

EDUCATION SOUTH WEST TRUST BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the **Education South West Trust Board** held at the **Kenn Centre** at **10.00am** on **Friday 10th October 2025**.

Name	Role	Present/Absent
Graham Austin GA	Trustee, Chair	Present
Bethany Brooks BB	Trustee	Present
Gail Brown	Trustee	Absent
Annelie Fearon AF	Trustee	Present
Adrian Hines AH	Trustee, Vice-Chair	Present
David Potter	Trustee	Absent
Matthew Shanks MS	Executive Principal and Trust Leader	Present
Jenny Sutton JS	Trustee	Present
Executive Board		
Rob Coles RCO	Deputy CEO	Present
Andy Goodwin AGO	Trust Safeguarding and Attendance Lead	Present
Jayne Keller JKE	Director of Education	Present
Suzannah Wharf SLW	Director of Education	Present
Stuart White SW	Chief Financial and Operating Officer	Present
Invitees		
Jackie Ridding	Governance Professional	Present via Teams

1	<u>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>	
1.1	Apologies for absence were received from Gail Brown and David Potter. Trustees were informed Jennifer Gibbs had resigned as a trustee on 6 th October 2025.	
1.2	Trustees consented to these absences.	
2	<u>PECUNIARY AND OTHER INTERESTS</u>	
2.1	No declarations of pecuniary or other interests regarding items on the agenda were made.	
2.2	Trustees noted the requirement to complete and return a new declaration form. It was confirmed all trustees had completed their declarations.	
2.3	Trustees noted the requirement to update the register of pecuniary interests and to publish it on the website. The clerk agreed to ensure this action was completed.	
3	<u>CHAIR'S UPDATE</u>	
	GA thanked everyone for their work. He reported Paul Sampson would be joining the trust board and would join the Finance Committee and Audit and Risk Committee. GA confirmed Annelie Fearon would join the Performance and Standards Committee and leave the Finance Committee and Audit and Risk Committee.	
4	<u>ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR 2025/26</u>	

4.1	Trustees determined that the end of the term of office for the chair and vice-chair would be the first meeting of the autumn term 2026.	
4.2	Graham Austin was re-elected Chair. Adrian Hines was re-elected Vice-Chair.	
5	<u>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</u>	
	There was no other urgent business.	
6	<u>MINUTES</u>	
6.1	The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th July 2025 (copy shared on GovernorHub), having previously been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.	
6.2	<u>Matters arising from the minutes</u>	
	There were no matters arising from the minutes.	
7	<u>TRUST IMPROVEMENT</u>	
7.1	<u>Education Improvement Plan 2025/26</u>	
	<p>RCO explained the plan for the day which would include recognising the progress made in the previous year and revisiting the strategic objectives.</p> <p>The Trust KPI report was shared on GovernorHub prior to the meeting.</p> <p>RCO explained the Education Improvement Plan 2025/26 was focused around the Big 5 which were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum and Pedagogy • Inclusion and Belonging • Raising Attainment • Developing People • Strengthening Communities <p>RCO explained the core mission of Education South West was educating to lead great lives. He said they were focusing on closing the gap for the under-resourced and disadvantaged students. RCO reported they had set ambitious targets and had fewer resources but needed the same level of development.</p> <p>Trustees asked about the development of the improvement plan and what the education would look like in 5 years' time. RCO explained they had refined the Big 5 which had been shared with the headteachers. He said the schools were developing and interpreting them in different ways. MS said they were always working to improve and therefore, none of the areas would ever be completed.</p> <p>Trustees noted it was good to see the destinations of the students once they had left the ESW schools. RCO explained it was important to track where the students went because not all students would leave with high outcomes but the schools needed to support them into employment or further education.</p>	

