



EDUCATION SOUTH WEST TRUST BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Trust Board of Education South West held at Coombeshead Academy and virtually at 6.00pm on Thursday 27th March 2025.

Name	Role	Absent / Present
Graham Austin GA	Trustee, Chair	Present
Beth Brooks BB	Trustee	Present via Teams
Gail Brown GB	Trustee	Present via Teams
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	Executive Principal and Trust Leader	Present
Jenny Sutton JS	Trustee	Present via Teams
Barrie Taylor BT	Trustee	Present
Executive Board		
Rob Coles RC	Deputy CEO	Present via Teams
Andy Goodwin AG	Trust Safeguarding and Attendance Lead	Absent
Jayne Keller JK	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 Jennifer Gibbs and Suzannah Wharf.	
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 6th February 2025 were approved and would be signed by the chair.	
5	<u>FINANCE</u>	
	<u>Shared Services Verbal Report</u>	
	SW reported there was a positive variance of approximately £150,000 on the budget and the projected reserves were approximately £2.5M for the end of the year. He said financial planning for the following academic year was at an advanced stage and	



provisional conclusions were being reached regarding staffing. SW said they were expecting a surplus of approximately £200,000 for the following year and were hoping to avoid redundancies where possible.

SW explained the national insurance contributions had increased and the impact on the trust would be £50,000 in the current academic year and £220,000 in subsequent years. He said the government had said it would be funded but the funding was calculated per pupil and was lower for primary schools.

MS reported the trust had been contacted by an educational newspaper to discuss the national insurance contributions. He said SW would speak to them off the record about the lower amount for primary schools.

Trustees asked what percentage of the national insurance contribution was covered by the government funding. SW said approximately 70% was covered by the funding.

SW reported they had agreed on a supplier for the HR and payroll infrastructure and systems project following lots of meetings. He said they had selected MHR and iTrent and would be finalising the contract. SW said they had secured a significant discount of 23.5% off the initial quote. He said the roll out of new processes would take approximately 12 months.

SW said they had completed allocating the funding for the capital planning and explained the projects needed to be essential repairs and health and safety projects. He said it was possible the capital allocation would be slightly higher than expected, and if so, they would move on to the next projects.

SW reported there was a section 106 agreement for Blackawton which would be a 2-phase development of their pre-school and nursery over the next 2 summers. He explained Devon had agreed to release £195,000 for a section 106 agreement for KCC to go towards their IT programme which would help the growth and development of their curriculum.

SW said he was working on the capital funding for the area resource base at KEVICC. He said they were in the early stages of seeking the finances for Homelands who appeared to have healthy reserves.

SW reported they were in the early stages of working with Retrofit Action for Tomorrow (RAFT) who would support the trust with surveys which could lead to decarbonisation grants.

SW said new websites were live for Blackawton, East Allington, Kingsbridge Primary and Stoke Fleming. He said the other primaries were due to have their upgrades soon and the secondaries would be completed by 28th April 2025.

SW reported the sixth form catering at Coombeshead and Teign were being merged into the under 16 operations due to the size of the sixth forms. He said they were upgrading the data warehouse for network resilience and would move the whole trust to Windows 11. SW said all schools would use an app for parental forms which had been used in all secondary schools and Kingsteignton.



	<p>SW said the Bromcom MIS system was being developed to also support the teaching school hub. He said the energy database had been established and the data they received would provide more flexible analysis to manage and control.</p> <p>A trustee noted their trust had experienced some issues with MHR and iTrent and agreed to speak to SW about a solution.</p> <p>Trustees asked to what extent the HR systems would impact schools with the change the processes. SW explained it would be used to collect additional data to allow more effective succession planning and they could amend how the appraisals were carried out. He said it would define the system and organisational processes.</p> <p>Trustees asked how the rolling out of the system would be managed. SW explained they had not started yet but would develop an action plan which would be carefully managed. He said the HR system would be used by senior leaders and middle management so it would not affect people's jobs.</p> <p>6.20pm AF joined the meeting</p> <p>DP said he had been involved in a number of HR system rollouts and would be happy to support.</p> <p>AH asked about the topics of the government not fully funding breakfast clubs and the change to the GovernorHub subscriptions.</p> <p>Trustees discussed breakfast clubs and noted schools who signed up to the trial were losing money and it would be difficult for the government to force schools to run breakfast clubs without support. They suggested unions might become involved due to some of the early adopters of the trial having to use classrooms.</p> <p>Trustees noted the Finance and Internal Assurance Committee would be split into the Finance Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee due to the size of the trust. AH said the terms of reference would be shared at the next board meeting.</p>	AP1
6	<u>PERFORMANCE AND STANDARDS</u>	
6.1	<u>Performance and Standards Committee Report from Monday 10th March 2025</u>	
	<p>BT reported the Headteacher and Chair of Governors from Dartmouth Academy had joined the committee meeting and said their primary outcomes had improved and the secondary progress was improving. He said they had reported the staffing was a challenge with it being a small school but they were very appreciative of the support from the trust and the common curriculum.</p> <p>BT said the committee had received very detailed information about the SEND and disadvantaged strategies and the use of Edukey. JK reported in a meeting with inclusion leaders from Ofsted, they had identified inclusion being very important.</p> <p>Trustees asked if schools and trusts were at risk of SEND becoming unmanageable with the increase in the numbers being diagnosed and awareness increasing. MS said it had become unmanageable over the previous 6-8 years and the trust were fortunate to have a dedicated team of SENDCOs. He said they were also seeing adults being diagnosed and being signed off work. MS said the trust needed to ensure the right children received support and they had to continue</p>	



