MINUTES

Meeting:	Governing Board	**Date:**	26 November 2025
Trust:	**Wellacre Academy**		
Venue:	School	**Time:**	4:45 p.m.
Governance Professional:	**Trust Governor Services** Julie Lawson (Head of Service)	**Clerk:**	Trust GS

PRESENT: Mr S Casey (Chair)
Dr K Gill
Mrs L Henry
Ms L Hepple
Mrs J O'Connor
Ms H Rayson
Mrs J Sharrock (Principal)
Mrs J Thirkill

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss P Bailey (Business Director)
Mrs L Felton (Clerk, Trust GS)

1. MEETING MANAGEMENT

1.1 ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES & APPOINTMENTS

Apologies for absence were received for Mrs L Johnston, Mr S Russell and Mr A Young. Cllr S Procter and Mrs M Radhakrishnan were not present.

Resolved:

i) That the apologies for absence for Mrs L Johnston, Mr S Russell and Mr A Young be accepted.

ii) That the attendance of Miss Bailey at this meeting be approved.

1.2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN AGENDA ITEMS & UPDATES TO BUSINESS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of conflict of interest, direct or indirect pecuniary interest by members of the Board in respect of any item on the agenda.

1.3 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Resolved: ***That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2025 be approved as a correct record.***

1.4 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

There were no matters arising.

2. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT TO THE GOVERNING BOARD

2.1 **GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

The Trust strategy outlining the direction for the coming years had been shared with Trustees.

i) **Student Voice**

The Academy continues to participate in the BeWell survey for three year groups. This year, a revised Assurance model is being used, with a particular focus on tracking SEND and disadvantaged students. Lesson visits included structured conversations with SEND and PP pupils. Parent information evenings were held, providing an opportunity to re-engage families, outline strategic priorities, and reinforce expectations around independent learning, habit-building, attendance, and parental partnership. Updates were also given on safeguarding and the support available through external partners.

ii) **Staff Voice**

A staff survey conducted in the summer indicated positive feedback. Survey findings regarding the quality of CPD and opportunities for career development had been presented previously to the Curriculum committee.

Weekly letters and bulletins continue to be shared with parents. Some long-term staff absence had affected the marketing capacity, but a new appointment had now been made, significantly strengthening the school's marketing and celebratory communications.

Committee reports were included, and updates from PEN will be shared in due course.

iii) **SIP**

Following the recent HMI visit, a revised SIP had been produced and shared with governors. The document provides a strategic overview and aligns with the new Ofsted framework, incorporating feedback from the HMI. If approved, detailed improvement plans will be developed for each area, with SLT providing iterative operational updates over the next 12–18 months. The SIP will operate as a live document and will be shared with ALT and relevant line managers.

It was confirmed that the Ofsted framework helps clarify what is required within each judgement area and supports the school in positioning itself to secure improvements.

The Trustees approved the School Improvement Plan.

The Head reported on the half-termly meetings held with the DfE partner. A significant number of lesson observations had been completed, with feedback collated. The consideration and action points arising from this feedback have informed the strategic priorities within the School Development Plan.

iv) **Safeguarding audit**

A safeguarding audit undertaken in June had identified one urgent action relating to a Prevent referral, which resulted from Trafford not having a Prevent representative at the time. This issue has since been resolved, with updates now being provided by North West Police. All remaining actions were minor, and a risk assessment is in place.

v) **Collaboration**

An email had been received from Michael Mullins, Lead Reviewer for the SPP. The focus for this cycle will be SEND, with the Head leading on the secondary school cluster. The SPP will be used to share and celebrate best practice, and feedback will be brought to the next meeting for Trustees.

The school continues to contribute to local collaboration groups. Mr Pemberton sits on the Alternative Provision Working Group, and Mr Shiner leads the PP group for Trafford.

The school has been accepted onto the Belong Programme (Cohort 4). An audit has been completed, and two development plans have been initiated. The programme is expected to strengthen behavioural practices, particularly in reducing high levels of C2 and C3 sanctions, and to support the development of more trauma-informed approaches. The school expressed enthusiasm about participating.

vi) **Attendance**

The DfE has written to schools regarding attendance, noting improvements across the area. A new baseline expectation has been set at 92.9%, representing a 0.4% uplift on last year. The method used by the DfE to calculate this baseline, including contextual factors, was explained. Attendance at the school is currently slightly above last year's level, which is encouraging, and a new initiative is underway to support further improvement.

vii) **Safeguarding Update**

The school continues to face challenges linked to the number of pupils involved with social workers. Issues of neglect and reduced parental capacity for basic care were discussed. In some cases, parents were using SEND needs as a justification for non-attendance. It was noted that while the DfE's ambitions for safeguarding and SEND reform are appropriate in principle, the plans do not fully account for the funding constraints and real-world challenges schools are facing.

