

**Anglian Learning
Trust Board
Meeting Minutes**



11 March 2026

Trustees Present

Ken Murphy (KM Chair), Jon Culpin (JC CEO), Andy Brock (AB), Matthew Blake (MB), Andy Robinson (AR), Adeline Winshaw (AW), Sylke Scheiner (SS), Sabrina Ahmed (SA), Phil Caroe (PC), Annabel Curwen (AC) and John Morgan (JM)

Others Present

Stacie Cox (SC Financial Controller), James Mumford (JM CFO), Rachel James (RJ Head of Governance Support, Compliance and Risk)

| | ITEM | ACTION |
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| 1. | Acceptance of Apologies for Absence | |
| | There were no apologies for absence. | |
| 2. | Declarations of Interest with regard to agenda items | |
| | There were no declarations of interest. Trustees are reminded to complete a new form during the year if there are any updates with regards pecuniary interests. | |
| 3 | Agree minutes of last meeting and Matters arising not on this agenda | |
| | <p>Item 3a AL Board Meeting Minutes 16 Dec 2025.pdf Item 3b AL Board Meeting confidential Minutes 16 Dec 2025.pdf Trust Board Extra Ordinary Meeting 5 December 2025</p> <p>The minutes and confidential minutes from 16 December 2025 and the confidential minutes from the extra-ordinary meeting of 5 December 2025 were agreed as a true record.</p> <p>The KPIs had been discussed at Educational Standards Committee on 4 March 2026. The MIS system had moved to Bromcom which was not pulling the data through effectively. The KPI document would be shared w/c 16 March 2026 and would include attendance and exclusions.</p> <p>The trustees request for a dashboard with the direction of travel and benchmarking against similar Trusts should have been marked as an action in the minutes.</p> <p>A trustee requested that minutes were circulated once agreed by the chair. This would be completed for all committees.</p> <p>The actions from the extra -ordinary meeting had been completed.</p> | <p>JC</p> <p>JC</p> <p>RJa</p> |
| 4. | Finance | |
| | <p>Associated papers: Item 4a Period 4 and 5 Management Accounts 2025-26.pdf</p> <p>SC advised that the addition of four new schools in January significantly shifted the trust's financial figures, resulting in a budget deficit change of £198,000, which was previously approved by trustees. The revised budget</p> | |

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| | <p>now includes all 22 schools, and a new chart tracks monthly variations. There was a positive variance of £264,000 against the budget.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked why the figures in the budget had changed and whether the budget had changed. A The 4 Staploe schools were not in the December budget as they had not joined AL but we included in the January budget.</p> <p>The trustees asked for the variance chart to show £ as well as %.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked about supply costs and the correlation with substantive staff costs and the sustainability of the savings. A Every vacancy is approved by the executive team. Each contract is built into the system so the cost of vacancies is included in the budget. This could result in some savings.</p> <p>This would be discussed further at FEOC</p> <p>Q A trustee asked about the £60k for Bassingbourn and the cost of the pool repair at Sawston. A The LA has confirmed the payment of £60k for Bassingbourn which should be received in March. The Sawston leak will be reported to FEOC. The cost was not known as it depended on when the pool would need to be shut.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked about Marleigh finances A The Executive Head at Marleigh is determined to get the finances under control and is working very hard to achieve this.</p> <p>JMu added that the IMF calculator will be available in the next 2 weeks which could generate some additional income which is not in the budget.</p> <p>Work is being completed on the 2026/27 budgets. Schools are working hard to achieve a balanced budget but the delay in SEND funding is an issue in some cases.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if these schools had SEND funding agreed but not yet received and whether this will be backdated. A The local authority's lack of capacity, particularly in educational psychology and casework, is causing significant backlogs, with some pupils waiting over 50 weeks for assessment.</p> <p>The trustees asked for a list of all pupils in the schools who are behind in the EHCP process by 20, 30, 40, and 50 weeks, and what funding is owed for these cases.</p> <p>It was agreed that a governance day should be held in September. Sam Sadeghi from CST will be asked to lead this.</p> | <p>SC</p> <p>SC</p> <p>JC</p> <p>RJa</p> |
| <p>5.</p> | <p>Schools White Paper: initial overview and emerging implications</p> | |
| | <p>Associated papers: Item 5a Schools White Paper initial overview and emerging implications.pdf</p> <p>JC led the trustees through the implications of the White Paper. The emphasis is the expectation for mainstream schools to accommodate more</p> | |

