



Minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting
Thursday 16 October 2025
Held at The Chantry School, Martley, Worcestershire

Present: Sheila Boniface (Chair)
 Jane Britton
 Peter Cooper (Chief Executive Officer)
 Marion Hawkins
 Craig Holden
 Katie Jackson
 Peter Jackson
 Daniel Pearce-Higgins
 Rachel Salter
 Shirley Tully

In attendance: Sallyanne Griffiths (Chief Financial Officer)
 Andrea Marshall (Director of Quality)
 Linda Watkins (Director of Governance)
 Esther Campsall (The Chantry LGB)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting particularly Nicola Clear and Esther Campsall. The presentation from the Headteacher would be available on Governorhub.

1. Apologies for absence

Ceri Morgan.

2. Opening standing items

- I. There were no declarations of interests. Directors had declared their interests at the start of the academic year which would be published on the website.
- II. Some discussion was deemed to be confidential during the meeting with a separate minute recorded; this included a report from the Remuneration Committee.
- III. There was no urgent business to be transacted at the meeting.

3. Chair's Report

Sheila Boniface was honoured to take on the role of Chair and is looking forward to leading the Board; she explained that she will aim to become visible as Chair of the Trust and has arranged to visit each academy during working days to improve her local knowledge. The Chair and Director of Governance recently had one to one meetings with each LGB Chair with positive feedback and some ideas identified which will be taken forward. This would also allow triangulation of information between LGBs, the Trust and executive. Directors also recorded their appreciation to Sheila Boniface for taking on the role of Chair.

4. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Board agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2025. Matters arising were incorporated in the action list showed that these had been

Action

completed. The Director of Governance thanked Directors for completing their ID verification checks.

5. CEO's Report

The CEO presented his report for discussion. He drew Directors' attention to the 65% achievement from the combined GCSE resits commenting that the Trust has offered support to other sixth form colleges to improve their GCSE resit results. Children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) have a priority for year 7 places at their preferred school. This will change the character of the student body and require teaching and learning tailored to meet their needs.

The CEO had been invited to a meeting with the Regional Improvements Standards and Excellence (RISE) whose role is instrumental in improving standards. The RISE team comprise civil servants and educationalists. The DfE has appointed Sue Lovelock as the new Regional Director.

The Trust has strong performing sixth form colleges. The CEO is seeking to build partnerships with other Trusts and is well positioned to expand. There was a question about what partnership looks like noting the current partnerships include visits to other Trusts, colleges and schools to conduct quality visits, a reciprocal governance review and sharing expertise across some support services in the Trust. This will also provide useful benchmarking data.

Student numbers have grown with a marginal shortfall to the PAN in one of the academies and sixth form college numbers increasing which reflects the demographic increase. Enrolments are particularly strong at KEVI and WSFC; post-16 education is required for c180 additional young people in Worcester; the Trust is reviewing options to accommodate additional students. The Trust is working towards two shovel ready projects by Easter 2026 to position the Trust in a strong place for capital funding. The Trust has anticipated c£2.5m for capital investment across its academies.

6. Strategic Plan 2024-27 progress and update

The Director of Quality explained that the strategic plan is currently being updated to ensure that it is relevant to the Trust's strategic direction. An update will be provided at the next Board meeting. The CEO interjected that the Trust needs to be agile to change.

PC/AM

A Trustee asked if there was a timeframe for anticipated implementation of objectives and if progress of these would be reported to the Board. Last year annual timescales across years 1-3 had been included against each objective in the operating plan at the request of Directors; progress was last reported to the Board in April 2025. It was acknowledged that any significant changes should be reported to the Board at the appropriate time.

7. Support staff

Support staff in the Trust are affected by different negotiations for schools and sixth forms, the latter follow the Sixth Form Colleges' NJC pay agreement, which had just been agreed at 4% following negotiations as per the pay award circular submitted with papers. The School Support Staff Negotiating Body settled on 3.8%.

The Board agreed to adopt national recommendations reached following negotiations for support staff at 4%; backdated to September 2025.