	<p>RCO reported a challenge for schools since Covid was the gap had widened for students from under-resourced backgrounds and the attendance issues were often seen in students from under-resourced backgrounds. He said the attendance data was improving but it took a long time to improve.</p>	
7.2	<p><u>Primary Outcomes 2025 and RSL Strategy 2025/26</u></p>	
	<p>JKE reported the primary data was largely positive and they were seeing some impact with the more vulnerable students.</p> <p>JKE reported the schools who had been in the trust longer were mostly achieving above the national average for good level of development (GLD) in early years with the exception of Dartmouth whose children often had lower starting points. She said they were most concerned with Wynstream because the cohort was substantially below the expected level on entry.</p> <p>JKE explained at Wynstream there was a significant number of children working significantly below expectation and with a lack of specialist provision, these children were in a separate class and focused on play-based learning. She said the teachers were adapting to meet the needs of the children.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there was an issue with the parents engaging with these children. JKE said it was possible the parents were not engaging in a meaningful way which could be due to parental education. She said they were working with the headteacher to help support the parents. MS explained he had contacted a company called BorrowMe for a trial programme where parents could borrow games to help develop engagement with their children.</p> <p>RCO explained they were working to support families and were considering opening a nursery at Wynstream. He said at Dartmouth they were working with the children's centre to set up a community hub.</p> <p>JKE explained the stay and play scheme was an investment in working alongside parents to help them develop their skills.</p> <p>Trustees asked what the standard of literacy was with the parents at Wynstream. JKE said it was very low and few parents had been educated beyond GCSE. She said there was also lots of English as an additional language (EAL) at Wynstream whose early years results were often low but they usually caught up by years 6 and 7.</p> <p>JKE reported the boys in early years at the schools were further behind the girls than nationally. She said they needed to explore if they were judging boys more harshly or if the provision was enabling girls to achieve better. JKE said the gap was significantly more in the boys who were in receipt of pupil premium funding. She said conversations were happening with the early years' teams and headteachers.</p> <p>JKE reported there were some strong results with the year 1 phonics but said there was still lots of work to be done at Dartmouth and Wynstream. RCO said a Read Write Inc consultant had visited Wynstream and was pleased with the work they were doing.</p> <p>Trustees asked in a school like Wynstream, when would the aspiration be for them to catch up with their peers. JKE said it needed to be as soon as possible and ideally,</p>	

they would not need to catch up at all. She said the aim was for them to leave early years in line with their peers and to not have a gap.

JKE explained there was work to be done at some schools with the culture of the expectation. She said it was important to understand the context of the schools but it should not be an excuse. RCO noted some schools needed to have higher expectations.

JKE noted children in receipt of pupil premium and with SEND performed less well.

Trustees asked how schools were resourced to help children catch up if they had missed a session. JKE said more resources went into phonics than any other subject but if a session had been missed it was not always caught up as it should be.

SLW explained when a member of staff was absent, the schools needed to ensure they were covered and all staff should be trained to cover.

Trustees asked if providing the cover was more challenging in smaller schools. JKE said they needed strategies to ensure gaps were identified.

JKE reported the multiplication check outcomes in year 4 were broadly in line with national but some schools needed to do more work. She noted Wynstream had achieved well in the multiplication check.

JKE shared the year 6 data and noted the reading strategy had been well received. She said all English leads had reported improvements in their outcomes and the SEND children were engaging more in lessons. RCO said they always set a target of 90% of the children to achieve age-related expectations (ARE).

JKE reported the major focus on writing had an impact and they would be focusing on maths in the current academic year. She said the reading strategy launch took a year to develop and had a positive impact.

11.00 AGO joined the meeting

Trustees asked if the focus on maths would take a similar length of time to develop and launch. JKE said some of the work they would do first was to work with the teachers to ensure the children were test ready by analysing the assessments and adapting the teaching to be responsive. She said the long-term strategy would be to focus on the teaching and learning.

JKE reported the data was stronger in the schools who had been in the trust longer but they were already seeing an impact on the newer schools. She said the schools needed to increase the number of children achieving greater depth. MS noted the data was affected by mobile pupils.

JKE said they were continuing to monitor the children in receipt of pupil premium with a focus on attendance, expectation and teacher mindset. RCO noted the gap between the disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children was smaller than the national average but they wanted no gap.

JKE reported the current year 6 data indicated they were a long way from where they needed to be but the data was similar to the previous year 6. She said there was lots of work to do but they would not always be in this situation and year 6 should be about consolidating knowledge.

