

EDUCATION SOUTH WEST TRUST BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the **Education South West Trust Board** held virtually and at Teign School at **6.30pm** on **Thursday 5th February 2026**.

Name	Role	Present/Absent
Graham Austin GA	Trustee, Chair	Absent
Bethany Brooks BB	Trustee	Present via Teams
Gail Brown GB	Trustee	Present via Teams
Annelie Fearon AF	Trustee	Present via Teams
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	Present via Teams
Executive Board		
Rob Coles RCO	Deputy CEO	Present
Jayne Keller JKE	Director of Education	Present via Teams
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 Graham Austin. Adrian Hines agreed to chair the meeting.	
1.2	Trustees consented to the absence.	
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>	
	AH gave an update in the AGM held prior to this meeting.	
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 Friday 11th December 2025 (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" data-bbox="228 432 1358 618"> <thead> <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>11</td> <td>RCO to update the summary of changes to the pay policy.</td> <td>RCO</td> <td>Next meeting</td> <td>Completed</td> </tr> <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>Carry over</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p data-bbox="228 656 1358 819">Trustees asked what the expectations were for the link trustee responsibility and how often should they meet. MS suggested the trustees could contact the staff member before each Performance and Standards Committee meeting and have a discussion in between each board meeting. AH said when they discussed the areas of responsibility, they would also discuss the expectations and share with trustees.</p>	Action point	Agenda item	Action	By whom	By when	Status	AP1	11	RCO to update the summary of changes to the pay policy.	RCO	Next meeting	Completed	AP2	12	GA to review the trustee areas of responsibility.	GA	Next meeting	Carry over	
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6	<u>CEO Report</u>																			
	<p data-bbox="228 931 1358 965">The CEO report was shared and discussed in the AGM held prior to this meeting.</p> <p data-bbox="228 999 1358 1099">Trustees said ESW were more advanced with the development of the community hubs than other trusts around the country. They said it was important to measure the impact of the hubs by asking the staff and the people using them.</p>																			
7	<u>TRUST IMPROVEMENT</u>																			
7.1	<u>Feedback from the Performance and Standards Committee held on 12th January 2026</u>																			
	<p data-bbox="228 1301 1358 1435">BB reported the headteacher and one of the co-chairs of Kingsbridge Primary attended the meeting and updated them on what the priorities were at the school. She noted the committee reminded the headteacher to be mindful of her own wellbeing. BB said they had reported the community hub was working well at Kingsbridge.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1469 1358 1671">BB reported the data drop reports were shared but noted some validation of the data was needed. She said the primary data was broadly in line with the previous year but JKE was working with the headteachers to explore the possibility of unconscious bias in the assessments. BB noted there were concerns with reading, writing and maths at Wynstream but they were focusing on raising the expectations and closing the gaps. She said there was lots of positive data from the secondary schools.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1704 1358 1805">BB reported the committee had discussed behaviour, attendance and inclusion and noted attendance was improving and persistent absence had decreased. She said they had discussed suspensions and the behaviour policy.</p> <p data-bbox="228 1839 536 1872">7.00 JS left the meeting</p> <p data-bbox="228 1906 1358 2029">Trustees noted the schools compared themselves to national and asked why they did not talk about being better than national. RCO reported the outcomes for the primary schools who had been in the trust for more than 3 years were significantly better than national and Kingsbridge Primary and Kingsteignton were predicting approximately</p>																			

	<p>75% expected in reading, writing and maths combined. He said Wynstream had very low starting points and would always struggle but there had been a big improvement.</p> <p>RCO reported he had moved South Devon UTC out of the stabilise category due to the context of the school.</p> <p>Trustees suggested it would be good to see the individual data for the schools at or above national average. MS explained the trust would be judged by their overall outcomes.</p> <p>RCO explained South Devon UTC should not be compared to mainstream schools and should be compared to similar provisions. He reported attendance had improved by 10% at the school and there had been a reduction in suspensions. RCO said positive progress had been made in all subjects except English and they were making a difference for the pupils but would never achieve national.</p> <p>MS explained lots of the schools in the trust were above national but when the data was combined it was not all above national. He said the ambition was for all schools to improve.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there was still as much focus on improving in the schools already at or above national. They asked if resources were directed towards the schools below national. MS explained all schools were treated equally but some needed more support. He said headteachers would be asked for feedback about the support from the trust. MS said he was confident all schools were looked after and well-supported.</p>	
7.2	<p><u>Education Improvement Plan 2025/26</u></p>	
	<p>The education improvement plan was shared on GovernorHub prior to the meeting.</p> <p>RCO reported they were expecting the primary outcomes to be above national and the secondary outcomes to be in line with national. He explained there were fewer secondary SEND pupils being suspended but in the primary schools, the majority of suspensions were SEND pupils. RCO explained JKE would lead a project exploring the suspensions in primary.</p> <p>RCO reported they were aiming to link the KEVICC SEND hub with community governance. He said the children would start at the hub after the February half term.</p> <p>7.16pm JS re-joined the meeting</p> <p>Trustees asked if there had been an increase in the number of exclusions. RCO reported the number of exclusions was similar to the previous academic year. He noted there had been 7 in the first half of the 2025-2026 academic year.</p> <p>Trustees asked if they were able to see the attendance data. RCO agreed to send trustees the attendance data each week.</p>	
8	<p><u>FINANCE REPORTS AND SHARED SERVICES UPDATE</u></p>	
	<p>SW reported they were in the process of planning for the following year's budget and looking at capital condition planning, IT strategic planning and reviewing the contracts. He said they were looking at the 5-year projection plans with the headteachers looking</p>	

