MINUTES of a Meeting of the Academy Trust Board (ATB), held at Langtree School, Woodcote, RG8 0RA on Thursday 14 May 2026 at 19.00.

Present:

Alan Dunstan (AD) - Chair of Trustees;
Emma Ashby (EA)
Karen Brown (KB)
Dan Brooks (DB)
Sarah Parish (SP)
Catherine Roche (CRo)
Jan Seal-Roberts (JSR)
Hayley Scott (HS)
Mark Taylor (MT)

Apologies with Consent:

Deborah Allen (DA), Simon Bamford (SB) — Headteacher, Freya Garner (FG); Janet Haresnape (JH); Andy Lowe (AL), Christine Reeves (CRe), Clive Watts (CW).

In attendance:

Sarah Burman (SBu) Deputy Headteacher; Sarah Lonorgan (SL) — Clerk

Trustee questions, challenges and support are shown in red italics.

1. **Introduction**
    - Quorum was confirmed
    - Apologies tendered were accepted.
    - No trustee declared a material interest in any agenda item.
    - The Chair invited any items of other business. No items were declared

2. **Approval of the minutes of the ATB - 19th March 2026**
    - The ATB minutes of the 19th March 2026 were approved as an accurate record. The minutes would subsequently be signed by AD and filed at the school.
    - All actions arising from the previous meeting were reviewed and confirmed as either complete or incorporated into the current agenda.
    - It was decided that the Staff Survey agenda item and the approval of the school Complaints Policy would be carried over to the July 9th ATB meeting

3. Headteacher's Report

- The Chair (AD) confirmed that, in the absence of the Headteacher, the Deputy Headteacher (SBu) was in attendance to receive questions on the report.
- The Board noted the report, and a trustee raised a query concerning the attendance data, specifically the relationship between severely absent pupils and the categorisation of absences as authorised.
- SBu explained that severely absent pupils may carry authorised absences — for example, where absence was medically certified or where a reduced timetable had been formally agreed as a reintegration measure. It was noted that in such cases, absence in the agreed non-attended periods was recorded as authorised.
- SBu reported that of the twelve pupils currently identified as severely absent, the pattern had remained broadly consistent since the previous report, with limited movement.
- It was noted that progress was being made in terms of positive pupil outcomes, despite limited change in the severely absent records, with online learning provision now available via Academy 21. It was further noted that this engagement was not captured in the school's attendance data.

What learning has emerged from the review meeting following the rescinded permanent exclusion (PEX)?

- JSR and EA reported on the outcome of two review meetings held with the Headteacher following the rescission of a permanent exclusion. The meetings were described as open and productive.
- The review had identified that the exclusion documentation had not, in all respects, reflected the standards established through trustee training. In particular, the process had been complicated by the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and the Board noted that certain EHCP provisions appeared to have been included by the local authority without the school having agreed to, or having the capacity to deliver, those provisions.
- The Board **agreed** that, going forward, the school would push back formally on EHCP clauses that it could not meet. EA noted that the Headteacher had sought legal advice on the implications of doing so and confirmed that improvements to the exclusion process had already been implemented.
- AD noted that the Headteacher had agreed to undertake the same exclusion training programme completed by the Trustees, to ensure a consistent understanding of expectations.
- SBu observed that conflicting advice received from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and West Berkshire had added complexity to the process. The Board noted the learning and agreed the school was better positioned going forward.

What is the current position regarding work experience placements for pupils?

- HS confirmed that a tracking spreadsheet was in use and offered to provide a full update at the next meeting. **Action: HS**
- AD noted that an agenda item on the staff survey had been an outstanding action from the previous two meetings and asked for an update on progress. SBu confirmed that a stakeholder survey was planned. The Board agreed that a specific staff survey should be brought forward and the outcomes should be reviewed at the next meeting. **Action: SB**

What is the Board's responsibility in relation to pupils with physical EHCPs joining in the next academic year?

