Meeting	Seaford Learning Trustees
Date	Wednesday 28 January 2026
Time	5pm – 6.30pm
Venue	Chyngton School
Trustees	Jon Dilley Jacky Cross Bob Ellis Chris Mercer Margaret Rooms Sarah Speedie
In attendance	Jane Branson (Guest) Sally Laidlaw (Chief Finance Officer) Gaynor Newnham (Clerk) Amy Clarke
Apologies	James Hollingsworth
Absent	

MINUTES

<table>
<tr><th>Item</th><th>Item Outline</th><th>Action</th></tr>
<tr><td>1.</td><td>Welcome & Apologies for Absence
JD opened the meeting, as Chair of Trustees.
James Hollingsworth had sent apologies to the end of the year.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>2.</td><td>Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary Interests in Proceedings
There were no changes to the previously published declarations.</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>3.</td><td>Minutes of the Previous Meeting: December 2025
Trustees approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.
Trustees reviewed the summary of actions, as follows:
<table>
<tr><td>No</td><td>Action</td><td>By</td></tr>
<tr><td>7.1</td><td>Consider extending the length of the T2 Trustee meeting from next year</td><td>BE</td></tr>
<tr><td>8.1</td><td>Ensure the Governance of Safeguarding remains robust at SHS</td><td>MR</td></tr>
</table>
7.1 Trustees discussed and agreed to start the AGM at 7pm and have a 2-hour meeting, as normal
8.1 Complete

Trustees considered an item of AOB which had been requested by a member, re members joining for the meeting at which the finance is discussed. Trustees noted the key strategic role of the members – particularly scrutinising Trustees' approach, which the Chair confirmed had been explained to the three new appointees. Trustees discussed and agreed to invite the members to a training session, at which the parameters of the role would be clarified.

Action: Invite members to attend training about the role.
Trustees also briefly discussed the need to appoint at least one more member.</td><td>3.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>4.</td><td>CEO written report
Trustees noted the CEO report, school dashboards and minutes of the Term 3 meetings.
The CEO highlighted the following:
• CS validated data was positive, the school is prepared for Ofsted, and the Nursery is progressing well.</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

- Finance is a key risk but there has been good progress to reduce the deficit
- Attendance is an increasing issue for both schools – CS 94% (drop 0.5% from last year) and some SHS year groups are challenging. LA attendance is down 0.3%. An ongoing challenge is the dialogue between the schools and parents, who use section 19 as vehicle for securing alternative provision. There are currently 700 children in the LA with more than 15 days' absence, but the LA cannot place them. 'I' codes for authorised mental health absence cannot easily be challenged. Y11 attendance is weak, which is unusual. BE is confident both schools are doing all they can.
- CS' relationship with Cavendish Trust has been useful.
  Q: How did this evolve?
  A: The LA school improvement arrangements were not having the expected impact, so we moved to a system of current practitioners and a change from the previous SIP who had been visiting 5-years.

  Q: Is there a cost implication?
  A: It is excellent value for money, and the LA allowed CS to spend the money allocated to them for support.

- Seaford primaries work well together. Recruitment into Reception is low across the town, and the benefits of being part of the Trust must be promoted.
  Q: As in the guaranteed access to SHS?
  A: Yes, and the benefits of the Trust providing to children from age 2-18. CS is also the only 1FE with the nursery.

  Q: Are any Seaford schools over-subscribed?
  A: No – everyone will get their first choice

  Q: Will a local school need to drop a form?
  A: CS may pick up some families who do not want a mixed age class.

  Q: Is the access to specialist teachers a selling point?
  A: Partly though 2 other schools also use specialists – and this may not be affordable in the long term.

- Y7 recruitment is red on SIP – the LA paper states that SHS is full and has no interest in Denton sending children here – though strategically this would be good.
  Q: Who controls the area boundary?
  A: This would need to be discussed with Assessment and Planning, but they would not like that proposal. Denton families do not apply as they think it is oversubscribed but, as numbers decline, we need to think about where future students will come from.

  Q: Should joining the Trust be actively promoted to Denton?
  A: We include them in the group of Seaford schools, but most Denton pupils transfer to Lewes, Newhaven and Peacehaven in Y7. However, there will be a widening gap between what we need and what we will receive, and the future will need to be considered. However, actively inviting schools into the Trust is not the correct approach; other schools need to be proactive.

