MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

9 December 2025, 1p.m.

Part A Public

Item	Subject	Action
1	***Trustees present**: V = virtual* Matt Brierley (MB) Karen Brokenshire (KB) Amy Claridge (AC) Rob Gasson (RG) Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair Nick Lake (NL) Peter Sheppard (PS) *Also present:* Simon Hague (SE) – CEO Jess Hutchings (JH) – Lead Governance Professional Sean Pinhay (SP) – Chief Finance and Operations Officer (CFOO) Claire Roberts (CR) – Trust Speech and Language Therapist Vanessa Schreiber (VS) – Executive Assistant Rachel Martin (RM) – Potential Trustee (attended Items 1-10) Rachael Woodhead (RW) – Potential Trustee (attended Items 1-10)	
	Apologies were received for**:** Karen Harris, Ross Schreiber, Tamsin Lamb (Director of Education), Cathryn Andrews (CA) – Director of Development.	
2	**Introduction of Potential Trustees**	
	RM and RW were welcomed to the meeting and provided Trustees with a brief overview of their background and experience.	
3	**CEO Appointment**	
	Congratulations were extended to Cathryn Andrews for her appointment as CEO of the Trust from September 2026.	
4	**Conflicts of Interest**	
	The following interests were declared: RW – Chair at Penpol School.	
5	**Minutes of the meeting on** 14 October 2025 Part A Public were received. The following amendments were requested: 7.2 – KB reported, not KH. 7.2 – should indicate DoE was pleased that inclusion ran through all the strands of new Ofsted framework.	
6	**Action Tracker**	
	Tracker n.134 – GSoD is progress. Matrix has been agreed and reviewed – small amendments agreed – Tracker n.172 - Estate Management Paper – SP and JH to liaise regarding this. Request to add 'Governance Review Paper' to Spring 1 Board Agenda, and Action Tracker.	Action Tracker

7	**STRATEGIC OPERATIONS**	
7.1	CEO Update. SH reminded Trustees of the risks identified during the Trust Strategy Day and outlined the mitigations currently in place: • Cyber-attacks. Mitigation - employee cyber training compliance increased to 100%. Email accounts for volunteers suspended where necessary. IT Team are sending phishing emails to improve staff awareness. • Changes to Ofsted framework. Mitigation - DoE has attended Ofsted training and findings shared with Heads, who are preparing staff. Despite mitigations, SH has observed negative impact of recent inspection on staff. • Curriculum reform. Mitigation - changes not yet confirmed by DfE so Trust are actively trialling innovative approaches to curriculum delivery in various areas. • Fall in pupil numbers. Mitigation - PAN consultation underway. • Staff shortage - system wide issue. Mitigation – currently managing this and spending lot of energy on training and building capacity within existing staffing structures. • Challenges with releasing staff for training and CPD. Mitigation - we have changed approach to CPD. Staff now have a time allocation for training and can now access training online. This removes need to be out of school during the day and has been well received by staff. • Use of AI. Mitigation – topic at recent inset training day. Trust continues to promote with caution. • SEND reform still under review - further consultations have been launched. Demand for SEND support has surged nationally - current estimates indicate a cost of 6 billion per year, in addition to normal funding. Mitigation - we are operating on the assumption of no further funding. • Mental health and wellbeing of staff. Mitigation – people strategy framework was created last year. Next 12-month focus is defining our approach to wellbeing. Education is a challenging environment but is also hugely rewarding and stimulating. We need to find our words and frame it – staff need to fee supported. • Increasing cost of energy and employment.	
	SH reflected on the current political environment and shared his concerns about the increased influence of the rhetoric of the far right on society and the media. SH confirmed that although some parents are choosing the remove their children from certain aspects of the curriculum, these topics were covered during other subjects. SH shared potential implications for education, should there be a change in government, and queried how prepared the Trust would be should new laws conflict with our organisational values. SH reminded Trustees that teachers are not permitted to take a political position and can face disciplinary action if they do. SH shared view that the education system needs to be sighted in these issues and be prepared to respond.	
	Trustees considered SH's update and noted: • Concerning that adults must retain their views – highlighted importance of adults having safe spaces to have conversations, without being labelled • Current government is adopting certain right wing tactics and a lack of diversity within Cornwall could make it more difficult to challenge far right views • Cornwall is experiencing a rise in Prevent • Although government is strengthening protections for those with protected characteristics, it has yet to provide guidance on supporting changes to transgender law.	
	Trustees asked two key questions: *Q: What are Officers going to do, in terms of running education?*	

