

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
via MS Teams

Present:	Lloyd Nolan (LN)	Chair & Trustee
	Tracey Greenough (TG)	Trustee (items 1-7)
	Sally Henshall (SH)	Trustee
	Phil Mellor (PM)	Trustee
	Sally Peedle (SP)	Trustee
In Attendance:	Chris Davis (CD)	CEO (items 1-9)
	Kate Hewson (KH)	Chief Education Officer (items 1-7 & 9)
	Callum Priestley (CP)	COO (items 1-7 & 9)
	Victoria Evans (VE)	CFO (items 4-7 & 9)
	Rebecca Smith (RS)	Executive Head (items 1-7 & 9)
	Matthew Knox (MK)	Incoming Interim CEO (items 1-9)
	Melanie Nightingale (MN)	Clerk to the Board

Item		Action
1	Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest	
	- Apologies were received and accepted from Sally Bridges-Wickham. - Victoria Evans was on a briefing about the teachers' pay award and would join the meeting later. - Matthew Knox, CEO of Inspire Partnership Multi Academy Trust, was welcomed to the meeting as Interim CEO of Ethos from September 2026 and introductions were made. - Declarations of Interest: The Clerk declared that she was also the Clerk for Inspire Partnership MAT. Sally Henshall declared that she worked for Matthew Knox at Inspire.	
2	Previous Minutes & Matters Arising	
	<u>Resolved:</u> The minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2026 were agreed as an accurate record. All previous actions had been completed and matters arising were noted as follows. - TG reported on the mock Ofsted call with Enrich during which the SEF (self-evaluation form) had been updated. This had been very helpful prior to the Ofsted visit. KH recorded her thanks to TG on behalf of the Executive Team and senior leaders for her support with Ofsted preparation. - The Chair reported that the substantive CEO vacancy would close at 9am on 3 July and there were currently 14 applicants.	
3	CEO Report	
	The CEO highlighted key points from his report as follows. The Enrich Ofsted outcome was fair and recognised that robust action has been taken, and that improvements had been made from the school's very low start position. Safeguarding was met and there were more items needing attention than urgent improvement. Ofsted commented that they could see the process of school improvement and that the urgent improvement areas would expectedly be seen next.	

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
via MS Teams

	- There would be additional support for Enrich in the form of RISE (Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence) funding, external support from another Trust and a linked HMI (His Majesty's Inspector). Ironically, Ethos had proactively requested this from the DFE 12 months ago, but was informed we needed an Inspection report to allocate external support. - The CEO recorded his thanks to Tracey Greenough for Ofsted support and to Oasis Academy Trust for their external support. - The follow up meeting from the ERG (external review of governance) found significant steps have been taken to strengthen governance at all levels - 90% of the actions completed. Remaining areas for development were induction training for Trustees, succession planning for the Chair and recruitment of Trustees from under-represented communities. - The relationship with Unison had now improved following a lot of input from the Executive Team and SLT. - Senior appointments for September 2026 were David Bisley (Elements Headteacher), Stephen Plume (Executive Head for Wakefield and Rotherham) and Matthew Knox (Interim CEO). Induction and handover was underway for these roles. As this was his last Board meeting as the CEO, CD recorded his thanks as follows - Graham Dewhirst, former Chair, for his support, which had been greatly appreciated. - Lloyd Nolan, current Chair, for stepping up readily to the Chair role and for his commitment to Ethos. - Mel Nightingale, Clerk, for governance support. - The full Board of Trustees for their input and support. The Chair thanked the CEO on behalf of the Board. He reassured the Board that he was reviewing Trustee induction and training. Trustee recruitment had proved challenging but LN had details of some potential candidates to circulate to Trustees for discussion and recommendation to Members. He asked colleagues to put forward suitable candidates with a business / non-educational background. The Chair requested the final report from the ERG reviewer. Action 3.1: CEO to provide the final ERG report to the Clerk for circulation to Trustees.	CD
4	Finance Update The CFO joined the call at the beginning of this item and requested the following approvals from Trustees. - Approval of the final budget for 2026/27 and medium-term financial forecast following scrutiny and recommendation by the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee (FARC). - Approval of a temporary 8.4% central services contribution for 2026/27 following recommendation by FARC. The CFO highlighted key points from her budget report as follows. - It was a balanced budget with a 2.8% surplus	