	<p>pushing for extra support. He said Ofsted were recognising inclusion and disadvantage.</p> <p>JS said it had been reassuring hearing in the committee meeting that ESW was tracking engagement in extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>JK explained they were focused on directing support to where it was most needed and it was reassuring that Ofsted were looking for inclusion being weaved through every category. She said ESW had a tight network of SENDCOs who supported each other which was important with increased pressure from parents.</p> <p>MS suggested trustees should comment on Ofsted's consultation about inclusion because they wanted high standards for every child.</p> <p>BB reported she was writing a Southwest Social Mobility Commission response to the consultation and said they wanted an explicit definition of disadvantage throughout the framework. She said she would like to talk to the trust about case studies, particularly with a focus on extra-curricular activities.</p> <p>BT reported the committee asked how they knew the strategies were working and discussed the staff wellbeing impact report and school improvement.</p> <p>MS reported the latest internal exam data was looking more positive. He said the secondary schools' grades 9-4 should be higher than national average but the 9-5 grades were still lower. MS said the English at Teign had significantly improved following lots of work. He said they had a new English lead for September 2025 and new English teachers.</p> <p>JK said the latest primary data indicated there would be a pass rate of 90-94% for the phonics screening check which was positive because it would enable them to access the curriculum. She said some of the children in some of the smaller schools had not performed well in the most recent assessments which had skewed the data.</p> <p>Trustees noted some of the LGBs had reported that SEND was worse than ever in the schools. JK said in some schools they were very stretched financially due to individual children requiring specialist provision which was not available. She said staff were working very hard to meet children's needs, particularly those with social, emotional and mental health needs.</p> <p>GA said the recent governor training on SEND was very good and recommended trustees to watch the recording.</p> <p>BT said the statistics and outcomes at South Devon UTC were shared and they noted the high level of SEND and disadvantage at the school. MS said it was not unusual to have a higher percentage of SEND and disadvantage in a UTC and it was often the child's 3rd or 4th school. He noted they had reduced the PAN at South Devon UTC which had reduced the income. RC said in year 10 and 11 they had 88.7% SEND but the outcomes would be better than they were the previous year and were in line with national averages for similar cohorts. He said they needed to look at the outcomes within the context and to look at the destinations.</p>	
6.2	<u>Deputy CEO Report</u>	



