Minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting
Thursday 11 December 2025
Held at Hereford Sixth Form College

Present:	Sheila Boniface (Chair) Jane Britton Marion Hawkins Craig Holden Peter Jackson Daniel Pearce-Higgins Shirley Tully
In attendance:	Sallyanne Griffiths (Chief Financial Officer) Andrea Marshall (Director of Quality) Linda Watkins (Director of Governance) Tim Newsholme (observer) Kristian Phillips (SEND and Inclusion Lead) [Left after presenting SEND report]

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Tim Newsholme who Members would be asked to appoint as a Trustee at the forthcoming AGM, and Kristian Philips, the SEND and Inclusion Lead, who would outline how the Trust is supporting SEND students at its academies.

Action

1. **Apologies for absence**
   Peter Cooper, Katie Jackson and Rachel Salter. Ceri Morgan did not send his apologies.

2. **Opening standing items**
   I. Declarations of interests: Andrea Marshall declared her interest as a Trustee of Richard Huish Trust.
   II. Some discussion was deemed to be confidential during the meeting with a separate minute recorded.
   III. There was no urgent business to be transacted at the meeting.

   [Item 9 was brought forward on the agenda so that the SEND and Inclusion Lead could leave the meeting after presenting the report]

3. **SEND report**
   The Director of Quality reminded Trustees that an external review had been commissioned across the academies. Subsequently, a new post was created, the SEND and Inclusion Lead, with Kristian Phillips appointed to work one day a week for the Trust alongside his role as an Assistant Head at JKHS.

   The SEND and Inclusion Lead explained that he had developed an action plan in response to the SEND report noting the differences of SEND requirements across the academies. This covers key strategic elements whilst incorporating the new Ofsted framework. Challenges include inconsistent data reporting, capacity of SENCos, and funding disparities across different local authorities. The Trust has

c8,826 students with 2,002 identified with SEN needs and 296 with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs); 124 students are eligible for additional funding.

In response to a question, it was clarified that inclusion includes young people with English as a foreign language (EAL), Free School Meals (FSM), looked after children, children who had previously been looked after or adopted children, Pupil Premium (PP) in schools, bursaries (in colleges), young carers and children with safeguarding needs. Social emotional and mental health (SEMH) is the highest group of young people requiring support.

The Trust's inclusive offer to the academies will be identified whilst taking account of autonomy in the academies. There is positive practice in the academies driven by talented and committed SENCos. Interventions are regularly reviewed to ensure students are making progress. The White Paper is anticipated to support inclusion of SEND in mainstream provision.

A Director asked what success will look like for the strategies identified for SEND; this would be to identify any support the Trust can offer whilst creating life chances for all young people.

There was another question about the most challenging part of implementing the strategy; these included creating capacity for SENCos who have challenging roles and time. As previously mentioned, inconsistencies in funding from different local authorities is frequently insufficient to meet a young person's needs, with failure of timely reviews of EHCPs.

The Chair thanked the SEND and Inclusion Lead on behalf of the Trust.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair thanked those who had attended Ken Hopkins' funeral.

LGB Chairs had acknowledged the support from the Trust at a recent meeting when LGB Chairs were invited to the strategy day in February. The Trust's risk portal was demonstrated to LGB Chairs who confirmed that academy summaries of risk registers are discussed at LGB meetings. The Chair had attended WSFC's dress rehearsal of Hadestown which was very enjoyable.

5. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The Board agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2025. The action list was noted; there were no matters arising.

6. CEO's Report

In the absence of the CEO, the report was noted. The Director of Quality referred to a quality review arranged at HSFC which will include case sampling of students with a focus on inclusion. The Trust is continuing to work closely with Richard Huish Trust where the Director of Quality recently became a Trustee. Use of similar systems and policies are being explored to allow a degree of security if a key staff member at either Trust is away or leaves their employment.

There was a question followed by discussion about AI and its usage in the Trust. Copilot is a secure platform within the Trust. A further question followed about the level of AI usage in the Trust noting that a survey had been conducted evidencing mixed use with more use in sixth form colleges compared to the schools. CPD

sessions on AI attract high interest from staff. Usage by students was also requested; this has not been ascertained by surveys to date, with confirmation it is used widely. Marking platforms detect AI usage in students' work. ChatGPT is widely discouraged in the Trust. There was a comment that it is important to educate students about potential dangers of AI, particularly teenage boys, following recent articles in the news.

The Trust is engaging with the Regional Directorate of the Regional Improvements for Standards and Excellence (RISE) team regarding opportunities to help and influence improvements in school within the area; this will also benefit staff.

7. Strategic planning update

The Director of Quality gave a verbal update that there is discussion about making the strategic plan a live document. In discussion it was acknowledged that the operating plan needed to be updated to include AI, SEND and inclusion with the revised operating plan anticipated at the next meeting. The Board agreed that regular reviews of progress of the strategic plan would be helpful. The Trust is currently in a period of consolidation but continuing to explore growth opportunities. PC/AM

8. Finance report to October 2025

The CFO summarised the finance report to October 2025 which had been presented at the F&R Committee; the November 2025 accounts would be available imminently.

- Schools Conditional Allocation (SCA) funding is anticipated to be c£2.7m next year. The Trust is working with an architect to identify capital development and shovel ready projects.
- This year the Trust is anticipating a breakeven or modest surplus at the year-end.

There was a question about the employer's pension contribution with an explanation provided that the employers' contribution has increased to 28.6% which is a national issue. TPS pays the liability, and the Trust makes a contribution.

9. Summary from Committees: 27 November 2025

The Committee Chairs referred to the minutes, highlighting the summary of key points from the meetings with the following key items <u>approved at the recommendation of the Committees</u>:

I. Audit & Risk Committee (including confidential minute)
   a. Audit Committee's annual report year ending 31 August 2025
   b. Going concern assessment
   c. Annual accounts to 31 August 2025
   d. Letters of representation (audit and regularity)

II. Finance & Resources Committee:
   a. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

III. Curriculum & Quality Committee: no items to approve

IV. Search & Governance Committee:
   a. Resolution noted to recommend the Members appoint Tim Newsholme as a Director of the Trust

b. Re-appointed Sam Wilson, external governor of WSFC's LGB for a 4-year term in office

10. SEND review external report [addressed as item 3]

11. Committee items for information

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

I. Audit & Risk Committee:
   a. Risk Register
   b. Cyber security data protection and fraud report

II. Finance & Resources Committee:
   a. HR report
   b. Health and safety, estates and sustainability report

III. Curriculum & Quality Committee:
   a. Data pack, student performance headline data
   b. Quality report and summary from Self-Assessment Reports (post 16) and School Development Plans (schools)
   c. Safeguarding report

12. Summary from LGB meetings

I. WSFC 26 November 2025
II. JKHS 24 November 2025 (available on Governorhub)
III. The Chantry no meeting
IV. HSFC 27 November 2025 (to follow)
V. KEVI 22 October 2025

13. Any other business

Following discussion during the meeting, a Director referred to some significant tasks which are outstanding. In response, it was noted that there have been some staff capacity issues within the MIS team which are being addressed. The central team is in the process of relocating to Churchill House which had created high levels of work for the IT team. The Trust operates with a lean central team.

14. Date of Next Meeting

AGM: **Monday 15 December 2025** commencing at 5.00pm on Teams
MAT Conference: **7 February 2026** at WSFC facilitated by Michael Pain, Forum Strategy, focusing on growth of the MAT.
Trust Board: **Thursday 30 April 2026** commencing at 6.00pm at JKHS (venue TBC) LJW