

EDUCATION SOUTH WEST TRUST BOARD

Part 1 minutes of the meeting of the **Education South West Trust Board** held virtually at **6.00pm** on **Thursday 26th March 2026**.

Name	Role	Present/Absent
Graham Austin GA	Trustee, Chair	Present
Bethany Brooks BB	Trustee	Present
Gail Brown GB	Trustee	Present
Annelie Fearon AF	Trustee	Present
Tamsin Frances TF	Trustee	Present
Adrian Hines AH	Trustee, Vice-Chair	Present
David Potter DP	Trustee	Present
Paul Sampson PS	Trustee	Present
Matthew Shanks MS	Executive Principal and Trust Leader	Present
Jenny Sutton JS	Trustee	Absent
Executive Board		
Rob Coles RCO	Deputy CEO	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

1	<u>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>	
1.1	Apologies for absence were received from Jenny Sutton.	
1.2	Trustees consented to the absence. MS reported Jayne Keller had been appointed CEO of the Wessex Learning Trust and would start in September 2026. He said there was a succession plan in place. Trustees congratulated JKE. 6.05pm TF joined the meeting GA reported Annelie Fearon would resign from her role as trustee at the end of the academic year. He thanked her for her contribution to the trust.	
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	No declarations of gifts or hospitality had been received or given since the last meeting.	
3	<u>CHAIR'S UPDATE</u>	

