**Directors (i.e. trustees) meeting**
**Meeting held on 17th Sep 2026 at 5 pm,**
**At Brixington Primary Academy and via Teams**
**Draft Part I Minutes**

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| **Present:** | P Walker (CEO), A Walmsley (chair), C Bromfield, and R Shaw |
| **In attendance** | C Fegan (Director of School Improvement – DSI), A Jenkins (Director of Performance & Development – DPD), K Powell (Director of Inclusion – DoI), M Platten (Director of Finance – DoF), H Warren (Director of Operations – DoO) and V Dower (Governance Professional – GP), Tracey Winn for item 4. |

**Quorum:** the meeting was quorate

**Circulation:** Directors and Members (through GovernorHub), Dioceses (BWDBE, EDEN and SDBE through GovernorHub), schools & public (through Trust website)

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| | Decision | | Action due |

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| **1. Welcome, introductions and apologies** | |
| Apologies were received from Ann Denner (ill) and Paul Wimsett (expected late or not at all, due to dependent care commitments). R Warwick did not attend the meeting. | |
| **2. Prayer** | |
| Led by Paul Wimsett. | |
| **3. Declaration of Conflict of Interests** (including a reminder to update Register of Business Interests / Related parties forms) | |
| All directors were reminded that they needed to update their annual declaration of interests and related parties form.<br>Declarations of conflict of interests were invited by the chair. None was made. | |
| **4. Election of chair and vice-chair** | |
| ***4.1. Election of chair*** | |
| A Walmsley was elected as chair of the Trust board.<br>The board was reminded of the need to plan longer term for the chair's succession, given that there is currently no candidate to take on the role of chair when the current chair chooses to step down. | |
| ***4.2. Election of vice-chair*** | |
| A Denner was elected as vice-chair of the Trust board and thanked for her dedication to the role | |
| **5. Minutes of the last meeting** | |
| ***5.1. To approve the minutes of the 16 July 2026 meeting*** | |
| The draft minutes of the previous meeting (Part 1 & Part 2) were circulated before the meeting. | |

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| These were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and marked as signed in GovernorHub following the meeting. | |
| ***5.2. To review matters arising not otherwise on the agenda*** | |
| The list of matters arising report was circulated ahead of the meeting.<br>The following points were raised and discussed:<br><u>Procurement for legal and HR support:</u><br>• It was confirmed that there was a temporary arrangement in place for both aspects with the current provider, whereby the current contract would be renewed on a monthly basis, until the procurement of the support was completed.<br>• Separate aspects of the contracts which were currently with one provider would be reviewed separately.<br><u>Governance survey:</u><br>• A summary of the responses to the survey setting out the main findings was circulated ahead of the meeting. The rate of response to the survey had been low.<br>• The T rust had to postpone the planned governance conference because of low attendance.<br>• These two factors may be due to lack of engagement and some dissatisfaction with the current structure and systems, or due to the timing of the survey and conference.<br>• The board discussed that it would be helpful to do a survey around best dates & times for the conference, and that a useful time to hold it may be around the spring term as part of working on the Trust next three year strategy. | **Appendix 1**<br><br>**Appendix 2**<br><br>**LGP** |
| **6. Items for strategic discussions** | |
| ***6.1. School improvement approach and priorities for 2026-27*** | |
| A report from the CEO was circulated for this agenda item ahead of the meeting. (This is also covered agenda item 6.2.).<br>The CEO highlighted that:<br>• Trust priorities for 2026-27 were SEND entitlement, disadvantage, early fluency and consistency.<br>• Priority schools for 2026-27 would be Aveton Gifford, Brixington, Charmouth, Chudleigh Knighton, Hawkchurch, Marshwood, St Andrew's and St Budeaux. The schools were selected based on an analysis of 2026 pupil outcomes.<br>• The School Improvement team would continue using Rapid Improvement Plans (RIPs) and Raising Attainment Plans (RAPs). A new approach called 'Notice to Improve', for schools that did not improve.<br>The meeting went into Part II to discuss this further.<br>The meeting went back into Part I.<br>The CEO further highlighted, ***in response to questions from trustees***, that:<br>• Intervention programmes were designed to address relevant priorities. Attendance at those programmes was mandatory for some schools and optional for other schools, depending on the needs of the school.<br>• The accelerated programme was mostly for priority schools.<br>• Former priority schools that no longer had that status this year would continue to receive enhanced oversight through to their next Ofsted inspection.<br>***The board queried why one school with a positive Ofsted (Aveton Gifford) was a priority school.*** | **Appendix 3** |

