Minutes of CAST Board Meeting held on Friday 15th May 2026
in person at the Ockment Centre, Okehampton from 10.30am

Attendees:	Ruth O'Donovan (RO)	-	Foundation Director (Chair)
	John Andrews (JA)	-	Foundation Director (Vice-Chair)
	Deacon Nick Johnson (NJ)	-	Foundation Director
	Steve Hole (SH)	-	Foundation Director
	John Cosgrove (JC)	-	Foundation Director
	Nick Baldwin (NB)	-	Foundation Director
	Ingrid Quaife (IQ)	-	Foundation Director
	Alison McDonald (AM)	-	Foundation Director
	Graham Briscoe (GB)	-	Co-opted Director
	Alison Nettleship (ALN)	-	Co-opted Director
	Matt Richards (MR) (virtual)	-	Co-opted Director
In Attendance:	Zoe Batten (ZB)	-	CEO
	Karl Murphy-Barnes (KMB)	-	CFO
	Rose Colpus-Fricker (RCF)	-	COO
	Kevin Butlin (KB)	-	DoE
	Leah Paiano (LP)	-	Clerk
	Helen Brown (HB)	-	DSC

1.	**Welcome and Opening Prayer** RO welcomed all to the meeting and led with a prayer.	**Decision /Action**
2.	**Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum** Quorum met.	
3.	**Declarations of Interest** NJ Governor at St Edward's.	
4.	**Minutes of previous meeting 06.03.2026 (Part I and Part II)** Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.	Minutes 06.03.2026 approved
5.	**Actions Summary - March 2026** Updated on the Actions Summary. 25.27 KB advised that numbers of pupils leaving due to dissatisfaction are low, pupil numbers being lower is due to less children joining and larger year groups leaving in Year 6. Schools report to the LCB on pupil movements so tracked at school level. Current numbers in primary now and September 2026, lost income approximately £700 000, a national trend, which will feed into secondary schools in future years. 25.21 HB and ZB have met. ZB and NJ to meet in June to discuss how to move forward. NJ is the Lead Director for RE and Catholic Life and is looking for ways to improve the role. 25.15 Education Sunday in September, RCF has created a document and will bring to July Board meeting. 25.11 Spreadsheet provided. Can add the F&R Dashboard to the CEO report.	

25.09 RCF and MR have liaised. Protocol to be created for September 2026.

22.24 Diocesan support on a one-to-one basis for advice pending guidance.

Q. Legislation? Awaiting DfE legislation and CES will then work with DfE. Ongoing for a long time.

6. Chair's Business and Chair's Action (if required)

- IABs approval

RO advised the Board on the IABs which had been approved by her as Chair.

CtK in COO report to March Board meeting due to governance concerns, and in CEO report today.

ND&SBC LCB members resigned unexpectedly. Needed strong governance and IAB now in place.

- Letter seeking assurance

The letter was shared with Directors by email prior to the Trust submission, this took place over the Easter holiday. Responses are operational rather than strategic and need to be mindful of the tight deadlines and SELT workloads. Responses need to be robust and evidence based.

Q. Letter was addressed to the Board and should have been shared for Board opinion prior to submission, felt it was defensive in tone? RO provided an update to the Board on the deadline allowing 4 weeks and 2 weeks of that time was the Easter holiday which is crucial to a Catholic Trust. The letter went to the Chair of the Board and CEO. SELT then actioned the response. Would have required a window for Directors to respond which would have delayed the submission..

Not defensive but needed to assure things were in place such as policies, new processes in place, new IT systems now in place. Areas that had to change and improve were the 'even better if', included national policy changes with effect from 1st April, and from September 2026. Had to work to have in place in advance of the changes and had to respond quickly, including requesting information from school staff over the Easter holidays.

Receive letters of assurance following complaints, desktop DfE exercises. Do not normally receive advance warning but was advised one was coming and it was a lot of work. The RD has previously highlighted the openness and transparency of the Trust.

Directors recognised the huge amount of work that was required alongside other HR recruitment processes that were taking place and thanked SELT for their work.

ALN confirmed that during her Safeguarding meeting with KB and LP there was a clear process and could see a lot of work that had taken place. ALN assured the Board that the process and action taken was robust.

Q. Should there be a letter of assurance in the future Directors will be advised for information only with a discussion taking place at a later date as the detail is operational.

Q. As addressed to the Board, should this be delegated to the CEO and/or the Chair of the Board as unrealistic to share correspondence of this nature and detail, should be notified of the letter and the response but beyond that is not necessary.

