclusion</u> <i>A governor asked if this was in connection with a different pupil. It was confirmed it was the same child.</i></p> <p><u>Staff wellbeing and workload</u> Long term staff absence and staff changes were prevalent and impact was felt across all schools. The Staff Governor had asked the Mid Devon LAC administrators to pass on her email to all staff; inviting questions or concerns to be fed directly back to the Staff Governor. There had not been a high level of response but concern had been raised at one of the schools, particularly with the impact of long term sickness and other factors in addition to the usual stresses which were weighing heavily on people's minds. How best to offer support was discussed. The Staff Governor wondered if a visit would be helpful. It was agreed initially for the Parent Governor to ask what support needs to be put in place to help and then to perhaps give a gentle mention to the School's EIT. It was recognised staff had been under high pressure for a sustained amount of time. It was agreed there is no easy fix, particularly with budgetary constraints and lack of cover.</p>	<p>Parent Governor to ask what support would help and perhaps mention to the EIT</p>
11	<p>STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM TRUSTEES' MEETING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Response to draft minutes dated 04.02.2025 (confidential until approved) ▪ Feedback on any issues raised from local board Chairs in S&C meeting – raised at Mid Devon LAC 20.01.2025: <p>The Chair had attended the meeting and whilst a lot of the content did not directly apply, it was interesting, she had learnt a lot and believed she would understand more by attending further meetings. The Trustees have to talk at a strategic level but it had given the Chair an understanding how the Mid Devon LAC fits into the wider picture. <i>The GP asked if governors felt what was being discussed by the LACs was being listened to by the Trustees?</i> Governors felt the two-way question/answer channel was useful. They had found the GP's email with the LACs' questions and responses very useful. The Chair commented it had also meant there were less and more focussed questions dealt with during the S&C meeting itself.</p>	

12	<p>NEXT S&C FOCUS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision and impact for SEND ▪ Subject focus: PE ▪ Complaint's Policy (governors to discuss number of complaints with AHs) <p>Governors to discuss the next S&C focus in preparation for their next round of visits. Governors to share best practice and raise any questions for clarification.</p> <p>The GP suggested the next visit would provide a good opportunity to ask AHs about the number of complaints they received. <i>A governor asked for clarification: did this mean formal complaints or other niggles?</i> The GP suggested asking for either, including what staff had done to ensure a complaint is satisfied. It may be that following visits and discussion, further good practice could be shared to support colleagues. <i>Another governor thought it would be an opportunity to ask what happens with a formal complaint at higher Trust level – where would that go and how would it be dealt with?</i> The GP advised complaint hearing panels are set up. However, they do not meet that often, there are currently only twenty three schools in the Trust.</p> <p>Governors were reminded they are able to meet with their AHs in the half term prior to the visit should that timing work better. The clerk would email the Summer 1 focus visit template after the meeting. The next Mid Devon LAC meeting will be on 10 May 2025 with completed reports to be returned to the Clerk by Thursday, 8 May 2025.</p>	<p>Clerk to forward Summer 1 focus visit template – Governors and AHs to book/hold meetings at any point</p>
13	<p>EVALUATION OF GOVERNANCE IMPACT - To review performance and value of the meeting – to summarise the effectiveness of the meeting and how this will positively impact on our pupils, staff and Trust. Governors to seek Assurance from the AHT and get Reassurance (evidence) eg by talking to staff and children, digging deep and asking 'how do you know'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governors believed their visits, questions and discussion during the meeting had raised the need to continue to understand and support staff wellbeing. It was important for people to know they are being listened to and that people care. ▪ Data and discussion about children's learning – a key focus – had identified where gaps were and how they were being closed. 	
14	<p>QUESTIONS TO BE DEALT WITH AT LAC LEVEL (Governance Professional)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two points to be followed up as detailed in item 4.1 ▪ AH Governor Representative: If a volunteer does not come forward by 31.03.25, the GP will take this matter to the Board of Trustees. 	<p>Three points for the GP to follow up</p>
15	<p>QUESTIONS TO BE ESCALATED TO S&C FOR TRUSTES CONSIDERATION (Clerk)</p> <p>No questions to raise. However, the GP will speak to the S&C Committee to ensure they are aware of the general unrest following the potential admin restructure.</p>	<p>GP to raise awareness</p>

The meeting closed at 6.09 pm

Signed as approved by the Chair, Joanna Hooper Date: 12 May 2025