



EDUCATION SOUTH WEST TRUST BOARD

Part 1 Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Trust Board of Education South West held at Teign School and virtually at 6.00pm on Wednesday 14th May 2025.

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

1	<u>WELCOME</u>					
	GA welcomed everyone to the meeting.					
2	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>					
2.1	Apologies for absence were received from Gail Brown, Jennifer Gibbs, Matthew Shanks and Jenny Sutton.					
2.2	Trustees consented to these absences.					
3	<u>DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY AND BUSINESS INTERESTS</u>					
3.1	No declarations of pecuniary or other interests regarding items on the agenda were made.					
3.2	No declarations of gifts or hospitality had been received or given since the last meeting.					
4	<u>MINUTES</u>					
	The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 27th March 2025 were approved and would be signed by the chair.					
	Matters Arising					
	Action Point	Agenda Item	Action	By Whom	By When	Status
	AP1	5	GB and SW to discuss MHR and iTrent and alternatives.	GB/SW	ASAP	Completed
	AP2	5	SW to meet with DP to discuss the rollout of the HR system.	DP/SW	Summer term	Completed



5	<u>FINANCE</u>	
5.1	<u>Report from the Finance and Internal Assurance Committee meeting held on Thursday 1st May 2025</u>	
	<p>AH reported the committee discussed the challenges with budget setting and reserves planning. He said they were expecting the reserves to fall further below the target and they were managing the balance. AH said the committee was comfortable with the approach and noted beyond the 2025/2026 academic year the reserves were expected to improve. He said plans were in progress to make savings but they were closely managing the challenging financial situation.</p> <p>AH said at the next Finance and Internal Assurance Committee meeting they would agree on the internal audit approach. He said they had discussed the outcomes from the GDPR audit and had looked at the GDPR report. AH said they had discussed the health and safety dashboard and were confident actions were being taken in a timely manner.</p> <p>AH explained SW would share the background of budget setting with the LGBs when he presented the budget to them at the next round of LGB meetings. He said they were also including some finance material in the governors' induction training.</p>	
5.2	<u>Shared Services Verbal Report</u>	
	<p>SW reported the current financial position was approximately £85,000 higher against the budget. He said they were forecast to have a surplus of approximately £2.5M at the end of the year.</p> <p>SW said financial planning for the next academic year was underway and should be completed by 23rd May 2025.</p> <p><u>HR System</u></p> <p>SW reported he had discussed with Gail Brown the issues she had with iTrent and had also followed up with the company. He said iTrent had been honest about their post-implementation service and support and said they acknowledged there had been issues and said they were improving their service. SW explained iTrent was supplied by MHR and Gail's concern had been with MHR. He noted they could buy iTrent through another company but they would not have the whole functionality they required.</p> <p>SW reported he had spoken to a number of other MATs who were using iTrent and they had all agreed it was the best on the market within their budget. He said it was crucial the initial set up of the system was effective which would require expertise and capacity in-house. SW said following his research and discussions with Matthew Shanks and Gail Brown, iTrent with MHR remained the system he would recommend the trust purchased even though there could be some inconsistencies with the servicing and support.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there were concerns with the support issues with MHR. SW explained the trust could configure the system how they wanted and MHR would provide the support. He said there would be detailed work beforehand and lots of the preparation work had already been completed.</p> <p><u>Budget Planning</u></p> <p>Trustees asked what guidance was presented to the Finance and Internal Assurance Committee about the concerns. SW explained he had shared the headlines to ensure all</p>	



trustees were aware how the reserves were being managed and controlled. He said the reserves would dip down over the next 48 months but they were controlled and being carefully managed. SW said they were making decisions to support the trust and individual schools which included allowing some schools to run with a deficit knowing that some schools may never recover their deficit.

Trustees asked if there were any areas the trust were disappointed that they could not spend on. SW said they were unable to do enough of what they wanted which included employing more staff.