- Another SIP 'red' is the CPD event for staff, as the current focus is parents. This action will be downgraded.

	Trustees noted the Appendix includes a SEF based on new Ofsted framework, and that CS is likely to be inspected soon. Trustees briefly discussed the new Ofsted framework and wished CS luck, when it is inspected.	
5.	**Finance and operations** <u>Finance</u> The CFO reported that: • the December management reports show some improvements, due to savings on maternity pay. • There is a member of staff interested in the nursery. Staff would not be eligible for a discount, but they can be given places. • The CS budget is being closely monitored and will be in a better position to discuss staff for facility and nursery next year. • Absences at CS have led to higher supply costs – SL is now doing the return-to-work meetings, which was effective at SHS. • There will be a DfE meeting next week to discuss the proposal. • SL attended a recent CSTUK session for small trusts. • The internal audit of finance is complete, and the papers should be available for the next A&R meeting. Trustees asked for the school dashboards to be reordered so the newest tab is on the left. **Action: Ask ES to reorder the school dashboards so the newest tab is on the left** <u>Operations:</u> <u>Nursery</u> The CFO reported that CS has appointed an experienced nursery lead who will be in post from 09 February. Children will be welcomed from the start of Term 4, with a full launch at Easter. The funding document will be returned to ESCC before opening. Q: How many pupils will attend nursery? A: There were 4 requests for January, and 5 for April. It is hoped to admit 10-15 in July, and more in September. Q: Who will staff the nursery? A: TA's will be moved from other parts of the school. depending on ratios. Q: What is the expected financial trajectory? A: Not yet modelled as we do not know the numbers, and the funding is different for different age groups. We will redeploy existing staff. The LA has been very positive. <u>Facility</u> The CFO reported that initial plans have been received and the topographical survey is done. The LA is looking to open by September 2026. For every current child there will be an additional £6k plus SEND top up of £11k, and there will be 22 on roll (£72k + £204k). The staffing costs are predicted to be £152k. The CFO asked Trustees to approve continuing to the next phase of the project. Q: As we are still waiting the white paper, how can the LA guarantee the funding?	**5.1**

A: We know what the high needs block is – there will be mainstream inclusion agenda but there is no confirmation of when the paper will be released. The LA has been asked to write a local SEND reform action plan. The special facility model is backed by the schools' forum and funding will be allocated accordingly.

Q: Could the criteria change?

A: Yes – but there will still be EHCP children. The current tribunal system is not helpful and results in children held in mainstream. SS and BE think this is the most positive way forward; there will be consultation on putting children into the facility. Autism and SEMH are increasing and the funding will not be at risk.

Q: What is the timeframe for the funding?

A: There will be an annual review of the provision – there may be the potential to expand in the future.

Q: Is this a permanent decision?

A: It will be done through an SLA and there could be consultation to close. Problems may occur if schools have vacancies.

Q: Are the local schools positive about the facility?

A: Yes. Place planning has determined the areas of need and the LA will support; the staff will be skilled up and supported, and there will be support for the other primaries with managing children with SEND and ensuring consistent SEND provision across the town.

Q: Are KPI's (key performance indicators) set out in the contract?

A: Yes, there is a transparent process. The children in the facility will also increase the number on roll.

Trustees requested a mid-year update on the KPI's.

A Trustee raised a concern about the lack of documentation for this meeting and the CEO explained that the LA has been pressed for reassurance around funding, as they want to open in September and the Trust has staff to deploy who might not otherwise be needed, which would be positive and would save money in the long run. There have been two previous presentations to Trustees about the facility, and they have been kept informed.

Q: Will there be any cost to the Trust?

A: No – the facility will be fully funded by the LA, with an allowance for fixtures, fittings and IT, and salary for person in T6 to set it up. The CEO will feed the Trustees' comments about the lack of figures back to the LA.

Q: Could the SLA be shared with Trustees?

A: It is a generic report and not bespoke – SL is working on the school, nursey and facility budgets which will ultimately be combined.

Trustees agreed that the specialist facility is needed for CS pupils, who will, eventually, be SHS students.

Q: The original proposal related to Seaford children, but might some come from outside the town?

A: It is aimed to be for local children and negotiations will be needed. There will be two facilities opening in Eastbourne, which will resolve this to a degree.