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
 Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
 via MS Teams

	• Conscious decisions had been made to increase staffing as a commitment to school improvement and this had reduced temporary staffing expenditure and vacancy gaps. • The budget supported the reinvestment of the surplus into the estate, including digital infrastructure. • The proposed central service contribution was the reintroduction of a previous charge and was recommended as best practice by the SRMA (School Resource Management Advisor) review. • The medium-term forecast showed that the Trust was financially sustainable throughout with the surplus reducing over time, reflecting an increase in costs and reduction in income. This did not currently include the SRMA recommendations or potential growth of the Trust. • The new school support grant announced by the government would provide a 1.7% contribution to teachers' pay and 1.5% to support staff. These figures were not incorporated into the budget and would improve the surplus. • Trustees were asked to note the reserves strategy. • Further guidance was awaited regarding the reduction of the employers' pension contribution for teachers. Funding would decrease in line with this but would have no impact on costs. There was some discussion about whether an additional Board meeting would be required in September to review any further changes to the budget following government guidance on the school support grant and the proposed reduction of the employer's contribution to teachers' pensions. The BFR (budget forecast return) submission had been extended to the end of September to allow time for this additional information to be factored in but Trustees agreed that the budget could be approved in principle, subject to further changes being circulated via email for approval. <u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the budget for 2026/27 and the medium-term forecast, subject to changes being reported on employer's pension contributions for teachers and the impact of the schools support grant. <u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the temporary central service charges of 8.4% for 2026/27. <u>Note:</u> Sally Bridges-Wickham had provided her approval of the budget and service charge via email prior to the meeting. The CEO and the Board of Trustees recorded their thanks to the CFO for all her hard work on the budget.	
5	School Improvement Updates, including Enrich Update Kate Hewson, Chief Education Officer, highlighted key points from her report as follows. <u>Enrich Ofsted outcome</u> • Judgements were in line with the SEF. • Safeguarding was identified as a strength but must remain at the forefront. • Attendance and behaviour remained key improvement priorities.	

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
via MS Teams

- Achievement had not yet demonstrated sufficient impact due to cohort complexity and attendance challenges.
- Attendance was improving, including persistent absence rates.
- Teaching quality and adaptive practice remained areas for development.
- Ofsted were assured that Trustees had a good understanding of the school
- Personal development was recognised.
- The official report not expected until September.
- KH recorded her thanks to the Wakefield LA for their support.

Trust-wide QA findings for the other schools

QA summaries of RSBs (Raising Standards Boards) and external Oasis reviews were included for all of the schools as background information. Rebecca Smith (RS), Executive Head, reported on the key points.

- Robust internal QA was carried out at RSBs (Raising Standards Boards), which had been welcomed by Headteachers.
- Leadership stability had improved.
- Curriculum development was a strength.
- Attendance remained a major strategic risk and had an impact on outcomes. Thanks were recorded to Sam Crossley, for his work on attendance systems.
- Assessment systems required further strengthening.
- Quality assurance processes were not yet fully consistent across all schools.
- Inclusive practice is at the forefront of the schools.
- Safeguarding was strong across all schools.

Trustees had the following comments and questions about school improvement.

- **Individual school RAG ratings would be helpful for the first Learning & Achievement Committee of the next academic year.**
- **Whether RSBs were achieving their intended purpose, if they would continue in the same format and if they needed to be reshaped.**

The Executive Team responded as follows.

