



EDUCATION SOUTH WEST TRUST BOARD

Part 1 Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Trust Board of Education South West held at Coombeshead Academy and virtually at 6.00pm on Wednesday 9th July 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	Present
Jenny Sutton JS	Trustee	Present via Teams
Barrie Taylor BT	Trustee	Present
Executive Board		
Rob Coles RCO	Deputy CEO	Present
Jayne Keller JKE	Director of Education	Present via Teams
Suzannah Wharf SLW	Director of Education	Present via Teams
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 and Jennifer Gibbs.	
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	MS reported he had been offered a ticket to the executive box of the Lord's test match by TES but he did not accept this.	
4	<u>MINUTES</u>	
	The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14th May 2025 were approved and would be signed by the chair pending the following amendments: The minutes incorrectly stated SW was working with the Construction Industry Council (CIC) but this should have been Retrofit Action for Tomorrow (RAFT) .	
5	<u>FINANCE</u>	
5.1	<u>Report from the Finance and Internal Assurance Committee meeting held on Thursday 3rd July 2025</u>	



	<p>AH reported they had discussed financial reporting and projections and were assured the financial planning was robust and there was sound thinking behind the savings. He said they had noted the provisions for redundancies and figures were based on evidence.</p> <p>AH said they had discussed the trust-wide budgets for 2025/2026 and agreed to recommend for the trust board to approve them.</p> <p>AH said they had received the final internal audits from Malcolm Wheatley and expressed his thanks to Malcolm for his contribution to the internal scrutiny.</p> <p>AH explained they had discussed the plans for changing the structure of the committee and said they would need a separate audit and risk committee as well as an external auditor for the internal scrutiny who would review financial and non-financial aspects of the trust. He said they would review the scope of the work and agree on the auditors with SW.</p> <p>AH reported the committee had received the information security data protection dashboard and the health and safety report. He confirmed all actions had been followed up and the risk register would be reviewed and updated for the next meeting.</p> <p>GA reported the budget for 2025/2026 had a surplus of £356,000. He said there had been positive feedback from the information shared at the local governing body (LGB) meetings.</p> <p>Trustees asked if SW attended all the LGB meetings in the summer term to present the budgets. SW confirmed he did and said it was manageable and felt it was important to attend. RC noted one of the LGBs had requested to have more time from SW in the future.</p>	
5.3	<p><u>Approval of the 2025/2026 Budgets</u></p>	
	<p>Trustees approved the trust-wide budgets for the 2025/2026 academic year.</p>	
5.2	<p><u>Shared Services Verbal Report</u></p>	
	<p><u>HR Project</u></p> <p>SW reported the HR project had been reviewed with DP and they were currently scheduling the project.</p> <p>DP confirmed SW had considered all relevant processes, carried out gap analysis and identified the requirements and capabilities. He said SW had considered the data and identified the core requirements and the longer-term requirements. DP reported he was very satisfied with what SW had achieved and considered and was assured the system would be implemented in a way which would benefit the trust. He said there were still some concerns about the system but SW had spoken to users from other MATs.</p> <p><u>Homelands</u></p> <p>SW reported the financial review of Homelands was progressing well and they were in a good financial position. He said the headteacher had earmarked some of their reserves for the academy conversion.</p> <p>SW said the DfE did not start the process until the middle of June which was late. He said Torbay County Council had not engaged since 16th June which had been reported to the DfE.</p> <p><u>Leading Great Lives Foundation</u></p>	



SW reported the Leading Great Lives Foundation was progressing and they were working on finalising premises in Dartmouth and Newton Abbot.

KEVICC Area Resource Base

SW reported they had approval for £500,000 funding for the capital upgrade and were waiting for the final approval of the plan. He said discussions were ongoing regarding the minimum funding per child.

