

## Mid Devon Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

P1 Minutes of the meeting held via Microsoft Teams

**Monday, 12 May 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	P
Hannah Bancroft (AH)	Staff (Academy Head) Governor	Across the LAC	P
<b>Vacancy</b>	<b>Trustee Appointed Governor</b>	<b>Across the LAC</b>	
Pam Down (Clerk)	Clerk	Mid Devon LAC	P
Charlotte Roe (GP)	Governance Professional	Link Academy Trust	P

Present/Apologies/Absent

		ACTION
<b>1</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b> JH, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She introduced Hannah Bancroft, the new AH at Morchard Bishop Primary School and thanked her on behalf of the LAC for being so willing to step into the vacant AH governor representative role.	
<b>2</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:</b> As logged on the Register of Business Interests - nothing further to add in relation to this meeting's agenda.	
<b>3</b>	<b>APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 10 March 2025</b> The Minutes were <b>approved</b> and were signed by the Chair. They will be forwarded to HR to be uploaded onto the Trust website.	Chair/Clerk
<b>4</b>	<b>MATTERS ARISING from 10.03.2025 (not covered elsewhere in the Agenda)</b>	
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Governors' review of responses to the questions raised at the previous LAC and to confirm if there are any supplementary questions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Update re 'creative thinking' re a pre-school building: It was confirmed that unfortunately it had been decided by the Trust there was no suitable area to accommodate a pre-school.</li> <li>b) Update on school security at Yeoford: This is still a red area in the Risk Register. Ideally there fencing around the whole of the school would make everything secure but realistically, the priority is securing the Y5/Y6 classroom. The Chair confirmed this would remain on the agenda and the matter would be flagged again with the GP to signpost to Matt Matthew, DCEO.</li> <li>c) Staff wellbeing feedback, including unrest re the potential admin restructure</li> </ul>	GP to follow up with MM, DCEO  See item 11
<b>4.2</b>	Governors to confirm if their AHs are happy for visit reports to be shared and how best to do this. HB, AH at Morchard Bishop, believed transparency to be important and will verbally relay key points at a staff meeting which will be minuted.	Each governor to check sharing the visit report method

4.3	Establishing the mental health lead / who, on site, would be there to support the AH? The GP had previously advised that Sue Howard, HR, was the Trust's Mental Health/Wellbeing Lead. It was assumed the AH would be the first point of contact who would then signpost. The Mental Health Lead within the Trust would be responsible for supporting the AHs. It was hoped that Foundation and Parent Governors, by visiting, may naturally support this role together with a support network within each school.	with their own AH.
<p>5</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p> <p>5.5</p>	<p><b>CLERK'S UPDATE</b></p> <p><b>Vacancies:</b></p> <p>a) <b>Trustee Appointed Governor:</b> Governors had been delighted to receive a nomination and BA was thanked for being proactive in discussion leading to this. <b>The previously circulated nomination was approved.</b> The GP confirmed there was not a Trustee Appointed Governor role description; each LAC could decide their own priorities in line with individual skillsets. The person has a passion for education, schools and development. <b>Agreed the GP and Cheryl Mathieson would arrange a meeting with TC to discuss the role. His appointment is subject to the usual recruitment checks. He would be invited to the June meeting and asked what he feels he is best placed to bring to the LAC.</b></p> <p>b) <b>AHT Governor Representative:</b> The Clerk thanked HB for being so willing to take on this role which officially began on 30 April 2025, with a view to it being reviewed at the beginning of the Summer Term 2026 as part of a rolling rota with the other AHs within the LAC.</p> <p><b>Training:</b></p> <p>a) Update re in-house <b>SEND training</b> with Fran McLoughlin, Director of Inclusion, on 02.04.2025: The Chair, BA and CC had previously apologised for not being able to attend prior to other commitments. MB and the GP had attended. It had been an informative session and Fran will be attending the S&amp;C Committee meeting tomorrow evening and delivering an update.</p> <p>b) In-house session '<b>Asking pupils questions</b>' by Lizzie Lethbridge, Director of Education on 03.06.25. The GP will check this is going ahead and confirm the timing – expected to be 6.30 pm.</p> <p>c) <b>Clerks' briefing</b> 06.05.2025 – attended by the GP and Clerk. A useful session as always. The Clerk will forward the presentation to all governors.</p> <p>d) <b>MSF</b> – all reminded about the monthly in-house focus which had been circulated.</p> <p><b>Clerk to Local Board Committee to update the governors on any local or national issues:</b></p> <p>a) <u>Standards &amp; Curriculum meeting 13 May 2025</u> – JH confirmed she would be able to attend.</p> <p>b) <u>Governor Checklist May 2025</u> – a reminder this had been circulated</p> <p><b>Significant changes within the Trust including key personnel:</b> The new CEO had been appointed. Rachael Sharpe will begin the role in September. Governors commented on the well written introduction letter and were filled with confidence about the appointment.</p> <p>The nationwide school budget funding was discussed. It was recognised the budget situation causes unrest for staff and parents. It was confirmed there would be no significant change to class structures within the LAC.</p>	<p><b>Trustee Appointed governor – GP and CM to arrange a meeting to discuss the role. Appt subject to clearance of checks – clerk to invite to the June meeting</b></p> <p><b>GP to confirm timing of session</b></p> <p><b>Clerk to forward presentation</b></p>