Feedback from the School Partnership Programme indicated strongly that every child spoken to could identify at least one trusted adult in school and understood where to seek help if needed.

viii) **Whole-School Targets**

The school continues to work towards ambitious whole-school targets and is focused on addressing the factors that contributed to last year's dip in performance. Year 11 assessment data had been uploaded to the system earlier that day and would be reported to the Curriculum Committee.

ix) **Independent Alternative Provision**

In response to a question regarding the small IAP cohort, it was confirmed that eight pupils are currently on roll and attendance has improved. The school is working closely with family support units, and the interventions in place were outlined. Several pupils present with highly complex needs, and some may require a second term in the IAP. The educational psychologist has indicated that a number of these pupils may not be able to return to mainstream education.

Mrs Thirkill joined the meeting.

Positive progress was noted for pupils in the IAP, although significant change is not expected within the first 6–7 weeks of placement. Two Year 7 pupils, including one who transitioned from a specialist primary setting, have begun attending for two days a week. A Year 8 pupil has also joined. Cohort numbers remain fluid, and although up to eight pupils are enrolled, they are not all present simultaneously. The provision is costly, so it is the only alternative provision the school is able to fund and offer.

x) **Target Setting**

A query was raised regarding lower-range targets for some pupils. It was explained that baseline assessments undertaken on entry in Year 7 are used to assign prior-attainment bands. KS4 value-added data from each pupil's previous setting is examined, and minimum targets are derived from this. Baseline assessments using past papers were completed for all new joiners, and profiles were aligned with those of last year's Year 10 and 11 cohorts.

Trustees approved the targets that had been set.

xi) **Staffing Update**

There had been minimal staffing changes. Vacancies remain in English and Maths, with long-term cover arrangements currently in place.

xii) **Pupil Numbers**

The school roll stands at 733. Admissions and leavers data was shared, highlighting where the schools' pupils are joining from and transferring to mid-year.

Q. Was the quality of home education raised?
It was noted that Trafford had not raised concerns with the school. A recent example was given of a Year 10 pupil who joined from a local school before being withdrawn for home schooling. It was felt the challenges faced in one mainstream setting are likely to occur in others.

xiii) **Finance and Compliance**

Monthly management reports had been completed by the Business Director.

The Finance Manual, showing amendments in green, had been reviewed and accepted by the Resources Committee. Trustees approved the updated manual.

The budget remained unchanged from the version approved at Resources Committee and was formally agreed by Trustees. Forecasts indicate a stable position for the next three years, supported by a £301k surplus brought forward. A reduction is expected beyond this period, though wider educational changes are anticipated within that timeframe.

The School Workforce Census was submitted in line with statutory deadlines. Additional requirements this year included reporting on staff ethnicity and disabilities. The SCR is maintained in accordance with KCSIE expectations and is reviewed termly by the SBM and Payroll Officer, with sign-off by the Vice Principal. This provides assurance to the Board about compliance.
No cyber security incidents had occurred, and this had been reported to Resources. The school continues to meet audit requirements, which are monitored annually.

Resolved: ***That the Governance and Leadership Reports be received and noted.***

2.2 **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Resolved:

i) ***That the minutes of the Behaviour, Attitudes and Personal Development Committee meeting held 1 October 2025 be received and noted.***
ii) ***That the minutes of the Pay Committee meeting held 15 October 2025 be received and noted.***
iii) ***That the minutes of the Curriculum and Standards Committee meeting held 5 November 2025 be received and noted.***

2.3 **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT UPDATE**

Resolved: ***That the School Improvement Plan be approved***

2.4 **HIGH QUALITY & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REPORT**

This item was covered within the Governance and Leadership Report.

Resolved: ***That the High Quality & Inclusive Education Report be received and noted.***

2.5 **WORKFORCE UPDATE**

This item was covered within the Governance and Leadership Report.

Resolved: ***That the Workforce Update be received and noted.***

2.6 **FINANCE & OPERATIONS UPDATE**

This item was covered within the Governance and Leadership Report.