	We need to start by being aware. At the last Heads meeting, Heads shared current issues they are facing. SH shared resources with Heads such as *hope against hate*, from NAHT. We must be clear about the support in place for staff who are managing these challenges. Trustees suggested it would it be wise for staff to refer to our Trust values when managing any issues. *Q: What are we (as Trustees) going to do about it, in terms of the strategic direction of the Trust?* Trustee suggested cultural exchange projects could be helpful and shared details regarding work with the Cornwall Resettlers Service. Officer noted increased diversity within secondary schools and suggested Trust creates greater links, and the opportunity for children to engage with a wider range of cultures.	
7.2	Sandpiper Briefing. CR presented a business case to Trustees, detailing the proposed provision of a small specialist unit within a Trust school. CR outlined the project details, confirmed the details yet to be considered, and shared the proposed project timeline. CR requested Trustees permission to convene a working party, who would finalise the project details and present a full proposal to Board in March 2026. Trustees' questions included: *Q: How will the first phase of the operation be funded?* Two funding models are proposed: Trust-wide recharge based on NOR, or a per-pupil placement cost of approximately £10,000 per year. There is potential to provide places to third-party settings, at a cost of £13,000–£15,000 per child annually. *Q: If there are only 12 places, how do you ensure this offer is available to all schools?* We currently have 15 children within the Trust that meet the proposed admission criteria. The NOR is based on a staffing ratio of 1 to 4, but this could be flexible if required. The NOR doesn't need to be set at 12. *Q: Are you going to take mixed age ranges?* The initial proposal is for age range of Reception to KS1. Trustees: • Acknowledged the positive impact of the current speech and language programme • Agreed the Sandpiper proposal has potential. • Suggested the Trust review SEND provision more widely and consider similar SEND provision for other needs in future. • Noted preference for offering places to Trust pupils, rather than providing places to third party settings. • Agreed that officers proceed to the next stage and present a full business case to Board for further consideration.	
8	**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**	
8.1.1	Minutes held in Part B Confidential.	
8.1.2	Trust Consultation. SH confirmed: • Trust is currently consulting staff regarding the use of inset days to create a two-week October half term. • Trust schools feed into several other secondary trusts, some of which have a 2 week half term • Need to consider the challenges for our staff • Staff feedback will be reviewed in January and will be used to create a set of principles that Heads can then use to consult with their communities	

	• The challenge will be in making the best use of the training days, as this is not primarily about reorganising holidays. Trustee noted that TPAT, CELT and Wave all have a 2 week half term and confirmed evidence indicates a positive impact on attendance and staff absence.	
8.1.3	New Ofsted framework. SH confirmed: • Rosemellin inspection currently underway • New framework is called an Ofsted toolkit • Previous judgments have been replaced with following categories: urgent improvement, needs attention, expected standard, strong standard, exceptional. • In judging grades, inspectors require all criteria to be met to aware that grade in a focus area • Feedback from other schools indicates that 50% of schools that have been inspected have had one or more that needs attention in each focus area. Trustees noted that: • Recent inspection reports haven't been moderated and published yet • If something needs attention, schools should be allocated with a RISE advisor, but currently there aren't enough RISE advisors and it's unclear what the threshold for rise interventions will be • National Ofsted lead will moderate reports on a Friday – HMI will then receive training on a Friday, to address any lack of consistency. • Recent Ofsted training indicates the importance of the schools context.	
8.2	School Overview/Risk Report. SH confirmed TL reflected on how frequently school risk reports are are revisited. The schedule has been updated, and Hub leads now review the risk analysis each half term. This ensures in year changes can be noted and reported.	
8.3	PAN Update. SH confirmed recent update from LA that impacts Trusts PAN proposal for two schools: Pennoweth and Pencoys. As a result, Pennoweth PAN will remain unchanged and Pencoys PAN consultation will be postponed until 2027.	