	<p>Trustees asked if the earlier data had been analysed. JKE explained the data had been recorded on a different system which made it difficult to compare but she said they were tracking individual children. She said staff needed to be aware of the boy/girl split.</p> <p>11.09am the meeting paused 11.25am the meeting resumed</p>	
7.3	<p><u>Secondary Outcomes 2025 and RSL Strategy 2025/26</u></p>	
	<p>The KS4 and KS5 data was shared on GovernorHub prior to the meeting.</p> <p>SLW reported the KS4 attainment 8 data was an improvement from the 2024 data but they were not back to the 2019 figures. She said the 4+ basics outcomes were above national in many schools.</p> <p>SLW said there was a high level of EBACC entry and the average point score was positive against national. She shared a summary of each school's performance.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there was a reason for the drop in outcomes at KEVICC. SLW explained the English outcomes were lower than predicted. She said the work there was ongoing and the issues had been identified.</p> <p>SLW reported mobility was an increased challenge for teachers. She said the disadvantaged students did not perform as well as their non-disadvantaged peers.</p> <p>SLW said the disadvantaged students at Teign and Coombeshead performed in line with their non-disadvantaged peers. She said girls outperformed boys which reflected the national picture. SLW noted they were aware of the link between attendance and attainment.</p> <p>SLW reported 17% of students at ESW achieved grades 7+ compared to the national average of 23%. She said KCC was the only school above national with 26% of their students achieving 7+. SLW noted children on entry to KCC tended to be above national.</p> <p>SLW reported at the Teign review they identified the teachers were not putting enough challenge into the lessons. She said the forecast grades in most schools were conservative and there was lots of work being done at KEVICC and South Devon UTC to ensure they were aligned.</p> <p>SLW reported the KS5 cohorts were very small but the value added in all schools had increased. She said lots of the more able students at Coombeshead and Teign went to other institutions at the end of year 11.</p> <p>RCO reported the challenges in English at KEVICC was known by the trust but school leaders did not always act. He said the quality assurance process needed to have an impact.</p> <p>Trustees asked why the school did not act. RCO said the QA system was peer reviewed and the leaders were held to account. He said the trust would not have been able to make the changes necessary to improve the outcomes.</p>	

	<p>Trustees asked if they were seeing similar trends in the forecast grades in KS5 at KEVICC. SLW explained the group sizes were smaller and teacher expertise was good. She said they had not seen the same discrepancies. SLW said the staff had been made aware how damaging it was for students if they achieved a grade lower than they had expected. She said leaders needed to moderate the assessments.</p> <p>SLW shared the challenges the schools faced to make the improvements needed. She said they were working on raising standards.</p> <p>SLW explained the trust had developed a KPI tracker for the SLT which would highlight what was happening across the school. She said some schools had rapid improvement plans. SLW explained staff needed to identify the gaps and act on them in the classroom. She said there were subject specific networks which was increasing the amount of collaboration.</p> <p>SLW explained the SLT tracker enabled headteachers to develop a clear strategy on what they were working on.</p> <p>Trustees suggested it would be useful to see a diagram of the bigger picture as well as the week-on-week progress. SLW explained after 10 weeks they would have a 10-week trend. MS said they were using different sources for the data and the tracker was used at the beginning of the SLT meetings.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there was data available on internal suspensions. SLW explained the schools did report on the internal suspensions but the data was not included in the KPI document. MS said it could be included but each school managed them differently. He said they also needed to review what happened with the children when they were in internal suspensions.</p>	
7.4	<u>Early Destinations Data 2025</u>	
	This item was not discussed.	
7.5	<u>People Strategy – leadership and development / CPD</u>	
	This item was not discussed.	
7.6	<u>Sustainability</u>	
	This item was not discussed.	
7.7	<u>Digital and technology standards</u>	
	This item was not discussed.	
8	<u>FINANCE</u>	
	This item was not discussed.	
9	<u>SAFEGUARDING</u>	
9.1	<u>Safeguarding Strategy and Improvement</u>	