Resolved:

- ***i) That the Finance & Operations Update be received and noted.***
- ***ii) That receipt of the Monthly Management Accounts be noted.***

2.7 **SCHOOL UNIFORM AND THE CHILD WELLBEING BILL**

The DfE guidance on school uniforms was discussed. Schools must ensure that no more than four branded items are required and must publish on the website whether each branded item is compulsory or optional. It was felt the school's current uniform is considered good value and good quality. The reasons behind the national policy change were discussed.

Monkhouse advised retaining the blazer, tie, jumper, and branded PE top as the core branded items. Other Trafford schools generally keep the jumper optional and have branded PE shorts. Concerns were raised that removing a required jumper could lead to students wearing hoodies beneath blazers. It was therefore agreed that a grey V-neck jumper would remain part of the uniform, but branding would be optional.

There was discussion about including PE shorts as a branded item to offer less variation on shorts worn. It was noted the school already applies reasonable flexibility during very hot weather.

The following items were the agreed recommendation by Trustees as compulsory branded items:

- Blazer
- Tie
- PE top
- PE shorts
- Grey V-neck jumper remains required, but branding will be optional.

The possibility of selling unbranded grey jumpers as part of a bundle through Elite was considered. The benefits Elite currently provides were discussed.

Q. It was queried how often parents and pupils were involved in decisions?
It was noted that parents and pupils have previously been consulted only during major uniform reviews. Input is taken from the Student Council where appropriate. A letter to parents will highlight that there will be a consultation period before the policy is finalised. The proposed changes are expected to reduce overall uniform costs for parents compared with last year.

The inclusion of PE socks as a uniform requirement was questioned, and it was suggested that socks could potentially be removed from the required items list.
The school continues to run a “nearly new” uniform event each summer, which remains very well attended.

Resolved: That the School uniform and the Child Wellbeing Bill be received and approved.

2.8 **PUPIL PREMIUM STRATEGY STATEMENT**

Mr Shiner’s document was presented, outlining the school’s approach to quality-first teaching, targeted reading interventions, inclusion work and mentoring.

There is a continued priority on reading and strategies are based on high-quality research. Disadvantaged data shows improvement overall, with last year’s dip reflecting subject performance patterns. The challenges of interpreting disadvantaged data were noted, and it was emphasised that the new framework places barriers to learning at its core.

Trustees were reminded to remain cautious when comparing disadvantaged outcomes to national figures, and the reasons for this were explained. It was acknowledged that most schools continue to have a disadvantaged attainment gap.

The Link Governor for Pupil Premium had met with Mr Shiner and reported being impressed by his depth of knowledge. Local schools also approach him for advice on best practice, and it was felt that the school could not realistically be doing more in this area.

The feedback from the recent HMI visit was discussed. Inspectors had commented that some staff found it difficult to articulate the PP strategy, however, it was noted that staff are not expected to recite the strategy, as it should instead be reflected naturally in their practice. Overall, the feedback was positive, and it was felt that the chosen strategies are appropriate and will embed further over time.

Resolved: ***That the Pupil Premium Strategy Statement be received and approved.***

3. COMPLIANCE

3.1 CHAIR'S REPORT/UPDATE

i) **Code of Conduct**

It was noted a number of Trustees have not confirmed acceptance of the code via GHub. Business Director will chase up those who had not ticked it on GovernorHub.

It was agreed Trustees accepted the Code of Conduct for 2025.

ii) **Declarations of interest**

These had been completed at the start of the academic year, so it was confirmed they were all accurate and no changes required for those present.

iii) **OFSTED letter**

An incident from 2019 had resurfaced in the local press due to a recent hearing. As a result, OFSTED became involved and a letter was received in the October half term to say they were aware of the incident, and it would be something inspectors would bear in mind with the next inspection.

The school had done everything it could and should in that incident. Trustees were just being made aware that the correspondence was received.

Resolved:

- ***i)*** ***That the Business Director chase up those Governors who had not confirmed they had read the Code of Conduct on GovernorHub.***
- ***ii)*** ***That the Chair's Report/Update be received and noted.***

3.2 **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GOVERNANCE 2025-26**

Resolved: ***That the Code of Conduct for Governance 2025-26 be received, approved and adopted.***

3.3 **TRUSTEE REPORTS FOR THE WEBSITE**

Resolved:

- ***i)*** ***That the Report on Trustee Attendance at meetings 2024-25 be received and noted.***
- ***ii)*** ***That the Trustee Training Report be received and noted.***

3.4 **SAFEGUARDING NOTICE**

Trustees were asked to confirm reading Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 by clicking on the Confirmation via their Profile, Declarations on GovernorHub.

