Mid Devon Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

Minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Monday, 29 September 2025 at 5 pm

Name	Role/Type of Governor	School	
Joanna (Biddy) Hooper (JH)	Chair – Foundation Governor	Morchard Bishop/across the LAC	P
Bruce Abbott (BA)	Parent Governor – Vice Chair	Yeoford	P
Hannah Bancroft (AH)	Staff (Academy Head) Governor	Across the LAC	P
Mat Boult (MB)	Parent Governor	Cheriton Bishop	P
Todd Chenore (TC)	Trustee Appointed Governor	Across the LAC	P
Catherine Cozens (CC)	Parent Governor	Morchard Bishop	P
Tom Woodley (TW)	Parent Governor	Tedburn St Mary	Ap
Vacancy	***Staff Governor***	Across the LAC	
Pam Down (Clerk)	Clerk	Mid Devon LAC	P
Charlotte Roe (GP)	Governance Professional	Link Academy Trust	P
Rachael Sharpe (CEO)	CEO	Link Academy Trust	P

Present/**Ap**ologies/**Ab**sent

		ACTION
1	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES** JH, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly TC, his first meeting since the confirmation of his appointment as Trustee Appointed Governor (from 08.07.25). The Chair reminded everyone that Rachael Sharpe, the new CEO, plans to join the meeting at a later point. Apologies were received from Tom Woodley due to lack of Internet as his connection had been accidentally damaged by someone during hedge cutting - **approved.**	
2	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** As logged on the Register of Business Interests - circulated to all governors for annual updating if required, signing and returning.	
3	**ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR** The Clerk had emailed previously inviting self-nominations for either of the posts. JH and BA were thanked for volunteering to stand as Chair and Vice-Chair for a further year if required. There were no other nominations. Governors unanimously agreed the proposal to elect JH and BA for a further year (with a review in September 2026).	
4	**APPROVAL OF THE P1 MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 23 June 2025** The Minutes were **approved** and will be signed electronically by the Chair. They will be forwarded to HR to be uploaded onto the Trust website.	**Chair/Clerk**
5	**MATTERS ARISING from 23.06.2025 (not covered elsewhere in the Agenda)** **Governors' review of responses to the questions raised at the previous LAC and to confirm if there are any supplementary questions:** **a)** **School security at Yeoford:** There had been no further update re the perimeter fencing issue (flagged red on the Risk Register). Lack of finance is the biggest barrier. **b)** **Tedburn St Mary – playground fence/boundary between the School and**	

	the Methodist Church: This remains unrepaired. Trees and brambles pulling the fence have been cleared. **c)** **SEND / SENDCo (thinly spread) – Action plan requested at the July S&C:** The Chair confirmed this has been discussed at length but there has not been a further meeting since July. The new CEO is meeting every Academy Headteacher and staff and big decisions are on hold until visits are complete. A Trustees Away Day (including LAC Chairs) will discuss and form a strategic plan. **d)** **Minibus - exploring potential purchase –** following the last meeting, it had been agreed a discussion with the AHs should take place before exploring further with PTAs. The AH offered to raise this subject with the other LAC AHs to seek initial thoughts. The AH head was unsure how useful a minibus would be with year groups around 30. The AH has the required driving licence which is not difficult to get. MM had been asked to provide a model/guide to be used should it be decided to pursue this further. This would include costs, budget lines and general information connected with purchasing or owning a minibus (including seating/Licence requirements). TC had previously agreed to assist in exploring further if required. A governor added that should there be interest in exploring further it will need to be agreed how costs are shared (ie number of pupils in the school or a percentage split proportionate to the school). The GP will discuss this with MM if there is sufficient interest. **e)** **Potential change to school day timings/to discuss with the DoE:** It had not been necessary to make a change to the actual school day timings. A successful change had been made by reorganising morning procedures and timing of the gates being locked. ***The CEO joined the meeting during discussion of item 5d***	**Once the CEO school visits are complete, Trustees and LAC Chairs will meet on an Away Day to develop a strategic plan.** **HB to speak to the other LAC AHs to determine interest in a minibus. If this is to be explored, the GP will discuss further with MM.**
6 **6.1** **6.2** **6.3** **6.4**	**CLERK UPDATE** **Vacancy: Staff Governor –** the Clerk had advertised the vacancy in July and again in September. AHs and administrators had been asked to share the advert with all staff. No nominations had been received. The Clerk will send a follow up email. The GP asked the CEO to raise this with AHs. **Training update:** **a)** Governors reminded they must complete L2 Safeguarding. Alex Waterman had accepted evidence of recent Safeguarding training from other school settings. Others were asked to send evidence of training to the Clerk urgently for Alex to approve. Two governors will be attending the 'mop up' session tomorrow. Remaining dates: *Tues 20 Jan 2 pm / 7pm* *Tues 28 April 2 pm / 7 pm* **b)** Governors' Annual Compliance Form – thanks expressed to everyone for completing and returning their forms. **c)** Annual 'Housekeeping' Tasks (list circulated as a reminder for everyone). The Clerk highlighted: ▪ The continued need for confidentiality regarding discussion and minutes, including from S&C. All minutes confidential until approved. ▪ New (or not so new) governors asked how the recruitment process had worked for them and what could be improved. **d)** Complaints Panel training – 15 Oct 2025 at 10:00 **e)** Exclusion Panel training – 20 Nov 2025 at 13:00 – TC plans to attend. The difficulty of attending training during the working day was noted. Governors asked for more information about the courses. The Clerk will forward following the meeting. **Clerk to Local Board Committee to update the governors on any local or national issues**: The termly clerks' briefing webinar takes place tomorrow so any updates will be shared after that. **Publications/paperwork** (previously circulated): **a)** Governor Checklist – lots of useful information, including training opportunities. **b)** List of Trust roles and contacts – helpful information about who's who. **c)** Standards & Curriculum meeting 14 October 2025 – JH confirmed she would be able to attend.	**<u>Staff gov vacancy</u>** **Clerk to send another advertising reminder – to be followed up with AHs by the CEO** **Clerk to forward further info re Complaints and Exclusion Panel training**

