

## Standards and Curriculum Committee

**Minutes**  
9<sup>th</sup> July 2024  
5pm  
Held Online

**Present:** Kate Evans (Chair)  
Nicky Dunford (CEO)  
Cheryl Mathieson (CM)  
Graeme Scott (GS)

**In attendance:** Rebecca Sear (RS) - Totnes Local Board (LB) Representative  
Max Thomas (MT) - Woodleigh LB Representative  
Oliver Heathman - Moorland Hub LB Representative

**Minutes:** Charlotte Roe (GP)

\*PLEASE NOTE - The underlined text was the DoE's response retrospectively as she was unable to attend the meeting.

No	Item	ACTION
1.	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. Apologies from Lizzie Lethbridge (DoE) and Christine Cottle were accepted.	
2.	<b>Declarations of interest</b> The CEO is a trustee of the Bearnas Education Foundation. Graeme Scott is Executive Chairperson of the Mario Framework. Kate Evans is Director for Education of the Good Shepherd Trust, Diocese of Guildford.	
3.	<b>Any other business</b> There was no other business	
4.	<b>Approval of last meeting minutes</b> <b>For approval:</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 were accepted as a true record – the Chair signed accordingly.	
5.	<b>Matters arising from minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024</b> 5.5 EYFS outcomes data comparison with Devon 5.7 Manual data drop on the SEND/CIC/PP pupils 5.7 Trend data (phonics data) that tracked a group from Yr1 to Yr6 in each area identifying changes in the gap in SEND/CIC/PP pupils This information was not available either through a report or from a member of the EIT. The Chair asked for the questions to be sent direct to the EIT and the response to be added to the minutes retrospectively by Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2024. 5.9 Ipad log-in usage – The GP informed the meeting that the DCEO had addressed this and that all the pupils had their own logins now. However, it was noted from the LAC minutes that there was still an issue. The GP agreed to highlight this with the DCEO.	GP  GP
6.	<b>Focus:</b> Overview of curriculum EIT overview of Trust vision for the curriculum, and validation of the quality, impact and consistency of curriculum across academies, identification of strengths and areas for support and/or improvement. Enrichment curriculum and participation in wider opportunities.  A report had been circulated before by the DoE. The following questions were asked by the meeting. In addition to the CEO's responses, the Chair asked for the questions to be sent direct to the EIT and a response to be added to the minutes retrospectively by Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2024.	

- The Trust has a curriculum 'statement' on the website that sets out high expectations. How does the Trust ensure this was the case in all the schools, when curriculum development was localised? How were schools supported when the curriculum falls short of expectations?* The CEO said that the schools were unique in themselves, so the Trust does not impose the curriculum. However, some schools adopted the same scheme and providers across the Trust. The CEO said that as a senior team, the whole curriculum was being reviewed to improve cross curricular links and track tight progression. Providers such as Cornerstones, could provide this across the whole Trust. This would also be useful to track the different cohorts in the schools more easily. With the recent change in government and the possibility of resulting changes curriculum expectations the companies would do the groundwork for such changes and the updates would be automatic. This would also help highlight weaknesses or gaps in delivery or expertise across the Trust. The EIT and Academy Heads had met to discuss the options, but no final decision had been made. The first step was to trial the favoured scheme (Cornerstones Curriculum Maestro) in some schools. The meeting noted that in small schools, with few staff having one curriculum provider would support the staff especially as each member of staff could have 3 curriculum lead responsibilities. *The Trustees asked whether the package could be tailored for each school?* The CEO confirmed that it would. *The Trustees asked about the schools who were not part of the trial?* The CEO said that the EIT would use the scheme to support their visits in these schools to ensure an equitable high provision was being delivered. In her opinion, the CEO said that the schools that had a strong embedded curriculum would be more reluctant to adopt the move and felt that the scheme would support the schools who were struggling. The Trustees commented that the experience of being a young historian (for example) should be the same across the Trust; how that was achieved would be different depending on the needs of the pupils in each school. The LAC Chair said that in the LACs concerns had been raised about having 'experts' across the whole curriculum so felt this would help.

