

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 14 May 2026 at 3.30pm
via MS Teams

Present:	Lloyd Nolan (LN)	Chair & Trustee
	Sally Bridges-Wickham (SBW)	Trustee
	Tracey Greenough (TG)	Trustee
	Sally Henshall (SH)	Trustee
	Phil Mellor (PM)	Trustee
	Sally Peedle (SP)	Trustee
In Attendance:	Chris Davis (CD)	CEO (Items 1-7 only)
	Kate Hewson (KH)	Chief Education Officer (CEdO) (Items 1-7 only)
	Callum Priestley (CP)	COO (Items 1-7 only)
	Rebecca Smith (RS)	Executive Head (Items 1-7 only)
	Victoria Evans (VE)	CFO (Items 1-7 only)
	Melanie Nightingale (MN)	Clerk to the Board

Item		Action
1	Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest	
	There were no declarations of interest and no apologies. Rebecca Richards had resigned from her role as Trustee since the last meeting due to work commitments. Trustee adverts were currently live.	
2	Previous Minutes & Matters Arising	
	<u>Resolved:</u> Minutes of the following meetings were agreed as an accurate record 11 December 2025 23 February 2026 (extraordinary) 25 March 2026 (extraordinary) Actions from the December minutes were reviewed. All actions apart from one had been completed and could be closed. Regarding action 3.1 (H&S visit), the COO confirmed that the first round of visits were complete but he would circulate further dates when available to enable Trustees to join in.	
3	CEO Report	
	The CEO recorded his thanks to the Chair of the Board for his support in recent months and to the wider Trustees for support with appeals and hearings. The CEO highlighted key points from his report, which had been circulated in advance. - Pupil attendance had increased 4% YTD compared with the previous year. Five schools were performing above the national average for AP (alternative provision) and were demonstrating value-added attendance. - There had been significant gains in pupil attendance at Enrich, reaching 42% this week (compared with 28% previously). The new Headteacher was making a positive impact at Enrich and a new Deputy Headteacher had started in role. - There was a significant increase in GCSE entries this year. - Formal discussions were underway to end the employment of three colleagues with long-term absences.	

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	• Further discussion was required at Executive Team level and with the Board regarding the redesignation of the Kirklees schools from AP to special. The DfE had confirmed that the only way to achieve this was to close the schools and re-open them as free schools, which would invite applications from other Trusts. • Relationships with the trade unions in Wakefield presented a heightened risk due to a collective staff grievance. The CEO was engaging with union central leadership to find a resolution with input from the Board Chair and Vice Chair. • Capacity was an area of concern and colleagues were working exceptionally hard. Additional HR resource had been engaged and a Finance Manager had joined the Trust. • Trust colleagues were understandably unsettled about senior appointments (CEO and CEo) and it was important to put a transition plan in place. There was some discussion about the potential risk of not changing the designation of the Kirklees Schools. The Executive Team confirmed that there was no immediate risk but the CEO would present a risk analysis to the Board once he had discussed further with the LA and checked the funding agreement. Currently students attending the Kirklees schools had the school named on their EHCP (Education, Health & Care Plan). The Chair reassured the Executive Team that there was a plan regarding the CEO appointment, which would be discussed under the confidential agenda item today and would hopefully be approved by Trustees. The CEO recorded his thanks to Trustees and Executive colleagues for their continued commitment during this period of change.	
4	School Improvement Update and Impact	
	The CEo highlighted key points from the School Improvement Update Report, which had been circulated in advance. • RSBs (Raising Standards Boards) had taken place in all schools. Four RSBs each had been held for Elements and Enrich due to the level of support needed. • Changes had been made to how RSBs operated for the Kirklees schools they provided a quality assurance model in preparation for Ofsted. • The external reviews from Oasis provided an additional layer of scrutiny and the next round of reviews would take place in June. • Leadership changes were noted in the report. The new Deputy Headteacher at Enrich would mainly be based at the Enterprise site. There were now two SENCos in Wakefield rather than an Executive SENCo across the two schools and the SENCo at Enrich had strengthened the school's senior leadership team (SLT). • Interviews were due to take place for two Assistant Headteachers at Elements; one for curriculum and one for inclusion. There had been 25 applicants in total. • Following the resignation of Danny Ross as School Improvement Officer, the structure of the School Improvement Team was being reconsidered in consultation with Headteachers and further input would be needed from the new CEO and CEo once they were in post.	

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- The RSBs had highlighted differences between Elements and Elevate, with Elevate lagging behind on robust systems. This would change under the leadership of the new Headteacher.
- Behaviour incidents had declined throughout the year across all settings. This was usual as pupils settled during the year and work was focused on their SEND supported by transition and induction.

Action 4.1: Add RSB updates to L&A agenda.

MN /
KH

Trustees asked for an update on SEF judgements for the schools currently in the Ofsted window.

RS and KH responded as follows.

