

**Directors (ie trustees) meeting
Meeting held on 24th April at 5 pm,
at Brixington Primary Academy,
Draft Part I Minutes**

Present: in person: A Walmsley (chair), P Walker (CEO), A Denner, R Shaw, C Bromfield and M Williams
virtually:

In attendance in person: C Fegan (DSI), K Powell (DoI), A Jenkins (DPD) and I Candy (C Sec)
virtually: R Warwick (candidate to the role of trustee)

Quorum: the meeting was quorate

Circulation: Directors and members (through GovernorHub), Dioceses (EDEN and SDBE via GovernorHub), schools & public (through Trust website)

Decision	Action due
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1. Welcome, introductions and apologies	
Apologies were received from M Platten (annual leave) and from P Wimsett (after the meeting).	
2. Prayer	
Led by M Williams.	
3. Declaration of Conflict of Interests	
Declarations of conflict of interests were invited by the chair. None was made.	
4. Minutes of the last meeting	
4.1. To approve the minutes (Part I and Part II) of the last meeting (held on 30 January 2025)	
The draft minutes (Part I and Part II) of the previous meeting were circulated shortly before the meeting. These were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the chair.	
4.2. To review matters arising not otherwise on the agenda	
The list of matters arising was circulated ahead of the meeting, as was the proposal to extend the age range at Charmouth to 2 to 11 (from currently 3 to 11). Matters arising: The following points were raised and discussed:	Appendices 1 – 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R Warwick appointment: I Candy will follow this up with Bath & Wells Diocese so that the process can be started now the articles have been updated. • Joiner deficit: this will be followed up by the strategic & finance committee. P Walker reported that Exeter Road had worked hard on their deficit and are expecting to reduce it to circa £40K-£50K and this without additional LA support. • Marshwood Church lease: this is in progress and J Price is working on this. • Bestic trust: one of the parent council members for Mrs Ethelston's has been in contact with I Candy around the Bestic trust and A Walmsley was due to reply to them. 	I Candy
	A Walmsley

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land sale at Lodders: this will be followed up with Salisbury Diocesan Board of Finance to ensure it is completed. • Community representative from Portesham: I Candy confirmed he was now a member of the Dorset hub board • Academy committee for Chickerell: I Candy reported that this would continue as the head finds the committee a helpful source of additional challenge. • Swimming pool at Membury: this is fenced off and therefore cannot be accessed. • Complaint at Colyton: this was still due to be followed up. <p>Charmouth – proposal to extend age range from 3 to 11 to 2 to 11: Having read the proposal, the board agreed the proposed age range change at Charmouth.</p> <p>The board enquired whether the school had a breakfast club. The school was not included in the initial rollout with funding provided by the DfE. It will be given the opportunity in future as breakfast clubs are due to be rolled out to all schools, with some initial funding for new provisions. The Trust is aware of the roll out and monitoring opportunities offered by the DfE.</p>	I Candy / P Walker
5. To receive the verbal feedback from the committee chairs	
<p><u>Education committee:</u> A Denner (chair of education committee) reported that the committee had discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools causing concerns (Salcombe, Mary Dean's and St Budeaux), using the school dashboard and rankings. • Schools due an Ofsted, for example the additional support provided by the Trust at Portesham because of their previous poor experience of Ofsted. • The PP gap and how it remained the same for different year groups. The committee had suggested looking at the gap year-on-year for each cohort to see how it changes. • Alternative provision, both in terms of better oversight from the Trust and also the possibility of establishing a Trust provision. This was due to be discussed in more details. • Peer reviews and their impact, with more information due to be shared at the next meeting of the committee. <p><u>Strategic & finance committee:</u> A Walmsley (chair of strategic & finance committee) reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The predicted in-year deficit when the budget was approved had initially increased to £694K due to the cancellation of the TCAF grant but was predicted in March to be around £500K thanks to careful financial management. • Funding for 2025-26 and therefore budgeting looked challenging, as the funding for Devon schools was increasing by only 0.5%, well below cost inflation. The FFT situation was no different from other MATs in the area. Therefore, the Trust would be reviewing class structures and staffing. • The committee had also discussed the content of the regular Trust meeting with the DfE RD. <p>The board queried how consistent the staffing structures were in schools across the trust and whether addressing them would be helpful in terms of budgets. There is a model which is working well, and schools of similar size are staffed in a similar way. Each class is taught by a qualified teacher. In smaller schools, the Trust is looking at nurseries and having them in school where possible to help with pupil numbers and funding. However, there are some more recent joiner schools with legacy issues where staff surpluses are not replaced. The next thing is to consider whether there is a more efficient way to delivery PPA, e.g. by grouping it and having activities for children while this takes place. P Walker explained to heads what the core funding grant does and does not cover, specifically that it does not cover TAs, and that TA costs may be covered by SEND needs and pupil characteristics, depending on the wishes and priorities of the school.</p>	