6	<p><b>FOCUS: PROVISION AND IMPACT FOR SEND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trends over time of prime needs, pupils moving on and off SEND registers, meeting progress targets and EHCP objectives</li> <li>▪ Pupil and parent voice</li> </ul> <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>Concern was raised from every school about the high level of need combined with the lack of staff and space and battles with the Local Authority. It was recognised there are many children with needs that are not on the register. The situation is affecting every single class, so the impact is felt by all the children. The staff governor highlighted the Trust SENDCo, for financial reasons, is spread very thinly. This means a visit for one morning every other week - how could the SENDCo provide the level of support needed? Other staff completed referrals but no additional time was given meaning it was not possible to perform other duties as well. The Chair stated the SENDCo would not be able to have full knowledge of the children seeing them for such a limited time and that knowledge is key. The GP noted this is a national problem and recent funding announcements amounted to a drop in the ocean. <b>It was agreed the Chair would raise the situation at tomorrow's S&amp;C, outlining the extent of the problem and emphasising the staff are doing a great job but there are not enough of them to support together with a lack of space which is affecting everyone. The Chair would ask what can be done and request an action plan.</b></p> <p>The frustration of being signposted to OELP resources (Organisation for Early Literacy Promotion) was aired and acknowledged by governors; this was not new help and the resources were already in common use.</p> <p>The possibility of a child on a very restricted timetable in one of the Trust schools going to a special school was discussed. This is a lengthy process which includes independent assessment. The child deserved a setting which would offer greater support for the child to achieve. Support currently offered at the school is impacted even further with continued long term absences.</p> <p><b>Staffing: Part 2 was taken</b></p>	<p><b>Chair to raise the major SEND problem with S&amp;C and request an Action Plan is drafted and implemented</b></p>
7	<p><b>FOCUS: PE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What are the areas of strength and priorities for development across the Trust</li> <li>▪ What is the feedback from pupils, staff and parents</li> </ul> <p>The visit reports conveyed a similar message: the majority of funding was used to pay for the external providers who, in turn, provide CPD by teacher observation (and teacher delivery of a follow up session later in the week). All schools were also involved with the QE Sports Partnership. The staff governor advised the external PE team is incredible. Staff morale is lifted when they visit. It was noted that not all schools always engage with the PE CPD. AHs have a difficult role in ensuring the teachers engage with CPD rather than PPA. <i>The Chair asked if schools consider the cost effectiveness of external PE provision: is it value for money?</i> The staff governor believed the PE offer is very good compared with some other schools – it is fantastic for both the children and staff.</p>	
8	<p><b>FOCUS: COMPLAINTS POLICY</b></p> <p>The Chair noted a low level of official complaints with a small number of other complaints being dealt with and resolved.</p>	<p><b>Updated Complaints resources available – see slides forwarded from</b></p>