Trustees approved proceeding with the specialist facility at CS.

	The CFO fed back: • on a recent meeting to discuss the SHS facilities at each site, which will generate a similar income stream with higher top up – staffing will need to be considered in the light of discussions at A&R. There is no opening date yet. • The SIF-funded safeguarding work at Steyne Road is nearly complete, with 12 months snagging – not all funds will be spent but should not need returning. • Fire safety work should be complete by the end of the year. • There were no SIF bids submitted this year due to the current climate and works	
6.	**Feedback from the Audit and Risk (A&R) Committee** The Vice Chair reported that: • progress against audit actions will be a standing item on the A&R agenda • Financial savings were discussed at length, and the committee agreed that a mixed approach of restructure and natural wastage would be optimal. The curriculum has been adapted to allow up to six teachers to leave and not be replaced. There are no concerns about the staff, but cost savings are needed. The consultation will end on the 05 March and be discussed the A&R on the 06 March. Other Trustees were invited to attend the meeting, if they wish. A restructure of Student Services was also discussed. Q: Is there a risk to staff morale? A: Yes – the SRMA advised against this approach. The team is shocked but reassured a proper process will be followed. They acknowledge savings are needed. Q: How will staff be selected for redundancy? A: A competitive process will be followed. Q: Is the school obliged to accept requests? A: No – but a small group will be more manageable. Q: Is there a risk of losing skills we wish to retain? A: Yes, but impact can be minimised. Q: Will the greatest savings be from those that leave and are not replaced? A: The significant saving is around the curriculum saving. Q: How much might redundancies cost? A: This would depend on individual staff. **Trustees approved the restructure proposal and agreed to delegate responsibility to the A&R Committee**	
7.	**Safeguarding Report** <u>Plan for JH absence</u> MR is the safeguarding link while JH is absent. The school and Trust safeguarding governance team is due to meet (SS/MR/JB).	

	It is planned to allocate two governors to lead safeguarding at SHS and recruitment is underway. Safeguarding Report Trustees noted the report circulated for December on Governor Hub and that the next report is due in March.	
8.	**Trust Calendar for 2026** **Trustees discussed and approved INSET days for 2026 2027:** **Seaford Head**: 2-3-4 September 2026; 30 November 2026; 04 January 2027; 09 July 2027 **Chyngton**: 2-3-4 September 2026; 12 April 2027; 07 June 2027	
9.	**Policies for review and Agenda items for next meeting:** **Trustees approved the following policies:** • **Appraisal** • **Complaints** A Trustee proposed changing the wording on p8, to replace 'large volume' with 'multiple,' and urged governors to attend the 16 April Governor Conference on complaints • **ECT Induction** • **Pay** **Action: Remove Janet Bowen as HR link in the relevant policies**	9.1
10	**Any other business** **Trustees approved JD/SS/SL to complete the Schools Management Annual Return to be submitted by 13 March**	
11	**Next meeting:** Wednesday 18 March 2026 – 19.01 closed	

Summary of Actions			
No	Action	By whom	By when
3.1	Invite members to attend training about the role.	BE	Tbc
5.1	Ask ES to reorder the school dashboards so the newest tab is on the left	ES	Next meeting
9.1	Remove Janet Bowen as HR link in the relevant policies	ES	ASAP

Seaford Learning Trust – meeting schedule for 2025 2026				
Term	**SHS LGB**	**Chyngton LGB**	**Trustees**	**Other**
1	Tuesday 23 September 8-10am	Thursday 25 September 8-10am	Wednesday 08 October 5-7pm	
2	Tuesday 11 November 8-10am	Thursday 13 November 8-10am	Wednesday 3 December 5-6.30pm	AGM: Wednesday 3 December 6.30-7pm
3	Tuesday 13 January 8-10am	Thursday 22 January 8-10am	Wednesday 28 January 5-7pm	

4	Tuesday 3 March 8-10am	Thursday 5 March 8-10am	Wednesday 18 March 5-7pm	
5	Tuesday 28 April 8-10am	Thursday 23 April 8-10am	Wednesday 6 May 5-7pm	
6	Tuesday 23 June 8-10am	Thursday 09 July 8-10am	Wednesday 10 June 5-6.30pm	Awayday: 15 July 2026