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PART 1 MINUTES OF THE TRUSTEE BOARD		
Date	**16th July 2026 @ 9.30am**	
Venue	**Virtual - Teams**	
Present:	Tim Haselwood (TH) Nic Brindle (NB) Charles Whittle (CW) Ian Carden (IC) Philip Sheldon (PS) Mark Heywood (MH)	Vice Chair of Trustee & today's Chair CEO Trustee Trustee Trustee Trustee
Apologies:	Maureen Brettell (MB) Helen Davies (HD) Kerry Inscker (KI)	Chair of Trustees Trustee Trustee
Absent:	Helen Philips (HP)	Director of Education
In attendance:	Leanne Takaki (LT) Chris Heptinstall (CHe) Suzanne Lloyd (SL)	Director of People Director of Business Independent Clerk to Trustees

For all sets of minutes and backing papers it is taken that all will have been pre-read and coverage will therefore be limited to: • **accuracy** • **action points** • **challenge**
The new Academy Trust Handbook 2025 states that trustees should focus on three descriptors (replacing the 3 core functions):

· **Strategic leadership of the academy trust** – the board defines the trust vision, fosters the trust's culture and sets its strategy, including determining what (if any) governance functions are delegated
· **Accountability and assurance** – robust oversight of the trust's operations and performance
· **Engagement** – strategic oversight of relationships with stakeholders (parents, schools and communities)

Quorum required: 3 Trustees

The meeting commenced at 9.30am

AGENDA ITEM 5	**OPENING & GOVERNANCE FORMALITIES**
Discussion	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that TH would Chair today's meeting due to MB's absence. Apologies were accepted from MB, KI, HD and HP, and it was noted that MH would be attending later. There were no new declarations of interest to note, nor any other business to note. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

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AGENDA ITEM 6	BOARD & COMMITTEE ACTION LOG – ASSURANCE REVIEW
Discussion	Trustees reviewed the minutes from the meetings dated 30th April 2026 and 14th May 2026, and the Trustees agreed that these were a true and accurate record. It was noted there were no Part 1 minutes for the meeting held on the 14th May 2026 as there were only Part 2 minutes for this meeting. Trustees reviewed the following actions: • For confirmation that a skills audit had been completed or would be completed shortly - **Completed** • For the ToR for the Finance, HR & Premises Committee to be updated to include more detail of the audit aspects - **Completed** • For the YES Connected lead to come and present to the Board - **Completed** – On the agenda today. • For the AI SWOT analysis to be shared with the Board - **Completed** – On the agenda today. • For the fire risk on the Risk Register to be updated to a red category - **Completed** • For a further assessment to be carried out on the scaffolding at BCAP - **Completed** • For the process of Trustee visit reports to be reviewed - **Completed - SL/IAG reviewed this and felt the current process was working, and that the Trustees were sent the form to DocuSign after the visit.** • For the updates to be made to the CCTV Policy to be ratified out of the meeting - **Completed** • For the new Strategic overview to be shared with the Trustee for approval in December 2026 - **Completed** • Committees to further review their TofR - **Completed** • For IAG to provide link Trustees with access to the website compliance software 'Robin' - **Completed** – IAG had spoken to HP regarding this, and it had been decided that giving access would be too operational. IAG would therefore produce any reports that the Trustees required. • For training on the new Ofsted framework to be completed by the Trustees – **Outstanding** – Due to HP's absence this was still outstanding. • For pupil numbers to be reviewed by the Board annually - **Completed** – On the agenda today.

AGENDA ITEM 7	CEO REPORT & STRATEGIC ASSURANCE – NB
Discussion	The CEO report was on GVO and taken as read. NB provided an overview. He confirmed that the leaders within the Trust had become more confident and NB was really proud of the work that had been undertaken this year. NB felt that this year had seen other elements such as vocational pathways increasing, Duke of Edinburgh being reintroduced, NEET figures being significantly improved, the recent exams had gone well, School