	The Clerk advised there were updated resources available via the Governance Consultancy Team, DES, as detailed in the recent briefing. The information is contained within the presentation slides the Clerk will forward.	Governance Consultancy Team, DES
9	<b>FEEDBACK FROM ETHOS COMMITTEES AND COMMUNITY GROUPS</b> The Foundation Governor at the CofE School reported she had been unable to attend the recent Ethos Committee meeting but the new AH had been present. This was a positive meeting and the AH will focus on values and collective worship. The AH will be attending SIAMS training in readiness for the Inspection.	
10	<b>SCHOOL UPDATES</b> Governors to consider and discuss feedback on any issues/successes from their school visits or visit notes completed by the AHT. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PAN (to include pupils joined/left)</li> <li>• Pupil wellbeing</li> <li>• Staff wellbeing and workload</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Suspensions and permanent exclusions</li> <li>• Feedback on any parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA</li> <li>• ASIP update</li> <li>• Risk Assessments/Accident Book</li> <li>• Pre-school update</li> </ul> <p>The visit reports had covered quite a bit of the above. In addition, the following points were raised:</p> <p><b>PAN</b> None of the schools were at full PAN. Discussion had taken place about how to promote and market although it was noted that, in general, cohorts are smaller.</p> <p><b>Pupil wellbeing</b> surveys indicate that generally there are no problems.</p> <p><b>Staff wellbeing and workload</b> <b>Part 2 was taken for part of this item</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As mentioned in item 6, letters from the Trust about the budget and TA, admin staff and SEND funding had created unease.</li> <li>▪ One governor had prepared a staff questionnaire which had been approved by the AH. The governor hoped it would provide quantitative data. The GP asked if the governor would share. It was agreed the pro-forma, although not massively extensive, would be shared for use at other schools if thought useful.</li> <li>▪ Long term sickness absence had a major impact on staff and the children. It was also questioned whether the number of staff on long term sickness painted its own picture.</li> </ul> <p><b>Attendance</b> No specific problems although it was noted that Annex R and a child with complex medical needs reduces the attendance percentage.</p> <p><b>Suspensions and permanent exclusions</b> <i>A governor asked if the number mentioned by one school was in connection with different pupils.</i> It was confirmed it was the same child. Another governor confirmed the permanent exclusion referred to was not a new or different one.</p> <p><b>Feedback on parent forum meetings/parents' evenings/PTFA</b> Feedback was good and particularly extensive at one school.</p> <p><b>ASIP</b> In response to a governor's question, it was confirmed this would be reviewed in September when three new targets would be set.</p> <p><b>Risk Register</b> The GP confirmed training is ongoing with further discussion being held by S&amp;C regarding who populates the RR and how. MM, DCEO, has been delivering training with AHs and when this has reached an appropriate point and covered more areas, MM will deliver training with governors.</p>	Governor to share the staff questionnaire pro-forma