- Engage was pitching as “strong” in four areas and “expected” in one. There needed to be more robust evidence of achievement measured against national standards.
- Reach was confident of meeting “expected” standard in all areas but it was hoped they could achieve “strong” in some areas following their significant school improvement journey, subject to robust evidence.
- Ethos College posed the biggest risk out of the Kirklees schools, mainly due to leadership changes over the last 2 years. The school pitched itself “strong” in four areas and “expected” in two. This had previously been the outstanding school and more focused work was required.
- There was more work to do on the Elements SEF but it was not currently in the Ofsted window.
- Following a robust conversation with TG, which was followed up with the Headteacher, Enrich was trying to build a solid evidence base. Historical issues relating to staff culture remained a concern. Leadership and management and personal development were evaluated as “needs attention” but had developed some strengths. Inclusion and curriculum and teaching would be evaluated as “needs attention” and the new Headteacher had taken responsibility for teaching and learning in order to improve this. Achievement would still be rated as “urgent attention”, although students had been entered for more qualifications and had access to double the amount of subjects. Attendance and behaviour had improved but not near enough to where it needed to be. Safeguarding would be confidently met.

Trustees asked for assurance about safeguarding at Elements.

RS confirmed that some follow up work was required to rectify attendance coding and she planned to carry out a deep dive on safe and well checks, which would be recorded in the next RSB minutes.

Trustees asked why Elements was regarded as having strong relational practice whilst there was instability of staffing.

The Executive Team responded as follow.

- The staff that were attending regularly were performing well but it was important to ensure there were enough of them to move the school forward.

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	- Elements had had operated without a Deputy Head for Quality of Education so far but would be moving to a new model with two Deputy Heads and two Assistant Headteachers, which would stabilise leadership. - The new Elements Headteacher was already having a handover with the Interim Head ready for September. Action 4.2: TG to hold a mock Ofsted call with Matt Allison and Kate Hewson for Enrich.	TG
5	People & Culture Update The COO reported on People & Culture as follows. - Following the departure of Lesley Conway (People & Culture Lead) and Shelley Brydon (Senior HR Advisor), earlier in the year, the workload had increased and become increasingly operational meaning that long-term strategic changes could not take place during spring term. - Jane Burton has stepped up in the short term as HR Lead. - Agency support had been enlisted to support with HR in the short-term and interviews would be held for the Senior HR Advisor post next week. - The COO was looking at job layouts and task layouts ready to plan for September. - Limitations with the We are Every reporting system being used for HR was preventing the Trust from improving its reporting. This was a priority for the COO. The Chair recorded his thanks to the COO and JB for their hard work on appeals and navigating the challenging relationships with union reps. The COO noted that JB was doing an exceptional job. <u>EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Report</u> The COO had provided a mid-period update against Trust's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion objectives for 2025-2027, as outlined in the Trust Equality Policy approved in July 2025. Key points were as follows. - Due to the nature of the Trust, EDI was at its core. - Workload had prevented a comparison of data but this would be presented during the next academic year at the People & Culture Committee. - An EDI assessment as part of internal audit, as not completed this since 2023. - As the threshold for gender pay gap reporting was 250 staff and the Trust currently employed 248 staff, the COO would start to report on this as a matter of course. Trustees thanked the COO for his thorough report and had the following questions and comments. Concern about spending time on data reporting at the detriment of delivering the EDI objectives. What the intended outcomes of the report were and the importance of employing the best people for the job irrespective of EDI makeup. The COO responded as follows. - With a better HR system data could be generated more easily.	

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	The purpose of the EDI report was for the Trust to measure itself against national benchmarks and to reassure Trustees that it was not out of sync with any demographic. EDI reporting was a statutory requirement and the Trust did not sit outside of any national standards.	
6	Committee Update & Impact	
	- The People & Culture Committee had been temporarily disbanded due to a lack of quorum and a limited number of Trustees. - The Learning & Achievement Committee had not yet met this term and was due to meet mid-June. PM provided the following FARC update - An 800k surplus outturn was predicted for the end of 2025/26 excluding capital expenditure and all schools were showing a surplus excluding central recharges. - There was a predicted deficit in 3-4 years deficit but this was being monitored through budget planning. - The aim was to reduce the surplus in the coming years and the COO would be producing detailed capital expenditure budgets for the next five years to prioritise spending. - H&S was a priority focus for the COO and there was now more assurance following the Crysp audits and internal audits. £1.2m capital works would be carried out at Elements over the summer.	
7	Policies & Statutory Documents	
	Progress against the Equality Policy objectives had been noted under item 5 and the current Equality Policy remained valid until July 2027.	
8	Confidential Update on CEO Recruitment	
	<i>[This section has been redacted and included in a separate set of confidential minutes]</i>	
9	Any Other Urgent Business	
	<u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the following changes to Committee membership. Sally Bridges-Wickham and Craig Fawcett (Co-opted Committee Member) would move from the People & Culture Committee to the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee in the short-term until further Trustees with a finance background were recruited. Trustees thanked the Chair for his hard work in recent months and in challenging circumstances. The Chair thanked all Trustees for their support, noting the increased workload. There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 16:50.	
10	Date of Next Meeting	
	11 June 2026 at 15:30 via MS Teams.	

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Action Points

- Action 4.1: Add RSB updates to L&A agenda.
- Action 4.2: TG to hold a mock Ofsted call with Matt Allison and Kate Hewson for Enrich
- *[Item redacted and included in a separate set of confidential minutes]*

Responsibility

MN / KH

TG

Deadline

20/05/2026

22/05/2026