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| <p>pupils with complex needs. Inclusion bases will be required in schools and this will be part of the estate’s strategic priorities.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if teachers were equipped to deal with more difficult pupils in mainstream.</p> <p>A This will be a challenge for teachers. The challenge will also be with parents as they will be concerned that EHCPs could end at transition.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked about the long-term viability of the strategy with a general election in 2029 and asked if the trust should plan for different scenarios.</p> <p>A The education policy might look different in the future but the government has produced a workable plan for a system which is not working at the moment. The Trust will be agile enough to change direction.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked which schools will struggle with the reforms.</p> <p>A The Trust Core Standards identify strengths and weaknesses and a bespoke planning programme will raise the standard across all schools.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked about the risk of the standard of education dropping under the expected Grade 5</p> <p>A Not all pupils will be able to achieve grade 5. Changes are being proposed to make the curriculum broader but it will still be a significant challenge.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if there was any data to factor in for the budgets and whether secondary funding could be moved to the primary schools.</p> <p>A Some funding will be available with immediate effect. There is a delay with the LA responding to SEND. There was also no indication of pay settlements which is a real risk.</p> <p>Cluster school groups could be formed to work together to solve local SEND issues. Money could then be pooled into a local pot. This could be difficult as not all schools/trusts have the same approach to inclusion for example.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked whether, in the long-term future, there may be a need to move schools into trusts which are more local to them geographically.</p> <p>A As the Government brings more coherence there may be a need to rationalise the growth strategy.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked the direction of the need for schools to be in Trusts.</p> <p>A There is a lack of coherence in the system. Local Authority Trusts are being discussed but it is unclear how these will work. There is currently no legislation to force schools to become trusts.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked whether an implication of the White Paper is that more schools will approach AL.</p> <p>A There may be a need to revisit growth and trustees will need to discuss the appetite for this taking into consideration whether the trust is large enough and if growing is adding value.</p> <p>Three schools are currently subject to DfE oversight for attendance. ELT colleagues met with the DfE and explained the policies and support provided to the schools.</p> | <p>JC</p> |
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| <p>SP2 – The implementation of the tool kits is now being driven forward after a delay of 2 to 3 months due to the focus on finance. This included recruitment, secondary school curriculum, clear expectations around reading, development of a trust system for leaders to think about a proactive succession plan.</p> <p>The finance recovery plan – JC and JM will be making this clearer and easier to track.</p> <p>Staff absence – this is a major priority</p> <p>Restructure – reacting to dropping pupil numbers and other pressures</p> <p>This section of the minutes are under confidential minutes.</p> <p>Deneia – construction was due to start this week but the infrastructure is not in place for the build to commence.</p> <p>Local Governance – The project to restructure local governance may be paused due to the White Paper. The Working Party will continue to explore options but these will not be implemented yet. Meadow and Wimbish LGB have been suspended due to the lack of numbers and will now come under the Education Standards Committee. The Pines does not have an LGB but may combine with Kennett Primary School LGB</p> <p>Development of the ELT – creating a greater sense of belonging.</p> <p>The following have been paused:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk system – How AL uses risk • SP 3 Connecting Communities. This was designed to be a 5-year plan so pausing will not cause a delay. • Growth • Communication strategy • Anglian Learning at 10 <p>The new standards around estates and current works were discussed.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked which team was under most pressure.</p> <p>A A number of teams are under pressure:</p> <p>HR is under pressure due to staff absences and members of the team not being replaced. They are also dealing with live investigations, the TLR project and the staff absence project.</p> <p>Finance is under pressure due to budget management.</p> <p>School Improvement is under pressure due to JR's absence and the resignation of CM. The OSCR project is being led by RJo in place of JR. The Bromcom project is being led by LR. DC and JC have picked up JR's schools.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if the projects had been paused or delayed due to the RSM report.</p> <p>A The SP3 project was due to start next term but this will now be 2026/27.</p> <p>AL at 10 has been paused since the RSM report.</p> <p>The communication strategy has paused due to maternity leave.</p> | |
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| <p>Q A trustee asked about the monitoring of the staff absence policy which was discussed at the People and Culture Committee.</p> <p>A The policy has been launched with a toolkit. Webinars will be taking place with Headteachers. KPIs will be produced and reviewed by the ELT and People and Culture Committee.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked about the curriculum.</p> <p>A The secondary curriculum in some schools has some weaknesses. The curriculum at SOH is strong and aspects can be shared across the other schools. The primary curriculum is ambitious but some schools do struggle to deliver.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if there would be a change in direction to a more centrally driven curriculum.</p> <p>A JW will be producing a paper for the Education Standards Committee on this.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if this will be in place by the 2028 deadline.</p> <p>A The trust is sketching out the parameters and looking to other Trusts. This will be brought to the Trust Board after Education Standards Committee. It is envisaged that this will be a 2–3-year project.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked what would be prioritised if more resources could be supplied either temporarily or permanently.</p> <p>A More clarity is needed for this and it will be clearer next term as there are a large number of moving parts at the moment. The ELT will welcome the support of the Trust Board but mindful that the reserves need to build up.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked that, if there is a lack of capacity in the ELT, whether growth will help.</p> <p>A This is a decision for the Trust Board to make. The team is consolidating at the moment as taking on 6 schools in a year created a massive strain. Two urgent capital requests have been rejected and need to be resubmitted which is causing additional work. A project manager will be required if the Trust Board decided on further growth.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked about visits to schools which are expecting an Ofsted visit. There are 6 schools predicted to have Ofsted in 2025/26 and it will be difficult for trustees to have a granular knowledge of these schools.</p> <p>A DC is currently producing a handbook to support during an inspection. Eight team members have been accepted as inspectors and will start the training next week. This will give an insight in to the Ofsted framework.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if the Trust has the right people in post and if the Trust was getting the best out of them.</p> <p>A The team is developing. With the increase to 22 schools there is the need to change mindset and think more strategically.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if there was an appraisal system in place for senior leaders.</p> <p>A There is a functional system in place. Targets are identified and set. However, we are seeking to evolve this into a better model across the Trust.</p> | |
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| 10. | Discussion around what both Trustees and Senior Leaders want to get out of committee meetings | |
| | <p>JC advised that preparing and attending the ESC, Board, FEOC, ARA and P&C meetings cost in the region of 27 hours. The reports for the meetings are sometimes very granular in detail and sometimes high level. JC has applied a limit of 2-3 pages of A4 for reports for FEOC. The Trust needs to look at the meetings and ensure there is a clear aim of the committee to drive the Trust forward. Reports will look back and look forward, picking up things that matter and risk implications.</p> <p>The trustees suggested the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is specific and succinct so questions can be picked out • Agendas amended to have items for approval at the start of the agenda • Committees need to be clear what they need to monitor and how • An annual planner for the year • Meetings to be used as a sounding board • Assurance on a risk-based process <p>It was agreed that each committee discuss what is important for the committee and for the executive.</p> <p>It was agreed that a governance day should be held in September. Sam Sadeghi from CST will be asked to lead this.</p> <p>The Trust Board will ask CST to review how governance at AL operates and this can be discussed at the governance day in September.</p> | RJa |
| 11. | Personnel Update | |
| | <p>Three Headteachers will be leaving at the end of the academic year and a further retirement is expected at Christmas 2026. There is a good opportunity for a cultural reset and revisit what it is to be a headteacher in AL.</p> <p>JM has started as CFO and CM's operational work has been divided between JW, CN & JC.</p> <p>Q A trustee asked if the headteachers who were leaving would have an exit interview.</p> <p>A Yes all will have an exit interview and HR will feed back to see any trends.</p> | |
| 13. | AOB | |
| | <p>A discussion was held around the visits to schools who were due an Ofsted visit. A list would be sent out of schools who would benefit from a visit. Trustees will be provided with the internal document before an Ofsted meeting which provides strengths and weaknesses and school performance overview.</p> <p>A Trustee had visited Stapleford LGB and had found that it was focusing too much on operational issues, rather than strategic</p> <p>A mechanism for feeding back to the Trust Board after a visit needed to be developed.</p> | RJa RJa |
| 14. | Date time and venue of next meeting | |