8.4	School Improvement and Governance Committee 27 November 2025. KB confirmed: • Long discussion at SIG around the need to narrow the Pupil Premium gap – key area for LGC monitoring this year. • Discussion at SIG about schools causing concern – Trannack and Marazion • Reading Thematic Report– some disadvantaged pupils don't have a space to read; SIG discussed how the Trust could create opportunities for children. • Recent Heads meeting focused on high expectation for reading for all children. If they can read, they can access the curriculum. Encouraged in LGC monitoring • Reading not on all PP plans – addressing this during next PP review. • Sandpiper presentation was shared with SIG • Review of Governance brief was discussed • Suspensions – lower this year but higher than we would like • Temporary one year PAN reduction planned for Godolphin, to allow them to manage last year's high intake • Feedback from LGCs was considered – multiple references to staff survey. Change to timing of survey will be made in response to this. • Declining staff survey response rate.TL will highlight the importance of this with Heads. • Exit plans discussed for the 4 Trustees who are acting as interim chairs. Acknowledgement that this is giving trustees experience of LGCs, but is a short term solution. • Trust wide community governor recruitment campaign planned for Spring term. • Governor training rebranded, to encourage attendance.	
9	**FINANCE**	

9.1	SP confirmed:
	• Audited Accounts reviewed by Finance Audit and Risk on 25 Nov 2025 and recommended to Board for approval.
	• Presentation from Westcotts – narrative updated for Board.
	• Overspend of £360k – £170K due to deficit inherited from Marazion.
	• Reserve currently £1.6 million
	• In year overspends are being managed
	• 4 minor action points from audit:
	  ○ Ensure staff contracts are signed – all signed in last 12 months – working through historic changes now
	  ○ Asset register - agreed to differ on this as cannot get the initial assets that were transferred from county and we wont benefit financially from this exercise. Agreed to give better narrative next year.
	  ○ Number of purchase orders – improvements made but work ongoing
	  ○ Requirement for a month end checklist for end of month procedures.
	• Long discussion about LPGS pensions – fund now in credit. If it's in debit you have to show it in the accounts – if it's in credit we have to show it as zero in the accounts.
	
	Trustees questions included:
	Q: Does the change of valuation effect the employer costs of the LGPS, will this mean more money in the budget?
	Yes. The amount we pay in to the LGPS has reduced by 3%. There will be a six-figure sum for the trust.
	Q: Who is the month end checklist for?
	It is just to prove we have done the job in case something happens to the CFOO or Financial Controller.
	
	Outcome: Board approved the audited accounts.	

9.2	Budget Monitoring. SP confirmed: • All various over and underspends are explained in the narrative • Biggest change was Marazion deficit – this was confirmed in the last quarter. Their deficit is a loan to us in the first instance, and we will pay this back over next 3 years. It will come out of Marazion's funding. • No changes to those school that are contributing and those that aren't • New financial accounts – Sep and Oct – nothing significant to repot. Funding as planned, staff expenditure as planned. • This year's task is to get on top of supply costs. • £15K shortfall noted as utilities budget was omitted for the training space. • Planned Circa £1.6 million reserves this time next year.	
9.3	Print Tender. FAR reviewed the print tender paper on 25 November 2025. Their recommendation is that Board approve the print tender of £264K, on the condition that if there is a contentious element, or if the costs go above 10% of the £264k, this will go back to Board for approval. **Outcome: Board approved the print tender of £264K, on the condition that if there is a contentious element, or if the costs go above 10% of the £264k, this will go back to Board for approval.**	
9.4	Energy Procurement Plan Tender. Trustees received a paper outlining potential options for Energy Procurement. SP requested that: • Board agree their preferred route to procurement • Board agree delegation of purchasing the CFO, advised by members of the Operations Team. SP confirmed: • DfE Framework uses only one supplier and therefore raises value for money concerns • Zenergi Framework has compliance issues • Trust have previously worked with Northern Gas and Power – paper outlines both advantages and disadvantages of this procurement process. **Outcome:** Trustees considered the information contained within the report and agreed: • Operations team should work with Northern Gas and Power and PHP Law to ensure that a compliant tender process has been established. • To allow Northern Gas and Power to lead on a purchasing timetable with their industry knowledge, comparing multiple suppliers options and allowing the Trust to buy at the most advantageous time financially, whilst considering renewable energy options when viable. • To delegate the purchasing to CFO, with the agreement that all the cost comparison information will be presented to the next FAR, for transparency.	
9.5	FAR Committee 25 November 2025. NL confirmed: • Positive meeting with auditors • Action tracker indicates Trustees must clarify expectations on Health and Safety • SCA funding – now minimum allocation of £25k per school • Underspend noted in budget as Officers spent the £138K that had been allocated first. • Budget monitoring undertaken • Plan for estates capital projects reviewed – Penpol will need to use Trust funding as view is that work that cannot be delayed – FAR agreed this.	