Cyber Essentials Plus Accreditation

SW reported the certificate had been reissued for the Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation. He said the disaster recovery service was making the service network and service structure more robust across the secondary schools. SW noted Teign had recently experienced a physical server hardware failure and it had seamlessly switched so nobody was aware of the issue.

Other Updates

SW reported the decarbonisation scheme had been withdrawn by the government and all school websites had been updated and were live. He said there had been a detailed review of compliance and risks of standards operating procedures.

SW explained he had worked with the IT technicians to improve the efficiency of resolving issues and they were using data to analyse the themes and training needs for the technicians. He said Windows 11 was being rolled out across the trust.

SW reported Cosafe would be rolled out to all schools in September having been running in Coombeshead. He explained staff were able to sound an alarm from an app on their phone if there was a threat in the school.

SW said in collaboration with SLW, they had developed the teacher-resource base so teachers could easily access resources. He said they were planning for capital works over the summer along with IT replacement and network upgrades.

6 **PERFORMANCE AND STANDARDS**

6.1 Performance and Standards Committee Report from Monday 30th June 2025

GA reported BT would be resigning as a trustee having started in 2003. MS noted BT would be missed.

BT said he had enjoyed chairing the performance and standards committee and it had been a pleasure working with RCO, SLW and JKE.

BT reported the committee were joined by Helen Coulson who was the headteacher at Coombeshead and Paul Sampson who was chair of governors at Coombeshead. He said they had shared the following points:

- Quality of teaching was good
- The school were on an improving trajectory
- Attendance was a focus
- They were working on developing a sense of belonging
- Suspensions had halved over the last year
- Good staff retention



- Pupil numbers were increasing
- The school had a strong pastoral team
- The sixth form viability was a challenge

BT noted Paul Sampson was a strong chair but would be leaving at the end of the academic year.

BT reported JKE and SLW focused on the reading strategy which was a focus across the trust. He said several children leaving KS2 were below age-related expectations. BT said they had discussed promoting the love of reading and how data indicated reading ability could affect behaviour and attendance.

SLW explained she had carried out a reading survey with the secondary students. She said she had shared the results with the headteachers and would share them with trustees.

JKE reported a school had been trialling the reading strategy and their data had significantly improved.

BT explained feedback about CPD was good and it was having an impact in all areas. He said there had been good feedback from the celebration event.

BT reported they had discussed the education improvement plan and explained there would be a focus on persistent absence. He said they had discussed suspensions and the higher number of suspensions in Dartmouth primary.

BT reported KEVICC and St Cuthbert Mayne had received good Ofsted reports. He said the Wynstream outcomes were a concern and they were seeing continued improvement at Dartmouth. RCO noted Wynstream were on an upward trajectory but they still needed more improvement.

GA reported lots of staff had thanked the board for the support given during the KEVICC Ofsted.

Trustees asked if they could replicate what Coombeshead had done with their pastoral team and reducing suspensions at other schools. RCO explained the work had started at Coombeshead 6 years before with a review of the pastoral team. He said the school had some issues following Covid but had since improved. MS noted other schools had not been in the same situation as Coombeshead were.

A discussion was held which was recorded in the part 2 minutes.

6.2 Deputy CEO Report

RCO reported Andy Goodwin had established the safeguarding audit which had been through an external validation to ensure it was fit for purpose. He explained the leadership of future DSLs would be in-house and would be added to the leadership qualification.

The KS2 outcomes and trends over the last 3 years were shared and MS noted they looked positive. MS said the Kingsbridge Primary outcomes were lower than they wanted but Wynstream and Dartmouth were positive and indicative of the school improvement work. He said JKE and SLW were supporting the schools and ensuring the focus was on the combined results. MS said they still needed to improve the outcomes for the SEND and disadvantaged children.

RCO reported a focus for the next academic year would be to balance the pedagogical practice with the curriculum implementation.



