Minutes - Board of Directors

Version:	Approved
Meeting Date:	Thursday 18 June 2026
Location:	In person
Time:	4.00pm
Chairing this meeting	Amanda Coffey

Vice Chair:	Rachel Mortlock (RM)	Trustee
Trustees:	Mark Davies (MD)	Trustee
	Orville Lynch (OL)	Trustee
	Bryony French (BF)	Trustee
	Georgie Gough (GG)	Trustee
	Yvonne Beach (YB)	Trustee
	Nicky McAllister (NM)	Trustee
	Jemma Griffiths (JG)	Trustee
	Nitin Parmar (NP)	Trustee
	Amanda Coffey (ACY)	Trustee
	Sunchi Chen (SC)	Trustee
Attendees:	Adrian Coleman (ACO)	Observer
	Steve Taylor (ST)	CEO
	Sarah Lovell (SL)	COO
	Sally Apps (SA)	Deputy CEO
	Alison Fletcher (AFL)	Director, CLF Institute
	Helen Davis (HD)	Finance Director
	Liz Tincknell (LT)	Head of Governance
	Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk

Matters Arising

Action date and no	Item no	Action	Owner	Update
09.10.25 04	6.3	It was noted that the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Education Scrutiny Committee were not reviewed or approved. This will carry over to the next Education Scrutiny Committee prior to coming back to the board for approval.	WH LT	To be reviewed at the January Executive Scrutiny Co meeting. **Complete**
14.03.26 01	8.3	ST will share the letter confirming FVA's designation with the board.	ST	**Complete**
14.03.26 02	9.4.1	The full White Paper will be shared on Governor Hub, provided that the Governor Hub platform is designated to hold information categorised as 'official sensitive'.	ST	**Complete**
07.05.26 01	3.13.7	Consider the development of a trust policy or procedural guidance to ensure compliance in managing classified information. (ST LT)	LT	LT advised that the Information Governance Officer is leading on this and an update will be brought to the next meeting.

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
Part One	Trustees meet in private	
1.1	Trustees met in private to discuss the board papers and agree areas of focus before inviting Executive colleagues to join the meeting at 4.15pm.	
Part Two	Trustees and Executive Team	
2	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
2.1	RM welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
3	Election of Chair	
3.1	The clerk asked for nominations for the role of Chair. ACY was nominated by NM and seconded by RM. No further nominations were received. ACT left the meeting to allow a vote to take place. Trustees voted in favour of the proposal. ACY was elected as Chair until the board meeting of October 2027. RM passed the chairing of this meeting to ACY.	
4	Declarations of Interest	
4.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
5	Minutes of Previous Meetings	
5.1	Minutes of the meeting of 12 March 2026 and 7 May 2026 were approved.	
6	Matters Arising	
6.1	The action table has been updated above.	
6.2	NM asked for an update regarding the appointment of an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Lead. ST advised that budgeting for next year has led to a pause on central recruitment until school budget positions are confirmed, to ensure value for money is applied consistently across the central team. An appointment has been made within the HR team to replace a different colleague, with some overlap to EDI responsibilities, and SW is currently working with the new appointee. A decision on whether to replace the EDI Lead role will be made once the recruitment pause has lifted; it is unlikely to be a direct like for like replacement.	
6.3	ST advised that the CLF has been awarded the MAT Excellence award for its EDI work. ST noted that this reflects the work that took place last year but also builds on all the work that has happened over the last decade.	
7	Report from Education Scrutiny	
7.1	The reports from the Executive Scrutiny meeting of 1 April, and the Academy Scrutiny meetings of 19 March, 26 March and 21 May, are included as Flag C.	
8	Report on Safeguarding	
8.1	NM reported that she continues to meet regularly with SW, and there is strong evidence that safeguarding procedures are effective. A total of 41 reviews has been completed this year—36 within the trust and 5 in commissioned provision. These reviews are being analysed to identify key themes and inform training priorities for the coming year. An annual safeguarding report will be presented to the Board in October. A working group has also been established to consider the use of AI on websites.	
8.2	Work is ongoing in response to updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education, particularly in relation to the curriculum, including PSHE. There is also collaboration with the Youth Endowment Fund, with a focus on concerns around youth violence. The Trust continues to engage in extensive partnership work with other authorities. There remain ongoing concerns regarding the links between attendance and safeguarding. Tony Searle is currently reviewing local behavioural and cultural trends as part of this work, which remains in progress.	
8.3	**Questions from trustees**	
8.4	**The press has detailed news about the social media ban for young people under 16. Schools**	

