

Minutes of the Board Meeting

14 October 2025, 1p.m.

Part A: Public

Item	Subject	Who
	<p><b>Trustees present:</b> V = virtual</p> <p>Matthew Brierley (MB)</p> <p>Karen Brokenshire (KB)</p> <p>Amy Claridge (AC)</p> <p>Robert Gasson (RG)</p> <p>Karen Harris (KH)</p> <p>Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair</p> <p>Nick Lake (NL)</p> <p>Ross Schreiber (RS)</p> <p>Peter Sheppard (PS)</p> <p><b>Also present:</b></p> <p>Cathryn Andrews (CA) – Director of Development</p> <p>Simon Hague (SE) – CEO</p> <p>Jess Hutchings (JH) – Lead Governance Professional</p> <p>Sean Pinhay (SP) – Chief Finance and Operations Officer [CFOO]</p> <p>Vanessa Schreiber (VS) – Executive PA</p>	
1	<b>Apologies</b> were received for Tamsin Lamb (TL) – Director of Education.	
2	<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>	
	KB noted that she was Interim Chair of Governors at Pennoweth School.	
3	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b> 15 July 2025, Part A Public and Part B confidential were agreed as an accurate reflection of the meeting.	
4	<b>Action Tracker / Matters arising</b> Tracker n.134: GSoD will be amended to include the capital expenditure programme approval. Tracker n. 224: JH will share the updated School Directory via GovernorHub. VS will ensure this document is updated periodically and ahead of any Trustee school visits. Tracker n232: JH will liaise with JA regarding the Trustee Skills Audits.	JH
5	<b>FINANCE</b>	
5.1	Budget Monitoring. Trustees received the detailed written reports presented to FAR. SP reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall net position is projected to be £703k better off than initial budget</li> <li>Trustees awarded additional capital commitment of £140k to estates and £48k to IT. These further reduce the projected improvement vs. budget to £514k. 514k after capital</li> <li>In year over spend surplus £21k</li> <li>Biggest change was the funded pay rise after we set the budget – worth circ. £600k.</li> <li>Details of adjustments included in narrative</li> <li>Yearend financial position is circ. Two million</li> <li>SP committed to advising FAR of potential underspends on utilities and catering earlier in the year – ideally in March.</li> <li>Schools that aren't contributing are as expected – smaller schools</li> <li>The finance system is open until auditors sign off. Final accounts will be available after the audit next month.</li> </ul>	

