

## Standards and Curriculum Committee Minutes

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025  
 5pm  
 Held via Microsoft 'Teams'

**Attended:** Christine Cottle (Chair)  
 Nicky Dunford (CEO)  
 Kate Evans (KE)  
 Joanna Hooper (JH) – Mid Devon LB Representative  
 Oliver Heathman (OH) - Moorland Hub LB Representative

**In attendance:** Charlotte Roe (Governance Professional)  
 Francesca McLoughlin (DoI)- Director of Inclusion- For item 8.  
 Lizzie Lethbridge (DoE) – Director of Education- For item 9.  
 Vicky Gillon (VG) - ECT Lead- For item 9.  
 Matt Tanner (MT) - P.E Subject Lead- For item 10.

**Minutes:** Nicol Bush- Clerk to the Trust

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> The Chair of the Committee opened the meeting with a welcome to Trustees and LAC Chairs. Apologies were received from MT, CT, CM and RJ.	
2.	<b>Declarations of interest</b> There were no new declarations brought to the meeting.	
3.	<b>Any other business</b> There was no other business brought to the meeting.	
4.	<b>Approval of last meeting minutes</b> <b>For approval:</b> The part I minutes of the meeting held on 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2025 were approved as a true record and would be signed accordingly.	CLERK

5.	<p><b>Matters arising from minutes of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025 (not on the agenda)</b></p> <p><b>5.6 Update on Risk Register working party</b></p> <p>The CEO raised that it could be useful in the latter part of the term for her to visit schools, review their risk registers, and collaborate with them, she would be speaking with all the headteachers over the remainder of the term to develop a detailed understanding of each school's position. This would enable them to make informed judgements on whether each school's status should be categorised as amber, red, or green.</p> <p>The CEO also noted that risks should be owned by those with the most knowledge and capacity to manage them. She raised importance of ensuring that the person responsible for a particular risk was also the one best placed to address it, and that they had sufficient time to do so. The CEO highlighted that while the DoE was clearly the most appropriate person to handle certain S&amp;C related risks, there were others that might need to be delegated or shared more widely.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that, if time allowed before September, there could be an opportunity to form a working party to review the trust-wide risk register. This would be particularly helpful to the S&amp;C committee, as there was a concern that they were currently only receiving operational details rather than gaining a broader strategic overview</p> <p><b>5.8 Update on AK and KE Pupil Premium data request. (Ongoing matters arising item)</b></p> <p>The Chair noted that discussions around this had begun several months ago when the need for analysing the data to assess value added and whether the attainment gap had narrowed was first raised. The Chair added that this had always been something the group wanted to see. Although it was initially thought that the implementation of a new IT system would simplify the process, this had not been the case. <i>She asked whether it was now too late to proceed or whether the process needed to start again.</i></p> <p>KE responded that the next set of data would be available in July. However, there was concern that without access to last year's data, it would be difficult to determine whether any improvement or impact had been made this year. At the very least, it was agreed that work should begin with the 2024 data, which ideally should have been available earlier.</p> <p><i>A Trustee raised concerns regarding inconsistencies in the terminology used within the pupil premium data, specifically highlighting discrepancies between the terminology of pupils working 'just one sub-level below' (as this was outdated terminology) and the references to pivotal children.</i></p> <p>The DoE clarified that the intention behind the terminology was to identify which children were currently on track and which required intervention or catch-up support. She emphasised that the issue lay in the language used, which she described as poor terminology, rather than in the intent. She further explained that the focus was not on sub-levels of progress, but rather on outcomes.</p> <p>KE suggested to the DoE, to arrange a meeting, to establish a baseline using the 2024 data before the week commencing 8th July, which was when the next set of unvalidated data was expected to be received. The aim was to begin reviewing the new data promptly to assess whether the anticipated impact had been achieved. The DoE agreed to the meeting.</p> <p><b>5.9 Crib sheet for AHs around Pupil Premium</b></p> <p>The Chair questioned whether she should have a conversation offline with the DoI regarding crib sheets for PP or whether the DoI should discuss it initially with the CEO.</p> <p>A Trustee highlighted the absence of Tier 3 plans in the previous S&amp;C meeting, due to time restraints, they were not available to view. The meeting <b>agreed</b> that it would be useful to receive a verbal update if the Tier 3 plans if these were not available in future meetings.</p> <p><b><u>ACTION:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DoE to arrange meeting to establish a baseline in using the 2024 data.</li> <li>• Decision to be made on the way forward for the crib sheet for the PP.</li> </ul>	<p>CEO</p> <p>CEO</p> <p>LL/KE</p> <p>DoE</p>
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6.	<p><b>Trust Risk Register</b> - Evaluation of risk related to quality of provision and standards and curriculum</p> <p><b>6.1 Update on the Risk Register working party</b> This was discussed in item 5.6- matters arising.</p> <p><b>6.2 Risks related to S&amp;C committee</b> The CEO reported that she had reviewed the general risk register earlier that day. She noted that the register was mostly organised by school, with SIAMs standards and safeguarding listed at the top—both marked as green, which she felt was appropriate. However, she expressed concern about the accuracy of some school-level ratings. She questioned whether the rating had not been updated properly or had been overlooked. The CEO emphasised the importance of reviewing each school using a consistent pro forma, particularly one that included criteria such as delivery of the national curriculum, to make informed judgements.</p> <p>The DoE suggested setting up a regular review process linked to the S&amp;C meeting schedule, so that an updated risk register could be prepared in time with input from the right people. She proposed forming a working group to build the system, define responsibilities, and ensure accountability.</p> <p>The Trustees noted that valuable conversations often began when there was a mismatch between EIT’s view of a school and the headteacher’s perspective. That difference helped spark meaningful dialogue.</p> <p><b><u>ACTION:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Working group to build a system to update Risk Register</b></li> </ul>	DoE
7.	<p><b>Strategic Plan - School Improvement</b> Trustees to update on their area of responsibility: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Improvement- Deferred from previous S&amp;C meeting.</li> </ul> <p>KE raised that when serving as Chair, she had been invited to produce the strategic plan for the committee, however felt that it should be a whole committee approach. She suggested that, before the new CEO begins and develops their own strategic plan for Trustee approval, the committee should review progress made this year. It was <b>agreed</b> that the current plan would be reviewed at the July S&amp;C meeting. The GP said she would circulate the document in advance, so Trustees could comment on how effectively the plan had been delivered before it was submitted.</p> <p><b><u>ACTION:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clerk to ensure that Strategic Plan was on the next agenda. GP to circulate Strategic Plan document to the S&amp;C Committee members</b></li> </ul>	GP/Clerk
8.	<p><b>Focus: Provision and impact for SEND (Report circulated before the meeting via email)</b> The Director of Inclusion gave a summary of the circulated PowerPoint report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenges were common in any job, and one of the biggest was money. Most EHCPs didn’t come with enough funding for that level of help. The Local Authority still assumed schools got £6,000 per child, plus extra top-up funding. But schools didn’t see that money directly, which made things difficult.</li> <li>• Delays in services were also a big problem. Since September, the Trust had made 40 new EHCP or funding requests, and it took about six months to get answers. Often, the first response from the local authority was “no,” which meant schools had to appeal, dragging the process out even longer- because of this schools had to find creative ways to support pupils without extra money. There were more children with SEND needs, and their needs were becoming more complex.</li> <li>• Training staff was also harder now, as the local authority no longer offered the same support. Some teams wouldn’t even look at a case unless schools had expensive reports from specialists, which added more pressure.</li> </ul>	