	GA thanked everyone who had contributed to the Ofsted inspections in the spring term and reported they had been positive. He said there had been Ofsted inspections in 3 trust schools and 1 school the trust were supporting. AH said a headteacher at one of the schools had given positive feedback about the support they received from the trust. GB said the consistency throughout the trust was evident during the Ofsted inspections with governance and the executive team.																																											
4	<u>ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS</u>																																											
	There was no other urgent business.																																											
5	<u>MINUTES</u>																																											
5.1	The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 5th February 2026 (copy shared on GovernorHub), having previously been circulated, were confirmed and would be signed by the Chair.																																											
5.2	<u>Matters arising from the minutes</u>																																											
	<table border="1"><thead><tr><th colspan="6">Action log from 11th December 2025</th></tr><tr><th>Action point</th><th>Agenda item</th><th>Action</th><th>By whom</th><th>By when</th><th>Status</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>AP2</td><td>12</td><td>GA to review the trustee areas of responsibility.</td><td>GA</td><td>Next meeting</td><td>Completed</td></tr></tbody></table> Trustees noted the following areas of responsibility: • GA – CEO (Matthew Shanks) • AH – Deputy CEO and Finance (Rob Coles and Stuart White) • BB – EYFS (Jayne Keller) • GB – Outcomes (Rob Coles) • JS – Professional Development (Suzannah Wharf) • DP – Risk (Matthew Shanks and Stuart White) • TF – Staff Welfare (Matthew Shanks) • PS – Shared Services (Stuart White) <table border="1"><thead><tr><th colspan="6">Action log from 5th February 2026</th></tr><tr><th>Action point</th><th>Agenda item</th><th>Action</th><th>By whom</th><th>By when</th><th>Status</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>AP1</td><td>10.2</td><td>MS, GA and AH to review the feedback from the LGBs.</td><td>MS, GA, AH</td><td>Next meeting</td><td>Completed – see below</td></tr><tr><td>AP2</td><td>11</td><td>Trustees to note approval of the Attendance Policy on GovernorHub.</td><td>Trustees</td><td>ASAP</td><td>Completed</td></tr></tbody></table> <u>Questions from the LGBs</u> Coombeshead: As we move into the Ofsted window under the new Ofsted toolkit, will there be CPD on all agendas moving forward led by the headteacher? Will there be any trust CPD on the new Ofsted framework that will be built into next year's agenda? MS explained they had provided training as needed as the inspections were happening but there was not too	Action log from 11 th December 2025						Action point	Agenda item	Action	By whom	By when	Status	AP2	12	GA to review the trustee areas of responsibility.	GA	Next meeting	Completed	Action log from 5 th February 2026						Action point	Agenda item	Action	By whom	By when	Status	AP1	10.2	MS, GA and AH to review the feedback from the LGBs.	MS, GA, AH	Next meeting	Completed – see below	AP2	11	Trustees to note approval of the Attendance Policy on GovernorHub.	Trustees	ASAP	Completed	
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	much of a change for governors. He said the trust would support the governors and the scheme of delegation had not changed. Dartmouth: What is ESW doing to draw in wider digital educational support for parents from either Devon County Council or elsewhere to accompany the mobile phone bans? MS noted this could have been answered by SLW in the meeting if it had been raised during the meeting. SLW reported the National Institute of Teaching was carrying out a pilot study looking at providing good digital literacy. She said it was important to continue educating and supporting parents. MS suggested the LGBs needed to identify what they think might be needed in their school. Kingsbridge Community College: Is the trust still accredited for Rights Respecting Schools and is it still a worthwhile aim for us to try and achieve gold? MS said it was good to work towards gold but it needed to support everything the school was doing and not be a priority. MS reported Miranda Martyn had been appointed as the permanent headteacher at Kingsbridge Primary School. 6.15pm JKE joined the meeting Kingsteignton: Would it be possible to have more clarity in aligning the ESW training with the LGB meetings. MS noted this was discussed in the Chairs' Forum. How did the trust support schools in balancing staff wellbeing and workload and a quality education with a reduced budget? MS said the scheme of delegation stated this was the responsibility of the headteacher, senior leadership team and governors. He said the trust provided a shared curriculum and external support. MS said there was reduced funding for schools because of decreasing pupil numbers. South Devon UTC: Could ESW use median averages when presenting the performance or attendance data alongside the mean averages to mitigate the disproportionate impact of outliers within a small cohort. MS said the data needed to be shared and discussed in the same way the DfE would review it. He said it was understood South Devon UTC had a different type of cohort but the context would be recognised and explained in an inspection. Wynstream: How often do governors need to refresh their training. MS said this was something which needed to be considered because it was often the same people attending the training. RCO said he had discussed the possibility of using the median to analyse data with Rob Skeggs who said the median could not be used for all data sets. He said the median could show progress with data containing many outliers but the South Devon UTC governors were exploring the best way to present the data. Trustees agreed it would be more beneficial for the questions and answers to be responded to at the Chairs' forum. RCO reported an email had been received from a governor on a LGB noting some governors had spent lots of time sitting on panels for exclusions and complaints. He said it was important the trust acknowledged this and would send communication	
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	thanking them for their time. GA noted sitting on panels was the worst part of volunteering as a governor and in many cases, it was for a different school.	
6	<u>CEO Report</u>	
	MS noted he shared an update in his weekly emails. MS reported there had been 4 Ofsted inspections and was proud of everyone who contributed. He said the trust was discussing teaching school hubs with OneCornwall and putting resources back into training and development. MS said they were working with Tim Rutherford and Leading Schools South West looking at leadership programmes. He said they were also working with Teach First exploring how they could support training. MS reported he had been invited to Peterborough for the launch of the white paper and was able to give feedback. He said the white paper was positive and there was more focus on making things happen. MS reported they were working closely with other trusts to try to get the 0.5% back into the budgets and noted all but 10% of the debt had been written off. MS said there had been another community meeting which included health partners from across Devon and non-ESW schools which was very positive. He said they discussed mental health and speech and language. MS reported they had entered into an agreement with Place to Be and had been awarded £50,000 to work on a mental health project. He noted ESW would match fund and the plan would be to work across other trusts to support mental health. MS said consultations were underway at Teign, Dartmouth and Coombeshead relating to pupils' mobile phones. He said Caroline Voden who was the Liberal Democrat education representative had visited KEVICC to see the work on the new SEND unit.	
7	<u>TRUST IMPROVEMENT</u>	
7.1	<u>Feedback from the Performance and Standards Committee held on 17th March</u>	
	BB reported the headteacher and chair of governors from Christow Primary School attended the meeting and gave positive reports about the school including their strong outcomes. She said they reported there had been an increase in the SEND need at the school which was impacting the staff workload. BB said the committee discussed improved parental engagement and stronger outcomes in early years. She said there was still an attendance gap between the disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged students. BB said there was still a gap with secondary outcomes but this was improving. BB reported the SEND strategy was progressing well and the area resource base had opened. She said they were waiting to see the impact on attendance and outcomes. BB said the focus on early years was largely addressing the gender gap. She said the primary outcomes were improving and the secondary outcomes were stable.	