	use YouTube in lessons and there is new government guidance around screen time for children under five. How are you taking this forward across the trust?	
8.4.1	All of the relevant guidance is being monitored, but it is too early to act as these are not yet statutory. Some schools are trialling phone pouches, though these are expensive and raise practical issues (e.g. insurance and safety risks), which are still being worked through.	
8.5	**Who leads on that from the trust point of view. Does it sit under IT or education?**	
8.5.1	Mobile phone use is primarily an educational issue, led by education leaders, and sits within wider behaviour policies. Approaches vary across schools, with phones generally expected to be out of sight, though exceptions exist due to parental concerns and safeguarding. The focus is on aligning any approach with educational priorities rather than leading with technology, given cost and implementation challenges.	
9	**Report from the CLF Institute (including Five Counties Teaching School Hub, SCITT, Boolean Maths Hub)**	
9.1	AFL provided an update on the CLF Institute. The SCITT operates with its own board, which meets regularly to scrutinise its work. AFL reports into this board, providing headline updates, including recruitment for the upcoming year and the number of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) progressing into roles both within the Trust and beyond. AFL confirmed that following the Ofsted inspection in March, the report has now been published, and it can be shared and quoted from.	
9.2	**Questions from Trustees**	
9.3	**There appears to be a reduction in advertised teaching posts. Is this a concern, and does it reflect budgetary constraints or subject-specific factors?**	
9.3.1	It is important to strike a balance between being ambitious with recruitment and being realistic about trainees securing employment, alongside schools being able to offer high-quality placements. There has been a shift in employability, with schools being more cautious; posts are often not advertised until schools are certain they will be filled. In some cases, recruitment is undertaken collectively (pooled recruitment) before vacancies are fully confirmed.	
9.4	**How successful are trainees in securing employment?**	
9.4.1	Where trainees secure interviews, most are successful on their first attempt. However, many begin in temporary, fixed-term, or agency roles before permanent positions become available. Looking ahead, recruitment targets need to reflect market conditions. For example, the bursary structure in secondary education influences application levels by subject. Some subjects, such as PE, are oversubscribed with fewer available roles. In response, trainees may be encouraged to develop a second subject (e.g. Maths or Computing) to enhance employability. The Institute works closely with schools across the Trust and beyond to identify and signpost vacancies, which can also support cost efficiencies for schools.	
9.5	**Do you support trainees during the application process?**	
9.5.1	Initial applications can be of variable quality, with gaps or incomplete sections. To address this, trainees are given dedicated preparation time in January, including a week focused on applications. They receive feedback on draft application forms and complete a model application for a notional CLF role. While this is not always tailored to a specific academy, it provides a strong foundation. This approach was recognised positively in the Ofsted inspection report.	
9.6	End of Questions	
9.7	MD noted that the Board is highly supportive of the strong learning environment and recognised the significance of the recent Ofsted outcome, which rated the provision as Outstanding. This was acknowledged as an exceptional achievement.	
10	**Strategic Developments**	
10.1	**CEO Report**	