- The DoT explained that speech, language and communication needs were the most common primary need across the Trust. While each child was usually identified with a primary need, many had more than one area of difficulty. She noted that there was some variation in how schools identified these needs. For example, although autism spectrum disorder appeared lower on the list, some schools recorded speech, language and communication as the primary need—even when the child had a diagnosis of autism. In many cases, the two needs were closely linked.
- At the time, there were 431 pupils with SEND across the trust, and that number was gradually increasing. This represented nearly 23% of the pupil population. Nationally, the most recent statistics—though typically a year out of date—showed the average at around 17%.
- The number of pupils with EHCPs was roughly in line with national figures, but there were still many EHCP applications awaiting decisions.
- The DoI noted that, although attendance for pupils with SEND was lower than for all pupils, it wasn't significantly below. The Trust had a number of children with emotional-based school avoidance, reduced timetables, and medical needs, all of whom were included in that group. She felt the Trust's attendance figures for SEND pupils were fairly close to national averages. Persistent absenteeism among this group was only slightly higher.

The Trustees asked the following questions-

*For specialist reports like those from the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) or SEMH team, would the local authority accept reports from professionals appointed by the Trust, or did the reports have to come from Devon-employed staff?* The DoI responded that the local authority did accept reports from external professionals, as long as they were qualified educational psychologists. The team the Trust worked with, called MAST, wasn't part of Devon and originally came from Plymouth. That was acceptable to the local authority. However, the funding available to use MAST had been reduced, so the team had to carefully prioritise how and when they used their support. The same applied to the SEMH team.