The Board approved the CEO and Chair responding to any letters of assurance on the Board's behalf

Directors delegated to CEO and Chair, with the Board being advised. Directors noted the time taken to receive the letter and the amount of work required and the timescale.

- Ofsted complaint

Submitted to Ofsted on 15th January, Trust letter received on the 17th April, inspection on the 25th and 26th February. Unusual to be advised of the details of the complaint.

Q. Any redress at all? No.

Inspection report references the complaint, inspection triggered due to the complaint received in January, the Trust didn't receive until April, no conversation regarding the context. Formal report has been delayed pending the Trust response so is still confidential.

- ALN term of office

ALN left the room 11.07am

RO explained that ALN is a co-opted Director and has to be approved each year. The Board unanimously approved her appointment for a further year.

ALN approved for a further year

ALN returned 11.08am

- Use of AI

AI Policy approved in November. "Only use Trust approved tools" which is Gemini. Access through the CAST email and use Gemini.

- AGM attendance

Directors confirmed their attendance/sent apologies for the AGM.

7. CEO Report (including update from CFO, COO and DoE)

Q. Where would SELT most value the Board's strategic focus and support over the next 12 months? Prioritisation of the Goals, look at the Board Strategy Day, useful to identify goals and shape our future going forward.

Q. Enough resource for SELT to do the job, also a risk to being operational. Useful discussion at Strategy Day.

Q. Need to consider the Estates report, the falling numbers, need to consider Catholic education going forward to secure it in the future, need to consider in partnership with the Diocese.. HB advised this is a national discussion, falling roles of baptised Catholics in our schools, falling pupil numbers, falling numbers in churches. The Catholic Church has been in place to support with Christ at the centre.

Q. How will assurance reporting evolve over the coming terms so the Board can appropriately monitor embedding and consistency across the Trust, particularly around safeguarding and improvement activity? We have the Heat Map already and a new iteration is being developed and will be coming to a future meeting, also have strategic Risk Register, KB's Safeguarding reports, and ALN assurance to the Board as Lead Director. Looking at a finance dashboard, and a Risk Register summary for the Board.

A&R to discuss the Risk Register. GB confirmed the Committee role is to ensure there is a Risk Register in place which is reviewed by A&R and the Board.

Need to ensure that we remain compliant with the Academies Trust Handbook (ATH) and other key policies and governance guidance cannot be too streamlined, as weill miss monitoring key statutory areas. too much. Key risks for Trusts are broadly covering the same areas althoughthe level of the risk is variable to each Trust.

NB's suggestion on Risk Register should be discussed with the A&R Committee, a lot of work is spent on the Risk Register by RCF and KMB, and GB as Chair of the A&R Committee. Considerable thought would be required. Measurable KPIs can be used through the Risk Register and added to a form of dashboard. The Risk Register can be used as a basis but cannot be replaced.

Q. Over time, would it help the Board to have a more directional medium-term view of key pressures and strategic choices emerging around pupil numbers, staffing structures and sustainability, recognising the uncertainty involved? Linked to finance and driven by pupil numbers, the finance dashboard will support. KMB is working on this dashboard, and planning which will give longer-term assurance to the Board.

Q. Life-saving allergy pens are to be stocked by schools for the first time - How are we ensuring that there is always someone onsite that can administer these appropriately and safely? When will the Trust Medical Conditions Policy be updated to reflect this National change, as "autoinjectors" is currently an optional section in the July 2024 policy template? RCF has been considering the processes in school. Benedict's Law and statutory from September 2026. All schools to stock allergy pens, staff training, pupils with allergies to have IHCP, named Governor.

A watching brief with Devon H&S service to review their resources, training module on SSS Learning, looking to procure epi-pens centrally for value for money. If Devon resources are too general, will look to a specialised provider at a potential cost of £20 000 per year which would be a financial stretch, but if it is a must-do will come from central budget. The Policy review date is due at January 2028, but will be reviewed in advance of September 2026.

RCF to confirm if an insurance impact regarding Benedict's Law

Q. Is there an insurance impact? RCF will confirm.

Q. Numbers on Roll - Columns G and H have the same year, is it safe to assume that column H is for the year 30/31? KMB confirmed 30/31 and will update.

Q. Breakfast Club posts at St Mary Plymouth - who would cover for the Lead if they were off? Is it safe to have a lone worker running breakfast club? What about from a safeguarding perspective?

Q. St Mary and St Josephs Wool - removal of INSET pay - when will those staff receive their statutory training? Aren't most updates done on INSET days?