10.1.1	**Assessments** The GCSE examination period concluded on Monday, with Year 10 mock examinations commencing shortly thereafter. Year 12 mock examinations have also commenced. There continues to be a significant volume of assessment activity within primary phases, including ongoing writing assessments (to be externally moderated), Early Years analysis, and the administration of the Multiplication Tables Check (MTC).	
10.1.2	Within specialist provision, a record number of pupils are undertaking examinations this year. Pupils have access to a broader suite of Key Stage 4 qualifications than previously, ensuring that, while not all pupils sit GCSEs, all have access to appropriate and meaningful qualification pathways. It was noted that the Trust does not implement examination leave for Year 11 students. Staff continue to support and encourage pupils throughout the examination period, with the view that retaining students in school supports effective revision and preparation and reflects the Trust's duty of care.	
10.2	**Update on the Development of the CLF Strategy for 2026-2027**	
10.2.1	The CEO introduced the CLF Strategy 2030 (Flag E), which is aligned to the Trust's mission and core purpose. The strategy is structured around three core themes: people, partnerships, and disadvantage. Each year of the strategy is accompanied by a distinct focus and strapline. Year 3 of the strategy (2024/25), themed Fulfilling Promise, focused on improving outcomes for pupils experiencing disadvantage. This approach emphasised the use of asset-based language and reflected the Board's agreed priority to focus explicitly on disadvantage ahead of the wider cohort. This work has had a moderate level of success.	
10.2.2	In the current year, the focus has shifted to investing in people, with an increased emphasis on inclusion and "inclusive excellence", underpinned by high expectations and strong outcomes comparable with national peers. This has been supported by a set of explicit objectives and targets, as outlined in the accompanying paper at Flag F. Staff feedback mechanisms continue to provide valuable insight into workforce perceptions, including views on the Trust as a place to work. A pan-Trust staff survey is planned for the coming year to strengthen engagement and ensure all voices are heard, particularly where there may be limited confidence in existing channels.	
10.2.3	A strategic review is scheduled for 9 July, at which the plan for the forthcoming year will be presented for Board review and approval. While it had previously been intended to move the strategic focus to partnerships, it has been agreed to maintain a focus on people, with a revised and developed approach rather than a continuation of existing activity. Building on earlier work to define disadvantage, the Trust will now further explore concepts of belonging and mattering as part of this continued focus on people.	
10.2.4	ST also provided updates on the Department for Education (DfE) White Paper, wider sector developments, and emerging discussions across the Trust regarding the "social soil" that underpins organisational culture.	
10.2.5	ST outlined Year 5 of the strategy, Thriving Together (2026/27), as detailed in Flag F and invited questions from trustees.	
10.2.6	Questions from trustees	
10.2.7	**How are you responding to concerns about staff experience and the wider life context for individual members of staff?**	
10.2.8	We recognise that messaging has not always reflected colleagues' wider life context. We are placing greater emphasis on community, belonging and reducing isolation, aligning this with our core values and mission of "togetherness."	
10.2.9	**How are relationships with the unions? How are you supporting staff and managing pressures?**	
10.2.10	We are facing increasingly challenging union activity, which can be intimidating for leaders. We are working with sector leaders nationally to anticipate and mitigate this, while supporting our own staff and maintaining constructive engagement where possible. The HR team is under a lot	