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	Improvement across the schools (not including Kairos) had improved, and cross school working was going well. **Q:** TH asked whether the Head Teachers working to assist across the Trust had any impact on their own schools? **A:** PE and SC were the main Head Teachers working across other schools, these both had strong SLT and this was supporting these teams to stretch and grow, meaning there was no change if they were not onsite. NB confirmed that Axis and Fermain were really strong. CHe noted that the Fermain Team had recently received an award for their hard work and commitment. **Safeguarding, Welfare and Inclusion** – Safeguarding was always a high priority. Attendance was still high on the Trust agenda, and specific roles on this had been put in place, and this did have an impact on Safeguarding. NB noted that the Trust was above the national average; however, he still wanted to see this improve. NB noted that they had decided not to move forward with the Free School project in Sandbach, which was mainly due to capacity. NB invited questions. There were no further questions raised, and NB was thanked for the thoroughness of his report. MH joined the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 8	**FINANCE, RISK & COMPLIANCE – BOARD ASSURANCE**
Discussion	**Finance** – CHe confirmed the proposed draft budget for the upcoming 3 years, and that this would be the budget proposed to the DFE. He confirmed that this did not include any expansion plans as nothing so far had been confirmed; they did, however, have varying budgets in the background dependent on the expansions to take place over the next 3 years. CHe provided an overview. He noted that the Kairos budget had been reduced; however, this had not been completely reduced, and should this close, he would provide an updated budget. CHe also noted that the budget did not include the approvals made today in Part 2. CHe confirmed that any updated budgets throughout the year would be shared with the Trustees. CHe confirmed that the budget did not include reductions to the grants to be received due to the proposed reduced teacher pension contributions, as he felt that this would lead to a net zero; he was still awaiting confirmed details on this. It was noted that this was a regulated scheme, and there was no impact to the employees, as the pension was based on the salary amount rather than the individual contributions the employer made. CHe noted that this did also include future staff pay increases. TH confirmed that he had met CHe to discuss and review the budget and this had been discussed in further detail at the Finance, HR & Premises Committee. The current in-year forecast was still predicting an in-year surplus of £250k; this would depend on the projects at BCAP and might result in a higher in-year surplus to report. The P8 report was on GVO and taken as read. It was confirmed that funds had been increased in the investment accounts following discussions at previous Trust Boards.

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	Premises – The Premises report was on GVO and taken as read. CHe noted that at Keystone, some of the cladding had fallen; this had now been reported to the main contractor, the Operational Director was due on site to review further, and the school had put appropriate risk assessments in place. The site leads at Fermain and at Raise had both stepped down, and CHe had therefore put out recruitment for an Estates Manager. **BCAP Update** – The main roof and guttering were complete, the window replacements were underway, and the remaining roof, cladding and windows would be undertaken in the Summer. There was still a contingency of £200k, which CHe was working on with Eddison's, as there were some areas of brick work where work needed to take place. Should there be any funds remaining, this would be spent on additional roof repairs. There had been no health and safety concerns to note throughout the project so far. The Trustees thanked CHe for his commitment on this. **Pay & People** – LT confirmed that there were currently high levels of anxiety, stress and mental health concerns relating to absences within the Trust; however, these were not related to work issues but more to external factors. They had been looking to mitigate against this by working with the Head Teacher to offer support, and flexible working arrangements had been reviewed. 25 staff had been enrolled on further qualifications this term, and LT wished to start having more career development and aspirational meetings to support staff further. Workforce planning had been looking at reducing single points of failure and at developing leaders; the next step on this would be to look at a pipeline of new staff coming through. At the Pay Committee the proposed pay was discussed, and in-depth discussions had taken place to ensure that there was consistency in place. It had been suggested that there was a framework for bonuses rather than this being at the sole discretion of the Head Teachers. LT also noted that support staff pay had been reviewed ahead of the national pay awards, LT had a meeting with the unions the following week to review this further. LT had also proposed additional pay bands for support staff which was again under review with the unions. **Education Standards** – In HP's absence IC provided an update; there was an outstanding action in that the wellbeing area was still being highlighted since LC-D had stepped down from the Board. IC noted that the majority of areas had already been discussed within the agenda; however, he was really pleased to report that peer-on-peer support had gone really well and that the exams had gone well. The safeguarding areas at BCAP were discussed within Part 2. **Safeguarding** – Discussed within Part 2. LL would come to the next Full Trust Board meeting to discuss processes further. **Website** – Nothing further to note. **GDPR** – Nothing further to note.
Decision	**There was a unanimous approval of the proposed 3-year budget as outlined on GVO.**

AGENDA ITEM 9	**STRATEGY & TRUST DEVELOPMENT FOCUS**
Discussion	NB noted that he had two prospective Trustees, and following the recent Skills Audit it had been outlined that Legal and IT were the areas that the Board required. NB was still in the initial stages, and he would share their details in due course.