8. Finance report

The CFO presented the finance report to August 2025 summarising key points and answering questions from Directors.

The Trust changed its internal and external auditors this year who are auditing key systems. The external audit has only identified minor recommendations from the audit.

A new accountancy system is being embedded to improve budgetary control across the Trust. A procurement strategy and failure to prevent fraud risk assessment will be put in place.

Appreciation was recorded to the CFO for ensuring that the Trust is in a strong financial position. The CEO commented that the central costs are 4.6% against a national average of 5.6%. The Trust has maintained low central costs and allows autonomy for its academies.

9. Safeguarding and child protection policy

The policy is revised annually; this meets the requirements of the DfE's publication Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025. The Board approved the safeguarding and child protection policy.

Directors were reminded to read KCSIE dated September 2025 if they had not already done so. The NGA has a new and useful safeguarding module for Directors outlining the updates to KCSIE 2025. Key changes include responsibility to ensure policies support online safety and AI. There was a question about the Trust's AI policy noting that this is currently in draft format.

10. Summary from Committees: 25 September 2025

The Committee Chairs referred to the summary of key points from the meetings requesting approval by the Board as indicated.

I. Audit and Risk Committee

The Board approved the following items at the recommendation of the Committee:

- a. TIAA's internal audit scrutiny annual report 2024/25
- b. RSM (new internal auditors) audit plan of assignments 2025/26
- c. Cooper Parry external audit plan year ended 31 August 2025

II. Search and Governance Committee:

The Board also approved the following items at the recommendation of the Committee:

- a. Peter Jackson was appointed Digital/Technology Standards Designated Director
- b. LGB Chair appointments:
 - i. Sean Devlin, WSFC
 - ii. John Hodt, KEVI
 - iii. Danielle Thompson, HSFC
 - iv. Esther Campsall, The Chantry
 - v. Paul Deneen, JKHS
- c. Angela Bates appointed Staff Governor at the Chantry for a 4-year term until 02/10/29
- d. Trust Governance Procedures 2025/26 [Daniel Pearce-Higgins abstained on the basis that he did not support the description used

to define characteristics of any functioning western liberal democracy as 'British Values'. It was explained that the term 'British Values' are an expectation for institutions to create a safe, inclusive and respectful environment for all children and young people]

- e. LGB Governance Procedures 2025/26
- f. Trust code of conduct
- g. Trust scheme of delegation 2025/26

11. Ofsted Inspection Framework September 2025

A presentation provided by the Confederation of School Trusts (CST) about the new inspection framework had been circulated with Board papers. A new report card format has been introduced with a 5-point grading scale to replace the previous judgements. Ofsted have introduced toolkits to the framework to support academies to prepare; these are slightly different for Further Education and Skills Sector and secondary schools. There will be a greater focus on the local context which is positive. Safeguarding is a binary decision on grading with inclusion introduced as a golden thread throughout the framework. Expectations and communications will be managed with academies agreeing that these would also be useful to be shared with the Board.

The Trust has appointed Kristian Phillips as the SEND and Inclusion Lead. The Trust commissioned a SEND review; a summary will be presented at the next Board meeting including how the Trust is supporting the academies.

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A quality review has been arranged at HSFC which will use the framework.

12. Search and Governance Committee items for information

The following items had been discussed by the Committee and were presented for information and assurance.

- I. Directors' profile and data September 2025
- II. DfE Academy Trust Handbook 2025 summary of changes was provided including a spreadsheet that evidenced that the Trust is compliant with the handbook.

13. Summary from LGB meetings

- I. WSFC 8 September 2025
- II. JKHS 22 September 2025
- III. The Chantry 22 September 2025
- IV. HSFC 25 September 2025
- V. KEVI no meeting

14. Any other business

The Chair congratulated Peter Cooper and Andrea Marshall on their recent engagement which was echoed by all.

15. Date of Next Meeting

Trust Board: **Thursday 11 December 2025** commencing at 6.00pm at HSFC (venue TBC)

AGM: **Monday 15 December 2025** commencing at 5.00pm on Teams

MAT Conference: **6-7 February 2026**– venue and timings will be confirmed

LJW