The development of curriculum expertise continues. The trust offer has been picked up by the majority of schools with Cornerstones now agreed as a curriculum that the trust advocates for those where there is the need, i.e., EIT make the decision that Cornerstones will be used where expertise is not in a school and for structure, or for AHs who choose it. Training materials are held in Teams about trust expectations for a quality curriculum. Trust curriculum principles are in development.
- How was the Trust assured that the foundation curriculum was as strong and as established as the core subjects?* The CEO said that the foundation curriculum was not as strong. Some of the subject's delivery was exemplary such as PE. One barrier was finances to enable the schools to release staff for cross school collaboration and sharing good practice. This was why the scheme was being looked at to support this.
- The website curriculum pages say that the Trust facilitate 'cross-school collaboration' to achieve consistent excellence. How was this brokered and quality assured, and what was the impact?* The CEO said that the Trust approach was to continue to deliver a high level of curriculum expertise. The use of floating teachers and hours of TAs would be considered. School Improvement had now been split into 3 hubs with a dedicated EIT member. This would mean that the EIT member would understand their schools in their hub well and enable them to highlight strengths and weaknesses.

The development of the improvement team and hubs in English and Maths are supporting the development of expertise. Other curriculum experts are utilised across our school to support curriculum development in History, Geography and Science.
- It was interesting to hear about the investigation of commercial curricula. Was it expected that all schools might adopt the same curriculum?* The CEO said that eventually but by encouragement rather than coercion. The CEO added that the disadvantage of the scheme was the staff could become reliant on the scheme

	<p>and lose the ability for creative teaching so this would need to be monitored closely.  <u>Any scheme must be unpicked, understood and adapted for the context of the school and its pupils. Our curriculum principles underpin this and set high expectations, e.g. what we expect a curriculum looks like/does.</u></p> <p>The Chair of the LACs were invited to raise the questions from their meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sharing of teaching resources to support the new systems introduced (ie Maths) would massively ease teacher workload. If PP presentations could be shared, these could be adapted for daily use specific to each classroom's need.</i> The CEO said that the possible adoption of a commercial curriculum scheme would support this. The CEO added that this was also being done already, for example the Trust English Lead had done some videos which was circulated across the Trust to support consistent excellence across all the schools. Both the Maths and English Leads were coming out of classroom for an additional day to work across the Trust with other staff shadowing them to ensure succession planning. <u>Planning must respond to the needs of the children therefore a great deal of thinking and adaptation is essential, regardless of whether the starting point is the scheme or someone else's planning. There are times when sharing is great and saves time, but it can also lead to 'delivering' what's on a slide. AHs need to lead on this in the context of the needs of their school.</u></li> <li>• <i>Were there Hubs for all subject areas?</i> The CEO said that it would be perfect to have an expert in all subject areas however this was untenable and too costly. The team would be looking at ways how best to ensure that there were hubs for all subject areas.</li> <li>• Richard Charlie's Maths hub had worked extremely well, and his meetings had been effective - what particular practices could be learnt, to be rolled out to other hubs? The CEO said that this was good to hear and would feed that back.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><b>Focus:</b> Behaviour and Attendance</p> <p>Overview of impact of behaviour policy and practice, impact of relational approach and interventions. Exclusions and suspensions.</p> <p>In addition to the CEO's responses, the Chair asked for the questions to be sent direct to the EIT and a response to be added to the minutes retrospectively by Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024.</p> <p>The Attendance Officer circulated a report before the meeting. The following questions were raised by the meeting. The questions were sent to the Attendance Officer who responded to the questions via email through the Governance Professional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The RAG rated comparison with last year was helpful. It would also be useful to know how the Trust compare with a Year-to-Date national average and how the Trust compare with Devon and or SW averages.</i> The national average for primary schools for the academic YTD was 94.6%. Currently, the Trust have 5 schools which fall below this national average and the Trust were at 94.89%. The Trust have been unable to obtain data for the average attendance %age for Devon however, those schools that had signed up to the View Education Data element on the DfE website could get where they were ranked in Devon, out of 294 schools and from the schools that provided the Trust with their rankings, the Trust range from 45<sup>th</sup> down to 272<sup>nd</sup>. The meeting questioned whether this was good enough. The CEO said that her data showed that only 3 schools in the Trust were below the national average. The CEO said that waiting until the end of the year would give a truer picture. The CEO added that the Trust worked hard with attendance.</li> <li>• <i>What was the split between authorise and unauthorised absence, and do the Trust have PA data?</i> Data was limited now with some schools still in the process of migrating to the new version of SIMS however, from the schools that provided the Attendance Officer with their data the Trust average authorised attendance rate across the trust was 3.87% and unauthorised was 0.76% (national averages year to date are authorised 3.9%, unauthorised 1.5%)</li> </ul>	GP