	<p>RC gave an update on safeguarding and explained they were updating and implementing new procedures around bullying. He said they were improving risk assessments related to safeguarding concerns and there had been lots of training around development and management of educational visits.</p> <p>RC reported the safeguarding visits were continuing and they had started carrying out audits in the partnership schools. He said Andy Goodwin was leading on attendance and the growing gap in outcomes between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils was due to attendance.</p> <p>RC suggested the education improvement plan for the next academic year was monitored by the impact on the disadvantaged groups to ensure everything schools did had an impact on those groups.</p> <p>RC reported attendance was better than it was at the same time the previous year. He said secondary attendance was in line with the Devon average but below national average and primary attendance was above the Devon average but slightly below national.</p> <p>RC said the concern in secondary schools was the 9-5 grades in English and maths. He said the primary concern was with the stabilise schools, Kingsteignton and Wynstream but they were hopeful Dartmouth's outcomes would show an improvement.</p> <p>RC reported the 3 stabilise schools Kingsteignton, Wynstream and South Devon UTC were receiving a high level of support.</p> <p>RC said suspensions were slightly higher than at the same time in the previous year and there had been 663 across all schools. He noted some schools outside the trust had reported 1,200 suspensions in one school. RC explained there had been a sharp increase in suspensions in KCC and they had explored the complexities of the individual pupils. He noted there had been a 50% reduction in suspensions in Coombeshead and Dartmouth.</p> <p>MS said the trust were committed to supporting the children and avoiding permanent exclusions where possible.</p> <p>RC discussed the SEND strategy and explained they were working with the Special Partnership Trust (SPT) who were leading the strategy across Devon. He explained the SPT would work with the schools on the ordinarily available inclusive practice to enable them to become better equipped.</p> <p>RC reported there was a full week of activities at the Kingsbridge Community Hub. He said they were supporting families with children with autism and families with small children. RC noted other charities wanted to be involved and they were negotiating taking on a Dartmouth Community Hub.</p>	
7	<u>STRATEGIC DIRECTION</u>	
7.1	<u>Strategic Plan Overview</u>	
	<p>MS shared a summary of staffing, appointments and a grievance process. He noted a dismissal procedure was underway but there had been no harm to any children in ESW.</p>	



	<p>MS reported Jon Eaton and Helen Coulson had been invited to present at the RISE and Shine Conference on attendance and noted there had been lots of positive feedback.</p> <p>MS said the Education Endowment Fund were exploring if TAs were used effectively. He said ESW would hold a conference and invite the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) to be involved.</p> <p>MS shared a summary of projects the trust was involved with which included a visit from Ian Bauckham who was the Head of Ofqual to meet with some sixth form students and a national showcase for Talk for Writing at Kingsbridge Primary School.</p> <p>MS reported they were due to have a decision on Homelands joining the trust at the end of April 2025. He said it was a privilege to work at a trust with such a passionate team.</p>	
7.2	<u>CEO Verbal Report</u>	
	The CEO report was included in item 7.1.	
8	<u>GOVERNANCE</u>	
	<p>The meeting dates for the 2025/2026 academic year were shared on GovernorHub prior to the meeting. MS asked trustees to pass on any feedback.</p> <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 and noted it was good to see the discussions about SEND and student voice.</p> <p>7.15pm DP left the meeting</p>	
7.3	<u>SEND Unit</u>	
	<p>Trustees approved the significant change for a 20 place SEND unit at KEVICC.</p> <p>Trustees asked what the timescales would be for the unit. RC said the consultation would run until the end of April 2025 and the funding model was for pupils to be in the unit from either September 2025 or January 2026.</p>	
8	<u>GOVERNANCE Continued</u>	
	<p>Trustees asked what the Trust Board did with the feedback from the LGBs. MS explained the Trust Board were responsible for the LGBs and needed to know what was discussed in the meetings.</p> <p>Trustees noted there were sufficient opportunities to feedback to the Trust Board and there was always a good discussion in the Chairs' Forum.</p> <p>MS suggested the trust might need to have a governance review.</p>	



9	<u>POLICIES FOR REVIEW</u>	
	<p>Trustees noted the following policies had been approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints Policy • Data Protection Policy • Health and Safety Policy • Information Security Policy • Managing Allegations Policy <p>Trustees were informed the Transgender Policy was on hold pending government advice and the Managing Sickness Absence Policy was being rewritten.</p>	
10	<u>MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR OR CEO</u>	
	<p>GA said the trustees' feedback would be a standing item on the agenda in the future. MS reported DP had met with Andy Goodwin about safeguarding and BT had met with Suzannah Wharf to discuss the secondary curriculum and would meet with Jayne Keller on 28th March 2025 to discuss the primary curriculum.</p> <p>7.29pm RC left the meeting</p> <p>Trustees discussed the funding for Dartmouth Academy as an all-through school.</p>	
11	<u>PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR 2024/2025 AT 6.00PM</u>	
	<p>Trustees confirmed that the next meeting of the Trust Board would be held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 14th May 2025.</p> <p>Trustees agreed the programme of meeting dates for the 2024/2025 academic year as follows (locations to be confirmed):</p> <p>Thursday 10th July 2025 at 6.00pm</p>	

The meeting closed at 7.32pm.

Signed

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Dated

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Action log

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	
AP2	5	SW to meet with DP to discuss the rollout of the HR system.	DP/SW	Summer term	