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| This was due to a number of factors, around pupil outcomes. The SI team aim was to identify schools that may be declining or not achieving as well as they should be. The factors leading to schools being priority schools were covered during the standards panel meetings, which had been observed by two trustees. One of the trustees reported that heads had been well prepared, had taken the meetings seriously, and had felt supported. The meetings were about heads knowing what improvement was needed and how the trust could support the school.<br>The board fed back that it was positive to see how the analysis of pupil outcomes had led to the Trust intervention programme.<br>***The board probed about the workload of link directors and their capacity to deliver the full range of intervention programmes.***<br>The CEO explained that the intervention programmes were the main SI offer. Executive directors pointed out that the team was also using A rated schools this year to help add to the SI capacity.<br>***The board asked for confirmation that the executive SI team would be focussing on priority schools, knowing that other schools had the leadership capacity to continue to do well.***<br>The team confirmed that was the approach.<br>The board noted and endorsed which schools were priority schools, the SI approach and the Ofsted preparation and support to be provided.<br>[One specific matter around priority schools was discussed further under Part II at the end of the meeting once executive directors had left the meeting.] | |
| ***6.2. Stakeholder engagement and external surveys*** | |
| A report from the CEO was circulated for this agenda item ahead of the meeting. (This is also covered agenda item 6.1.)<br>The CEO highlighted that:<br>• The work with Edurio was part of the strategy development work<br>• The Trust was involved in a pilot to develop a dashboard, focussing initially on SEF (Self Evaluation Forms) and then evolving on a termly basis.<br>• The Trust size means that using Edurio for surveys would be more efficient and would also provide some sector benchmarks, which would be helpful for the development of the next strategic plan. Using Edurio would also allow a consistent approach for surveys across the Trust.<br>• The pilot would provide an assurance platform, which would then turn into a risk register by school and/or for the whole Trust, used to develop action plans.<br>***In response to questions from the board, it was confirmed that:***<br>• Edurio would use information from other systems, for example school IDSRs, to help populate the pilot dashboard<br>• The pilot dashboard would be useful to interrogate various KPIs across the trust and/or across specific areas.<br>• The Trust would have the opportunity to influence the content of the dashboard, as part of being involved in the pilot.<br>The board agreed to support the Trust engaging with the pilot assurance platform.<br>A trustee reported how another local trust had used Edurio surveys to help deliver survey outcomes to different audiences efficiently.<br>A different trustee reported how helpful the surveys had been in a different local trust for example as evidence during Ofsted inspection. | **Appendix 3** |

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| In response to question from the board, the CEO explained that the Trust would time surveys based on the advice from Edurio to ensure a good rate of response.<br>~~At~~ As this was something that the board had wanted to do in order to fulfil their oversight of engagement with stakeholders and to inform the next three year strategic plan, the board agreed for the Trust to commission staff, pupils and parents surveys.<br>The CEO was asked to keep the board updated around surveys. | |
| ***6.3. Approach to board and committee meeting agendas and papers, including hub board meetings*** | |
| A paper from the LGP setting out a proposed approach to meeting agendas and papers was circulated ahead of the meeting.<br>The chair highlighted that:<br>• The aim of the paper from LGP was to set out a proposed approach to meetings which would be further developed as the year goes on, and to help to plan ahead because there had been a drift last year in the timeliness of paper which could affect or appear to affect the quality of decision making.<br>• The agenda for this meeting had been set to reflect the proposed approach, grouping reports in items for strategic discussion, items for approval and items for information.<br>• The approach was an incremental change rather than a revolution.<br>• He was open to suggestion for hubs, in particular to help with engagement.<br>• The board was looking at commissioning an External Review of Governance and potential providers were aware that hub engagement and trustee succession planning were priorities.<br>The board discussed that:<br>• Agendas should include as final standing agenda item a review of risks to ensure these were identified.<br>• Rather than the committee chairs reporting verbally at board meetings, committees would agree key matters to be reported to the board in writing, set out under the following headings: decisions made, risks and matters for escalation.<br>The board agreed:<br>• to adopt he proposed approach, with the addition of the two bullet points above,<br>• that the cut-off deadline for papers to be considered at the meeting would be the Friday before the meetings,<br>• that emergency items would be considered at the discretion of the board or committee chairs. | **Appendix 4** |
| ***6.4. Resolution team proposal*** | |
| The resolution team proposal setting out the rationale, proposed membership, legal aspects, proposed delegation, and proposed support for resolution team members was circulated ahead of the meeting.<br>Aim to deal more efficiently with the rising number of complaints and suspension panels and reducing workload of a small number of trustees to make their role more manageable<br>The board discussed that:<br>• This was partly linked to the change in approach when the complaints policy was last updated, to move from a "handling complaints" mindset to a "resolution" one. | **Appendix 5** |