7	**TERMS OF REFERENCE** (previously circulated) Governors reviewed the Terms of Reference to ensure compliance in line with the Scheme of Delegation for approval by S&C. The Chair confirmed the Terms of Reference reflected an accurate representation of what the Mid Devon LAC does.	
8	**STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOCUS: Analysis and evaluation of pupil outcomes and targets for the year** Feedback from governors re their focus visits invited. Governors were thanked for providing reports from each of the four schools. *A governor referred to one school's report and queried the projected MTC of 44% and the achievement of 88%. The Governor asked why the projection was so low in comparison to the achievement.* The AH explained that when joining the school in Easter this year she had 'put a bomb' under it, including using the TTRS program (multi-sensory approach to repetition learning) every day which had really worked and produced the much higher level of achievement than originally forecast. Governors remarked on this being a good success story! *A governor noted lack of satisfactory ICT was mentioned as a barrier in the Reports, including a new teacher who had not been able to log in until recently. The governor acknowledged finance is a barrier but there had been little or no response from MM or the IT provider to explain the situation.* *A governor and AH also mentioned the problem of intermittent internet with no clear fix. The office computer had stopped working which, amongst other issues, means it is not possible to track attendance effectively (although staff are aware of attendance within the school).* The CEO confirmed she is very aware of the IT issues, as are MM, Deputy CEO, and LL, DoE. The CEO is in her fourth week of her new role and is continuing to visit all schools – she will complete this by the end of next week. At that point, she will have a better insight into each school's successes and challenges which will help in creating a strategic plan. *A governor questioned how finance limitations would allow progress in the challenging areas.* The CEO has connected with another Trust which is robust and clear about expectations. The IT situation will be unpicked and will be a key objective. The CEO acknowledged this does not help in the immediate but it will be addressed. She commented the visits had been insightful and interesting and there were areas of common concern; IT being one of them.	**Response re ICT requested from MM / IT provider**
9	**STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOCUS: ACADEMY IMPROVEMENT PLANNING/CPD PLAN** Feedback from governors invited. The Chair commented the Reports reflect the AHs are all clear with Trust and individual school targets and focus. Finance was highlighted as a barrier, together with IT issues, staffing changes, lack of human resources (including staff absence) and SEND.	
10	**STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOCUS: BRITISH VALUES AND PREPARING FOR LIFE IN MODERN BRITAIN** Feedback from governors invited. The Chair noted that Reports were positive. One school identified this area as a target and plans are in action to address the gaps. A governor was pleased to advise that in every class from R to Y6, children knew the five values; they were well embedded. *A governor asked how the school had enabled this.* It had been achieved through assemblies, wall charts and was discussed each morning. *A governor asked if the values were closely linked to the other behaviour values in the school.* The governor will investigate. One school had School Ambassadors and Values Ambassadors. British values was taught in classes through PSHE, world views and class assemblies.	**Governor to investigate if school values are closely linked to the other behaviour values in the school**
11	**FEEDBACK FROM ETHOS COMMITTEES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS** The Foundation Governor reported a successful and positive Ethos Committee	