	<p><b>Pre-school update</b> EYFS will be a main focus in the ASIP next year with general tightening up of the Trust's early years' provision.</p>	
11	<p><b>STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM TRUSTEES' MEETING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Response to draft minutes dated 25.03.2025 (confidential until approved)</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Feedback on any issues raised from local board Chairs in S&amp;C meeting – raised at Mid Devon LAC 10.03.2025:</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Staffing: P2 was taken</b></p> <p><b>Minibus access for Mid Devon</b> The original query about wider sharing of Trust's minibuses had been answered previously. They had been partially funded by various schools' PTAs so where they were based was understandable. The further questions about who funds the insurance and maintenance of the minibuses will be directed to MM, DCEO, when he attends the Mid Devon LAC meeting in June, together with further exploration of ways schools in this area could potentially join together to ease transport costs. Currently, much of the Sports Premium is spent on transport as opposed to an actual sports activity which is very frustrating.</p>	MM, DCEO – June LAC
12	<p><b>NEXT S&amp;C FOCUS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Overview of the curriculum</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Attendance</b></li> <li>▪ <b>Behaviour and relational approach</b></li> </ul> <p>Governors briefly discussed the next S&amp;C focus outlined above in preparation for their next round of visits. The Chair remarked that the behaviour and relational approach aspect particularly lends itself well to a Learning Walk.</p> <p>The second half of the summer term is always a busy one. 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 2 focus visit template after the meeting. The next Mid Devon LAC meeting will be on <b>Monday, 23 June 2025 at 5 pm via Teams with completed visit reports to be returned to the Clerk by Thursday, 19 June 2025.</b> MM, DCEO, will be in attendance.</p>	Clerk to forward Summer 2 focus visit template – Governors and AHs to book/hold meetings at any point
13	<p><b>EVALUATION OF GOVERNANCE IMPACT – Assurance v Reassurance</b></p> <p>The GP reminded governors assurance is sought from the AH via governor visits and reports. Reassurance (evidence) is gained by Learning Walks, looking at the School Website, talking to staff and children, digging deep and asking 'how do you know'.</p> <p>In spite of the pressure staff were under, a governor remarked on the reassurance that it was not impacting on how the children were feeling. The GP added that statement could be evidenced by looking at children's books and talking with them. Another governor added that he visited all classrooms and chatted with staff regularly and always made himself available. He believed he gained evidence of reassurance by the successful PTA, parents being extremely supportive of the school and physically undertaking onsite projects.</p> <p>Ethos Committee reassurance was demonstrated in Collective Worship being developed surrounding school values with a clear focus for each day which is then followed up in the classroom.</p> <p>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.</p>	

14	<p><b>QUESTIONS TO BE DEALT WITH AT LAC LEVEL (Governance Professional)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Access to a Trust minibus</b> (item 11) Who funds the insurance and maintenance of the minibuses? Exploration of ways schools in this area could potentially join together to ease transport costs.</li> <li>▪ <b>Yeoford - security of the site</b> (item 4.1)</li> <li>▪ <b>Tedburn St Mary – playground fence</b> between the school and the Methodist Church – clarity sought about ownership of the fence</li> <li>▪ <b>Yeoford - £4,000 of ICT equipment deemed obsolete</b> – what action plan is in place to bolster ICT hardware and software?</li> <li>▪ <b>General:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>External assessment</b> – <i>is this actioned/what are the Trust’s procedures to ensure unbiased assessment when staff members are related?</i> The GP advised if there was an assessment not appropriate for the AH to undertake, this would be signposted/actioned by the GP or HR.</li> <li>➤ <b>Peer reviews</b> – <i>Does the Trust encourage these between LAC schools to avoid possible reluctance to give thorough, detailed reviews (which may cause friction amongst schools with low staff numbers)?</i> The AH advised AHs work in a team of three to support each other. The AH added there is a lot of sharing of good practice between colleagues.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Four points to be raised with MM either before or during the 23.06.25 LAC meeting</b></p>
15	<p><b>QUESTIONS TO BE ESCALATED TO S&amp;C FOR TRUSTES CONSIDERATION (Clerk)</b></p> <p><b>SEND – (item 6)</b> major problem with funding/space/people resources, including SENDCo time. It was noted this is a national problem. <b>It was agreed the Chair would raise the situation at tomorrow’s S&amp;C, outlining the extent of the problem and emphasising the staff are doing a great job but there are not enough of them to support, together with a lack of space which is affecting everyone. The Chair would ask what can be done and request an action plan is drafted and implemented.</b></p> <p><b>Early Years’ Focus / CPD:</b> <i>How can schools release people when there is no money?</i> It was highlighted there was a budget line giving access to £1K. As one day of supply equates to almost £200, CPD time is very limited. For rural schools trying to access after school training/moderation in a distant location, it has almost finished before staff are able to arrive. The challenge needs to be considered and framed carefully.</p>	<p><b>Chair to bring SEND problems highlighted to S&amp;C and request an action plan is drafted and implemented</b></p> <p><b>To be highlighted with S&amp;C</b></p>

The meeting closed at 6.12 pm

Signed as approved by the Chair, Joanna Hooper ..... Date: 23 June 2025