	<p>Trustees noted if the curriculum was too directed, the teachers could lose how they taught. RCO explained the reading strategies blended together the pedagogical approach and the curriculum approach.</p> <p>RCO said they would be working on cultural inclusion and wanted a reduction in suspensions and would develop the relational behaviour policy in secondary schools.</p> <p>RCO reported he was working with BB to develop an ESW definition of what it was to be a disadvantaged or under-resourced family at ESW. He said this might look different in different schools.</p> <p>Trustees said it was promising they were thinking of a broader definition but asked what the schools would do with it and how they would gain an understanding without over-labelling. MS explained they never dumbed the curriculum down but were looking for equity. He said ESW did not make excuses and they had leaders who bought into the values and culture. MS said they were working to improve children’s lives and the KS2 outcomes indicated the mobile children had achieved well. He explained it was more difficult in secondary schools with the current outcome regime but outcomes took many forms.</p> <p>A trustee noted at the strategy day they had discussed being more inclusive and asked if following the inclusive approach, would they see all standards raised and effectively meet the needs of all. MS said they would and explained RCO had interviewed high prior attaining children to identify why they were not performing as well as they could. He said they needed to report on the labels but needed to ignore the labels when they were working with the children.</p> <p>BB explained with the efficiency protocol, disadvantage needed to be identified early for effective early intervention.</p> <p>RCO reported studies indicated if children had not achieved as well as expected and were disadvantaged, they would have lower self-esteem and it was important to identify the children early.</p>	
7	<u>STRATEGIC DIRECTION</u>	
7.1	<u>Strategic Plan Overview</u>	
	The education improvement plan was shared on GovernorHub prior to the meeting. MS explained they were not changing the targets but refining how they delivered it.	
7.2	<u>CEO Verbal Report</u>	
	<p>MS did not have any other updates which had not already been discussed.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there were any expansion plans for the trust. MS said there were no plans to expand but they would continue supporting other schools through management partnerships and reviews. He noted ESW ran a research school who supported Cumbria and ran SWIFT teacher training. MS said they were expanding their influence and sharing the trust’s values. He shared some of the additional work the executive team did including as trustees of other MATs and involvement in the Queen Street Group.</p>	
8	<u>CHAIRS’ UPDATE</u>	
	GA reported he had fortnightly meetings with AH and MS. He said there had been lots of discussions with the regional team who had flagged ESW as being inclusive.	



	<p>DP reported he had met with Andy Goodwin on 16th May 2025 to discuss safeguarding and noted Andy was improving safeguarding and attendance. He said the safeguarding policy had been rewritten and there were strategies in place to improve attendance.</p> <p>JS reported she met with SLW who shared lots of information on CPD. She said there was a forensic approach ensuring teachers were teaching to the best of their ability through instructional coaching. JS said they had some discussions about seeing the impact which included feedback from teachers and the impact on pupils. She said ESW needed to promote how unique it was with what it could offer.</p> <p>BB reported she met with JKE to discuss early years. She said they discussed the challenge at Wynstream and highlighted the positive work happening at Kingsbridge Primary School.</p> <p>AH reported he met with RCO where they discussed governance at KEVICC. He said they reflected on successes and discussed roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>DP noted how MS empowered others and delivered the values through leadership and teaching staff. He said it had taken lots of hard work to get the trust where it was.</p>	
9	<u>GOVERNANCE</u>	
9.1	<u>Feedback from local governing body meetings</u>	
	<p>GA explained they had encouraged all LGBs to share feedback with the trust board. MS noted lots of points raised were more positive than they had been but some areas would always be tricky, such as catering where they needed to provide nutritional food at very low prices.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the difficulty with providing food in schools and the low number of complaints they had received from parents.</p> <p>AH said they could follow up on the viability of sixth forms.</p> <p>Trustees asked about a school banning mobile phones and asked if it would be a policy across the trust and if so, would there be implications for IT in the trust. MS explained lots of children did homework on the bus using their phones and the rule had often been that phones should not be seen in the school. He said there was not a blanket policy across the trust and it would be for the schools to decide.</p> <p>A discussion was held and recorded in the part 2 minutes.</p> <p>MS discussed the potential difficulties if they tried to ban mobile phones at some of the schools. He explained parents had been surveyed at the school aiming to ban phones and the majority did not want their children having phones in school.</p> <p>SLW reported evidence indicated smartphones and continual access to the internet were harmful for children under 16.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the implementation of the ban and how the information had been shared.</p>	
9.2	<u>Reappointment of Graham Austin and Annelie Fearon as trustees</u>	
	Trustees approved the reappointment of Graham Austin and Annelie Fearon.	