	meeting had taken place. Vision and Values need to be underpinned in clearer theology to match the Christian Distinctiveness, eg ‘Deeply Rooted’ – exploring what the school is deeply rooted in. Sharon Lord had advised the group about what SIAMS would be looking for and how best to develop the necessary areas. A further meeting to evaluate progress had been arranged to take place next half term. *A governor asked how the term courageous advocacy is reflected in the school’s vision.* The Foundation Governor believed the term means not being afraid to do the right thing in the right situation; acting in truth, justice and love. *A governor asked if it was felt the pupils feel empowered to act for justice and are encouraged to make ethical choices.* The Foundation Governor and AH agreed this is currently on the target list. Each half term, quite deep questions are explored. Weekly class worships look at smaller questions. An example of a questions explored was given, ‘Can love change the world and what would that look like?’ Within British values, ‘What rights do you have?’ – democracy had been discussed within relational approach. The CEO advised SIAMS would look for the evidence behind the questions and answers. She gave an example: children learning about injustice had felt moved and inspired to fundraise for children in Uganda. Photographic evidence is always useful. The CEO will be meeting with AHs next week and looking at visioning.	
12	**SUCCESSES AND SHARING OF GOOD PRACTICE** ▪ Governors referred to item 8 (projected MTC of 44% and the achievement of 88%) – how this had been done and the success of the TTRS program. ▪ Governors referred to item 10 and having heard that in every class from R to Y6, children knew the five values; they were well embedded. ▪ Positive and productive Ethos Committee meeting – recognising Vision and Values need to be underpinned in clearer theology to match the Christian Distinctiveness. Working with Sharon Lords and the Committee to explore and develop the necessary areas, particularly in view of a forthcoming SIAMS Inspection.	
13	**SCHOOL UPDATES** Governors to consider and discuss feedback on any issues/successes from their school visits or visit notes completed by the AH. • 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 The visit reports had covered quite a bit of the above. In addition, the following points were raised: **Transition** had gone well including between Pre School to Reception. In some schools, links between primary and secondary schools were not as clear. One governor mentioned the ‘Big Step’ initiative which had been very positive. One aspect of the Big Step is for some children to attend their secondary school during the summer holiday to build confidence and reduce anxiety. Another governor explained his primary school had identified anxious pupils and they had been offered extra sessions with the opportunity to meet other students in the same position. *A governor asked whether the parents had identified the child/children or whether this is something the school had done.* The governor confirmed the school had identified those concerned although he felt sure the school would support a request from a parent if appropriate. Another governor mentioned children with SEND had been offered an extra transition day. **Staff wellbeing and workload** ▪ Staff sickness was highlighted as affecting the wellbeing of staff particularly as	

	staff resource was already limited. AHs are often regularly covering absence which creates additional pressure. ▪ Lack of effective ICT is affecting wellbeing and workload. ▪ Internal appointments have created gaps due to the need to back-fill. ▪ SEND support and crucial interventions for children on the cusp is at risk It was noted repeatedly that finance is a big barrier affecting the above and other areas. **<u>Attendance</u>** The Chair noted there were no major issues – except one school being unable to track attendance effectively as IT systems were not functioning. *A governor referred to the S&C Committee meeting minutes of 08.07.25 when a question had been raised about persistent absence data: did data include children who were late, or was it limited to full session absence?* Data had included children who were late, particularly arriving after the register had closed. *This was an area the LAC governor had previously identified as flawed. The LAC governor was pleased to read the introduction of a new Power BI system aims to break down attendance and better distinguish between types of absence to gain a clearer insight in the future. The governor added that in instances when it had been agreed that children would attend part time, this currently skews overall attendance for an individual school and needs to be reflected accurately.* **<u>Pre-School</u>** One school reported a new Pre-School leader had started today. The Toddler Group had been offered the use of the school hall free of charge. The school is looking to source baby toys and equipment as the items previously used in the village hall had been disposed of. It is hoped to hand over to a group of parents who would lead the sessions. The Chair suggested contacting the local Methodist Church who may be able to help with resources. *The GP asked whether anyone had discussed numbers.* Governors had not discussed in this round of visits but would do so in the second half of this term, monitoring wrap around care in terms of numbers and how this reflected in school intake and cohorts. A governor mentioned the local Pre School (not affiliated with the school) had been giving positive feedback to parents about the school which had been encouraging as previously some children had gone on to attend another local school. A bigger intake than previously is expected into Reception next year – however, that is a long way ahead but strengthening links were very welcome and positive. The Chair noted there had been no suspensions or permanent exclusions, Safeguarding was up to date and PTFAs were running well.	
14	**STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM TRUSTEES' MEETING** ▪ **Response to draft minutes dated 08.07.2025 (confidential until approved)** ▪ **Feedback on any issues raised from local board Chairs in S&C meeting:** The Minutes were lengthy yet the Chair reported there had not been many specific LAC questions to feedback. ▪ There had been a massive discussion surrounding attendance (as noted by a LAC governor in item 13 above). ▪ The Risk Register is being evaluated and reviewed with training ongoing. ▪ A governor noted the previously discussed PP crib sheet to help standardise responses around data was on hold until reviewed by the new CEO. ▪ Behaviour: A governor noted that staff continue to report pupil behaviour affecting staff wellbeing. The governor understood as that had been the case in his local school. The GP advised there are some challenging behaviours which staff find difficult. A governor stated the relational approach had helped with managing behaviour but expressed frustration that children are not getting into the schools they deserve to best support them. It is often the reason for exclusions, in order to protect the other children. The CEO confirmed there is more and more need yet less and less money. Behaviours have impact and external waiting lists are long with not enough spaces available in specialist schools. Another governor highlighted the need for further Relational Approach training in one of the schools – particularly needing to be revisited for new staff.	
15	**NEXT S&C FOCUS:** • **Personal Development/Wellbeing – Relationship Education, PHSE &**	

