



TRUST BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held at Liskeard School & Community College on Monday 31st March 2025 at 5.30 pm.

Present	Yes/No	Present	Yes/No
Mr M Aarts	Yes	Mr L Hallam, Chair of the Trust Board	Apologies
Prof V Campbell Barr	Yes	Mrs L Lawson via Teams	Yes
Ms J Chan-Penney	Yes	Miss K Reed	Yes
Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes	Mr N Toms	Yes
Mr J Crisp, Vice Chair	Yes		

In Attendance: Mrs J Lumbard, CFO
Mrs K Williams, Clerk to Trust Board

25. **Welcome**
The Vice Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
26. **Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties – update on any changes since completion of written declaration**
There were no changes.
27. **Apologies for Absence**
Mr Hallam had sent his apologies in advance of the meeting which were received and accepted by the committee.
28. **Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th January 2025**
The minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2025, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.
29. **Progress of action points and matters arising**
M23. Discuss and agree the outcome of External Governance Review and action plan
r) The points were not disagreed with but there is a capacity issue. Mr Buckley felt that the link model is not working and this could be removed straight away. The TGLG meeting should still stand and Trustees attend these meetings. We need to ensure that communication continues and this would be done by visiting LGC meetings and schools.
Update: Complete.
30. **Discuss election of the Chair of the Trust Board and succession planning**
Including an update on Trustee appointment
 - a) Mr Buckley advised that Mr Hallam will be in post until June. It was suggested that Mr Crisp should cover the Chair role for the remainder of the year and then we look at succession planning in terms of either recruiting to the Chair role from the current Trust Board, have a rotating Chair or recruit externally. We have two other applicant Trustees, one whom has been formally appointed and one who is undergoing DBS checks.
 - b) **A Trustee asked if we have any retirees joining the board.** It was discussed that we do not. It was suggested that the role of Chair has been under more demand due to Ofsted visits etc and it was discussed that we have not been using the Trust Board as the role should be used and this was identified in the EGR (External Governance Review). It has been a challenge for Mr Hallam due to

his capacity and the Ofsted framework has a focus on the Trust Board during visits rather than just the Chair of Trustees.

31. **Reports and Recommendations from Committees¹**

- a) Remuneration 03-03-2025 CONFIDENTIAL
UPS applications were approved.
- b) Learning/People 03-03-2025
There was a discussion on the recommendations for the Headteachers. Mr Buckley advised that we are working on a strategy for disadvantaged with a set of principles. TSLT (Trust Senior Leadership Team) have agreed the principles and how to take this forward. The method we are going to use is to have a full data dashboard and the areas we need to improve which will then be analysed to see the impact on PP (Pupil Premium) and non PP. The conditions have been set for the KPIs and the starting points. We will then look at a range of strategies for SLTF. There will be a paper presented to Trustees ready for September.
- c) **A Trustee asked what can be looked at in-year.** Mr Buckley explained that each of the schools could tell us a whole range of strategies and KPIs and how well they have done but this new approach is led by the Trust Board who will set the strategy. This will however have a lag but it will give Trust wide evaluation.
- d) **A Trustee referred to the strategic plan and asked when do we re-set the goals and objectives.** Mr Buckley advised that we had a broad set of goals and each school could follow its own path. Disadvantage is a priority for us still and we will align to the overall strategy but will be more focused in future. We have a set of principles that we have already addressed but we need to look at mechanisms for delivery. We will start the debate on the new Strategic Plan in 2026.
- e) **A Trustee asked how we are measuring ourselves against the objectives of the strategic plan.** Mr Buckley explained we have tried to review the progress towards the strategic plan in different ways. We have a high percentage of staff who believe we are doing well but we need to look at more than just the ethos of the Trust. Mr Buckley explained that we need to have a Trust Board focus on a particular priority. Mr Buckley added that a major concern for disadvantage is unintentional bias. We are attempting to set up a strategy to remove any label and have a clear KPI with analysis in September.
- f) **A Trustee referred to using NEET data and the increase in numbers of SEND students and growing need for SEND education provision in Cornwall and asked how do we have a counterbalance to have better results post 19.** Mr Buckley explained that as a Trust we had have had the best outcomes for NEET despite a 9% drop in Liskeard last year. We are near 100% of placements for post 18.
- g) **A Trustee suggested that having a longer term trajectory is useful and felt we need to look at how we work with our uniqueness and how we tap into other initiatives with universities.** Mr Buckley advised that we had moved away from KPIs as we have been focused on the ethos of the Trust and ensuring each school could work on its own priorities, but we are now ready to have specific strategies across the Trust and use reintroduce the formal use of KPIs to have better specific data to support where we need to make improvements.
- h) Resources 25-03-2025
Mr Aarts explained that the increase in National Insurance is expected to have a shortfall of around £100k overall and allocations will not be paid until September. Mrs Lumbard advised we will accrue for this in our accounts.