- Ofsted areas for improvement had been incorporated into the agenda plan for next academic year. School development plans and the SEF for all schools would need to be reviewed at the next L&A meeting.
- RSBs had been an incredible success and had fed into school development plans. Feedback on improvements to the RSB format was welcomed and their continuation in either the same or a different format would be dependent on the new leadership.
- The remaining members of the Executive Team would work with the interim CEO on the format of RSBs and the structure of the School Improvement Team. It might be helpful to link Headteachers up with other schools in the Trust to share good practice and experience. MK noted that he would like to gain a better understanding of RSBs and would be happy to continue with them if they were working well.

Action 5.1: School development plans and SEF for all schools, including RAG ratings, to be included on the autumn Learning & Achievement agenda.

MN

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
 Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
 via MS Teams

	RS recorded her thanks to KH for leading the SI team, which had been transformational, along with the RSBs.	
6	Summer Capital Planning	
	It was ratified that Trustees had provided approval via email in June 2026 for the following capital works to commence during the summer holidays. • Confirm release of the previously approved Trust contribution of £218k towards the £891k CIF project to install an air source heat pump (ASHP) at Elements Academy, which had already been budgeted within the Trust's medium-term financial plan. • Capital improvement works to the value of £656k at Enrich Academy (Crofton and Enterprise sites) to include CCTV systems, electronic gates, anti-climb system, perimeter fencing and separate staff and pupil • Capital works at Evolve Academy for KS1 expansion funded by the Wakefield LA. The COO thanked Trustees for their support with the approval of capital projects and provided further updates as follows. • IT improvements, particularly to the Wifi, remained on the risk register for Elements and was now planned for October half term, as the roof work as part of the ASHP project needed to be completed first. • Device ratios for IT needed to improve at Enrich to bring it in line with the DfE core digital standards. • Capital works would be required at Reach Academy; staff room renovation, improvement of central space and IT equipment. • As discussed and recommended at FAR, Trustees were asked to approve a provisional capital budget of £456k for the 2026/27 academic year. This budget had been calculated using the Trust's current financial forecast and was subject to confirmation through the Trust's statutory year-end accounts. The COO would prepare an estates strategy to priorities projects against this provisional capital budget. <u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the provisional capital budget of £456k for the 2026/27 academic year. There was some discussion about a more robust due diligence process when onboarding new schools in future to ensure that capital improvement was identified at the start via thorough condition surveys. The perimeter fencing at Enrich (Crofton site) was an example of remedial work not being identified at the outset and the COO was negotiating with the LA to secure additional funds.	
7	Committee Update & Impact	
	<i>TG left during this item at 17:00</i> Updates were provided by Committee Chairs as follows. <u>Finance, Audit & Risk Committee</u> • The focus was on the budget and forecast. The five year forecast currently showed a deficit in year five but PM reassured Trustees that this position would be closely	

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
 Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
 via MS Teams

monitored and FARC Trustees were confident that with advanced planning a deficit position was unlikely to be reached.

- Thanked the COO for his hard work on the estates and the plans he was putting in place in conjunction with the CFO to ensure affordability.
- More thorough due diligence prior to making decisions to onboard new schools had been discussed.
- An increase in PAN (published admission numbers) at Ethos College and associated staffing increases had been discussed but further information had been requested prior to making a decision.
- There was a reasonable surplus and best use of this was being prioritised, e.g. capital works.

Ethos College Expansion

The Chair invited RS to provide further information about the business case to increase the PAN at Ethos College from 42 to 47 and recruit a SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) Teacher with a TLR (teaching and learning responsibility) for Deputy SENDCo (Special Educational needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator) and one Inclusion Worker. RS reported as follows.

- Ethos College had exceeded PAN by 6 pupils during 2025/26. Exceeding PAN by 3-6 pupils been a trend in recent years and was expected to continue
- The bulk of places were commissioned by Kirklees but some were kept for out of area pupils.