<p>The Trust is also rationalising its approach to alternative provision (AP) to help reduce costs while maintaining a good provision. Currently, there are two layers of AP, one for very high need children who need it full time but cannot attend one AP provider full time because the providers are not Ofsted registered, and one where AP is used as a refresh / respite model. This could be addressed through existing staff with expertise and additional specialists who could move around the Trust to meet children needs. This would be an “invest to save” model which is challenging at a time of budget pressures.</p> <p><u>Audit and risk committee:</u></p> <p>M Williams (chair of audit & risk committee) reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit had highlighted two red rated items, one being a double payment which was not picked up by the individual or software, and another matter for which the committee got assurance that it was not an ongoing issue. • The website compliance report received by the committee continued to show significant non-compliance in particular around pupil behaviour policies and schools due to have Ofsted, and the committee had asked whose responsibility it was to ensure this was addressed. 	
6. To receive and discuss the CEO report	
<p>The CEO report was circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p><u>2025-26 budget:</u></p> <p>P Walker highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust had received GAG statements for all schools and was looking at 1% funding growth across the schools. • The Trust had made a loss of about £60K on the grant to fund the NI increase, as the grant was based on pupil numbers and PP numbers rather than actual staffing costs. • He had met with M Platten to review the budget working assumptions and staffing structure in schools to compare the cost of this with funding. • The Trust had a large number of temporary TAs, and in many instances, contracts were likely to be ended. Temporary staff would get a general letter reminding them that their contract was temporary and when it was due to end. Then the Trust would circulate available vacancies to them so they could apply. • Budgeting would not take into account EHCP submissions as Devon was significantly over the statutory time to review EHCPs and many were refused. Therefore, budgets will be based on actual EHCP numbers. • There were fewer new staff joining the Trust because there were fewer vacancies, therefore staff costs were increasing as staff moved upwards on pay scales. • The in-year deficit would leave reserves below the DfE benchmark but better than expected when it was announced that TCAF was cancelled. • Teachers pay & condition information were due to be published by the government in May. The NEU had already voted to strike. <p><u>Staffing structures and update:</u></p> <p>The meeting went into Part II to discuss some recent and planned changes. The meeting went back into Part I.</p> <p>P Walker reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catherine Willcocks, the third SI officer, who was recently a head, had started the week of the meeting and would be bringing new ideas as well as capacity. • Adam Peters had a new post and would be leaving at the end of the summer term. His role was unlikely to be replaced in the same way, as Maths had been a challenge for several years for the Trust and some of the changes made during his secondment were having an impact. • Hannah Jay, who was deputy at Willowbank, had been appointed as head of the school following a robust recruitment process including external candidates. 	Appendix 3

<p>The meeting went into Part II to discuss headship matters. The meeting went back into Part I.</p> <p><u>Inspections:</u> P Walker reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Budeaux had had an ungraded inspection (which he had expected to be graded because of the change in age range) and retained a good judgement. As discussed at education committee, this had been a challenging inspection. • The following schools were still due to be inspected: Aveton Gifford, Portesham, Salcombe, Membury and Axminster. • Mary Dean's had had a SIAMS inspection, as had St Andrew's. Both inspections had gone well. • Two more schools were due a SIAMS inspection: St Budeaux and Chudleigh Knighton. <p><u>Challenge Partners review:</u> P Walker explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review would be exploring the impact of the Trust on SI and how the Trust supports and challenges the schools. It will be done by seven reviewers (one facilitator and 6 current trust leaders) who will speak to a range of leaders and staff in schools. • Trustees were invited for a session on 19th May, followed by a meeting with hub chairs. Trustees were also invited to the feedback meeting taking place on 21st May. • The report and some follow-up actions should be available for the next board meeting. <p><u>Sidmouth project:</u> The meeting went into Part II to discuss this item. The meeting went back into Part I.</p> <p><u>Other matters:</u> P Walker reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust and its schools would be moving to new websites. The websites will be redesigned and help to ensure more consistency, starting with the Trust website and one example school. • The Trust had had a workshop around complaints. This suggested the use of a new concept - having a resolution hub - and increasing the pool of people. The aim would be to have a new complaint process in place for September. • The Trust had received a communication from the DfE around a parental complaint at Axminster where no further assurances were being sought as the DfE had found the necessary reassurance on the school website. There was very limited information from the DfE about the nature of the complaint. The school had received a complaint that mentioned referring it to other agencies but that may be a different complaint. 	
7. To receive and discuss the Church schools report	
<p>The Church schools report was circulated the day of the meeting. C Fegan highlighted the following key areas that were worked on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected SIAMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Five SIAMS inspections have taken place, all got judgement 1 and got strong reports including for Mary Dean's whose journey was not straight forward. This reflected the very effective work from the Trust church schools officer, R Earley. Inclusion, strength of vision and positive partnership between school and clergy had come as strengths. ○ The work done with Exeter Diocese with Salcombe following their judgement 2 had stalled due to the change in leadership and will resume when the new head is appointed. ○ Two more SIAMs are due in 2025-26: Mrs Ethelston's and Portesham. 	Appendix 4