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| • The Trust wanted to work on preventing complaints at the source, starting at teacher level, then headteacher level, then resolution team level.<br>• The resolution team level offered a flexible selection of options, depending on what would resolve matters and to match the approach to the nature of complaints and complainants.<br>• The Trust was looking at training some leaders as mediators and several heads had already expressed an interest.<br>• The aim was also to make sure that communication with parents in response to concerns was right from the start to ensure it did not make parents more unhappy, for example by promising to do something and then not delivering that.<br>• There was a need to expand the pool of people who took part in the formal complaint process because the current approach relied on too few people, in particular a small number of trustees having to deal with an increasing number of complaint panels.<br>The board had mixed opinions on the inclusion of staff within the membership of the resolution team with some trustees feeling that this may lead to a perception of the process not being impartial. It was discussed that:<br>• The requirement to have an independent member in complaints panel was about having a person independent from the leadership and management of the school, and the DfE had confirmed that this could be a governance volunteer from another school within the same trust.<br>• The Trust could continue to use independent panel members for specific complaints where it was felt that this was necessary. Trustees were aware of instances when complainants had contested the independence of the independent complaint panel member even when those were external to the trust.<br>• The proposed delegation to the resolution team was for complaints and suspensions, and did not extend to HR matters.<br>• Other trusts, both locally and elsewhere in the country, were using staff on complaints and suspension panels and had found that having staff members was helpful to be able to advise on reasonable school practices. It was also useful development for staff because they learnt from the process.<br>The board agreed:<br>• to adopt the proposed approach, resolution team membership and support<br>• that the Trust needed to progress staff training around complaints<br>• that the Trust needed to progress the recruitment and training of resolution team members. | **SLG**<br>**LGP** |
| **7. Items for approval** | |
| ***7.1. Staff pay increments*** | |
| Three separate reports, one from the CEO and two from the Director of Performance and Development, as well as an advice note from the Trust solicitors.<br><u>"Cost of living" increase:</u><br>The board agreed the recommendation from the CEO that Trust applies the nationally agreed pay scale increases - 3.3% backdated to April for support staff and 3.5% due to be agreed in November by parliament for teachers backdated to Sep, with both being paid in the November salary. | **Appendices 6 - 8** |

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| ***In response to questions from the board***, it was confirmed that:<br>• The pay scale increase for support staff had been budgeted for and accrued.<br>• The pay scale increase for teachers was due to be partly covered by the grant announced by the DfE before the summer, and the announcement the day before this meeting seemed to indicate that more of the pay scale increase may be covered by DfE funding.<br>Pay progression on pay scales for executive leaders as defined by the Trust pay policy, not including the Trust Senior Leadership Group (SLG):<br>The LGP pointed out that to comply with the Trust pay policy these increases could not be agreed by executives and needed either strategic & finance or board approval.<br>***In response to questions from the board***, it was confirmed that:<br>• All relevant leaders had had their performance appraisal<br>• There was no leader under a formal capability process.<br>• Many leaders, as per the report from Director of Performance and Development, were at the top of their pay scale and therefore not eligible for a pay increment.<br>The board agreed the pay increments for executive leaders (not including the Trust SLG), as set out in the report from the Director of Performance and Development.<br>Pay progression for Trust SLG:<br>The board discussed in detail the recommendation from the CEO to agree the timeline for SLG pay reviews set out in the advice note from the Trust solicitors, raising the following points:<br>• The committee mentioned in the advice note does not match existing board committees. SLG pay increments fall within the remit of the Executive Remuneration and Performance Management committee, not the Audit & Risk committee.<br>• The timelines suggested in the advice note, together with the timeline of the last executive appraisal meeting, do not allow time for the board to sufficiently scrutinise the process, which is a requirement of the Academy Trust Handbook and related Setting executive salaries: guidance for academy trusts - GOV.UK.<br>• The process suggested, whereby the decision to agree pay increments is agreed by a committee and then ratified by the board, does not appear to comply with the Academy Trust Handbook and guidance requirement that this be a board decision.<br>The board agreed that they needed a report comparing the Trust pay policy, Academy Trust Handbook / DfE guidance on setting executive pay, the terms of reference of the Executive Remuneration and Performance Management committee, to the proposed process to assure themselves that the process would be compliant with DfE expectations.<br>The CEO indicated that the date of the performance appraisals arranged for November could be brought forward, in order to allow time for the board to scrutinise the process, in time to meet the payroll deadline for increases to be included in the November salary.<br>The board noted that this would require an additional, single agenda item, board meeting to be arranged before the November payroll deadline. | **LGP** |
| ***7.2. Terms of reference for committees*** | |
| The proposed terms of reference for committees and the chairs group were circulated ahead of the meeting. As it became apparent that tracked | |