Q. St Mary's Poole - who is picking up the admin that was previously done within those 17.5 hours each week? Same question applies for the Senior ICT Assistant's work

Q. Christ the King - On the face of it, removing 42 hours a week of pastoral care when SEND needs are rising, is counterintuitive. What safeguards are in place to support the children currently being assisted by the Pastoral Care workers?

Forms part of ongoing staffing consultations, they are for schools to have taken account of, an operational requirement for schools to have taken into. Consultations will have included HTs, and SBMs to take account of these requirements.

Q. I'm deeply troubled by the absence reporting which suggests that there is a significant gap between the needs of pupils with SEND and EHCPS, and those labelled as disadvantaged, and the support being delivered. How are we going to target support for these pupils to close that gap? Dysregulation is a sign that needs have been missed, and opportunity to make that child feel safe has been missed for too long or too frequently, and that can't be allowed to continue unchallenged. Please can we have assurance that the School Improvement Officers, Safeguarding Leads and Heads are targeting support for these children, and that the current consultations on reductions in staff numbers won't adversely affect this group further? Everything we do is aimed at closing the gap, the provision, the culture, the increasing number of internal APs, policies in place for adaptive provision and pedagogy, and the climate for SEND pupils is positive. Not happy the gaps exist, SEND attendance is positive, in line with national, Persistent Absence (PA) figure for all children is significantly below average, PA for SEND is significantly below average.

Written a new Attendance Policy with a significant change in trigger and monitoring points for attendance. Policy to the July Board meeting. Triggers of absence and PA%, moving to a broken weeks model which is catching children earlier, hopefully impact positively on children with SEND, looking at absolute attendance in % and PA % against broken weeks. Broken weeks is a week with a half or day absence. HTs are excited about this. Figures are showing as broken weeks and from September 2026 will catch all children earlier, introduced a Trust-wide 3 tier intervention, suite of letters for parents, aligned with relational approach and want to support parents, clear triggers, medical evidence letters, pupil support plans across the Trust to clearly identify barriers to learning such as SEND, young carers, military children. There will be specific meetings with children and parents. First trigger of two broken weeks per half term. SEND attendance is inline with the national average but not good enough. PA for SEND is significantly below the average. Policy being trialled now.

Q. Noting that Chartwells is the Trust's Central Catering Provider, and the Trust's Plymouth primary schools are moving to Chartwells, what mechanisms exist for monitoring the quality and quantity of meals provided? And what penalties, if any, are in the contract if meals are lacking in either quality or quantity? The contract measures quality and quantity over a number of KPIs. Less than 60% score would be defined as not-met; the contract provides various penalties which RCF outlined for the Board.

Q. 60% across the entire contract? Central contract relates to central schools, now incorporating the Cornwall, and then Plymouth schools. Now have a Torbay contract. 60% relates to the larger contract.

Q. 60% compliance, are schools asked termly? Monthly compliance monitored centrally which are picked up with providers.

Q. It's great that there are leavers' Masses noted later this term in Poole, Exeter, Torbay and Plymouth but is there a reason one won't be held in Cornwall? Plymouth is a long way from Penzance, Falmouth and Camborne and not exactly close to Bodmin. HB advised that over the last 5 years have gone from no Leavers' Masses to now having 4. All the schools in Cornwall can get to Plymouth, have tried to locate where schools can travel easily. Every school in the Diocese can attend, using transport other than coaches.
Q. Practical things to consider when taking 30 children on a school trip. Year 6 pupils and two Year 5 pupils who receive the Candle of Hope from Year 6.

HB invited all Directors to the Leavers' Masses and Conferences.

Need to consider Canon Mark's capacity as he leads the Masses, important for children to see the wider Catholic community, and AM highlighted the whole coming together and how children value this, good to go to Plymouth Cathedral.

Q. How do schools perceive this? Cornwall schools are excellent at attending and taking part.

Q. 5 recommendations following inspection, 2 robust monitoring through E&S, is that sufficient? KB reports are excellent, detailed and transparent. The E&S Committee is robust in asking challenging questions. Good structure, reporting mechanisms, oversight, and questions in place and works well. ALN then reports to the Board through Committee impact statements.

Q. Strengthening capacity recommendation - internal SIO role in terms of strengthening capacity? Recognising current challenges, looking to mitigate risk, against judgements and RISE program ending in July 2027 with an expectation that the school will be Good. Looking at enhancing support. Working with Ted Wragg through a robust package which will satisfy DfE, strengthen capacity, and supersede SIO requirement. Package will be delivered by secondary school experienced staff, which will go above and beyond the SIO support, in terms of secondary networking and professional development opportunities

Q. Governance readiness? Have taken steps to put an IAB in place. New IAB will have Board representatives and is chaired by an experienced Chair. Will need to ensure it is well placed to challenge and support leaders. The LCB was one of the strongest LCBs and a shame to lose them.