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	<p>Q: <i>What is the materiality for the financial audit?</i> £500k.</p> <p>Chair confirmed the increase in projected budget had been discussed in detail at FAR. Trustees thanked FAR committee for their update regarding the budget monitoring.</p>	
5.2.1	<p>Chair of FAR reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAR received presentations from Estates Manager and IT Manager.</li> <li>• Concern reported to FAR regarding recent conduct of asbestos inspector. Trustees were unhappy with impact on Headteacher and staff. SH will make enquiries with National Association of Headteachers (NAHT) about appropriate course of action.</li> <li>• Cyber response plan shared. Trustees concluded that due to risk factors involved, staff and volunteers without a valid cyber certificate would have their email accounts suspended until training is complete.</li> <li>• Thorough monitoring of budget by FAR.</li> <li>• FAR received an investment update – presentation of investment process will be given to Board in December.</li> <li>• Pupil Number Projections paper – reviewed by FAR - to be discussed at Board today.</li> </ul> <p><i>Q: Following the asbestos inspection, there are a myriad of reasons and people who could close a school without the Headteachers permission, most of which would be covered in a business continuity plan. Would it lighten their load if Headteachers understood where they are responsible, and where the Trust is responsible?</i></p> <p>That's exactly what happened – the inspector insisted the school had its own plan; however this was covered by the Trusts plan.</p> <p>SP reported the asbestos issue is now resolved and the Trust has satisfied HSE requirements. SH reported that 27 email accounts were due to be suspended on Monday, with 48 hours' notice: 4 staff and 23 Governors/Trustees. In terms of risk, this is now mitigated. JH will contact governors with suspended accounts. ELT will agree how to manage staff on long term sick, maternity leave, and new starters.</p>	SH
5.2.2	<p>DfE Dear Accounting Officer letter June 2025.</p> <p>Trustee noted that letter includes the interim update on Executive Pay, the details of which will be discussion during item 9.</p>	JH/ELT
<b>6</b>	<b>STRATEGIC / OPERATIONS</b>	
6.1	<p>SH attended the Southwest leaders conference. Latest updates from DfE included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeated emphasis on collective system leadership to tackle locality-based issues such as tackling poverty and disadvantage.</li> <li>• Acknowledgment that Trusts can have a big positive impact on levels of deprivation and suggested that Trusts don't wait for permission to collaborate.</li> <li>• DfE have a clear partnership strategy – we will link this to our strategic plan.</li> <li>• Bristol Children's Director shared statistic that 93 children with significant need were costing 56 million, emphasising that most of their attention is focussed on those with the most need and recognition that schools do most of the heavy lifting.</li> <li>• Bristol also affected by falling population, with 33 excess reception classes in Bristol currently.</li> </ul> <p>SH confirmed the content and release date of DfE White Paper was not yet confirmed, but indicated following topics may be included:</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of current SEND funding on Local Authorities. Secretary of State keen to reform SEND system, but current government cautious. Government have acknowledged a reform would require more from health services.</li> <li>Details about parental complaint, and the impact this is having in the profession.</li> <li>KS3 curriculum – Reading. Some secondary schools are focussing on improving or maintaining progress as GCSE results are dependent on reading ability.</li> <li>Attendance – has been a huge focus and will remain so.</li> <li>Use of technology and AI.</li> <li>Maternity pay and flexible working. Flexible working is part of wider workers' rights. This will present implementation challenges due to the nature of the Education sector.</li> <li>Enrichment and extracurricular activities.</li> </ul>	
6.1.1	<p>Strategic Plan. SH Reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three newly formed strategic objectives - shared with shared services team for feedback.</li> <li>As we go through our performance management cycle, individual targets will be linked to these objectives.</li> <li>Practices and policies are being aligned to the new people strategy and will continue to be embedded into Trust culture.</li> <li>Trust's partnership strategy will outline how we could and should engage with our communities. Current partnerships have been identified across the Trust.</li> <li>CA currently working with Reach Foundation.</li> <li>Risk management training delivered to Board today - first step towards implementing and refining the Risk Management System and ensuring Trustees have oversight.</li> <li>Trust will encourage movement within the new Southwest Net Zero Network, to support third strategic priority of being agents of change.</li> </ul> <p>Trustees approved the Strategic Plan.</p>	
6.1.2	<p>Ofsted Reforms and risks to staff wellbeing letter. SH confirmed the new Ofsted framework doesn't outline how it will prevent future deaths as was required by DfE, and shared potential actions the NAHT may take in response to this. NAHT are encouraging Headteachers to send this letter to their employer, asking them to acknowledge that the Ofsted framework doesn't consider health and wellbeing.</p> <p>SH has completed a risk assessment for Ofsted Visits - this could be shared with FAR – and suggested the Board acknowledge the requests outlined within the letter and confirm that the Trust has addressed the risk as best we can.</p> <p>RG suggested the Board could mitigate the risk posed to staff during an inspection, by agreeing that if a staff reported levels of stress that were beyond a level that's manageable, a member of the Executive Leadership Team will liaise with HMI during the inspection. If ELT didn't then get the desired response, the CEO could then intervene, with support from the board, and instruct staff not to speak to the inspectors. RG confirmed this was the approach taken at Wave Academy Trust. SH agreed this was a good suggestion.</p> <p>Trustees acknowledged that they own the Health and Safety risk and noted the importance that staff be reassured that they will have support from the Trust during an inspection.</p> <p><i>Q: How would you identify if Ofsted were being reasonable, but the Headteacher just didn't like what they were hearing?</i></p> <p>CEO would have the knowledge about the staff and the school.</p>	