	of pressure; it can be a challenging work environment and there has been some turnover in the team. Additional pressures have come from the increased use of AI, particularly around its ability to generate legal language. The number of grievances seen across the trust has increased; this is not solely due to union activity but adds to the complex and challenging picture. We are investing in our people, including supporting leaders under pressure, strengthening HR capacity, and responding to increased grievances and workload challenges. We are also mindful of external pressures such as cost of living and the impact of AI on casework.	
10.2.11	**What are you doing to support parent engagement?**	
10.2.12	We are actively engaging parents, recognising their importance as partners. While relationships vary across communities, we are adapting our approach to build trust and ensure parents understand and support the work of schools. We have good experience of building relationships with communities; Tewkesbury Academy is a good example of some excellent work whereby some parents that were extremely unhappy with the school are now the school's biggest advocates.	
10.2.13	**What is the impact of industrial action?**	
10.2.14	We are monitoring the impact, which has so far been limited in overall days lost but significant in affected schools. There are wider financial and community implications, and we are engaging staff openly about these impacts to build understanding. This week we have received notification of 4 strike days that will take place at HWA and there are a potential further 5 days. We will ensure staff and parents are well supported and clearly communicated to throughout this challenging time.	
10.2.15	**Are you working with others on these challenges?**	
10.2.16	Yes, we are collaborating with other trusts and national groups to share learning and respond collectively, although we are among the first to experience some of these issues at this scale.	
10.2.17	**Why are you continuing to focus on "people" in the strategy?**	
10.2.18	We believe focusing on colleagues is critical to improving schools overall. Strengthening culture, belonging and leadership will underpin success in other areas, and we are prioritising this over expanding into additional strands at this stage.	
10.2.19	**How will you demonstrate impact?**	
10.2.20	We are working to define clearer metrics and indicators of success, while recognising the complexity of measuring cultural change. This will include both qualitative and quantitative measures, with further detail to be shared in July.	
10.2.21	End of Questions	
10.2.22	Trustees were asked to approve the general direction of travel in relation to the CLF strategy for 2026/27. Further detail will be brought to the strategic board meeting of 9 July, where trustees will then be asked to approve the final version of the strategy. <u>Decision:</u> The board approved the general direction of travel for the CLF strategy for 2026/27 as set out at Flag F.	
10.3	**Mitton Manor**	
10.3.1	**The Board of Trustees are asked to consider the due diligence, note the risks identified and subsequent mitigations and approve Mitton Manor to join the CLF on a transfer date to be confirmed in the 2026/27 academic year.**	
10.3.2	SL highlighted key elements of the paper at Flag G: • The trust went through a significant period of growth two years ago; since then, the desire to grow has been focused on growing within the 5 clusters. • Mitton Manor Primary school is in Tewkesbury and presents an opportunity to grow the Gloucestershire cluster. • Mitton Manor is a Single Academy Trust. In December 2025, Mitton Manor trustees made the decision to proceed with formal due diligence with a view to transferring to CLF. Due diligence took place between January and March 2026.	

	• Key risks are around estates and finances as detailed in Flag G; there are other risks that the trust is able to mitigate. • The proposal was discussed at the Growth Committee meeting that took place in May. • MD, Chair of the Growth Committee, confirmed the committee members were supportive of the approach. An action from the Growth Committee was to present a further paper to trustees; this paper is included in the pack at Flag G. • The proposal is that the school will transition into the trust in the new calendar year (2027). • MD highlighted the discussion that took place at the Growth Committee meeting around the potential response to the transition from members of the community that are not happy with the challenges at Tewkesbury Academy. Growth Committee members stressed the need for a clear communications plan should the transfer be approved.	
10.3.3	**Questions from trustees**	
10.3.4	**There is a financial risk due to the projected three-year budget deficit. Have you modelled finances going forward to understand if you can reduce this figure? Do the CLF budget projections shared with trustees already account for the impact of the transfer of Mitton Manor?**	
10.3.4.1	We have modelled the staffing against the pupil projections. There is minimum budget for maintenance, and in addition, the heating systems needs to be replaced. This means the only area we can consider is the staffing element and will look at fixed term contracts in place whilst also ensuring the school can manage from an education delivery perspective. The CLF budgets do not include any reference to Mitton Manor and will not do so prior to transfer. Mitton Manor does have some reserves, and this will support the financial situation. Mitton Manor is currently a single academy trust, and this is more costly to run than one school; there will be potential further savings once the transfer, if approved, takes place.	
10.3.5	<u>Decision:</u> The board approved the transfer of Mitton Manor into the CLF with a transfer date in the 2026/27 academic year to be confirmed.	
11	**Finance**	
11.1	**Finance Report**	
11.1.1	HD referenced the Finance Report at Flag H, highlighting one further update since the paper was written. The Virgin bank account has been closed and the money reinvested at a better interest rate.	
11.2	**Questions from trustees**	
11.3	**BF and ACO have spent time reviewing the catering and cleaning contract. Has that been built into the budget presented?**	
11.3.1	The budget includes an estimate. The final figures have now been confirmed, and they will now be included in the budget; it is a very small difference in terms of cost.	
11.4	BF thanked HD and her team for their diligent work on preparing the budget. The board echoed this.	
12	**Reports from Sub-committees**	
12.1	**Audit and Risk Committee**	
12.1.1	A report from the most recent Audit and Risk committee meeting is included at Flag I. GG confirmed that a discussion had taken place around the delivery of the internal audit contract. There were no questions from trustees.	
12.2	**Remuneration Committee**	
12.2.1	This committee has not met since the last board meeting.	
12.3	**Growth Committee**	