¹ To include items raised for TB consideration by LGCs

- i) **A Trustee asked if we will be working at risk until we have the allocation paid.** Mrs Lumbard advised the Ready Reckoner is quite accurate and the next check will be at the end of April to see what it looks like.
- j) **A Trustee noted we are in a better financial position than many Trusts.** It is likely that many Trusts nationally may have to make redundancies. We have discussed budget savings across the Trust schools and we do have some reserves. **A Trustee asked about the thresholds for redundancies.** Mr Buckley summarised the process for redundancy.
- k) The information for funding is really late this year. Mrs Lumbard summarised the timings for the funding streams and the impact this has on the budgeting processes and trying to make key decisions and this has been communicated to the DfE. Mr Buckley advised the schools have confirmed that they can still operate with reduced funding. Mr Buckley explained that there are a number of Excluded students who are out of education as the LA (Local Authority) do not have appropriate placements for them. The numbers of students with specialist levels of need are expected to increase significantly. The use of ARBs was discussed.
- l) **A Trustee asked if it is the duty of the schools for SEND students.** Mr Buckley explained the high level of expertise of staff needed to work with high levels of SEND and this for some pupils can't be replicated in Mainstream schools. There are a large number of students who need high levels of support in specialist provisions who are unfortunately in mainstream and we desperately need more specialist provision in Cornwall.
- m) TOLT (Trust Operational Leadership Team) now have more capacity following recruitment. There are some vacancies in the site team.
- n) The toilet work in Saltash and Looe is ongoing and we are using Section 106 funding and the final toilet work in Looe will be finished over Easter. The roof work has finished in Saltash. Saltash are installing canopies from the section 106 funding. We have tested the model for the toilets in Looe and despite a number of complaints, the view from the pupils is positive and this model will be replicated in Saltash.
- o) **A Trustee asked if many of the issues around the toilets have now been removed.** Mr Buckley advised this has reduced the number of students eating lunches in these areas, there are reduced reports of vaping and the toilets feel safer. There is a new problem with students kicking the toilet doors. These are unisex toilets but the girls have made a point about messy toilets but it has been found that this is due to door kicking which is being addressed.
- p) We were awarded £100k to build a nursery provision at Landulph. This has been problematic in terms of building regulations and planning. We are exploring a possible solution by having an internal reconfiguration to house the nursery.
- q) **A Trustee queried ratios for the nursery.** Mr Buckley advised that in terms of operating it as a nursery, operating internally is beneficial. There will be some reduction in useable space in the school.
- r) **A Trustee asked if from the funding we have been awarded, are we using specialists or social value.** Mr Buckley advised this funding is to be used just for the building. **A Trustee noted the benefit for having a social value ask and a catalogue in place.** Mrs Lumbard advised this would be easy to have this in place in terms of estates.
- s) Audit & Risk 25-03-2025
Mr Toms advised key points were the live risk of the Liskeard Ofsted. Mr Buckley summarised the outcome of the Ofsted visit at Liskeard. There are staff absences at Trewidland which are being managed. The risk of not having a Chair of the Trust Board needs to be added to the Risk Register. Mr Buckley explained that we can direct staff between Dobwalls and Trewidland to cover absence.

- t) **A Trustee asked if we have a rotating Chair, how would it work in practice.** Mr Buckley advised we can change this on DfE databases. The internal assurances testing is underway and this will be reported to the Audit & Risk committee. The committee has had confirmation that we are compliant in a number of areas.