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	<p>Q: Where does the stress come from? Is it during the inspection, or what follows afterwards?</p> <p>It's the nature of the accountability system within the education, rather than the inspection. The inspection framework in Wales is rigorous and identifies where schools could consider improvements but is not graded. Headteachers are not anti-accountability or inspection, they are anti judgement. You cannot judge school in that term. Judge us in a meaningful and supportive way.</p> <p>Trustee noted the letter outlines that staff are subjected to unreasonable behaviour and reiterated the Boards responsibility for staff wellbeing. Trustee queried whether the Board has enough tools to ensure the health and safety of our Headteachers and if not, queried whether Trustees are willing to allow another tool that may alleviate some of that stress when faced with someone who is acting outrageously.</p> <p>SH noted the risk assessment outlines the risks before, during and after an inspection and reiterated that the stress can last months after the inspection. SH agreed that having the option to intervene would be a good pre-control measure.</p> <p>Trustees discussed and agreed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement that Trust can intervene during Ofsted inspections.</li> <li>• A letter of support to staff, that could be shared with NAHT.</li> </ul>	
6.3	<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> Item listed under Part B Confidential.	TL
6.2.1	<p>Alignment of Admissions' Oversubscription Criteria. SH confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Crofty schools should have the same admission oversubscription criteria.</li> <li>• Trustees are asked to agree to consult on changes to Marazion criteria.</li> <li>• Minimal changes required to bring Marazion into alignment.</li> <li>• More significant changes required at Penpol - suggested changes to be presented to Trustees next year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Outcome: Trustee agreement to consult on the alignment of Marazion's admission oversubscription criteria given.</b></p>	SH
6.2.2	Trustees reviewed and approved the Crofty Education Trust Admission Arrangements 2027-2028.	
6.4.1	<p>Children in Care and Previously Looked After Policy.</p> <p>Q: Section 6.2 indicates the Headteacher must ensure the designated teacher has training away from timetable commitments. How likely is this to happen?</p> <p>This is realistic. One of the Trusts building blocks is linked to the development of others.</p> <p>Trustees requested that all references to MAT are replaced with the Trust.</p> <p><b>Outcome: Policy Approved.</b></p>	JH
6.4.2	<p>Child Protection and Safeguarding.</p> <p>JH confirmed the policy had previously been approved by Trustees and was being presented for information. Trustees noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Length of the policy and whether it is easy to apply.</li> <li>• Acknowledgement that policies from other Trusts were of a similar length.</li> <li>• Importance of having strong safeguarding systems in place.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request that all references to MAT are replaced with the Trust.</li> </ul> <p>SH noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy is designed by CAFH and covers all the legal requirements.</li> <li>Document includes both policy and guidance.</li> <li>Importance of safeguarding culture within Trust.</li> </ul>	
6.5	<p>Safeguarding Update.</p> <p>Detailed report submitted to Trustees. Safeguarding Trustee (RS) also noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of consistent Safeguarding reporting to board – suggested report format shared.</li> <li>Recent attendance at Trust DSL network meeting.</li> <li>Importance that Board review safeguarding practices and identify whether policies are correct and being applied correctly.</li> <li>Recent attendance at safeguarding training.</li> <li>Trust Safeguarding Lead is also a Headteacher and Executive Headteacher. Concern raised regarding their current workload, and query whether a formal DSL hierarchy within Trust Hub structure could reduce their workload.</li> </ul> <p>SH clarified that the responsibility for safeguarding lies with the Headteacher, the Trust Safeguarding Lead is a supporting role, and the Trust has a responsibility to support their wellbeing.</p> <p>Trustee noted two items of interest at a recent TES Safeguarding Event: Reporting of Near Misses and the importance of professional supervision around safeguarding. SH confirmed that this supervision is embedded within the Trusts culture but agreed it should be included in formal structures. CA noted that Hub Leads are now acting as the main contact within their hubs.</p> <p><i>Q: Do we have anything for staff to access, when they experience trauma through work?</i> Yes, we have professional supervision for Headteachers but unsure whether that extends to DSL's. This supervision comes at a cost but is important.</p> <p>Trustee suggested that as the risk management framework becomes more embedded, the report format that RS suggested for Safeguarding, could be applied to all main areas of risk.</p>	
