Company No.: 08036395

MINUTES

Non-Confidential minutes of the Eden Academy Board of Trustees, held via Teams on Tuesday 27th January 2026, starting at 6:30pm

Attendance:

Angela St. John	ASJ	Trustee
Anne Marie Neatham	AMN	Trustee
Barry Nolan	BN	Trustee (Chair)
David Edwards	DE	Trustee
Jane Inglese	JI	Trustee
John Moffat	JM	Trustee (Deputy-Chair)
Mari Ladu	ML	Trustee
Mary Canavan	MC	Trustee
Vicky Collis	VC	Trustee
Also present		
Jackie Eason	JE	External Reviewer, CST
Keith Holroyd	KJH	Head of Governance, Policy & Compliance; Clerk
Susan Douglas	SD	CEO & Accounting Officer

Apologies:

Emily Ellington	EE	Trustee (Maternity leave)
Leena Dattani	LD	Trustee

Absent:

Mike Holt	MH	Trustee

The meeting was declared quorate.

Ref.	Discussions and decisions	Action
28/2025-26	**Welcome, introductions and apologies and the Board's acceptance or rejection for any absences** BE welcomed JE to the meeting. JE was observing the meeting as part of the ongoing external review of the Trust's governance arrangements. Apologies were received and **accepted** from LD and MH. EE is currently on maternity leave and apologies were therefore **accepted** and recorded.	
29/2025-26	**Declaration of interests and offer/receipt of gifts or hospitality** There were no new declarations.	
30/2025-26	**Board approval of the minutes of the previous meetings, actions and matters arising** Trustees **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 18th November 2025, noting that all actions had been completed. Trustees **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 15th December 2025, noting that all actions had been completed.	
31/2025-26	**Portfolio update – Standards** VC briefed Trustees on her discussions with Carley Holliman (CH), Andrew Sanders (AS) and Kris Williams (KW) in the context of the reports previously circulated with a focus on the quality of school leadership and management. Trustees noted that there are now four new Heads of School and VC and the RD's views on how they are settling in and that they are receiving coaching and support from an experienced Head. ***Evidence of Excellence (EoE)*** VC had discussed with CH, AS and KW the work required by some schools to improve the use of data to inform decisions round the curriculum and the development of teaching to deliver improved pupil outcomes. Trustees noted the significant improvements at Branthwaite Academy and George Hastwell School and GHS and the contributions of all those involved. It was felt that this provided evidence of the Trust's ability to develop schools in need of significant support. ***School Management Information (SMI)*** VC had discussed with CH, AS and KW how the current data can be further developed to support Trustees' understanding and decision making, particularly when comparing schools in very different circumstances. Part of this relates to the importance of understanding the context of the different schools. VC will be working with CH on this but welcomed Trustees' thoughts. DE also offered his support in this area as it plays into his skillset.	

Ref.	Discussions and decisions	Action
	Action: Involve DE in the discussions round the use of data Trustees discussed the need to understand schools' direction of travel and where they are on their current journey. Trustees noted that similar discussions had taken place within the Safeguarding Strategy Group around how data can be used to inform actions and the links to pupil outcomes. Trustees discussed the evidence of data being used better within schools to solve issues at an operational level, whereas Trustees need data which is appropriate to hold executive leaders to account, ask intelligent questions and take strategic decisions. Trustees appreciated the narrative to help them understand the context in the data, but would welcome some additional narrative to support their understanding of how and why schools are improving and developing. Trustees also discussed how TEP data can be used to provide further context and narrative to support the SMI data. Trustees discussed how this information can also be linked to financial reporting, such as the impact of staff absence and the drain on financial resources this can have, diverting funds from other areas. Trustees noted that the Trust has now invested in a staff wellbeing package across all schools and the central team; the evidence from the early adopters suggests that this has reduced staff absence. Experience from outside the Trust suggests a link between staff absence and significant change, and Trustees would welcome some thought on the impact on staff absence at those schools undergoing significant change. **Action**: Trustees to send VC thoughts on how the data sets can be more usefully reported for Trustees.	**VC** **All Trustees**
32/2025-26	**CEO report** *Confidential minutes also refer.* SD provided some additional background and took questions from Trustees on her previously circulated report. ***Free schools projects*** Trustees celebrated the opening of Grand Union Village and Pinn River Schools and noted the way the Heads are bringing the staff together at the new schools. Trustees were delighted to view the final build video from Kier, who had built the new Pinn River School and commented on how fantastic the school looks. Trustees noted that all the legals had been completed in relation to the new schools, that Grangewood School and the Sunshine House Specialist Setting were now officially closed and the Sunshine House site has been returned to the RNIB. ***Delivery of the strategy*** Trustees noted the progress on the operation delivery of the current strategy. Trustees discussed the growth in	