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	There had been a proposed change that the People part of the Finance, HR and Premises Committee be amalgamated with the Pay Committee. CW offered his support to be added to the Pay & People Committee. There was a conflict noted that CW's daughter worked at Fermain; however, it was noted that the Trustee role was to give strategic overview rather than to approve individual recommendations. **Governance Review** – NB noted that the Board Review had taken place and it was agreed that this would be fed back to the Board.
Decision	**There was a unanimous decision that the new committee structure would be for a Finance & Premises Committee and a Pay & People Committee.** **There was a unanimous decision that CW be added to the Pay & People Committee.** **There was a unanimous decision for MB to be reappointed as the Chair for the Trust.** **There was a unanimous decision for Second2None to be appointed to Clerk for 26/27 with a clause added that this would only be in place if SL remained in her position.**

	What	**Who**	**When**
Action	For new ToR to be drafted for the new proposed Committees.	SL/IAG	ASAP
Action	For a meeting to take place to receive the recommendations from the Governance Review	NB/SL	ASAP

AGENDA ITEM 10	**STRATEGY PLAN ASSURANCE ROUND**
Discussion	This item was covered under previous agenda items.

AGENDA ITEM 11	**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – YES CONNECTED**
Discussion	AR was in attendance for this agenda item to provide an overview of YES Connected. This was primarily put in place to support students from the Trust; however, it had recently received some commissioned external positions. AR confirmed that this was an online school to support children who could not attend school, and from this they had successfully reintegrated students back into school settings. AR noted that an additional remit was to provide additional subjects either to support or to allow for additional capacity. AR explained the different external commissioning in place. LL was their DSL, and then there were 5 staff members supporting YES Connected. It was noted that students were placed by stage not age. It was noted that this was a blended, hands-on learning experience and was a blend of virtual learning as well as offline learning. All lessons were interactive and involved regular communications with the YES Connected staff and others.

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	AR invited questions. **Q:** TH asked if there would be significant growth in the upcoming year? **A:** AR confirmed that they could grow; however, they did not want to grow too much too fast, to ensure the quality of the services on offer. **Q:** IC asked if there was a way to ensure that the students obtained their attendance mark? **A:** AR confirmed that there was not; Cath Kitchen was supporting with this, and NB noted that they were looking at whether students with medical conditions might be able to be marked as B; however, this was still under discussion with OTAS. MH noted that this was fantastic. **Q:** MH asked if the main aim was to reintegrate to a setting? **A:** AR noted that the aim was to reintegrate; however, this was dependent on the age of the school, with KS3 being reviewed as a short-term element. **Q:** MH asked how this would work with the geographic spread with it being a blended school? **A:** AR noted that this was not currently an issue with the current set up; it was noted that the original school was still accountable for the child and so would be the one responsible for home visits etc. **Q:** MH asked what communications took place with the existing school? A: AR confirmed that there was an online portal which provided details of every lesson attended and every piece of work completed. LL and AR met with the SENCO every term to provide an update. **Q:** PH asked if there was a way to replicate this and grow this as a stand-alone system? **A:** AR noted that yes, this could easily be replicated and was something to investigate in the future. **Q:** MH asked if there had been any safeguarding issues that had been picked up that would not have been raised if it was not for YES Connected? **A:** AR confirmed that yes; they had regular contact with the students, they had had direct disclosures, and AR had access to the schools' CPOMS to log any concerns. The Trustees gave their congratulations for the work carried out this year and the success of YES Connected; it had far exceeded expectations, and these children would not have received any education if this was not in place.

AGENDA ITEM 12	**POLICIES**
Discussion	The following policies were due for review; however, due to current conversations with regards to the TURA agreement, these were on hold until after conversations had taken place: To ratify: • Trustee and Governor Expense Policy • Whistleblowing Policy To note: • Discretionary Staff Bonus and Pay Policy The following policies had been approved on GVO out of the meeting: • Anti-Fraud Policy • Employee Expenses Policy • Trustee/Governor Expenses Policy

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	• Cared for Children Policy (new) • Suspensions and Exclusion Policy (new) • Allergies & Anaphylaxis Policy (new)

AGENDA ITEM 13	**SUCCESSES & CELEBRATIONS**
Discussion	• Fermain had won AP PRU of the year. • YES Connected had been recognised for their work • National and Regional work had been undertaken • The Trust was constantly seen as advice givers

AGENDA ITEM 14	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS & ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING**
Discussion	There was nothing further to note.

AGENDA ITEM 15	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING/S**		
Discussion	The schedule of meetings for 2026/27 was on GVO and approved.		
	What	**Who**	**When**
Action	For the calendar invites for 2026/27 to be shared with all Trustees	SL	ASAP

The meeting closed at 12.30.

For the purpose of the minutes:

AR – Abbie Rock – Lead of YES Connected.

Signed by:
Maureen Brettell
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30-Oct-2026

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