6.6	<p>Legal Duty of Candour. In the absence of formal guidance from the government, MH confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees subscribe to the Nolan principles.</li> <li>We may need to revisit what has previously been made confidential in the past and identify a point in time that items are no longer confidential.</li> </ul> <p><i>Q: There are organisations that deliver training on this – has this been considered?</i> The spirit of this duty is linked to a public enquiry. The new duty is to promote ethical conduct – we need to ensure this is made obvious in our code of conduct.</p> <p>Trustee noted this Duty already exists in social care.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT</b>	
7.1	Apologies received from Director of Education.	
7.2	<p>SIG Committee Minutes 23 September 2025. KB reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ofsted framework – DoE was pleased that inclusion ran through all strands of the new Ofsted framework.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lanner - pilot school for new Ofsted inspection framework.</li> <li>• DoE attended Ofsted training – identified schools in inspection window – she will support these schools writing their SEF.</li> <li>• Outcomes – looked at each school.</li> <li>• Year 1 phonics – some schools have been identified as needing some extra support.</li> <li>• Multiplication check – improved results across Trust - work to do at Marazion and Trannack.</li> <li>• Schools recognising importance of multiplication check.</li> <li>• Reading increasingly in line with national</li> <li>• Gap between disadvantage and non-disadvantage is increasing – LGC will monitor pupil premium this year.</li> <li>• Trust development plan reviewed.</li> <li>• Reviewed pupil number projections.</li> <li>• AC to carry out an internal review of governance – including Members, Trustees, LGCs – Terms of Reference required.</li> <li>• LGC last to be reviewed as need to embed monitoring approach.</li> <li>• Mindful that we have 4 trustees as interim Chair of Governors – not a long-term plan – need to identify governors that have potential to be Chair.</li> <li>• Important that Headteachers support with governor recruitment – Officers to remind.</li> <li>• Governor conference – good feedback but not the numbers of attendees that we wanted</li> <li>• Next years Governors conference - 12 September 2026</li> <li>• JH cancelled governor induction due to lack of numbers.</li> <li>• LGC feedback to SIG – issues raised and things to celebrate - well received.</li> <li>• We are improving feedback process to LGC.</li> <li>• Parent survey – Trustees want to wait and see of Ofsted will give us new questions.</li> <li>• Childcare for governors – request from Governor. Trustees agreed governors should not incur childcare costs whilst undertaking governor duties.</li> <li>• Executive Assistant will arrange school visits for Trustees throughout the year.</li> </ul>	
<b>8</b>	<b>GOVERNANCE</b>	
8.1	<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> Item 8.1 listed under Part B Confidential.	
8.2	Draft FAR Committee Terms of Reference – recommended for approval by FAR. Outcome: Trustees approved FAR Terms of Reference.	
8.3	Scheme of Delegation. Updated delegated decisions table presented to Board for approval. Outcome: Trustees approved Delegated Decisions table, for inclusion in the GSoD.	
<b>9</b>	<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> Items 9 listed under Part B Confidential.	
10	<b>AOB</b> Chair provided Trustees with an update regarding Chair of Governors at Penpol, and potential for them to become a Trustee in due course. Trustees were in support of this appointment and noted the importance of corporate and commercial experience when considering succession planning of Trustees.  SP requested assistance from Trustees to sit on a procurement tender panel.	MH
	Meeting ended 15:08	

<b>Dates of next meetings</b>	
9 Dec 2025	Board
10 February	Board
31 March	Board
18 May	Board
14 July	Board