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| changes were not visible in GovernorHub without downloading the documents, the LGP highlighted key changes:<br>• Updating format for consistency<br>• Addition of an explicit purpose, authority and who the committee/group reports<br>• Membership updated to include the number of trustees in committee rather than named trustees to make terms more flexible with forthcoming trustee recruitment<br>• Responsibilities updated to reflect changes in the 2026 Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) and 2026 Academy Trust Governance Guide (ATGG) and practice/feedback from last year<br>Documents were re-uploaded in pdf format so that all trustees could see tracked changes.<br>The board approved the terms of reference for committees and the chairs group as proposed, subject to trustees raising queries following the meeting after they had read the tracked changes. | **Trustees** |
| ***7.3. Governance scheme of delegation*** | |
| The proposed governance scheme of delegation was circulated ahead of the meeting.<br>Tracked changes were also not visible and the LGP explained that she had updated the scheme of delegation, using the recently published CST checklist, to reflect changes in the 2026 ATH and ATGG.<br>The board approved the scheme of delegation as proposed.<br>Trustees discussed their experience of governance meetings during Ofsted inspections for both and outside the Trust, and the need for Ofsted inspectors to understand who is responsible for what within trust governance structures and therefore identify the appropriate governance tier to direct their questions. | |
| ***7.4. Governance code of conduct*** | |
| The proposed governance code of conduct was circulated ahead of the meeting. The LGP highlighted that this had been updated to reflect the latest version of the NGA model code of conduct.<br>The board adopted the proposed governance code of conduct as proposed. | |
| ***7.5. Policies*** | |
| The proposed policies were circulated ahead of the meeting.<br><u>AI policy:</u><br>The DoO highlighted that this was a new policy for the Trust which had been developed by new head of IT and procurement and it had ben reviewed by the Trust AI steering group. It was likely that the policy would need to be updated frequently because of the rapid evolution of AI technology and the Trust involvement in the RISE AI group.<br>***The board queried whether there was an agreement about which AI tools Trust staff could use as the policy referred to "agreed AI tools".***<br>The DoO explained that this would be made explicit to staff.<br>The board adopted this policy.<br><u>Finance policy:</u><br>The DoF highlighted that this policy had been updated to reflect that procurement aimed to secure value for money which could be different from the cheapest quote and the updated wording made this more explicit.<br>The board adopted this policy.<br><u>Suspensions and permanent exclusions policy:</u><br>This policy was updated to reflect the latest DfE statutory guidance. | |

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| The board adopted this policy.<br>Child protection and safeguarding policy templates for Devon, Dorset and Plymouth schools:<br>This policy was updated to reflect the 2026 Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.<br>The board adopted these policy templates.<br>Admissions policies for 2028-29 for consultation:<br>The board noted the briefing provided by the LGP.<br>The board agreed the amendments recommended by Devon admissions and to retain other elements of the policies are per previous years, with the exception of the policy for Mrs Ethelston's for which the PAN alternates between 25 and 30 on alternate years.<br>Nursery admissions policies for 2026-27:<br>These policies were updated to include up-to-date links to the funding available to parents and the latest template recommended by Devon.<br>The board adopted the policies submitted and agreed to delegate authority to the governance team to update all 2026-27 nursery admissions policies to that template. | |
| ***7.6. Trust risk register*** | |
| The latest version of the Trust risk register was circulated ahead of the meeting.<br>The board noted that there was an action from July 2026 for the Trust SLG to review this which had not yet been completed.<br>It was agreed that the audit & risk committee would review whether Trust risk register needed to be amended in view of the significant accidents that had occurred once there had been time to fully investigate those. | **SLG** |
| **8. Items for information** | |
| ***8.1. Charmouth Ofsted report*** | |
| The Ofsted report for the recent inspection at Charmouth was circulated ahead of the meeting. The board was informed that the school would be supported through the RISE programme because it had been rated "requires improvement" [before it joined the Trust] and then "needs attention" for leadership and management at this last inspection, and the RISE advisor would be J Bishop. The CEO confirmed that the letter from the DfE informing the Trust of the support had been acknowledged already.<br>The board noted that the RISE letter for Charmouth and the SIAMS report for Portesham would be circulated following the meeting as it had recently become available. | |
| ***8.2. Update of external review of governance*** | |
| The chair reported that the Trust was following up three potential providers, ImpactEd, CST, and Browne Jacobson in order to assess which one would result in the most useful and impactful review. A summary of the proposals and a recommendation would be circulated once discussions had taken place with all potential providers. | **Chair** |
| ***8.3. Updates on key operations and finance matters (to include confirmation of BFR submission), including a RIDDOR reportable accident at Gatehouse*** | |
| Updates on key operations and finance matters, including pupil numbers, were circulated ahead of the meeting.<br>Operations update:<br>The DoO reported that:<br>• A RIDDOR reportable accident had occurred on the afternoon of the last day of term in July 2026. A window had been propped open, the | **Appendices 9 -11** |