<p>Mrs Ethelston's is in a strong position. Portesham are working hard on this aspect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Trust is expecting SIAMS to shift more around impact in the same way as Ofsted has done. ○ R Earley is working on the flourishing trail which is an audit that leads to an action plan, this has worked well and led to the strong outcomes. ○ R Earley had also delivered SIAMS training and how different roles can support the schools flourishing in the SI team, as well as a training session for hub board members. A further training session will be offered to SENDCos. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Trust is working with vision leads for all schools half-termly, sharing feedback from local and national policies. Work is taking place on the new RE syllabus and adapting the curriculum accordingly, for example to include a unit around humanism. The vision group also did some work on collective worship which has also come up as a strength at SIAMS. ● The Trust is also supporting termly flourishing days based on themes. The theme of the Autumn term was peace, this term it is world view. The outcome of these can be seen in schools. The Trust is trialling a hybrid model of having both school-wide activities but also restarting ethos groups meeting across schools. ● The Trust has also continued to engage with dioceses, in particular Exeter, and their version of the schools flourishing programme. There are regular meetings with both Exeter and Salisbury dioceses. ● Policies review work was due to take place the week after this meeting, using the latest guidance. RE books were due to be reviewed across the Trust. The good model of collective worship from Mary Dean's was due to be shared with other schools. The Trust had also received very good feedback about the collective worship at Rockbeare. ● The Trust was also exploring alternatives to Ethos meeting minutes e.g. a rolling record to provide a better evidence base in terms of governance. <p>The board recognised the work done by R Earley and its impact.</p> <p>A Walmsley explained that as chair he had been asked whether the Trust has enough capacity to support schools around SIAMS. This may have been because of the judgement 2 at Salcombe. However, recent SIAMS inspections had shown the positive impact of R Earley's work. The training done with other staff means that her impact is extended and reinforced by other central staff, and also school-based staff in some cases.</p> <p>A Walmsley further reported that Salisbury Diocese had run a day about trusts developing the strength of church schools which had been very good ("The 5 Advantages"). The focus of the day had been developing great schools in MATs, not specifically Christian distinctiveness.</p>	
<p>8. Governance matters</p>	
<p>8.1. To note that the amended Articles of Association have been amended</p>	
<p>The amended Articles of Association were re-circulated ahead of the meeting for information. A Walmsley pointed out that they would need to be altered further to add a representative from Exeter University Graduate School of Education to the current Members.</p>	
<p>8.2. To re-appoint A Denner as co-opted director with effect from the end of her current term of office (31/04/2025)</p>	
<p>A Denner had confirmed she was willing to stand for reappointment before the meeting and her re-appointment was recommended.</p> <p>I Candy reminded the board that co-opted directors/trustees were appointed by trustees who are not themselves co-opted trustees. She also confirmed that there was no formal cap on the number of terms someone could have as a trustee.</p> <p>The appropriate election process was followed. A Denner was unanimously re-appointed as co-opted director/trustee with effect from the end of her current term of office.</p>	