32. **CEO summary of HT Reports – focus on Pupil Progress²**

A document has been circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley advised that we are in the process of identifying all the KPIs for pupil progress. We don't currently track all the KPIs but a number are in the Headteacher report. Mr Buckley explained that he will provide Trustees with the KPIs, the size of the gap and why we have chosen these KPIs. Trustees can then evaluate the list.
- b) **A Trustee asked if there is benefit to the Headteachers attending the next Learning Committee.** Mr Buckley advised that we are intending on forming a subgroup of SLTF which the chair could attend the Learning Committee meetings.

33. **Safeguarding update**

- a) We have had confirmation from Ofsted that safeguarding is effective in Liskeard and we have the same system in operation across the Trust. We still have internal safeguarding teams and they continue to meet. Mr Carrington is currently the interim Headteacher at Looe but he will return to the Trust safeguarding lead role.
- b) **A Trustee asked if we have a safeguarding Trustee.** Mr Buckley advised that this needs to be appointed.

34. **Risk Register – Review and consider**

A document has been circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley advised that risks around the Trust Board do not appear in the Risk Register and the EGR has suggested that this does need to be added such as the risk of a non-functioning Trust Board. Trustees agreed this should be added.
- b) The risk around nuclear attack was discussed in terms of Saltash. **A Trustee noted that this risk could increase.** Mr Buckley advised we do give staff training and all the schools have lockdown procedures which are actively tested.
- c) **A Trustee referred to Ofsted and the risk of low ratings impacting on possible expansion and asked does this need to be reduced.** Mr Buckley advised that we have discussed this with the Regional Group (RG). Mr Buckley explained that we are waiting for an Ofsted visit at Saltash and we have made good progress and there was a risk around not having a stable SLT (Senior Leadership Team) but we have now appointed the Headteacher. The adverts for the Deputy Headteacher and Assistant Headteacher will be next week.
- d) **A Trustee asked about the possibility of Trust takeover.** Mr Buckley summarised that there is a risk if Saltash receives another RI grading but this is felt to be a low risk. The change in Saltash is really noticeable.

35. **Update on Ofsted visit at Liskeard**

- a) Mr Buckley noted that attendance and sixth form outcomes need improvements. Sixth Form is just below average and we need to make sure student numbers are high. We have made a good appointment in terms of the new Liskeard Head of Sixth Form. We also need to protect numbers in the Sixth Form at Saltash.
- b) **A Trustee asked if we are breaking even in the Sixth Forms.** Mr Buckley advised that we are but we need to ensure that student numbers remain over 3000 as below this number would impact

² HT reports to be available at meeting. Report to include summary data from HT reports (P14) for each school

our funding. Mr Buckley advised that funding from the main school cannot be invested in the Sixth Form but we can use unrestricted funds for incentives for the Sixth Form such as providing minibuses. Mrs Lumbard added that we also have a responsibility to provide a post 16 education for the community. It was noted that St Austell no longer have any A Level provision. The offer for Sixth Form needs to be right to attract students.

- c) **A Trustee queried the opportunities for vocational courses.** Mr Buckley advised this is complex as we are tied to a curriculum. Mr Buckley advised that Trustees could agree to have Sixth Form models with lost leader courses.
- d) **A Trustee suggested that looking post 16 routes would be useful as well as what is happening in the community which would allow us to be more strategic with what we offer. A Trustee referred to historically non-viable courses and asked can we link the two schools together to cover this to increase the offer.** Mr Buckley advised that providing minibuses is better than providing online lessons. Mr Buckley explained that initiatives such as peer reading programmes are useful but students do need high levels of training initially. We can use some external resources and these are hugely valuable but this does have some challenges.
- e) **A Trustee asked what the Sixth Form leads are going to deliver.** Mr Buckley advised they will be forming an action plan. The Headteacher at Saltash will be modelling the role of Sixth Formers in the wider community including the feeder primary schools.
- f) **A Trustee noted the importance of offer in Sixth Forms but it suggested that students will also follow where their friends are going.** Belonging was discussed and the status of Sixth Forms is hard to get right. How to make the Sixth Forms more appealing will be a focus for the Heads of Sixth Forms.
- g) **A Trustee suggested that asking the students would be useful as well as having career maps.** The skills strategy has identified that we need skills to stay in Cornwall rather than move out of the area. Mr Buckley advised that we have small Sixth Forms and the capacity of Heads of Sixth Form was discussed. We have been unsuccessful in getting the secondary schools to take seriously the soft skills needed for young people when there are different demands on them in terms of outcomes and Ofsted judgements. The complexities around the education system and employment were discussed at length.