9.3	<u>Scheme of Delegation 2025/2026</u>	
	Trustees approved the updated scheme of delegation.	
9.4	<u>Committee Structure</u>	
	Trustees approved to the change to 3 committees with Adrian Hines chairing the finance committee and David Potter chairing the audit and risk committee. MS reported he had 2 expressions of interest for new trustees and asked if AF could remain on the performance and standards committee until they had recruited more trustees. GA asked members of the performance and standards committee to contact him if they were willing to be chair of the committee.	
9.5	<u>Terms of Reference</u>	
	AH noted the internal assurance committee would be called the audit and risk committee. The clerk agreed to action this in the documentation. Trustees approved the Terms of Reference pending the changes. GA noted the terms of reference currently stated nominations for chair of the local governing bodies needed to be submitted before the meeting but proposed this could be changed to allow nominations during the meeting. Trustees approved the change. The clerk agreed to amend this in the terms of reference.	
9.6	<u>Committee Membership and Appointment of Committee Chairs</u>	
	Committee membership and appointment of committee chairs had already been discussed.	
9.7	<u>Governor and Trustee Code of Conduct</u>	
	Trustees approved the governor code of conduct and the trustee code of conduct.	
9.8	<u>Companies House Identification Verification</u>	
	Trustees noted the need to verify their identification on Companies House and contact the clerk with their unique identifier.	
9.9	<u>Governors to be appointed or reappointed</u>	
	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.	
10	<u>POLICIES FOR REVIEW</u>	
	Trustees noted the following policies had been approved : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy • Charging and Remissions Policy • Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Policy • Driving on Trust Business Policy and Procedures • Employer Pensions Discretions Policy • Equality Information Report 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing Allegations Against Staff and Low-Level Concerns Policy • Medical Conditions Policy • Modern Slavery Statement • Neonatal Policy • Whistleblowing Policy <p>Trustees agreed to acknowledge approval of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy once it was shared on GovernorHub.</p> <p>The Exclusions Policy will be updated with the new guidance at the beginning of September 2025 and trustees will be asked to acknowledge approval on GovernorHub.</p>	
11	<u>MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR OR CEO</u>	
	<p>There were no matters brought forward by the Chair or CEO.</p> <p>BT noted the link to the governors' information page on the Coombeshead website linked to the meeting attendance document.</p> <p>7.59pm JS left the meeting</p> <p>RCO said LGBs had been asked to check the websites for compliance. The clerk agreed to check the governance information was correct when updating the information at the end of the academic year.</p> <p>GA thanked governors, trustees and staff for their hard work over the year. He thanked BT for his work as a trustee.</p>	
12	<u>PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR 2025/2026 AT 6.00PM</u>	
	<p>Trustees confirmed that the next meeting of the Trust Board would be held at 10.00am on Friday 10th October 2025.</p> <p>Thursday 11th December 2025 at 6.30pm (following the Finance Committee and Audit and Risk Committee meetings)</p> <p>Thursday 5th February 2026 at 6.30pm (following the AGM)</p> <p>Thursday 26th March 2026 at 6.00pm</p> <p>Thursday 21st May 2026 at 6.00pm</p> <p>Thursday 9th July 2026 at 6.00pm</p>	

The meeting closed at 8.03pm.

Signed

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Dated

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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)