<p>8.3. To agree to seek the re-appointment of A Walmsley as a foundation director appointed by EDEN</p>	
<p>This was proposed and agreed by the board. A Walmsley commented that the re-appointment form from EDEN was now longer, and the process included three references (CEO, professional capacity, and clergy) being sought which seemed to be somewhat disproportionate for a re-appointment.</p>	
<p>8.4. To note current appointments and vacancies</p>	
<p>The list of current governance appointments and vacancies was circulated ahead of the meeting. Appointments and vacancies were noted.</p>	
<p>8.5. To agree to use an external recruitment service to recruit a new chair for the West Hub</p>	
<p>Information about the recruitment service provided by Governors for Schools was circulated ahead of the meeting. I Candy explained that the Trust had not been successful in recruiting a chair for the West Hub and she had had good feedback about the recruitment service from other governance professionals. The board agreed to proceed with engaging Governors for School to recruit a new chair for the West Hub. R Shaw offered to explore whether the foundation vacancy on the West Hub board could be filled through DMAT staff. I Candy will email her the role description for foundation representatives.</p>	<p>Appendix 5</p> <p>I Candy</p>
<p>9. To receive and discuss KPIs for complaints, attendance and suspensions</p>	
<p>KPI reports for complaints, attendance and suspensions were circulated ahead of the meeting. <u>Attendance:</u> A Jenkins reported that attendance had been a focus for St Budeaux because it is a big challenge there, the school was able to demonstrate it was doing all it could reasonably do, and to show case studies where attendance had improved. The board commented that it would be useful to see trends and how figures change over time. It may be possible to do this with Arbor. It was discussed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some schools have circumstances that affect attendance e.g. refugees part-time timetables at Portesham. In some, there are also rapidly changing groups. • Some children who had had two weeks absence to date but regular attendance since will move out of being classified as persistently absent this term. • There is useful narrative in the head reports that are reviewed by hub boards. • It would be useful to also have mobility figures alongside the attendance data if possible. • The Trust, school and Dorset Hub had been looking at data in general around Portesham and separating the data linked to Afghan refugees from other children so that the good work done by the school is not masked. <p><u>Complaints:</u> The board discussed that the Trust had a low level of formal complaints, however some were very time consuming.</p> <p><u>Suspensions:</u> The board noted that the number of suspensions had decreased during the Spring term. Suspensions are down to a small group of pupils whose needs are high and some of whom are attending alternative provision. The Trust is making sure that reasonable adjustments are in place as most suspended pupils have SEND needs.</p> <p><u>IRP following PEX panel at Blackpool:</u> It was discussed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The permanent exclusion had been the first one in 8 years for the Trust. • Whilst it was right to have scrutiny by IRPs, IRPs should be reviewing the process to make sure the process followed by the disciplinary panel was right, not re-running the disciplinary panel meeting. This was not the case 	<p>Appendices 6 – 8</p> <p>A Jenkins</p> <p>A Jenkins</p>

<p>during the IRP meeting run by Devon, where a lot of questions were not about the panel process, and the meeting lasted from 10 am until 4.45 pm. That felt distressing to all parties. It was recommended (but that is mandatory) that the board reconsider its decision to uphold the permanent exclusion, and the IRP raised some points that will need to be reviewed as part of the reconsideration meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chair of the disciplinary panel fed back that the IRP meeting had differed from other IRP approaches elsewhere. • It had already been agreed that the Trust would become part of the local trust IRP group. <p>The board queried whether the issues around the Devon IRP process and meeting could be reported to externally.</p> <p>P Walker agreed to follow this up at the appropriate level within Devon.</p>	<p>P Walker</p>
<p>10. Policies and compliance</p>	
<p>The policy and compliance report and the proposed policies were circulated ahead of the meeting, as was the latest version of the Trust risk register.</p> <p>Managing allegations policy:</p> <p>I Candy explained that this had been reviewed by the Trust safeguarding lead, T Winn, and a few points around retention had been double checked with PHP. The updated policy was approved by the board.</p> <p>Nursery admissions and charging policies for Hawkchurch, Loders, Salcombe, Sidmouth, St Andrew's and Thorncombe St Mary schools:</p> <p>These were developed using the Devon template either to bring recent joiners in line with other FFT schools or because they were due for review. These policies were approved by the board.</p> <p>It was noted that the Trust will need to reply to the DfE regarding the complaint at Axminster around policy update dates.</p> <p>Requirement for directors ID checks for Companies House:</p> <p>These will become mandatory in the autumn. I Candy will undertake the checks first and then advise directors how to do them.</p> <p>Miscellaneous:</p> <p>Bere Alston and Whitchurch were closed for two days due to the lack of running water. There was good feedback from parents on how this was handled. It was disappointing that South West Water had not got in touch with schools to warn them of the issue.</p> <p>Risk register:</p> <p>The board agreed that no change was needed in view of the matters discussed at this meeting.</p>	<p>Appendix 19</p>

Meeting start: 5 pm; meeting close: 7.10 pm

Date of the next meetings: full board: 12 June and 17 July, 5 pm

These minutes are agreed by those present as being a true record.

Signed:.....
 Chair of Directors

Date:.....

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