The Chair explained the concerns raised in discussion at FARC about employing additional teachers to support the increase in PAN if there was a risk of the places not being filled and asked if there was commitment from Kirklees to fill the places.

RS provided further information as follows.

- Kirklees would take all the places if needed but out of area places and the potential redesignation of the school needed to be considered.
- There were a high number of consultations for 42 places. Ethos exceed PAN every year and had managed to accommodate the addition pupils. Additional staff were requested to provide consistent quality without using supply.
- The school could be directed to take additional pupils with an EHCP even if it was full therefore increasing PAN would provide stability.

The PAN had been increased at Reach Academy earlier in the year for the same reason and the proposed increase in PAN at Ethos College would ensure the smooth transition of pupils from Reach to Ethos.

Resolved: Trustees approved the increase in PAN at Ethos College from 42 to 47 and the recruitment of one SEND Teacher with a TLR for Deputy SENDCo and one Inclusion Worker.

Learning & Achievement Committee

- Enrich Ofsted preparations had been discussed.
- There were some inconsistencies in leadership across the Trust.
- Pressure on the workforce with the impending change of leadership and its effect on school improvement was discussed.

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
 Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
 via MS Teams

	- Pupil voice was reviewed and how to improve engagement, e.g. fewer questions more frequently. - The balance between keeping information strategic whilst having information on each school was noted. The Chair thanked both Committee Chairs for their hard work this academic year.	
8	Governance Update The Clerk provided a verbal update as follows. - The appointment of a Link Safeguarding Trustee and Parent Trustee was required to replace Rebecca Richards following her resignation. These appointments could take place at the September meeting and the Chair of Trustees would be the safeguarding contact in the meantime. - The appointment of an Interim Vice Chair was required to replace Sally Henshall who would need to step back from being an active Trustee while Matthew Knox was in post as Interim CEO. PM agreed to be Vice Chair for the autumn term <u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the appointment of Phil Mellor as Interim Vice Chair for the autumn term. - Chair of the Learning & Achievement Committee – a temporary replacement would be required for Sally Henshall in the autumn term. SP agreed to cover the Learning & Achievement Committee Chair role for a term. <u>Resolved:</u> Trustees approved the appointment of Sally Peedle as Interim Chair of the Learning & Achievement Committee for the autumn term. - Board Effectiveness Review 2026 – the ERG was the main vehicle for review this year and an internal review would take place next year. 2026/27 Governance Meeting Dates and Agenda Plan – dates had been circulated and confirmed. Calendar invites would follow. The agenda plan had been drafted and would be shared with the Executive Team, Chair and Committee Chairs before summer. The Chair recorded his thanks to MK and CD, who left the meeting at the end of this item. The meeting moved to items 10 and 11.	
9	Any Other Urgent Business This item was discussed prior to item 8. - The Chair recorded his thanks to the Executive Team, central team and all colleagues within schools. A thank you email would be sent out via Emma Salter. - The Chair recorded his thanks to the Board of Trustees for all their hard work this academic year during challenging circumstances. - The Chair recorded his thanks on behalf of Board to the CEO and CEdO for their commitment to develop excellence at Ethos and noted that this was their last Board meeting.	

ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES
 Thursday 2 July 2026 at 4pm
 via MS Teams

	<i>The Executive Team, apart from CD and MK, left the meeting</i> The meeting continued from item 8	
10	Date of Next Meeting	
	Thursday 24 September 2026 at 4pm via MS Teams	
11	Confidential item: CEO Recruitment Update & reporting priorities for interim CEO	
	<i>[Item redacted and included in separate set of confidential minutes]</i>	

Action Points

- Action 3.1: CEO to provide the final ERG report to the Clerk for circulation to Trustees.
- Action 5.1: School development plans and SEF for all schools, including RAG ratings, to be included on the autumn Learning & Achievement agenda.
- *[Item redacted and included in separate set of confidential minutes]*
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Responsibility

Deadline

CD

17/07/2026

MN

01/10/2026