Ref.	Discussions and decisions	Action
	outreach, local, regional and national SEND leadership and the examples provided by SD. ***Eden People*** Trustees discussed the Governance Pathway and how Trustee/LAB development and training needs/wants are identified and developed.	
33/2025-26	**Portfolio update - Safeguarding** Mari briefed Trustees on current developments and took questions on the previously circulated update report on the work of the Safeguarding Strategy Group. Trustees discussed the removal of financial support for post-16 pupil travel, and welcomed the ability of schools to use the Post-16 Bursary to support this. They noted that discussions are continuing with the Children's Commissioner about this, who in turn has written to the LA. Trustees noted that similar issues exist with pre-5s and welcomed that the LA has backtracked on their earlier decision for this pupil group. Trustees discussed the issue raised at the recent Pentland Field LAB regarding safeguarding for pupils aged 18 and over. They noted that Andrew Sanders had attended a recent Preparing for Adulthood Hub meeting, had explained how the arrangements differ for this group of pupils and is taking this back to the Safeguarding Strategy Group. Trustees welcomed the impact of having CPOMS in use across the Trust and discussed the resources available to continue to develop this along with how the outputs are being used.	
34/2025-26	**Portfolio update - Finance** AMN updated Trustees on the discussions and decisions from the Finance Committee meeting on 19th January. The committee is working with Sudhi Pathak (SP) on improving the budget position at George Hastwell School, and with Northumberland County Council in relation to top-up fees for Hexham Priory, which have not been increased for over a decade. The committee has requested further information on the changes to how LB Hillingdon pay top-up fees as they are now using average bandings. Trustees noted the improvements made in the SEND team at LB Hillingdon and how the current SEND lead is supporting our discussions with their finance team. Trustees noted the pending change in the employer rate of pension contributions which will have a positive effect on school budgets from April. Trustees also noted the good progress being made on the audit recommendations. **Actions**: Forward SP's update note to MC on progress on the external and internal audit recommendations	**SD**

Ref.	Discussions and decisions	Action
	Trustees noted that the finance restructure in the north is now in place, other than the appointment of an office manager which is currently being advertised. Trustees also noted the update in the report on financial risks.	
35/2025-26	**Portfolio update – Asset management, ICT & GDPR** *Confidential minutes also refer* ASJ provided some additional background and took questions from Trustees on her previously circulated reports. Trustees were content with the methodology for the development of the new ICT strategy. Trustees discussed the process for external health & safety audits and how the outcomes are followed through. They noted that most of the recommendations from the last round of audits were mainly administrative. Trustees further discussed the resources to support health & safety. They noted that new software is being implemented to support health & safety and that additional resources to improve capacity have already been provided in the south and are being implemented in the north. Trustees discussed the recent email account hackings, how the ICT Manager is managing the recent incidents and how security reminders are sent out to staff. JM suggested that our Office365 licences may include access to attack simulation through the Defender package. **Action**: Ask the ICT Manager to review the availability and potential of attack simulation through Defender in Office 365	**SD**
36/2025-26	**Portfolio update – Family engagement** *Confidential minutes also refer* JI provided some additional background and took questions from Trustees on her previously circulated report. Trustees noted the depth and range of work being undertaken by the Family Engagement Strategy Group, how proactive the Trust is in the issues which affect our families and welcomed that there are now Family Services Co-ordinators in all of our schools. Trustees discussed the ongoing challenge of the boundaries between role of the schools (and the Family Services team) and those of other, external services, particularly where this is outside our remit. Trustees noted that this is a problem across all schools, not just in Eden. Trustees considered that any decisions about the work we do, should be grounded in the core aim of the education of our pupils and their outcomes.	