Resolved: ***That the update to KCSIE 2025 be noted.***

3.5 **RISK REGISTER & RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Register had been reviewed by the Resources Committee, the highlighted changes were raised.

Resolved: ***That the Risk Register update be received and approved.***

3.6 **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS**

The annual financial scrutiny report was completed and audited at the request of the Resources Committee. The overall judgement was Low Risk. The scoring system was explained, with dark green representing the highest rating of 5. The report included a significant number of 5s and 4s, which was recognised as a credit to the finance team and their hard work.

VAT was referenced within the report. This issue has been noted consistently for around ten years and has not previously been raised as a concern. The overall risk rating for VAT remains low.

The Resources Committee agreed the programme of financial scrutiny for 2025/26. This will cover budget planning, monitoring and reporting, purchasing, income, payroll and HR, cashflow and VAT.

It was noted that when obtaining quotes for the scrutiny work, Red Rambler again submitted a proposal, and the same team as last year will be used. The SBM is a consultant for Red Rambler, and the Board was made aware of this. The audit work will be carried out by a senior auditor and reviewed by an additional auditor within the company. Trustees were informed that they should raise any concerns if they identify a conflict of interest.

Q. Clarification was requested regarding safeguarding and the Business Directors access to internal files about the school held at Red Rambler?
It was confirmed that Red Rambler only receives the documentation required for the audit and cannot access restricted internal Wellacre files.

Trustees confirmed they had no concerns regarding Miss Bailey's consultancy role, which is declared appropriately in the register of interests.

Resolved: That the Internal Audit update be received and noted.

3.7 **ANNUAL REPORT AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS 2024-25**

The external audit has not yet been presented to the Resources Committee due to timing. The external auditor will present the financial statements, which must be submitted to the DfE by 31 December, with the accounts return due in January.

The audit report is detailed and includes the financial statements, with auditors providing assurance on their accuracy. The Trustee Report is drafted by the Board and, once approved and signed off, is submitted to the DfE alongside the financial statements.

The auditors undertake their own full audit as well as supporting the production of the financial statements. This process takes approximately one week due to the level of detail required.

A management report accompanies the audit, highlighting any issues requiring the school's attention. The Business Director must provide responses to all actions raised. Five matters were brought to the Board's attention.

Firstly, the fixed asset register is still not being maintained in-house. The auditor currently maintains it, and the Business Director will receive training to bring this in-house.

Secondly, a Trustee had not been removed within the required timeframe and this has now been corrected. In a sample of 20 expenditure items, 10% did not have purchase orders. This was attributed to staffing transition following the departure of the finance officer in March. Processes have now been strengthened to prevent recurrence. There was also, a conflict of interest was noted relating to the Business Director's consultancy work with Red Rambler. This has been declared appropriately. Finally, declarations of interest for key management personnel had not been uploaded to the website. This has now been rectified.

The Letter of Engagement for 2025/26 is available on GovernorHub. The auditor will remain DJH, and the terms are unchanged from 2023.

Resolved: ***That the Annual Report and Audited Accounts be received, approved and submitted to DfE by 31 December, published on the Trust's website by 31 January and filed with Companies House by 31 May.***

3.8 **SCHOOL POLICIES FOR APPROVAL**

i) **Appraisal policies**

These had to be ratified by the Board but formed part of the Pay Committee agenda in October.

ii) **Biometrics Policy**

No changes.

iii) **Children with health needs unable to attend school policy**

Clarification had been added for the number of days children have to be absence for Trafford's absence team to become involved and alternative provisions available.

Q. Is quality assuring the alternative provision included in this report?
It was confirmed it is included in safeguarding policy.

iv) **Complaint Procedure Statement**

The Complaint Procedure Statement has been reworded and streamlined using the DfE exemplar policy as a model. While no substantive content has changed, the revised version provides a clearer definition of what constitutes a complaint and reinforces the school's commitment to working constructively with parents. The importance of resolving concerns promptly and issuing apologies where appropriate was emphasised, along with the procedures for progressing and resolving complaints.