- *What were the attendance rates for SEND and PPG? As above with regards to access to data. SEND 93.02% FSM 93.81%*
- *Does the Trust have similar data for punctuality? This data was not obtainable*
- *The Trust could reasonably expect a dip in attendance in the winter months, when illnesses tend to be more prevalent. However, what was the Trust's analysis of why attendance had declined since January? There have been outbreaks nationally of various illnesses and these had impacted upon the schools. These illnesses include chickenpox, scarlet fever, whooping cough and stomach bugs. Additionally, the changeable weather was having an impact with the normal winter bugs still lurking or hanging around longer than they would have done normally. The Trustees cautioned against attributing reasons that affected pupils nationally, as these would also have impacted national averages.*
- *It was good to hear that DfE documents were disseminated. How many schools had made effective use of Every Moment Counts materials? All heads and admins were encouraged to use the 'Moments Matter, Attendance Counts' email footer and materials were made available to be sent out to parents and/or used in newsletters.*
- *It was a concern to hear that there was inconsistent application of the Trust's policy for Attendance, particularly for the issuing of PN for holidays in term time. Whose role was it to address this? Why was there a reluctance to 'rock the boat' when the Trust had duties to deliver education to those pupils? How many PNs had been issued this year, and for what reasons? Had there been any other / alternative legal dispensations sought? Ultimately it would be down to the senior leadership team to ensure that policy and procedures were being followed. From the data that had been provided, across the trust 14 PNs had been issued this academic year for term time holidays. The CEO said that it was difficult for Academy Heads not wanting to have confrontations with parents when they were small schools with close relationships with the parents. Trustees challenged whether, for such families where attendance was poor, there was a good relationship, and reminded the meeting that our duty was towards the pupils and their best education, not the parents. The Trustees asked whether it had to be the school who highlighted to the LA the need for penalty notices or could it be from the Trust Head Office? The CEO said that this could be an answer; the problem was identifying a staff member with the capacity. A LAC Chair asked about attendance for pupils suffering from anxiety and how was this being considered and approached. The CEO said she had dug deep into the reasons for persistent absences – they were all based on children with anxieties. Looking over time all the persistent absences were improving with these children using relational approach. The CEO said supporting these pupils took time. The CEO said that she would like to look at this in more depth, tracking the journey of persistent absences. The CEO added the Trust took a strong approach around penalising parents taking children out for holidays in term time.*
- *Why was the CPD being prioritised towards admin staff and not Academy Heads and/or Inclusion Leads? The admin staff had only had CPD on attendance through their admin meeting. Heads doing more. The CEO said that attendance was discussed regularly in Academy Head meetings.*

The Chair said that in future, in addition to a data check, it would be helpful to add quantifiable explanations and deeper understanding when reporting on Attendance.

The Chair of the LACs were invited to raise the questions from their meetings.