Trustees asked about the number of pupils decreasing at Coombeshead and Teign. RCO explained this was a national trend and said nationally, in reception there would be a third fewer children in September 2025 than there were in 2019. He said when new houses were built, they would only expect 1 or 2 pupils per 150 new houses.

Trustees asked if this was a temporary dip in pupil numbers. RC said it was expected to be temporary but might never rise to where it had been. BB noted numbers were expected to increase in 2029.

Trustees asked what the deficit was likely to be in the following year. SW explained at the Finance and Internal Assurance Committee meeting he shared a paper with the worst-case scenario figures and said the low point would be down to approximately £1.5M in reserves but with the plans in place, the reserves should be approximately £1.7M. He said he had discussed the impending changes for 2026/2027 with headteachers and some had already started making changes for 2025/2026.

DP noted he had arranged a meeting with SW for the week beginning 19th May 2025 to discuss the implementation of iTrent.

Capital Planning and Execution

SW reported the DfE had announced more capital money for academies and ESW would receive £950,000 more than expected. He said the capital planning was in progress and involved condition and repair.

SW explained a detailed building plan and business case had been submitted to Devon County Council for the refurbishment at KEVICC for an area resource base. He said Devon County Council and the DfE seemed positive with the proposal which would need approximately £500,000 of capital funding.

Homelands

SW reported on 30th April 2025, Homelands had received formal approval to join ESW and they were liaising with DfE project leads.

Carbon Capital Planning

SW reported he was working with the Construction Industry Council (CIC) to produce surveys to allow the trust to prepare for bids for funding to work towards their net zero target.

Trustee Questions

Trustees asked if the additional capital funding was included in the figures shared at the Finance and Internal Assurance Committee meeting. SW confirmed they were and noted they



	<p>had expected the school conditions allowance to be £600,000 - £700,000 but the actual figure was £1.6M.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there would be any other schools from the Torbay area joining ESW as Homelands were joining. RCO explained the decision from Homelands had taken a long time but their ethos matched that of ESW. He said they had thought the schools in Torbay would not be able to join the trust but the regional director had met with the Torbay schools and agreed ESW could work with the schools in a partnership or as part of the trust. JKE explained there were very few maintained schools left in Torbay and any movement was likely to be the merging of smaller trusts.</p>	
6	<u>PERFORMANCE AND STANDARDS</u>	
6.1	<u>Performance and Standards Committee Report from Monday 12th May 2025</u>	
	<p>BT reported Gareth Howells who was the Headteacher at Kingsbridge Primary School joined the meeting and shared the background of the school. He said he had been very happy with ESW and noted he was retiring at the end of the academic year and was confident he was leaving the school in a good position.</p> <p>BT said Sam Battershall shared a presentation on personal development which had been very positive. He said 11 by 11 was a unique selling point for the trust and noted Nick Banwell was doing some great work. BT said the data of the participation in 11 by 11 was improving and there were more girls taking part than boys.</p> <p>BT reported Jayne Keller had shared the primary data with and without the new schools.</p> <p>RC explained improving the Wynstream performance was a priority for the school improvement team and they needed a rapid method of improvement because in the 2025/2026 academic year the school's data would be included in the trust data. He said 59% of the pupils at Wynstream had experienced disadvantage.</p> <p>BT reported the committee had noted the data for SEND and disadvantaged was not as good as they wanted. He said curriculum reviews had taken place and the committee had discussed the science review.</p>	
6.2	<u>Deputy CEO Report</u>	
	<p>RCO reported on the 5 areas of the education improvement plan which was shared on GovernorHub.</p> <p>RCO gave an update on safeguarding and reported they were continuing to ensure the systems and processes were robust and consistent across all schools. He said the safeguarding lead would go back and review all schools again before the end of the academic year. RCO said they would continue to develop the safeguarding curriculum to ensure children knew how to stay safe.</p> <p>A discussion was held which was recorded in the part 2 minutes.</p> <p>RCO reported the phonics and KS2 data was on track to be at least in line with national. He said the KS4 basics were in line with national but there was a significant drop in the grade 5 pass rate. RCO suggested the reason could be because the current year 11 had missed part of year 6 and 7 due to Covid. He said it was hard to push the pupils to achieve a grade 5 but if it was a national picture, they would be closer to national.</p>	



Trustees asked if the lower grades were more maths or English. RCO said it was maths holding them back. He said there was a significant difference between the grade 4 and grade 5 boundary.