12.3.1	The report from the most recent Growth Committee meeting is included at Flag J. The main item was the Mitton Manor proposal as discussed at item 10.3. There were no questions from trustees.	
12.4	**People Committee**	
12.4.1	The People Committee have met very recently, and the written report will be presented to the next board meeting. JG provided a verbal update, confirming the committee members had seen good progress to the HR plan, had discussed diversity in terms of recruitment and retention, and had discussed the mechanism of closing the loop when feedback is provided from panel meetings. There were no questions from trustees.	
12.5	**Operations Committee**	
12.5.1	The Operations Committee report is included in the pack at Flag K. ACO highlighted that H&S has now transitioned into the Operations function this year. A positive discussion had taken place around the Health and Safety (H&S) policy, with a focus on ensuring clarity and ACO noted the policy is included in the papers for approval at this meeting. Accident data was reviewed at the meeting with it recognised that there have been a relatively high number of reported incidents, with 21,000 accidents recorded year to date—an increase of 9% compared to the previous year. While this is a significant figure, it requires appropriate context. It is not yet clear whether the rise is attributable to the growth in the size of the organisation or to specific emerging themes. Developing a clearer understanding of trends within the data is an ongoing area of focus.	
12.6	**Finance Committee**	
12.6.1	The Finance Committee report is included at Flag L. BF confirmed that committee members had reviewed the management accounts and the budget information. A discussion around the fall in pupil numbers, and action taken by the trust to mitigate this, took place.	
12.7	**Sub-Committee Feedback**	
12.7.1	Trustees discussed challenges in interpreting risk registers across different committees, noting a lack of clarity in distinguishing key risks and understanding how they are mitigated. There was a suggestion to provide a clearer structure, potentially including an overview identifying whether risks are strategic or operational and where accountability sits. It was also highlighted that, where risks sit outside of tolerance, there needs to be consideration of how long this is acceptable and whether escalation is required.	
12.7.2	SL acknowledged the feedback and agreed that greater clarity in the presentation of risk information is needed. SL noted that a recent internal audit confirmed that risk management processes are effective and that risks are being appropriately identified and managed. The focus going forward will be on improving how this information is presented and explained to the Board, with further proposals to be brought back for consideration.	
12.7.3	**ACTION: SL will consider the framework and presentation of risk registers to ensure trustees have greater clarity in the management of risk within the trust.**	SL
12.7.4	GG noted that there is also some work underway by the governance team around membership and quoracy of the sub-committees.	
13	**Reports from Reference Groups - Chairs of Academy Council (COAC) and partnership groups**	
13.1	The report from the COAC reference group is included at Flag M. There were no questions from trustees.	
13.2	JG asked if the parent reference group and partnership reference group were ready to launch. LT advised that parent representatives from across each of the clusters and phases are currently being approached, as is the partnership manager. Both reference groups should be operational by the new academic year.	
14	**Reports from Local Governing Bodies**	
14.1	**Academy Councils**	
14.1.1	Updates provided via the COAC report at item 13.1 above.	
14.2	**Boolean Maths Hub Board**	