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| | The next Board meeting is on 19 May 2026 Meeting ended at 11.20am | |
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| Items for Future Meetings | |
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| Meeting | Item |
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| Action Log | | | |
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| ITEM | ACTION | DEADLINE | RESPONSIBILITY |
| 3 | KPIs to be shared | w/c 16 March 2026 | JC |
| 3 | A dashboard with the direction of travel and benchmarking to be added as an action | 19 May 2026 | JC |
| 3 | Draft committee minutes to be shared once agreed by the chair | Ongoing | RJa |
| 4 | The trustees asked for the variance chart to show £ as well as %. | 19 May 2026 | SC |
| 4 | Supply costs to be discussed at FEOC | 24 March 2026 | SC |
| 4 | list of all pupils in the schools who are behind in the EHCP process by 20, 30, 40, and 50 weeks, and what funding is owed for these cases. | 19 May 2026 | SC |
| 4 | Trustees governance day hosted by Sam Sadeghi from CST to be arranged | Sept 2026 | Rja |
| 5 | Trustees to discuss the appetite for growth | 19 May 2026 | JC |
| 5 | Trustees to discuss the appetite for GAG funding | 19 May 2026 | JC |
| 5 | Lowering the pay assumption to 2% for 2026/27 to be discussed at FEOC | 24 March 2026 | JC |
| 6 | FEOC and ESC committee reports to be on the May agenda | 19 May 2026 | Rja |
| 8 | CS and AC to meet to discuss safeguarding in all ToR | 19 May 2026 | AC |
| 10 | Each committee discuss what is important for the committee and for the executive. | 14 July 2026 | Rja |
| 13 | List of schools expecting Ofsted to be sent to trustees to arrange a visit | 20 March 2026 | Rja |
| 13 | A mechanism for visit feedback to be developed | 19 May 2026 | Rja |