

Trust Board Confidential Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 11th February 2026 – Teams

Present: Paul Howieson (PH), Martin Copsey (MC) (Chair), Brendan Mullany (BM), Jo Levasier (JL) (part), Paul Chadwick (PC), Claire Lawrenson (CL), Les Lane (LL), James Mikolajewski (JM), Rod Woodford (RW) (part), Lucy Waterhouse (LW)

Apologies: John Varney (JV)

In Attendance: Sue Bennett (SEB) Minutes

		Action
5.	Strategy for Falling Role (document circulated with the agenda) <u>Applications for September 2026</u> • The number of children expected to join in September 2026 is projected to be over 60 fewer than originally planned. • The committee agreed on the need to continue monitoring pupil numbers at Heathlands. • Lulworth and Winfrith currently have only 6 children enrolled in reception; final numbers will not be confirmed until September 2026. • Pupil numbers at St George's and St Mark's are consistent with previous expectations, reinforcing that the current strategic direction is appropriate. <u>Trustee Questions / Comments</u> Trustees questioned how much confidence could be placed in the predicted pupil numbers. It was noted that, particularly at Old Town, there are fluctuations throughout the year as children join and leave, but the overall trend across the Borough is a decline in pupil numbers. Trustees asked whether there is a system to track the number of children joining during the school year. It was confirmed that this is monitored; currently, there are 31 first-choice applications, compared to around 54 in each of the past two years. <u>St George's and St Mark's</u> [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] There remains uncertainty regarding the future of the St George's site, and the committee acknowledged the need for further clarity. The working group will now revisit the financial implications and consider wider engagement strategies. The aim is to bring a proposal to the board for approval, likely in the first half of the summer term. The intention is to clarify the preferred way forward and begin the engagement process early in the next academic year.	

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	PH suggested that the St Mark's and St George's working group could broaden its remit to include significant changes related to falling rolls in Purbeck, encompassing Lulworth & Winfrith. <u>Trustee questions / comments</u> • The current working group is closely integrated with St Mark's and St George's, and I would recommend establishing a separate group for Lulworth & Winfrith. • The recent meeting was very productive, and I would support exploring further the inclusion of Lulworth & Winfrith in these discussions. • CL will attend the next working group meeting to review the process, which may inform the decision on whether to bring the two schools together. • It was highlighted that, while consultation materials may be shared, it is important to recognise the distinct nature of each school community. • The committee discussed the need for an engagement process that is adaptable to different situations. For St Mark's and St George's, the situation is different and will require a tailored approach. • It was agreed that, while a common framework is useful, each school's circumstances should be addressed individually. The next step is to invite one or two members from the LGB at Lulworth & Winfrith, along with a couple of trustees, to form a working group. PH will attend both groups to share learning and best practice. JL left the meeting.	
6.	Governance Overview (documents circulated with the agenda) PH informed trustees that, following a vacancy for one clerk , there is now an opportunity to review and potentially restructure governance arrangements across the Trust. The circulated document outlines a proposal for this governance restructure. The current position regarding the number of governors across the Trust is generally positive. It was noted that the Salisbury Diocese is piloting a new approach that would move away from the use of foundation governors, although this change is not expected to be implemented in the near future.	

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	<u>Trustee questions / comments</u> If Salisbury Diocese moves away from foundation governors, will Winchester Diocese do the same? It was clarified that this is unlikely, as the two dioceses operate under different frameworks. Trustees welcomed any opportunity to further clarify the roles and responsibilities of governors within schools, noting that terminology and role definition have been recurring topics of discussion over the years. The recent standardisation of Local Governing Body (LGB) agendas has helped to clarify the role and remit of the governing bodies. It was noted that, for former Voluntary Aided (VA) Church schools, a governing board typically needs to consist of 12 members to meet requirements. Trustees agreed that simply changing the title from 'local governors' does not necessarily alter the underlying role or responsibilities. There was consensus that more could be done to review and improve governance structures. The current situation presents an opportunity to redefine the role of governors, enabling them to have a more direct influence on the work of local governing bodies. Trustees agreed to continue exploring the role and function of the governing body in greater depth.	

Meeting closed at 9:00pm

Next meeting: Wednesday 25th March 2026 at the Central Offices, Heathlands School
(LL gave apologies for this meeting)