	• Trust has tasked schools to raise 50% funding for outdoor play • Rolling plan for estates updates was reviewed. Trustees queried why some work linked to safeguarding was planned for future years, rather than current year, and requested reassurance at next FAR meeting. • £113k built in contingency pot • ICT capital progress report shared • New estates and IT KPIs were shared – new KPIs were relevant. • Business continuity audit – lots of work to do on this – Trustees suggested officers may need to outsource this work but appreciated this generates an element of work in itself. • Phishing email test – governance was included in test. • Risk register – decision to run with current system, evaluate findings as we go, and consider changes in the future.	Agenda Item
10	**COMPLIANCE AND GOVERNANCE**	
10.1	Leave of Absence Policy. Minor changes - inclusion of parental leave and application of leave of absence to ensure equity. **Outcome: Trustees Approved this policy.**	
10.2	Redundancy Policy. Inclusion of model redundancy matrix – reviewed by Unions. **Outcome: Trustees Approved this policy.**	
10.3	Teacher Pay Policy 2025-26. **Outcome: Trustees Approved this policy by email prior to the meeting.**	
10.4	Support Staff Pay Policy 2025-26. **Outcome: Trustees Approved this policy by email prior to the meeting.**	
10.5	Staff and Volunteer Code of Conduct. SH confirmed volunteer disciplinary process is now being written. **Outcome: Trustees Approved this policy.**	
10.6	Crofty Equality Statement. Sets out responsibilities in the equalities act and how we hold the act in our day to day work. **Outcome: Trustees Approved this policy.**	
10.7	Members Meeting 21 November 2025. MH confirmed new Member appointed at last meeting - currently 4 Members.	
AOB	SP confirmed complexities surrounding the shared ownership of the land that sits behind Marazion School, between Marazion School and the Playing Field Association. The Trust has been working with PHP law, to split the land and formalise the ownership, to allow a boundary to be put in place. Oasis nursery have an informal boundary onto the land, and the Trust would like to offer them use of this land. SP tabled a paper at the meeting, outlining the current and proposed land boundaries, and sought Trustees permission to grant a Peppercorn Lease to Oasis Nursery, for the small piece of land. Trustees discussed this request and asked: *Q: Whose asset register is the playing field on?* Part of it will be ours. *Q: Is the land owned by the Playing Field Association or Town council?*	

	The Playing Field Association. PHP Law have been involved in splitting the land so Trustees can be assured that the formal agreements are now in place. There will be a gate between the two pieces of land, so that the community could access land if needed. **Outcome: Trustees Approved to grant the Peppercorn Lease to Oasis Nursery.**	
11	**CONFIDENTIAL PART ONE**	
	Minutes held in Part B Confidential.	
12	**CONFIDENTIAL PART TWO**	
	Minutes held in Part B Confidential.	
	Confidential / Papers for next meeting Items 8.1.1, 11 and 12 were marked as confidential. **Meeting closed at 15:42**	