- DB raised the strategic question of trustee oversight in relation to pupils with physical EHCPs entering Year 7. AD confirmed that the operational management of EHCP provision rested with the school, but that the Board retained strategic oversight of SEND governance. The matter was noted for monitoring.

4a) Finance and General Purposes (F&GP) Committee Report

- EA presented the committee report. The forecast deficit had been reduced to £79,000, including transfer to capital funds, representing an improvement on the position at the previous meeting but above the original budget. The improvement was driven in part by additional Pupil Premium allocations and grant funding secured to support eligible pupils.
- The Board noted that an approach to OCC regarding potential relief on employer pension contributions had been unsuccessful.
- The contract schedule had been reviewed in accordance with the school's procurement policy. One minor gap was identified. The catering contract was due for renewal; given positive operational feedback and the current pressures on the senior leadership team, a decision had been taken to extend the contract for two years.
- It was noted that initial discussions on the draft budget had taken place at the F&GP committee meeting, and the budget would return to the committee at the next meeting for further consideration before approval by the ATB at the final meeting of the academic year.
- EA confirmed that the annual benchmarking exercise had been completed. One high-rated observation was identified (relating to administrative supplies), and six medium-rated observations. It was noted that the Board was satisfied that there were no material concerns. ICT spend was noted as an area to monitor, particularly in the context of the mobile phone policy and potential future investment requirements.
- The second internal scrutiny of the year, focused on cybersecurity management, had been completed. The review was described as beneficial. An action plan was in place, and several issues had already been addressed. Carolyn Ventress (CVe) was confirmed as overseeing the school's response, supported by Chris Nonweiller (CN). The Board noted that the scrutiny report had been presented in tabular format without a prioritised narrative, and that a proper written report with a retesting validation process would be requested from the provider in the future.

Does the cybersecurity review assess the school's resilience against future threats, and not solely current compliance?

- AD confirmed that the review brief covered current standards for educational settings. The Board noted that cybersecurity required persistent monitoring rather than periodic review alone and agreed that ongoing validation and rechecking should be embedded in the school's approach.
- The following policies were approved: Charging and Remissions; Rights of Way. The First Aid policy was deferred for further work. The Bereavement policy and two Adoption policies were agreed, subject to minor amendments.

4b) Curriculum and Standards Committee Report

- It was noted that the committee had received a presentation from the Head of Art, who reported strong outcomes in the subject: Key Stage 4 uptake had increased, over half the pupils who had studied art at Langtree, in the previous year had continued to study art post-16, and Year 9 options uptake for the coming year was significantly higher than in previous years. The committee noted the positive contribution of this teacher to pupil outcomes.
- The committee discussed the implications of the mobile phone ban for art and other creative subjects that had relied on pupils using personal devices to photograph and share coursework. The Headteacher had issued a survey to departments to identify operational requirements, and the Board noted that additional investment in digital equipment was likely to be required. This was flagged as a budgetary consideration
- Options allocations for the incoming Year 10 had been completed. The school was able to offer greater flexibility than many comparable schools, and all pupils had been accommodated, though approximately 40 required conversations to manage first-preference constraints. Cooking for Life and Art were among the most popular choices. Music numbers had declined slightly, and the viability of French as a standalone offer was noted for monitoring, given current uptake.
- The SEND policy had been reviewed. Limited changes were made, given the anticipated impact of the forthcoming White Paper, which was expected to require material policy revision. The committee noted that SEND summary sheets for incoming Year 7 pupils had been finalised.
- Pupil Premium oversight had been reallocated, with Charlotte Davies taking responsibility for delivery and Deborah Allen confirmed as the Link Trustee for this area.

4c) Pastoral and Community (P&C) Committee Report

- It was noted that the committee had reviewed attendance data and recognised incremental progress. Even marginal improvements in individual cases were recognised as significant, given the entrenched nature of some pupils' non-attendance.

What oversight is in place for pupils who elect home education, and does the local authority adequately monitor their educational development?