14.2.1	An update on the Boolean Maths Hub is included in the CLF Institute report.	
14.3	**Five Counties SCITT Board**	
14.3.1	An update on the Five Counties SCITT Board is included in the CLF Institute report.	
15	**Governance**	
15.1	**Governance Report**	
15.1.1	LT advised that the Governance Report is included at Flag N for information.	
15.2	**Policies for approval**	
15.2.1	Trustees approved the following policies: • Positive Handling and Physical Intervention Policy • Data Protection Policy • CLF Health and Safety Policy • CLF Academy Health and Safety Policy • CLF Education Visits policy (New policy replacing guidance)	
15.2.2	RM advised that she has some feedback regarding the CLF Supporting Pupils with medical needs and Intimate Care Policy and shared this with LT. The policy was not approved and will be reviewed before being resubmitted to the board for approval at the next meeting. **ACTION: The CLF Supporting Pupils with medical needs and Intimate Care Policy will be further reviewed and brought to the strategic board meeting in July for approval.**	**LT**
Part Three	**Risk** (Executive colleagues, with the exception of the CEO, Deputy CEO, COO and Clerk, left for this part of the meeting)	
15	**Risk Report**	
15.1	The risk report is included at Flag O. SL highlighted the 3 main risks identified in the report: Attendance, Finance and Industrial Relations.	
15.2	YB highlighted that, in relation to financial risk, it is important to recognise that the Trust currently has sufficient funds to meet its essential needs, though not all desired activities. She noted the Board's role in understanding the level of risk within this context and gaining appropriate assurance.	
15.3	SL acknowledged this and indicated she would provide further detail when presenting the next budget. SL noted that the financial position varies across the Trust, with efforts made to balance pressures between schools. Central contributions have been flexed to better support smaller schools. While this is currently most evident in the primary sector, similar pressures are expected to emerge in secondary, with ongoing management focused on prioritisation.	
15.4	A discussion followed about how priorities vary across schools depending on context and community, particularly highlighting the increasing pressures in smaller primary settings where limited staffing and mixed-age classes can impact curriculum delivery and pupil experience. It was acknowledged that leaders are often required to make difficult decisions, sometimes choosing the "least worst" option in order to maintain a high-quality education, with fewer options available in primary compared to secondary settings. Trustees noted the importance of balancing immediate decisions with longer-term implications, recognising that demographic changes and funding pressures may influence future sustainability, even where current decisions are necessary. Recent funding changes, such as the removal of primary sports premium funding, were cited as examples of external pressures requiring rapid organisational response and reprioritisation.	
16	**Any Other Business**	
16.1	The draft agenda for the board briefing of 9 July 2026 is included for information at Flag P.	
16.2	ST provided a confidential update on the leadership of Lime Hills Academy and The Sky Academy.	

16.3	Following a question from NP, LT provided an update on trustee recruitment, noting that the board is expected to be at full complement by the start of the next academic year or very shortly after.	
16.4	The board joined ST in thanking ACO for his service as a trustee of the CLF over the last 8 years, recognising the huge contribution he has made to the board, sub-committees, working groups and to the strategic aims of the trust. ST confirmed that ACO has agreed to act as Chair of the Academy Council for Airfield Primary Academy.	
16.5	The meeting closed at 7.05pm.	

Actions to take forward

Action date and no	Item no	Action	Owner	Update
07.05.26 01	3.13.7	Consider the development of a trust policy or procedural guidance to ensure compliance in managing classified information. (ST LT)	LT	LT advised that the Information Governance Officer is leading on this and an update will be brought to the next meeting.
21.06.26 01	12.7.3	SL will consider the framework and presentation of risk registers to ensure trustees have greater clarity in the management of risk within the trust.	SL	
21.06.26 02	15.2.2	The CLF Supporting Pupils with medical needs and Intimate Care Policy will be further reviewed and brought to the strategic board meeting in July for approval.	LT	