RCO reported attendance was currently 0.5% better than the previous year and the national increase was 0.7%. He said this indicated the work they were doing was good but it was not quick enough. RCO said attendance was a Devon-wide issue but they needed more rapid improvement.

RCO said the curriculum was continuing to be developed and English was a priority in primary and secondary, particularly reading. He said they were reviewing the common curriculum at secondary.

RCO reported lots of work was being done with the behaviour policy and they were working with another trust on the ordinarily available inclusive practice. He said they were working on the development of the SEND base at KEVICC and had launched the Kingsbridge Community Hub.

RCO said they had launched instructional coaching which had been very successful at Kingsbridge Primary School. He said all headteachers and staff needed a forensic approach.

Trustees asked if the trust's approach to the impact measures assessing school performance against pupils who experienced disadvantage was the right thing for the non-disadvantaged because the statistics indicated they were doing less well. RCO explained the higher-prior attaining pupils always made slower rates of progress than other groups which could be due to them being assessed on a narrow range of subjects at primary which did not translate to a broader range at secondary. He said this was not due to the schools focusing more on the lower-prior attainers.

Trustees asked how the trust would ensure the same effort went into teaching all pupils. RCO explained the curriculum was ambitious and demanding. He said it had the opportunity to push any child to the highest levels but it was harder to continue the momentum of progress. RCO explained the EAL pupils often did not achieve highly in KS2 but were able to excel at KS4 which indicated very rapid improvement. He said the more deprived areas could often achieve better at KS2 than KS4 but he noted the higher-prior attainers did not do as well as they should. RCO noted the ESW primary schools did not all feed into ESW secondary schools.

Trustees asked if other trusts were also expecting to see a drop in the KS4 outcomes. RCO said the data should not drop too much in all the ESW secondary schools but it would be reviewed in August. He said Coombeshead had introduced a period 6 and had not had as much of a drop than other schools and Dartmouth was expecting an increase in the attainment but noted they had a small cohort.

RCO reported he had shared the Education Improvement Plan for 2025/2026 with the headteachers and said the following were the Big 5:

- Raising attainment
- Inclusion and belonging
- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Developing people
- Strengthening communities

RCO said raising attainment was process driven and was not just focused on outcomes and he shared the wider strategies underpinning the work. He explained leaders had been asked to develop their improvement plans based on the Big 5. RCO said the success of the strategy would