Ref.	Discussions and decisions	Action
37/2025-26	**Portfolio update – Health & therapy** DE updated Trustees on current developments and issues relating to the portfolio. Trustees noted that many of the issues relate to the NHS's failure to take on its responsibilities and the lack of resources to support this. DE has been focussing on where additional funds can be secured to further support our work on therapies. Trustees noted that he had been working with the Head at George Hastwell Working with the Head at George Hastwell School to secure funds from the Duchy of Lancaster for the development of a new sensory room at the school. A grant application needs to be written in the next few weeks an DE will be working with the Head on this. SD added that she and the Therapy Manager would also be able to help develop the grant application. Trustees noted that DE will continue to investigate additional funding sources and plans to visit the northern region schools; JM was happy to meet up with DE for his visits. Trustees welcomed the progress with Integrated Care Boards on the provision of school nursing following the threat of a Judicial Review of their decision to scale back provision.	

Ref.	Ratification items	Action
R11/2025-26	**Safeguarding and child protection policy** Trustees noted and **ratified** the policy which had previously been reviewed by the Safeguarding Strategy Group including ML.	
R12/2025-26	**Special leave policy** Trustees noted and **ratified** the policy which had previously been reviewed by MC.	

Ref.	Information items	Action
I6/2025-26	**Staff travel policy** Trustees **noted** the policy which had been ratified by BN under Chair's Action on recommendation from AMN. Trustees noted that the same amendments to the overnight accommodation rates also applied to the governance expenses policy below.	
I7/2025-26	**Expenses policy for the governance community** Trustees **noted** the policy which had been ratified by BN under Chair's Action on recommendation from AMN. Trustees noted that the same amendments to the overnight accommodation rates also applied to the staff travel policy above.	

Ref.	Information items	Action
I8/2025-26	**Risk register** Trustees **noted** the updated risk register and accompanying summary of changes which will be further discussed by the Audit & Risk Committee.	

There are confidential minutes for this meeting.

Meeting closed at 8:13pm

These minutes were agreed by the Board at its subsequent meeting on 23rd March 2026

The Eden Academy Trust is a charitable company, limited
by guarantee, registered in England and Wales
Register number: 08036395
Registered office: Moorcroft School, Bramble Close,
Uxbridge UB8 3BF

ACTION SUMMARY

Agenda item x/2025-26		Action	Who
31	Portfolio update - standards	Involve DE in the discussions round the use of data	VC
		Trustees to send VC thoughts on how the data sets can be more usefully reported for Trustees	All Trustees
34	Portfolio update - finance	Forward SP's update note to MC on progress on the external and internal audit recommendations	SD
35	Portfolio update – asset management, ICT & GDPR	Ask the ICT Manager to review the availability and potential of attack simulation through Defender in Office 365	SD

DECISION SUMMARY

Agenda item x/2025-26		Decision
28	Welcome, introductions and apologies and the Board's acceptance or rejection for any absences	Apologies were received and **accepted** from LD and MH. EE is currently on maternity leave and apologies were therefore **accepted** and recorded.
16	Board approval of the minutes of the previous meetings, actions and matters arising	Trustees **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 18th November 2025, noting that all actions had been completed. Trustees **approved** the minutes of the meeting on 15th December 2025, noting that all actions had been completed.
R11	Safeguarding and child protection policy	Trustees noted and **ratified** the policy.
R12	Special leave policy	Trustees noted and **ratified** the policy.
I6	Staff travel policy	Trustees **noted** the policy which had been ratified by BN under Chair's Action on recommendation from AMN.
I7	Expenses policy for the governance community	Trustees **noted** the policy which had been ratified by BN under Chair's Action on recommendation from AMN.
I8	Risk register	Trustees **noted** the updated risk register and accompanying summary of changes.