	<p>AGO shared the attendance data from the last 2 years and noted the schools were getting closer to the Devon and national figures. He said the persistent absence across the trust was reducing but the severely absent data was not yet changing.</p> <p>AGO explained the DfE provided benchmarking information for attendance which compared 20 similar schools but the names of the schools were not shared. He said some ESW schools were quite high in the tables.</p> <p>RCO shared the context of some of the ESW schools and the challenges they had with attendance. AGO noted they had schools in some very challenging areas and were following through with prosecutions when necessary.</p> <p>AGO said the focus was on year 7 into year 8 and they needed to improve attendance for SEND students and disadvantaged students.</p> <p>AGO explained in the previous year they had focused on building the systems and embedding the processes. He said they needed to put the strategies into place.</p> <p>AGO shared some of the strategies which included secondary schools receiving information from the primary schools and breaking down barriers. He said they were working on breaking the culture of children having occasional days off. AGO explained every day at 11.00am the senior leadership team received an email with the names of the absent children so phone calls could be made if necessary. He said every school followed the emotional based school avoidance (EBSA) approach.</p> <p>Trustees asked how well embedded the processes were and if all schools were on board. AGO said some schools were more compliant than others. He noted it was dependent on how focused the leaders were. RCO explained it was a 5-year strategy and in primary schools the headteachers were the lead and had less families to work with.</p> <p>The suspension data was shared and it was noted Teign's new behaviour system was already having an impact but KCC needed to be monitored.</p> <p>Trustees asked if the increase in suspensions at KCC was related to the students not following the new mobile phone rules. SLW explained if students refused to hand in their mobile phones they would be suspended.</p> <p>Trustees asked if the increase at KCC would be a short-term trend and how would it help other schools implement a mobile phone ban. MS explained they had learnt lots from the implementation of the ban at KCC and they were already processing it for other schools. RCO reported a recent meeting about mobile phone bans in schools had indicated there had been a shift in the thinking but it was difficult when parents wanted students to have a phone. He said staff at KCC had noticed students were talking to each other more.</p>	
9.2	<u>Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2025</u>	
	Trustees noted the requirement to read KCSiE 2025 and agreed to confirm on GovernorHub when this was completed.	
9.3	<u>Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy</u>	

	Trustees reviewed and approved the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.	
10	<u>GOVERNANCE</u>	
10.1	Trustees noted the new requirement to complete an ID verification with Companies House and would inform Jackie Ridding when this was completed.	
10.2	Trustees ensured they and senior managers had signed the automatic disqualification declaration forms.	
10.3	Trustees approved the appointment of Beth Brooks as chair of the Performance and Standards Committee for the 2025/2026 academic year.	
10.4	Trustees approved the local governing body appointments of new governors, reappointments and chairs.	
10.5	The chair drew trustees' attention to changes and updates to the Academy Trust Handbook 2025.	
10.6	Trustees noted the feedback from the local governing body meetings. MS, GA and AH agreed to discuss the feedback.	
10.7	Trustees noted 2 sessions of governor training had been completed and shared.	
11	<u>POLICIES</u>	
	Trustees reviewed and approved the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy • Disciplinary Policy • ECT Policy • Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy • Managing Sickness Absence Policy • Pay Policy • Redundancy Policy • Staff Grievance Policy • Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions Policy • Teacher Appraisal Policy 	
12	<u>MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR OR CEO</u>	
	There were no matters brought forward by the Chair or CEO.	
13	<u>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u>	
	Trustees confirmed that the next meeting would be held at 6.30pm on Thursday 11th December 2025. Trustees agreed the programme of meeting dates for the remainder of the 2025/2026 academic year as follows: Thursday 5th February 2026 at 6.30pm (following the AGM)	

	Thursday 26th March 2026 at 6.00pm Thursday 21st May 2026 at 6.00pm Thursday 9th July 2026 at 6.00pm	
14	<u>STRATEGY PLANNING</u>	
	The trustees continued to discuss strategy planning after the formal meeting.	

The meeting closed at 12.40pm.

Signed

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Dated

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