- *What is classed as an "unauthorised absence", and when do we fine? Was there consistency as to how this is applied across the Trust? The CEO said unauthorised was anything that does not satisfy 'exceptional circumstances' which were laid out in the policy. Following a question from the Trustees, the CEO confirmed that authorised and unauthorised was judged at Academy Head level at the Head Teacher's discretion. The CEO added that in AH meetings, attendance was discussed regularly. The CEO said that if there was a significant sickness then a doctor's note was requested.*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What additional support was there for TAs in delivering the Relational Approach?</i> The CEO said that the TAs had been part of the training the whole time, but some TAs were more reluctant. <u>AHs, according to EIT's 3-year strategic school improvement plan, have built in training and twilights, including identifying when TAs should attend to access alongside teachers. Where this is not possible, AHs should be building in time for them to access the modules at another time.</u></li> <li>• <i>Pupil Survey – Could a Pupil Survey be centralised to track the impact of the Relational Approach?</i> Governors of the Totnes LAC asked whether they could also be involved in the survey. The CEO said that this would be a good approach. The Governance Professional would talk to the DoE about this.</li> <li>• <u>It is not currently clear who is leading on pupil surveys – Gov professional, LAC or EIT. EIT are happy to do so and will liaise with CR, as above. Currently this sits with individual heads.</u></li> </ul>	GP/DoE
8.	<p><b>Focus:</b> Verbal report on first unvalidated data outcomes</p> <p>KS2 unvalidated data was released on the morning of the meeting, and EIT had been invited to present a verbal report on the first analysis of outcomes. No members of EIT were present at the meeting. The Chair requested that this was submitted by 17<sup>th</sup> July, to be included in the minutes retrospectively.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Focus:</b> Quality of Teaching</p> <p>To include: EIT overview of the validation of the Quality of Teaching and Learning across academies including the induction programmes for ECTs Staff feedback on support for workload and wellbeing</p> <p>The DoE circulated a report before the meeting. In addition to the CEO's responses, the Chair asked for the questions to be sent direct to the EIT and a response to be added to the minutes retrospectively by Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The Trustee asked the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>It was good to know the detailed operational plan for those requiring support and for the ECT programme: what was the impact? What to do the ECT teachers involved feedback about the value of the programmes? What was teacher retention like as a result, and what was the Trust's overall evaluation of the quality of teaching, given the Trust's website says the Trust expected 'cutting edge pedagogy'?</i> The CEO said that she was part of the SWIFT research group looking at ECT training because the Trust's ECT provision was exemplary. The feedback from the Trust's ECT teachers was positive. <u>Retention is an additional indicator – the majority of ECTs from last year, other than where there were performance issues, have been retained.</u></li> <li>• <i>With an evaluation of the programmes, how might it be improved / sharpened in future years? What had been the learning?</i> <u>The programme is reviewed annually by the ECT lead and DoE. Content is updated to reflect current thinking. One identified area for improvement is the quality of mentoring. We identified that this was variable, so for next year's programme, DoE is building in further mentor training and principles to align for consistency and better quality of support for our ECTs.</u></li> </ul>	GP
9.	<p><b>Local Advisory Committees</b></p> <p>The LAC Chairs were invited to raise any additional verbal updates from the Local Advisory Committee meetings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Transport costs/provision of a Trust minibus? Rural schools are at a disadvantage due to the high cost of transport. Was there any possibility the Trust would be able to consider purchasing a minibus to be used by all schools?</i> The CEO said the Trust had 4 minibuses already and the Trust were looking at an additional one. The Trust were looking where the minibuses were based</li> </ul>	