Q. Is the school happy that the timescales provided are workable?
It was felt they were and the timeframes were noted.

Q. Working days was to be clarified that these are not days within school holidays?
This was to be made consistent throughout policy to say school days.

v) **Special Education Needs and Disability Policy**

Due to changes in the EIF the policy will be rewritten next year and has been aligned to local Policies and offers.

vi) **SEN and Disability Information Report**

The language has been aligned the in policy around the provision. It refers to the Haven as a grant had been received from Trafford for a reconfiguration for a space, to extend the provision for SEMH students. This funding was used to enhance the ecology site so some of Thrive work, ELSA sessions and mentor sessions take place there, as a result this had to be mentioned in policy.

vii) **Social Media Policy**

This had been updated in relation to KCSIE 2025.

viii) **Access Audit**

The Access Audit, originally written in 2014, continues to be reviewed regularly in line with the asset management plan. The audit outlines current provision and includes a key indicating required actions and progress to date. It was assured that no issues are currently affecting individuals who require access arrangements, and all necessary adjustments remain functional and appropriate.

ix) **Staff absence policy**

This had stayed the same, using the Bradford score. Unions suggest different options but concede the policy used covers conditions. The use of Occupational Health was discussed.

Q. Is there a policy for staff undertaking fertility treatments?
This is covered in the absence policy and had been added recently.

Resolved: ***That the following Policies be approved:***

i) ***Appraisal Policy for Support Staff***
ii) ***Appraisal Policy for Teaching Staff***
iii) ***Biometrics Policy***
iv) ***Children with Health Needs unable to attend School Policy***
v) ***Complaints Procedure Statement***
vi) ***Special Education Needs and Disability Policy***
vii) ***SEN and Disability Information Report***
viii) ***Social Media Policy***
ix) ***Access Audit***
x) ***Staff Absence Policy***

3.9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

i) **Pay Committee**

It was noted that the national pay settlements for teaching and support staff as recommended by the government have been accepted and implemented by the Academy.

ii) **Investments**

The Board received an update on proposals to review investment options in line with the school's reserves. A layered investment approach is being considered, allowing funds to be placed in three-month or six-month terms, with the option for monthly access so that cash is not locked away for extended periods. An illustrative example of potential returns was shared.

The review aims to ensure strong investment decisions while maintaining required cash flow. Last year, the lowest bank balance was £184k in July, with a peak of £344k, and the school is exploring opportunities to generate additional income. Investments would be made through Lloyds Bank using SME deposits and other low-risk products. A full proposal will be brought to the Resources Committee once options have been assessed.

It was confirmed that different risk levels and fixed-term options are available depending on the type of deposit selected.

iii) **Heating boiler**

The school has been attempting to replace the central heating boiler for the past three years through the CIF. Last year the bid missed approval by two points. It was noted that the previous governor minutes had not stated strongly enough the potential impact on school operations should the remaining boiler fail.

The wording included in the most recent CIF bid was read out to governors. It was confirmed that only one of the original three boilers is now operational, with the other two irreparably damaged. The school emphasised that failure of the final boiler would result in closure of the building, and this level of risk has been made explicit in the updated bid documentation.

Trustees agreed, if the boiler failed again and the part had not been received within three working days the school must close and revert to online learning. In periods of extreme weather the school must close immediately until the heating could be repaired.

Trustees agreed that if this roof was to fail and it resulted in the canteen being unable to provide the required service the school must close with immediate effect.

Trustees commented that both of the above would have a detrimental and far-reaching impact on the educational provision, academic attainment, and future outcomes of 731 students. Moreover, it poses a significant risk to vulnerable children who are entitled to free school meals and rely heavily on robust safeguarding and wellbeing measures.

iv) **School day**

The school is required to increase the length of the school day by 10 minutes, as it is currently operating below the expected total. At present, 30 hours of directed time are being used for activities such as tutor evenings and CPD.

Staff were consulted and voted to add 10 minutes to the start of the school day, resulting in new proposed hours of 8:30am–3:00pm. A letter will be sent to parents to gather feedback. The change is planned to take effect from September 2026.

Q. Is it thought this change would impact lateness?
It was not expected to, but it was advised to make sure the changes are fed into the Bee network.

What OFSTED will require from the school in relation to this was discussed.

v) **Guidance**

Dr Gill requested guidance on where he should be placing his expertise as he does not have the background in education. The chair and other Trustees offered their advice. Trust GS also offers training for Governance that was recommended. Visiting the school was recommended.

3.10 **ACTION SUMMARY**

The following Actions arising from the meeting were noted:
i. Business Director to chase up Trustees who had not confirmed they had read the Code of Conduct on GovernorHub.

3.11 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Resolved: That the next meeting of the Trust Board be held at School on 25 March 2026 at 4.45 p.m.

The meeting closed at 6:40 p.m.

Chair of Trust Board ……………………………………….