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| item propping up the window was move and the window came down on a child's fingers. The child needed an operation. As a result, HSE informed us that they would be visiting the school to discuss the incident. A meeting had already taken place with the Trust H&S advisor to prepare for the HSE visit in detail. The response from the, particularly the senior administrator, school has been very positive and a thorough review of risk assessments had taken place.<br>• A second RIDDOR reportable accident had taken place at Rockbeare the week of this meeting, after a child caught their fingers inside a door hinge. This would be reported to the same HSE representative. There was no door hinge guard, and one would be added. The investigation was ongoing.<br>• A third significant incident had also taken place at Gatehouse: a teacher had hurt their finger closing a top window which was stiff because the bottom window had been secured so it could not shut. This was a cause for concern because it may reflect the need to reinforce the culture around H&S and this would be followed up.<br>• The Sidmouth building project was on track for the planned October handover.<br>• The wall issue at Mrs Ethelston's had worsened because of the long period of dry and hot weather and the last test had led to a recommendation about restricting the use of the classroom. A new mobile unit had been ordered to be used as a replacement classroom. This was due to be delivered at the start of October and was likely to need to be used until at least Christmas. In the meantime, the class was being taught in the local church.<br>The board noted that the school was using the classroom for specific, small scale activity, based on advice given to the Trust.<br>***The board probed the Trust arrangements for allergies.***<br>The DoO reported that staff training was under way. Epipens had been ordered but there were supply issues due to high demand. The Trust had ordered enough packs for all schools, in quantities that reflected the different school sites. The DoI reported that the allergy policy was being finalised. The board agreed that this would be submitted for approval by written resolution as soon as it was ready.<br><u>Finance update:</u><br>The board received the MA accounts to June and noted that this showed an in-year surplus of approximately £370K being forecast for the end of the 2025-26 financial year, in line with previous information.<br>The board received assurance that the BFR had been submitted by the DfE deadline, in line with the budget approved by the board in July 2026, and that this had included the agreed pay awards and related grants.<br>The DoF highlighted that some of the operations matters discussed would have an impact on the budget but there was time to manage this.<br>The board received an update on pupil numbers and noted that these were declining as anticipated although numbers were slightly higher than previously predicted. | |
| ***8.4. Summary of governance vacancies and appointments*** | |
| A summary of governance vacancies and appointments was circulated ahead of the meeting.<br>The chair highlighted that:<br>• The board was carrying two SDBE foundation trustee vacancies, with one about to be filled from a candidate meeting the SDBE | **Appendix 12** |

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| foundation trustee appointment criteria and having the skills sought by the board (audit & risk expertise).<br>• The previous vice-chair of the board who was still a member of the strategic & finance and audit & risk committees had indicated that he would be happy to become a trustee again following a change in job.<br>The board discussed that the agreed trustee recruitment process would ned to be followed. The board further discussed the difficulties of balancing the need to recruit skilled trustees with the foundation appointment criteria, and that the board could look at changing the articles of association to include more coopted roles (subject to Members approval) or discuss appointment criteria and qualification with dioceses. | |
| ***8.5. Summary of key Academy Trust Handbook and Academy Trust Governance Guide changes*** | |
| The board noted the useful summaries of key changes and the governance impact of those. | |
| ***8.6. Summary of new / recently updated guidance*** | |
| The board noted the useful summary of new or recently updated guidance. | |
| ***6.1. School improvement approach and priorities for 2026-27 – Part II matter discussed at the end of the meeting.*** | |
| Meeting attendees other than trustees and the LGP were asked to leave the meeting.<br>The meeting went into Part II.<br>The meeting went back into Part I and ended. | |

Meeting start: 5 pm; meeting close: 7 pm

Date of the next meetings: ARC – 8th Oct, SFC – 8th Oct, EC – 22nd Oct, ARC – 3rd Dec, SFC – 3rd Dec, EC – 10th Dec, Board – 17th Dec.

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

**Signed:……** **Date:……..**
Chair of Directors

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