*A Trustee noted that the number of pupils identified as needing SEN Support across the Trust was above the national average. She asked how the Trust ensured quality in this area, specifically, how the Trust checked that SENCOs were identifying and assessing needs accurately and consistently.*

The DoT explained that the Trust used inclusion reviews to quality assure how SEND was identified. She and the team had nearly completed reviews in every school that year. They worked closely with headteachers and SENCOs, reviewing each school's inclusion register. As part of the process, they randomly selected pupils from the register, looked at their provision maps, and reviewed the identified area of need. Through this, they found a wide range of approaches, and in some cases, misunderstandings—in how schools were identifying needs.

*Regarding reduced timetables, who monitored, and quality assured the impact of the reduced timetables? Who quality assured how long it lasted for? How were they coded for the absences?* The DoI replied that the team checked reduced timetables during inclusion reviews. If a school had any, they asked to see the paperwork. The local authority expected reviews every six weeks, and the Trust was sticking to that, sometimes reviewing even sooner. If a child's hours didn't increase, there would have to be a clear reason.

*What should effective TA deployment look like?*

The DoI said their expectations for effective TA deployment were based on research. According to this evidence, TAs should be supporting learning by scaffolding, not doing the work for the child.

The DoE added that it was important to involve headteachers and school leaders in improving TA deployment. She explained that the DoI had taken responsibility for TA training through the Inclusion Hub.

	<p><i>How did the Trust manage the SENCo time, did each school have a SENCO or were they shared across schools?</i></p> <p>The DoI explained that two SENCOs worked full-time across five or six schools, each one covering the east and the other covering mid and south areas. These SENCOs were not class-based. Most other SENCOs were class teachers within their own schools who had completed the training and taken on the role alongside their teaching duties. She added that the Trust was reviewing SENCO placements to ensure fairness.</p> <p><i>The Chair asked whether parents were involved in helping their children and how the trust supported them to do so.</i></p> <p>The DoI said that parents were involved, but this was usually led by class teachers or academy heads. The trust had also run some parent courses. A LAC Chair raised that the situation remained very serious. While teachers were doing their best and being creative, the support outlined in EHCPs often couldn't be fully delivered.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the DoI for her presentation to the meeting.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Focus: Quality of Teaching including ECT focus and the impact on CBD plan (Report circulated before the meeting via email)</b></p> <p>VG gave a summary of the circulated report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VG said the Trust worked hard to support teachers, especially with the pressures around inclusion. Alongside the SWIFT Institute training, the trust offered an extra programme focused on its values and the needs of small schools, like teaching mixed-age classes and managing different subjects.</li> <li>• The programme gave Early Career Teachers (ECTs) a more personalised induction. There were four ECTs in their first year, and the training now ran over two years. Victoria took over the role in September and made small changes based on feedback, such as adding more hands-on experience and chances to observe others.</li> <li>• In the first year, ECTs had more release time. The second year focused on preparing them to become subject leaders. She gave an example of one ECT who decided the role wasn't right for them, which was agreed by both sides.</li> <li>• VG also supported academy heads when ECTs needed extra help, and the programme could be adapted further if needed. She welcomed any questions about the training.</li> </ul> <p>The DoE praised VG for her energy and positive impact, especially in supporting schools in the east of the trust and said her support was already making a difference.</p> <p>The Chair thanked VG for her verbal presentation to the meeting.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Subject Focus: P.E (Presentation circulated before the meeting via email)</b></p> <p>MT gave a summary of the circulated PowerPoint report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MT explained that his team of four, all originally secondary PE teachers, now specialised in primary PE across the trust. He was proud of how the trust had supported his vision over the years, helping to build a strong PE provision that many small schools wouldn't otherwise have had. The team designed a bespoke curriculum and qualified PE teachers, which had a strong impact on children's physical development and staff confidence. Their work supported both teaching and staff training, which aligned with the government's sports premium funding goals.</li> <li>• They delivered lessons, ran sports festivals, organised trips and competitions, and helped children develop life skills like teamwork and resilience. Staff feedback was very positive, gathered through surveys at the start of the year to tailor training to teachers' needs.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil voices were also collected regularly. Children shared what they enjoyed and found challenging in PE, and many spoke positively about trips, clubs, and competitions they wouldn't have otherwise experienced. Some parents also gave positive feedback, especially those involved in clubs or activity days.</li> <li>• Looking ahead, MT said they aimed to continue offering competitive sports and targeted activities, especially for girls, who were more likely to drop out of sport in later years. However, transport costs and staffing made this difficult, as trips could cost hundreds of pounds and left staffing gaps in schools. He also planned to work with Early Career Teachers (ECTs), as many had little PE training during their courses. He wanted to build their confidence and understanding of PE's value.</li> <li>• MT shared plans for a new intervention called <i>Fun Fit</i>, aimed at supporting children with physical development needs, such as poor core strength or fine motor skills. He and Fran would train teaching assistants to deliver it, using videos and practical sessions, starting in September.</li> </ul> <p>The Trustees asked the following questions:  <i>What proportion of P/E was taught by the class teacher versus taught by your team?</i> MT explained that each class had two hours of PE per week. One hour was taught by him or another specialist PE teacher, with the class teacher present. The second hour was led by the class teacher. The model was designed so that class teachers observed the specialist lesson first, then repeated and built on that lesson themselves. This gave them a chance to learn and practice the skills alongside their pupils.  <i>Did the Trust have data on who was and wasn't taking part in enrichment activities, and was the Trust successfully reaching harder-to-engage groups such as girls, disadvantaged pupils, or those from specific faith backgrounds?</i>  MT responded that all festivals included whole-class participation, every child had the chance to take part, with alternative opportunities available if they were absent. In football events, separate girls' and boys' competitions encouraged engagement and teamwork within each group. Last year, they hosted inclusive festivals with varied activities—such as archery and badminton, open to all schools. Despite logistical and financial challenges this year, they ensured children still attended whole-class events and received meaningful opportunities.</p> <p>The Chair thanked MT for his presentation to the meeting.</p>	
11.	<p><b>Local Advisory Committees</b>  11.1 Committee to note any additional updates from local board Chairs and from LAC minutes and Ethos Minutes</p> <p>The Moorland Chair shared that during their recent LAC meeting, a key discussion involved a detailed session with the DCEO, who faced thorough questioning, particularly around Governance and Finance. Although the conversation raised both reassurance and concern, Governors appreciated the openness and time given to address their queries. Additionally, there were ongoing discussions about the re-structuring of one of the Hub schools, which were being handled separately.</p> <p>The Mid Devon Chair shared that all four schools were supporting children with very high and complex needs. The meeting also addressed financial concerns and low staff morale. Staff expressed unease, a sense of helplessness, and uncertainty about how to meet pupils' needs with limited resources. Long-term staff absences across all schools were further affecting operations.</p>	
12.	<p><b>Action Plans</b>  Action plans were circulated to the Trustees via email before the meeting.  <b>Part II was taken.</b></p>	
13.	<p><b>Safeguarding (Report circulated before the meeting)</b></p>	