Q. Anything need to do? Monitoring in the usual way, checking in on how it's going, and ensuring the IAB receives regular reports from school leaders, and everything is being addressed.

Q. How long does the IAB stay in place? A limited timescale, there was no concern about governance, need to stabilise and use professional judgement when an LCB can take over.

Q. Will there be a handover between KB and successor? Confirmed.

Q. ToR Safeguarding Review approved? Approved.

Q. Move to central site management? Will need to be an HR consultation. More likely to be October.

Q. HR consultations, have sufficient resources to manage? Day to day is managed by SBMs, recommendation for unions is managed by HR and SELT.

Q. PA in secondary schools, attainment decline - requires urgent intervention, any timetabled targets to see impact? Always had targets, capacity in school and not being able to deliver. There have been huge improvements in SBC but outcomes still need to improve. A comprehensive support package from Ted Wragg will deliver the oversight and support on the ground to ensure it happens.

8. Safeguarding Report

Q. Safeguarding is a strategic priority, but doesn't appear within our Goals, should we be stating it as a Goal. Some.

Q. Section 2.1 - 10 774 incidents, surprised at the number? Continuum of concern, investigated and closed down, noted for the bigger picture. Lot of work with training.

Q. How does it relate to the documents discussed? Good that staff are recording, sometimes they don't know the full picture without the individual concerns.

Q. Strength of argument in terms of current processes, all on the increase, staff are reporting more. Some schools are really good at reporting and analysis. Concern over CCE (child criminal exploitation) and CSE (child sexual exploitation) and honour-based violence and the increase, LP and KB investigating with individual schools

Q. In school or outside of school? CCE and CSE are actions of others against our pupils.

Q. Pleased to see racist incidents haven't increased.

100% return rate which is pleasing.

External agencies involved prior to external review taking place, want the report to reflect the actual picture. The Trust commissioned the review prior to inspection.

9. RE and Catholic Life Update

HB report provided to the Board.

Two inspections this term. Both outcomes were Good - lower and higher end of Good. Higher end of Good was SBC, inspection was led by an experienced secondary school leader. Reflects the transformation in the school. Emotion was high at the feedback session which shows it is a constant focus for school leaders.

Meeting paused - 12.24pm
Meeting reconvened - 12.58pm

10. Education and Standards

10.1 Update from Chair of Education and Standards

RO advised the Board that an email had been received from a parent regarding the half term dates in October, requesting two weeks. This will be picked up by E&S and a response provided to parents.
ALN asked for term dates for schools in other LAs.

Term dates to be provided to the E&S Committee for discussion

ALN provided an overview of the E&S Committee meeting.

Q. Can we afford not to widen the Safeguarding Review to include our primary schools? Or can we commit to commissioning a separate review once the Secondary School review is complete? ALN discussion with RO regarding concerns, meetings with KB and LP, concerns were related to secondary and not primaries. A significant cost implication to consider as well, approximately £1500 per school. Review commissioned in light of historical case, a proactive approach to have external oversight.

11. Finance and Resources

11.1 Update from Chair of Finance and Resources

Minutes and Impact Statement shared with the Board.

Finances are stable, next year will be more difficult. GAG pooling will become a more pressing issue to give attention to.

11.2 Management Accounts to March 2026

Discussed at F&R and shared with the Board.

Expect to be near or achieve the 1% surplus. Monthly monitoring takes place which is easier with the new system.

Trying to determine figures for 26/27 as best we can. Unlikely to have pay awards when the Board is required to approve the budget. Currently 4% for teachers and 3.2% support staff but this figure has just been rejected.

Q. Compliant with the new act which states that academies need to pay the same? Use the NJC pay scale for support staff and already follow the national pattern.

Q. Never have enough money, should note that the Trust is budgeting against a capital shortfall, all know that the money isn't enough, strikes taking place in Nottingham Diocese. Cost pressure areas such as capital and SEND and exacerbated by not having enough money and a reduction in pupil numbers. Running the Trust based on the income we receive, will review in light of Kreston Benchmarking and bring to the July Board. National pressures. Capital budget every year, looking at £1.5m per year to deal with 35 schools, 1.5% of overall budget, a biased system on how capital is allocated, half of the £1.5m is to be spent on compliance that doesn't allow for other capital pressures and is difficult to balance. Connects to the work at F&R.

School conditional surveys will feed into capital funding requirements. Estates meeting to take place.