	RHSE • **SEF Overview – Academy Head's overview of accuracy and effectiveness of their school self-evaluation** • **Christian distinctiveness/SIAMS** (visit note template Autumn 2 circulated) Governors were invited to discuss the next focus and ask any questions. The AH advised the SEF is on hold because of the new Ofsted Framework and toolkit. What is currently being used is no longer the best fit. The AH advised the SEF was not ready in her school and currently she had only received limited training. The CEO advised the DoE was working on a new SEF template. The GP agreed it was better to change the focus from SEF overview to the new Ofsted Framework and how it will look in each school. The GP will change that area of the Autumn 2 visit report and resend.	**Action: The GP will change the SEF overview focus to the new Ofsted Framework and how it will look in each school. She will amend and resend the Autumn 2 visit report template.**
16	**KEY ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS:** *1) Are children safe? Do they feel safe?* *2) Are children attending? Are the places of education fit for purpose?* *3) Are children achieving? Are we providing the opportunities and support they need to achieve* *4) How are our staff feeling?* Most of the questions had been addressed throughout the meeting but the following points were raised: 1) Governors believed children felt safe in their schools. When asked, some children had said the staff are there to help them. Another governor agreed that when asked, children generally gave a strong view of feeling safe. 2) Settings were fit for purpose with a governor noting that every child was engaged purposefully, keen and enthusiastic during the governor/AH visit. Another governor commented on displays feeling child-friendly. 3) Are schools providing the opportunities and support they need to help children achieve? Governors acknowledged that all staff teams know the areas which need to be developed. A governor reflected on whether achieving meant to pass a test or to gain skills that maybe a test would not identify. Value added was discussed – looking at doing the best for each child and whether the setting has improved the ability for a child to learn – not just the grades achieved. 4) Staff and how they are feeling: Governors were able to speak with staff often and believed they had a good understanding of the way they felt (see item 13). ***TC left the meeting due to a family commitment***	
17	**QUESTIONS TO BE DEALT WITH AT LAC LEVEL (Governance Professional)** ▪ **ICT** (item 8) A lack of satisfactory ICT was mentioned as a barrier in the Governor/AH Reports, including a new teacher who had not been able to log in until recently. The finance barrier was acknowledged but there had been little or no response from MM or the IT provider to explain the situation. **MM** ▪ **Budget – clarity about ordering deadlines and where the remaining surplus funds had gone: MM** *A governor referred to the assurance given when their school joined the Link Academy Trust about their school retaining their healthy surplus and it not going into an overall pot. The governor also asked about for transparency regarding the 'top slice'.* The CEO stated the school in question may have had a surplus last year but what projections were forecast for this year and the next two years? The CEO is looking at the percentage of the top slice. She is not making changes **yet** but everything will be reviewed.	**The CEO will review all areas when creating the new strategic plan with staff and Trustees**
18	**QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED AT S&C LEVEL** No specific questions other than those already being addressed, particularly regarding finance, ICT and SEND.	

The meeting closed at 6.20 pm

Signed as approved by the Chair, Joanna Hooper ……………………………….. Date: 24 November 2025