	<p>across the Trust. The Trustees suggested approaching a local independent school who might be willing to share their bus, fulfilling their charitable aims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Inclusion Hub: Was there any plan for an Inclusion Hub closer to Mid-Devon How accessible was the current hub in this area?</i> The CEO said there were plans to have a nurture space in each hub and were working with the Local Authority. Fran McLoughlin (DoI) was going to lead with this. <i>The Trustees asked if the LA were working with the Trust, and would fund the provision, would that mean pupils from school outside of the Trust would attend the nurture space?</i> The CEO said that the nurture space would be a full-time provision which meant that any pupil attending would need to be temporarily added to the school roll which would then generate income.</li> <li>• <i>Pupil Premium white paper - Could this be circulated please?</i> The CEO said that this was being updated and would be circulated once it was finished. The CEO said that most of the pupil premium money was used to pay for staff; how the remainder was shared out needed to be agreed to ensure equity across the Trust.</li> <li>• <i>Governors raised the issue around being notified of Ofsted visit.</i> The GP said that she would discuss this direct with the DoE on the best way forward.</li> <li>• <i>Were more staff being added centrally to manage workloads in line with the growth of the Trust (4 new schools)?</i> The CEO confirmed that this had been done. The EIT team/Central Team/Inclusion Hub had increased significantly with backfilling with additional staff. <i>The Trustees said that with the challenges, how were the Trust ensuring the diluting the support for existing schools.</i> The CEO said by restricting the reach of the EIT team and bringing on more staff.</li> <li>• <i>The Governors were pleased to hear that the Trust recognised the challenge placed on teachers and some children by the disproportionate number of children with Special Educational Needs in these very small schools &amp; asked if there was an admissions policy/management policy to support this concern. The Governors sought more details of support put into these schools for the teachers and the effect on 'non send' children's performance.</i> The Chair asked for this to be added to the next SEND focus.</li> <li>• <i>The Governors also sought confirmation that any new schools joining the East Devon LAC would not dilute support given to schools already in the LAC especially those who have recently joined the Link Academy with ongoing transitional challenges to overcome.</i></li> <li>• <i>What risk management was the Trust taking against falling PAN?</i> The CEO said that the Trust promoted their schools through improved pre-school provision, strong links with communities, newspaper coverage and leaflets.</li> <li>• <i>Was there any marketing support for Diptford, to encourage new children to join the school?</i> The school had had support on this. The Trust Income Generation Officer was finding funding to support this as well.</li> <li>• <i>Concerns were raised around growing role and responsibilities for TAs and the increasing specialisms necessary required to do the job, not being reflected in pay, what was the Trustees' view on this?</i> The CEO said that there were HLTAs in every school however if a TA was needed to cover a class then they were uplifted to HLTA pay. The CEO said the Trust recognised that the difference in pay was nominal. The CEO said that she used other ways to recognise and thank staff who had excelled in their role.</li> </ul>	<p>GP</p> <p>GP</p>
10.	<b>Ethos Minutes</b> - The Ethos minutes from across the Trust were circulated before the meeting, and noted.	
11.	<b>Action Plans</b> In addition to the CEO's responses, the Chair asked for the questions to be sent direct to the EIT and a response to be added to the minutes retrospectively by Wednesday 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2024. Part II was taken	
12.	<b>Safeguarding</b> GS said there were no significant updates since the last report 6 weeks ago.	
13.	<b>Due Diligence</b>	

	Meeting to receive the due diligence around school improvement. The CEO said that she and the DCEO were looking at providing a summary to meetings in future. The CEO reported that currently there may be a delay to the conversion of the 4 East Devon schools.	
14.	<p><b>Trust Risk Register</b> - Evaluation of risk related to quality of provision and standards and curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training around the trust risk register -</li> <li>• Risks related to S&amp;C committee</li> </ul> <p>The Chair informed the meeting that she had met with the S&amp;C Trustees and the GP to review the ToR, the statutory requirements of the S&amp;C committee and the risk assessment. The Chair assured the meeting that all the statutory requirements were now reflected on the S&amp;C Annual Plan. The next step was for the GP to meet with DCEO to discuss how to ensure that the requirements were reflected on the Trust risk register.</p>	
15.	<p><b>Strategic Plan</b> Review of 2023/2024 plan</p> <p>Meeting to discuss the previous year's plan and consider the proposed 24/25 plan</p> <p>The Chair reported that the previous plan had been RAG rated. This had in turn informed the new proposed 24/25 plan. It was felt that EIT would need to have a say in the timeline and asked for the EIT to feedback their thoughts. There were no other comments or questions on the plan.</p>	
16.	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>16.1 Relationships Education Policy – this was postponed to the next meeting in Autumn.</p> <p>16.2 Online safety policy – this policy was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees made some small suggestions – these were agreed. The policy was formally approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>Represented from previous meeting</p> <p>16.3 Public sector equality statement for publication - this policy was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees made some small suggestions – these were agreed. The policy was formally approved by the Trustees.</p> <p>16.4 Children in Care policy - this policy was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees made some small suggestions – these were agreed. The policy was formally approved by the Trustees.</p>	GP
17.	<p><b>Evaluation of governance impact</b></p> <p>Principle 5 – Board Effectiveness</p> <p>The Board works as an effective team, using the appropriate balance of knowledge, skills, experiences and backgrounds to make informed decisions.</p> <p>The Chair asked that for future meetings that a member of EIT attended. It was noted that the dates were set at the beginning of the academic year.</p> <p>The meeting thanked Rebecca Sear for her dedication and hard work and wish her well for the future.</p>	

The meeting finished 1846