	<p>at how they could save money. SW noted some of the schools needed to make more savings due to the drop in roll.</p> <p>SW reported the current financial position was slightly ahead of the budget. He said they were expecting to end the year with similar reserves as the previous year which remained under the optimal target. SW noted they expected to be under the optimal reserve target until the 2029-2030 academic year.</p> <p>SW reported there were still delays with Homelands joining the trust but had been given a new target date of 1st May 2026. He said the HR IT system project was continuing and they were currently running the unassisted testing of the core payroll function and applying fixes.</p> <p>SW explained he was working with DP to select the organisation the trust would appoint to carry out the internal scrutiny. He said the firms required a detailed risk register which DP and SW had developed. DP reported they had received good feedback from the firms on the assurance framework which would enable them to reliably identify the 10 main risks.</p> <p>Trustees asked about the downward trend in unrestricted surplus and if it was due to South Devon UTC using the reserves. MS explained they were aware and were monitoring although they were not happy with the levels. SW explained the reserves were declining because the trust was using the reserves to help support some of the schools. He said Kingsbridge Community College had large legacy reserves which had gradually declined but the South Devon UTC reserves were moving in the right direction. SW explained when South Devon UTC joined the trust, they were aware it would need to go into a deficit but the deficit was decreasing. He said they predicted it would take 5-8 years to clear the deficit. MS explained if they reduced the funding for some schools, they would be unable to provide the education or staffing needed.</p> <p>Trustees asked if there was a financial impact with the delays to Homelands joining the trust. SW said there was no financial impact.</p> <p>Trustees asked if they needed to consider changing the threshold for the higher paid staff. SW said the threshold was set by the DfE.</p>	
9	<u>SAFEGUARDING</u>	
	Trustees noted there were no significant concerns.	
10	<u>GOVERNANCE</u>	
10.1	Trustees approved the local governing body appointments of new governors, reappointments and chairs.	
10.2	<p>Trustees noted the feedback from the local governing body meetings.</p> <p>MS noted he discussed the feedback from the LGBs and identified some key points during his meetings with GA and AH.</p> <p>GB reported it was very useful hearing from the headteachers and chairs in the performance and standards committee meetings. She said it gave the trustees the opportunity to genuinely listen to what was happening in the schools which was difficult to get from a document.</p>	

	<p>Trustees asked if the community hubs could be a source of future governors. RCO said the headteachers and chairs needed to work proactively to recruit governors. He said there were ongoing discussions about diversity on the LGBs.</p> <p>TF suggested the feedback from the LGBs should be purposeful and they could be asked to list celebrations and specific questions. She said providing guidance to shape the feedback would be useful.</p> <p>AH noted the feedback from the LGBs included some questions and said he would review these with MS and GA.</p>	AP1
10.3	RCO reported there had been issues with governors accessing the recordings of the training sessions which had been resolved. He noted governors needed to inform Claire Tucker if they had viewed a recording.	
11	<u>POLICIES</u>	
	<p>Trustees reviewed and approved the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions Policies • Code of Conduct for Employees Policy • Complaints Policy – link added for DfE parental guide to complaints • Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy • Financial Administration Policy • Leave of Absence Policy • Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Policy • Maternity Policy • SEND Policy • Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions – link to model letters removed <p>Trustees agreed to review and approve the Attendance Policy on GovernorHub.</p>	AP2
12	<u>MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD BY THE CHAIR OR CEO</u>	
	MS acknowledged the death of Peter Di Giuseppe who had been the Chair of Teign School for a number of years and was the founding Chair of ESW.	
13	<u>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</u>	
	<p>Trustees confirmed that the next meeting would be held at 6.00pm on Thursday 26th March 2026.</p> <p>Trustees agreed the programme of meeting dates for the remainder of the 2025/2026 academic year as follows:</p> <p>Thursday 21st May 2026 at 6.00pm Thursday 9th July 2026 at 6.00pm</p>	

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed

Dated

Action log

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	

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	
AP2	11	Trustees to note approval of the Attendance Policy on GovernorHub.	Trustees	ASAP	