	<p>be measured by measuring the impact on the pupils who had experienced disadvantage and noted he had shared the impact measures with headteachers.</p> <p>Trustees said it would be beneficial to see the trends in the data over a period of time. RCO explained in the paper shared by SLW at the Performance and Standards Committee there were several measures shown. He said it was useful to look at the basics for 4+, 5+ and 7+. RCO said the secondary schools did not tend to have the data swings seen in primary schools and if the data had dropped in secondary schools, it could indicate a shift in the community, issues with the quality of teaching or leadership issues.</p> <p>Trustees asked with the impact measures, how they would ensure they were not having a detrimental effect on the non-disadvantaged pupils and if they could look at the impact on other groups of pupils. RCO explained the plan would raise the aspirations for every child and the trust's aim was to improve the quality of education for all pupils.</p> <p>Trustees suggested there could be other contributing factors such as having extra support in the classroom and noted the trend in schools was to reduce TA support. RCO explained there was lots of research showing that group size and TAs did not have a big impact on the outcomes for children. He said TAs enabled children to access learning and allowed children with EHCPs to remain in mainstream schools.</p> <p>Trustees asked if the trust should have impact measures looking at improving across all groups of pupils and not just the disadvantaged. RCO explained the success would be to raise the bar for the most disadvantaged. He explained they had been developing the pedagogical principles and instructional coaching was ensuring there was consistency across all schools in the trust.</p> <p>Trustees asked about the distractions in schools which could detract from the good practice, such as behaviour challenges and asked if it was possible to measure these. RCO explained it was the school improvement team's responsibility to identify where there was not great teaching. He said at ESW, they taught all children unless their behaviour was detrimental to others so there was no impact on outcomes. RCO said they were not prepared to exclude pupils to increase outcomes. He said in some schools there were very complex needs which the schools struggled to meet and these could be a distraction to the high-quality teaching.</p> <p>JKE explained they were working to improve the gaps in the skill set around SEND and said behaviour was an issue. She said there was a forensic focus on learning and some leaders were able to focus on the high-leverage items which were causing a distraction.</p> <p>RCO said it was difficult to measure the impact with the complexity of the schools but they needed to ensure the primary children left the school ready for secondary school and the secondary school children left ready for their next steps.</p> <p>Trustees suggested it would be useful to have a trust definition of disadvantage which could be used for internal analysis. RCO agreed a clear definition would be useful because some children experienced disadvantage but did not qualify for the free school meals criteria.</p> <p>Trustees asked how long it took for students to be engaged at the beginning of the year. RCO said the classrooms were very settled and they had great teachers. He said disruption in the classrooms was very rare but the disruption outside the classroom was more common particularly when pupils became dysregulated. JKE said it was harder than it had been before and staff needed to be more appropriately trained to build relationships.</p>	
7	STRATEGIC DIRECTION	



7.1	<u>Strategic Plan Overview</u>	
	This item was not discussed.	
7.2	<u>CEO Verbal Report</u>	
	This item was not discussed.	
8	<u>CHAIRS' UPDATE</u>	
	<p>GA reported he had attended several meetings with other chairs and the regions group and said the focus from the regions group was around inclusion. He said the regions group had shared more information about the regional improvement and excellence (RISE) teams who were seconded staff who supported schools with targeted interventions.</p> <p>GA reported ESW had been involved in the attendance conference and Helen Coulson had been asked to present.</p> <p>GA asked the clerk to refresh the areas of responsibility which are listed at the end of the minutes.</p>	
9	<u>GOVERNANCE</u>	
	<p>The list of LGB governors for appointment and reappointment was shared on GovernorHub prior to the meeting. Trustees approved the appointment and reappointment of the LGB governors.</p> <p>Trustees received feedback from the local governing bodies but noted there was not feedback from every local governing body.</p> <p>Trustees discussed an item which had been discussed at Coombeshead which related to the assistant headteachers. They noted there was lots of good work happening at Christow and South Devon UTC had been working hard on improving attendance.</p> <p>Trustees noted 154 governor training sessions had been attended.</p>	
10	<u>POLICIES FOR REVIEW</u>	
	<p>Trustees noted the following policies had been approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DBS Policy • Menopause Policy • Volunteers in Schools Policy 	
11	<u>MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR OR CEO</u>	
	There were no matters brought forward by the Chair or CEO.	
12	<u>PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR 2024/2025 AT 6.00PM</u>	
	Trustees confirmed that the next meeting of the Trust Board would be held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 9th July 2025 .	



The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

Signed

Dated

Trustees areas of responsibility:

- GA – CEO (Matthew Shanks)
- AH – Finance (Stuart White)
- BB – EYFS (Jayne Keller)
- GB – Outcomes (Rob Coles)
- JS – Professional development (Suzannah Wharf)
- BT – Curriculum (Suzannah Wharf / Jayne Keller)
- DP – Risk (Matthew Shanks / Stuart White)
- JG – Staff welfare (Matthew Shanks)
- AF – Shared services (Stuart White)