	<p>10.1 CEO to give any safeguarding updates including update on the actions arisen following the safeguarding audits The CEO said there were no significant issues to report. The CEO raised there had been some issues with the recently circulated safeguarding report which needed attention. The CEO said she would investigate. The Trustees requested that the CEO review the document before it was circulated for future meetings.</p>	CEO
14.	<p><b>Due Diligence</b> The Chair highlighted that Due diligence would be discussed at the upcoming Board of Trustees meeting.</p>	Clerk
15.	<p><b>Policies</b>  <b>15.1 School complaints-</b> The GP noted that new guidance had been issued for the Complaints Policy and agreed to review it with the DCEO. This policy was postponed for approval.  <b>15.2 Children with health needs who cannot attend school-</b> The Trustees <b>approved</b> this policy.  <b>15.3 Equality and diversity policy 2025-</b> The Trustees <b>agreed</b> this policy and <b>recommended</b> for it to be sent to the Board of Trustees for final approval.  <b>15.4 Intimate care 2025-</b> The Trustees <b>approved</b> the Intimate care 2025 policy.  <b>15.5 School Uniform Policy 2025-</b> The Trustees <b>approved</b> the School uniform policy.</p>	GP
16.	<p><b>Review of Risk register RAG rating</b> The Trustees agreed that the Risk Register had been discussed throughout the meeting.</p>	
17.	<p><b>Evaluation of governance impact</b> The Chair noted there had been valuable discussions on quality assurance and triangulation, she thanked everyone for attending and noted it had been a helpful and productive session.</p>	

The meeting ended at 7.10pm

Signed by the Chair of the Committee..... on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2025.