	BB reported inclusion and support for the vulnerable groups was the central priority.	
7.2	<u>Education Improvement Plan 2025/26</u>	
	The education improvement plan was shared on GovernorHub prior to the meeting. RCO reported there were currently no schools in stabilise and those in repair were waiting for Ofsted inspections or needed improvements in attendance. He said some schools were predicting a significant uplift in outcomes. RCO said the primary outcomes were strong and the gaps were closing. He said the secondary outcomes were stable and had been over the last 7 years. RCO reported they were still working on the curriculum and pedagogy and were securing the development of the secondary curriculum. He said they would be appointing trust leaders to do the work. RCO reported primary attendance was in line with the Devon and national averages and secondary attendance was above the Devon average but below the national average. He said the secondary suspensions had decreased but the primary suspensions had increased due to some challenging SEND need. RCO said they were embedding the coaching and would look at developing an internal leadership programme. RCO reported the charity was currently stuck with the Charities Commission and the community hub at Dartmouth was held up due to negotiations with the building. Trustees asked if the community work was being driven by the overall vision for what it ought to look like across all communities or if it was responsive to what was happening in each community. MS said it was both and would be different in the different areas. He explained there was already lots happening in some areas so they did not want to double up on what was in place. MS said they were being led by what was needed in the area so they followed the vision but it was dependent on the community. He said they did not yet have charitable status and said it would be useful to have a trustee attending the meetings. Trustees asked when they would publicise what they were doing or ask for community support. MS said they had 29 people at Teign for the Teign, Rydon and Kingsteignton link and 9 people had attended at Coombeshead from Devon Health. He said the message was getting out and they would continue to share but did not think it was necessary to put it in the press. RCO explained they had put 2 more clusters together through Cradle to Career which would give the opportunity to bid for the £300,000 accelerator funding. He said the website had been built for the charity but was not yet live because they were waiting for the charitable status. MS suggested they should launch the website and state they were waiting for charitable status.	
8	<u>FINANCE REPORTS AND SHARED SERVICES UPDATE</u>	
8.1	<u>Shared services verbal report</u>	
	The management accounts were shared each month on GovernorHub.	

	SW reported the projected reserves were £2.6M which was £1M less than optimal. He said the reserves were expected to run below the optimal level until 2029/2030. SW said they were expecting to be ahead of budget by approximately £200,000. SW said they were currently working with the headteachers on the financial planning. A discussion was held which was recorded in the part 2 minutes. SW reported the energy contracts were locked in until August 2027. He said the capital allocation from the government was £1.6M and they would start planning the projects using the rolling condition plan. A discussion was held which was recorded in the part 2 minutes. Trustees asked what the £1.6M would be spent on. SW explained they prioritised core habitation but the money would not cover much more. He said there were some strategic initiatives. SW said he was confident with the process in place and they had a detailed capital planner. SW reported there were still delays with Homelands joining the trust because they were waiting for the Torbay County Council lawyers but they were hoping the new date would be 1st July 2026. He said the DfE were aware of the delay and the reasons so there was no reputational damage. A discussion was held which was recorded in the part 2 minutes. SW reported the HR project was on track but the next phase was deferred by 4 months. He said the core architecture was payroll which would be live in May 2026. SW said the Wynstream pre-school would start in September 2026 and they were currently promoting and marketing it. SW reported they were working with RCO and Claire Plumb to review the IT strategy at South Devon UTC to take into account the needs of the pupils and the curriculum.	
8.2	<u>School resource management self-assessment (SRMSAT)</u>	
	Trustees noted the SRMSAT had been submitted. Trustees asked what the motivation was behind the Wynstream pre-school. RCO explained there was no need in the community but the main indicator was inclusion and meeting the needs of the children. He said a third of the children starting school were not toilet trained. RCO said they could do a better job and it might also help secure numbers for the school. Trustees asked how concerned the trust were about post-16 funding. MS explained they had been cautious with budgeting especially with post-16. He said there would be an impact but it would be minimal. Trustees asked what the SEND funding was across the trust. MS suggested this could be discussed in the next meeting with a plan for the spending.	
9	<u>SAFEGUARDING</u>	

	Trustees noted there were no significant concerns. RCO reported there would be a big change to Keeping Children Safe in Education so expected a significant change to the policy. 7.15pm DP left the meeting	
10	<u>GOVERNANCE</u>	
10.1	Trustees approved the local governing body appointments of new governors, reappointments and chairs.	
10.2	Trustees noted the feedback from the local governing body meetings.	
10.3	RCO reported the governor training programme had been refreshed for the next academic year.	
11	<u>POLICIES</u>	
	Trustees reviewed and approved the following policies: • Complaints Policy • Data Protection Policy • Health and Safety Policy • Recruitment and Selection Policy	
12	<u>MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR OR CEO</u>	
	GA noted there were positive results for the trust.	
13	<u>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u>	
	Trustees confirmed that the next meeting would be held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 20th May 2026. Trustees agreed the programme of meeting dates for the remainder of the 2025/2026 academic year as follows: Thursday 9th July 2026 at 6.00pm	

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.

Signed

Dated