- SBu reported that five pupils had elected home education in the current year, consistent with the typical annual figure. SBU explained that on de-registration, the school notified OCC, who assumed statutory responsibility for monitoring. It was noted that parental notification and a two-week consideration period was standard practice before de-registration was processed.
- The Board noted that the quality of local authority monitoring was variable and that social and educational risks associated with elective home education could not always be discounted. The committee had agreed to seek comparative information from other schools. The Board noted that OCC monitored collectively for signs of off-rolling but did not routinely report on individual educational progress.
- SBu noted progress on Section 19 funding, with additional resources secured.
- The committee had reviewed behaviour data. The reintegration process following suspension had been discussed, with agreement to tighten documentation. The Board noted that incidents involving racist language, particularly among Year 8 pupils, had

been addressed, and that a broader societal shift in norms around language and conduct in young people was acknowledged as a contextual challenge.

- The mobile phone policy had been approved. A trial was confirmed for Term 6. Parent feedback following communication of the policy had been limited in volume, with queries largely relating to bus pass arrangements, which were being addressed operationally.

Has parent feedback on the mobile phone policy been assessed, and what has the response indicated?

- SBu confirmed that fewer than ten parental responses had been received following communication of the policy, significantly less than anticipated. Queries centred on bus pass and contract arrangements. The school's approach was considered reasonable and proportionate. The Board noted the policy was widely anticipated, given national media coverage and Government messaging.
- The committee had reviewed the publication of SEND information on the school website. The Clerk confirmed that statutory compliance required the information to be prominently and easily accessible. The school confirmed it was published and would review the navigation to ensure compliance.
- **Action:** SBu to review the accessibility of the SEND Information Report on the Langtree School website and ensure that it is easy and accessible to find
- It was noted that FG had agreed to take on the role of interim Safeguarding Link Trustee with immediate effect, pending a longer-term appointment to be confirmed by the end of the academic year.
- It was agreed to defer review and approval of the Complaints Policy to the next meeting
- **Action:** CR/Sbu to review the complaints policy at the next P&C meeting and bring the revised policy to the July ATB for approval.

5. Trustee Approval - UCS Proposal — Drama Studio Structural Works

- EA updated Trustees on the decision from a recent DfE UCS request, confirming that the DfE had determined that the school was not eligible for a full grant, offering instead loan funding of £58,740 and indicating that the balance of approximately £197,000 was affordable from the trust's existing reserves. The total cost of works was noted as being in the region of £258,000.
- EA set out the distinction between the school's reserves position and its cash position, noting that these were separate measures. The target under the school's reserves policy was 5% of operational income. It was noted that proceeding with the full works expenditure would reduce the reserves ratio from approximately 5% to approximately 2%, breaching the policy. The trajectory of improvement was contingent on the school returning to surplus.
- The Board discussed the urgency of the works and the DfE's position that the expenditure was affordable. It was noted that the reserves policy itself stated that reserves existed to meet emergency needs, and that this situation constituted such a need. The Board also noted the auditors' previous comments regarding the level of reserves being held and the need to deploy them on strategic priorities.

Is the Board comfortable that the school can proceed based on a 2% reserves ratio,

and is there a long-term plan to address the breach?

- MT requested a 12-month cash flow forecast (not solely a reserves forecast), confirmation from the auditors that the proposed breach of the reserves policy was defensible, and sight of the contract documentation.
- AD acknowledged the concern and noted that the school had previously navigated a more serious financial position, in part through the introduction of a bulge year intake. The option of a further bulge year was noted as a potential future measure, though it was acknowledged that this was not currently reflected in the forecast and would take time to implement.
- A trustee outlined that the two questions — whether the immediate expenditure was defensible, and whether the long-term financial plan was adequate — should be treated separately. It was agreed that the DfE letter and the reserves policy itself provided reasonable grounds to proceed. It was also agreed that the current plan was not sufficient without a credible route back to the 5% target.
- The Board discussed the DfE's offer of a loan. It was agreed that the loan added no benefit to the school's net financial position, as the liability would offset the asset, and that the compliance and reporting obligations attached to it were disproportionate. The Board agreed by consensus not to take up the loan. **Action: EA/CV**

As trustees approving significant capital expenditure, should the Board have sight of the contract to be satisfied that the scope and cost are fixed and that financial exposure is bounded?