12. Audit and Risk

12.1 Risk Register Review

Wording agreed "current and future guidance" in RR

No meeting since last Board meeting. Review of the Risk Register carried out in April and May. 8 changes to descriptions which have been provided to the Board.

Two risk changes. Risk Register 2 and Risk Register 24. Increase risk and updated wording.

ZB requested a tweak to wording - from "current" to "current and future guidance". Agreed.

13. Trust Board Governance

13.1 Link Director Reports

RO thanked Directors for submitting their reports. RO recognised that some Directors have had difficulties arranging visits.

Q. Has the nursery position at CtK been resolved? Out for consultation currently and then will return to the Board for a decision.

Q. Nurseries and good nurseries are a fantastic element to feeding into schools? Orchard Nursery is on the same site. Ofsted graded Outstanding provider. CtK nursery provision is delivered through the Reception class. Orchard Nursery is part of our family of schools.

13.2 Lead Director Reports

RO advised not getting Lead Director reports. Need to be completed- revisit at the next Board meeting.

Sa NJ highlighted the differences in the lead director areas and noted that there was a live relationship for Safeguarding, and a constant conversation. This works differently for other areas, such as RE and Catholic Life.

Q. ALN report - criteria for physical intervention, in the Policy for Directors to consider, what is the SELT recommendation? Legal situation in the Policy and the three reasons, should only authorise physical intervention for the first reason. Would prefer that children are not restrained to protect property, has the potential to harm physically or emotionally, this reason is too open. Should only be used to protect the child or others.

Q. A legal position, any repercussions could be considered by law? For us to authorise, if don't give the permission to protect property,

Q. H&S side, making staff make a decision on whether the item will harm a child or staff member if damage is made. Staff members have to make those decisions all the time, to protect the child, authorised if there is a risk.

Q. What if the child wants to smash every windscreen in the car park, never appropriate to intervene? Can be interpreted as smashing all the windows, by smashing the windows the child is at risk. Asking staff to make decisions and hold them to account.

In loco parentis judgement of whether the child is at risk of harm or harming others. Restraint should be the last resort and only if there is immediate/potential harm to the child or someone else. Sends the wrong messages to children, they are growing up, helping to form their character as well as their academic abilities. All staff trained how to use it, but it is always the last resort.

Q. A judgement call - trashing a computer, property so can't intervene. Continuation of the incident results in the harm of the child. Going to a computer with a screwdriver allows the intervention. Discretion is still with staff. Protection is the child and with others. When a child is dysregulated and could trash displays, any action that becomes harmful to the child means staff make the decision in that moment.

In a secondary environment, standing in front of a student to prevent running through would not be the same but would need recording. Where possible, barring the way wouldn't require the level of training required for children to be restrained.

Policy recognises that touch and physical intervention are welcomed and required, CPI trained restraint is a step up. The Policy would protect staff, if those points aren't included in the policy. By having the other points in it would put children at risk of unnecessary physical restraint.

14. Policies - for information only as approved via email

Plymouth CAST Safeguarding Policy v9.0 - review date July 2026. Changes approved and rewrite for September 2026

RSE Policy April 2026 - review date July 2027. Amendments made.

Plymouth CAST Anti-Bullying Policy v2 - new policy. **Approved.**

Plymouth CAST Safe Touch Policy v4 - review date December 2026

Plymouth CAST Physical Intervention Policy v3 - new policy. **The Board approved -** 3 points in the Policy for discussion - approved to leave protection of children point only. Want to take a considered view of Safe Touch and Physical Intervention Policy and make it as one in due course.

Plymouth CAST First Aid Allowance Policy - review date July 2026, Amendments made.

Plymouth CAST Emotional Health and Wellbeing Policy - review date September 2028. Amendments made.

Plymouth CAST Health and Safety Policy - review date September 2026. Amendments made.

Q. Merging Committees, will that affect policies? Emotional Health and Wellbeing reviewed in anticipation. H&S Committee has a sub-committee for Wellbeing. Difficult for the Wellbeing Committee to be quorate and there is crossover, signed up to the DfE Wellbeing Charter so Wellbeing Committee will be wound down, renamed H&S as Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee.

Q. Approval required? An operational committee so doesn't need Board approval.

Q. Board meetings venues to be changed? ZB will review.

15. Close of Meeting - 1.56pm

2025-26 Board Meeting Dates – All to be held in person.

Day	Date	Start Time	Location
Wednesday	**AGM** - 20th May 2026	10am	Buckfast Abbey
Friday	**Strategy Day** – 12th June 2026	9.30am	Buckfast Abbey
Friday	17th July 2026	10.30am	Ockment Centre, Okehampton