36. **Review in year objectives progress in support of the strategic plan**

- a) Mr Buckley explained that SDPs (School Development Plans) for each of the schools are reviewed by the LGCs (Local Governing Committees) who monitor the milestones over the year. This is the current approach for measuring the progress towards the strategic aims. At LGC two, four and six, the LGC minutes will show discussions on the updated SDP. In terms of the new plan, we need to decide a new approach to monitoring progress. We are largely on track in each of the schools. In terms of the objectives, there is a gap between the two documents. Mr Buckley would like to have a mid-term review on the KPIs. Schools have set the major objective on disadvantaged.
- b) **A Trustee referred to the Risk Register and the strategic goals and asked are these linked. A Trustee asked what year of the plan are we in.** Mr Buckley advised this is the case and we are in year three. A copy of the Strategic Plan is available on the SMART website.
- c) **A Trustee asked if the Trust Board need to start having more conversations on being strategic over the next 6 months and should this be added to agendas in future meetings.** Mr Buckley advised that we need to move away from one year plans and these are conversations that we need to start having. Our goal should be that we are able to compare children across the schools in the same subjects. If we get this in place by the end of this year, it will allow us to have detailed analysis to see where the gaps are.

- d) **A Trustee noted we are very school focussed and asked where do the nurseries fit into this.** Mr Buckley advised that we have brought all EYFS staff together for the first time this year and we are aligning training for them. We have ensured that a trained teacher is part of the contact in the nurseries to ensure that phonics is being delivered correctly. Trustees may agree to have a focus on nurseries and we would like to extend the concept reviews into the nurseries. We need to build paedology into the nurseries.
- e) Statutory Trustee roles were agreed:
Safeguarding – Professor Campbell-Barr
SEND – Professor Campbell-Barr
Careers – Miss Reed

37. Adoption of Policies and consider Trust policy compliance

A document had been circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) No policies for approval.
- b) Mrs Lumbard asked for an amendment to the Scheme of Financial Delegation where Mrs Del Gaudio is added now she has been appointed as Headteacher. Trustees were in agreement to the amendment.
- c) Mr Buckley advised that the policy tracker is in place and this will be circulated for Trustees in future. We are 89% compliant in terms of policies.
- d) **A Trustee referred to the use of AI and asked are we considering using this.** Mr Buckley advised we have drafted a policy on this but there is so much fast paced change in this area.

38. Items from this meeting for report back to LGCs

- a) The Trust Board are in the process of appointing another two Trustees. Professor Campbell-Barr is taking the Safeguarding and SEND responsibilities and Miss Reed is Careers Trustee. Mr Hallam will be finishing his term of office this year and Mr Crisp will cover the Chair of Trustee role until the new academic year.
- b) There is an expected shortfall in National Insurance funding and allocations will not be paid until September.
- c) It was noted that it is important to safeguard the numbers in the Sixth Forms to ensure that we continue to have 3000 students in the Trust as below this number will impact funding.
- d) Ofsted have confirmed that safeguarding in Liskeard is effective and we are using the same system for safeguarding across the Trust.

39. Training completed by Trustees

- a) KR – Safeguarding and Prevent, Minimising Exclusions, Effective MAT Governance and your organisation understanding school structures and what children should learn.
- b) Mr Buckley advised we have a subscription to Southwest Leaders and the CST who both hold a number of events for Trustees.

40. Trustee visits

- a) Mr Toms had visited Saltash and Looe and has arranged a visit Dobwalls.
- b) **A Trustee asked what is expected during a visit.** Mr Buckley suggested that Trustees could join a visit with a governor and there are also key members of staff who Trustees could join during a visit to a school. There are also health checks which Trustees can be part of.

- c) **A Trustee asked what the minimum amount of time is needed for visits.** Mr Buckley advised that just visiting for context are short meetings of around half an hour. If it is for a health check, it would be around a couple of hours.
- d) **A Trustee felt that joining a student council meeting would be really useful. A Trustee noted that a SMART Phone initiative organisation would be interested in presenting to the board.** Mr Buckley advised that this group is meeting with CACE and he is willing to feed back on their suggested models but our schools are all phone free.

41. **Agreements made by email**

- a) None.

42. **Date of next meetings:**

14-07-2025 at 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 19.58.