- MT requested sight of the tender documentation and contract before the Board gave final approval to the expenditure. AD noted that four independent contractors had been approached and that their tender returns had been closely aligned, which provided a degree of assurance. However, the Board accepted the principle that trustees should have access to the contract documentation before authorising significant spend.
- It was agreed that a small working group would convene the following week with the school's consultant and, where possible, the School Business Manager, to review the contract documentation, the cash flow forecast, and the DfE correspondence. The Board delegated authority to the working group to approve the expenditure on behalf of the full Board, subject to its being satisfied on those points.
- It was noted that the formal response declining the DfE loan would need to be submitted by the 18 May 2026 **Action: EA**
- CRo noted that the incoming Inclusive Mainstream Fund, associated with the SEND reforms in the White Paper, might provide additional resources from September 2026. The Board acknowledged this as a potential positive indicator but agreed that decisions should be made based on confirmed information.

6. Trustee Updates

- **Articles of Association and Funding Agreements -** AD reported that the updated Articles of Association for the Langtree School Academy Trust had passed the DfE and were now with the Charity Commission for consideration, expected to take a further three to four weeks.
- The updated Master Funding Agreement and updated Supplemental Funding Agreement had been approved by the DfE. AD had signed both documents, and they had been submitted to the Secretary of State for Education for countersignature, after which they would proceed to the Charity Commission. It was anticipated that all three

documents could be brought to the next Board meeting for formal approval.

- **Safeguarding Link Trustee:** FG had confirmed her willingness to assume the interim Safeguarding Link Trustee role with effect from the date of the meeting. A permanent appointment would be progressed before the end of the academic year.
- **Mobile Phone Policy:** The policy had been approved, and a trial was underway in Term 6. Parent feedback had been minimal. The policy remained subject to review and ongoing refinement.
- **Careers:** HS gave an update from her governor monitoring visit. It was noted that the mandatory Gatsby Benchmark training for trustees was up to date. The school's careers adviser had been conducting individual one-to-one sessions with all Year 11 pupils to discuss post-16 options, with 110 pupils seen in recent weeks.
- A post-16 guide had been produced for pupils, parents and teachers, to be piloted with staff before publication on the school website. From September, a dedicated termly careers day would be introduced in tutor time across the school.

7. Approval of Statutory Policies/Procedures:

- **SEND Policy:** The SEND policy was approved by both the Curriculum and Standards and Pastoral and Community committees, subject to minor amendments.
- **Complaints Policy**: Deferred to the next meeting for review and formal approval

8. Any Other Urgent Business

- No other business was received.
- The Chair confirmed the date of the next meeting as Thursday, 9 July 2026, at 19.00, when the budget would be presented for full approval.
- The Chair thanked all in attendance and closed the meeting at 20.30.

ACTIONS LIST from ATB Meeting, 14th May 2026:

Minute	Action	By whom?	By when?
1	Share an update on Work experience placements	HS	Completed
2	Confirm arrangements for a staff survey and bring an update to the next meeting.	SB	Completed
3	Review the placement and navigation of SEND Information policy on the school website to ensure statutory compliance and ease of access.	SBu/SB	Completed
4	Bring the Complaints Policy to the next meeting for review and formal approval.	CRo	Completed
5	Decline the DfE loan offer in writing by 18 May 2026, confirming the trust will fund the drama studio works from reserves. Notify auditors of the anticipated breach of the reserves policy and seek their confirmation that the position is defensible.	EA / CV	Completed
6	Convene a working group (AD, EA, SB, MT) with the school's structural consultant and School Business Manager to review the contract documentation, the 12-month cash flow forecast, and the DfE correspondence.	EA	Completed
7	Explore Section 19 equivalent funding and support for pupils in Berkshire and other local authority areas	SBu/SB	Completed