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Whinless Down Academy Trust

Trust Board Meeting

Tuesday 24th March 2026

CEO: Kelly Brown

Public Minutes of the Trust Board Meeting

Held at the Trust Office, St Martin's School at 4pm on Tuesday 24th March 2026

Board Trustees Present: Kelly Brown (CEO), Dean Jones (Vice Chair), Alison Mackintosh (Chair of Trust), Felicity Pearce, Carol Rayfield, Leeanne Westhire

Others Present: Anthony Welch (Trust Member), Michelle Noden (Trust Business Manager)

Governance Professional: Katie Banes

1	**Welcome, Introductions and Apologies** The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and the meeting was confirmed to be quorate.
2	**Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests** Trustees were given the opportunity to declare any new business or pecuniary interests. No new declaration of business interests were declared.
3 **3.1** **3.2** **3.2.1**	**Approve Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 9th December 2025** **Approval of Minutes** Minutes of the previous Trust Board meeting were made available to Trustees via Governor Hub prior to the meeting. The minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 9th December 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The minutes will be marked as signed on Governor Hub. **Matters Arising** The Governance Professional confirmed the term dates for the academic year 2026-2027 have been confirmed via email by all Trustees.

3.2.2	The CEO informed Governors a slight administration amendment had been made to the Admissions Policies as per the recommendation from the Local Authority. Trustees acknowledged and were satisfied with the amendments made.
4	**<u>Review Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) Meeting</u>** The Minutes from the AGM meeting held on Tuesday 9th December 2025 were made available to Trustees prior to the Trust Board meeting. Trustees agreed the minutes reflected a true representation of the meeting. Due to the timescale until the next AGM meeting, Trustees requested minutes from the AGM meeting are sent to all those that were present to agree the content of the minutes. Minutes will be formally approved at the next Annual General Meeting.
5	**<u>Review of Governance Responsibilities</u>** Following Pamela Brivio's resignation, the Terms of Reference for the Trust Board required reviewing, in particular, the reallocation of Trustee responsible for safeguarding. It was agreed that Dean Jones would step down from the FSARC Committee and that Dean Jones would be the Trustee responsible for safeguarding on the Trust Board. Felicity Pearce agreed to be Chair of the FSARC Committee in place of Dean Jones. *Governance Professional to update Terms of Reference for the Trust Board and FSARC Committee.*
6	**<u>CEO Report</u>** The CEO Report was made available to Trustees prior to the Trust Board meeting. A Trustee asked for feedback following Vale View and Priory Fields participation in the behaviour and attendance RISE programme. Trustees were informed that the schools are not in the same hub. Vale View have been allocated Chiltern Primary School in Ramsgate as their partner school and Priory Fields have been allocated Leigh Academy Cherry Orchard in Ebsfleet. The CEO has only had brief verbal feedback at the moment as the visits have only happened very recently. Priory Fields was reassuring as it was evident other schools are facing similar challenges however, it does not appear they face the same coastal school dynamics and levels of deprivation as Priory Fields. The EAL context and cultural challenges also differ significantly. Vale View's partnered school do not face the same challenges as Vale View. The EAL and culture comparison is vast between the two schools. The only suggestion the Headteacher has taken from the meeting was to try a 'soft start' for some pupils, rather than early morning work. When discussing data, the CEO informed Trustees that all three schools were on track towards their targets that were set at the beginning of the year. It was highlighted that it is expected that St Martin's data will not be as high as last year (70% combined). This year, St Martin's are targeted to achieve between 52% and 62%. As Trustees are already aware, EYFS at Priory Fields is significantly challenging. The Local Authority Assistant Director for Mainstream Inclusion visited Priory Fields to observe the children and meet with leaders to discuss the current challenges in EYFS at Priory Fields. A team around the cohort meeting took place on the same day as the Trust Board meeting and therefore, there is no initial feedback to report back just yet. Results for the Year 4 Multiplication checks look promising for Priory Fields, with initial results demonstrating Priory Fields could exceed their target.

	Within the CEO Report, safeguarding data was provided for all schools across the trust. It was highlighted that there is a significant level of safeguarding needs at Vale View, with a third of the school in receipt of safeguarding interventions. It was noted that safeguarding can come with challenges, particularly when parents refuse to engage with support. The difference in safeguarding needs between Vale View and St Martin's were highlighted as they are of a similar size school, but Vale View has the same number of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) as St Martin's. Staff absence data was shared within the CEO Report provided to the Trust Board. The trust Absence and Ill Health Policy has been implemented appropriately across the trust, resulting in fewer absences for dependent leave and informal absence monitoring being effective.
7	**Standards Monitoring** Standards monitoring took place by the Standards Committee through the attendance of School Reviews with the Headteachers and their respective schools. Trustees are aware of the ongoing challenges faced at the individual schools, particularly in relation to the high level of need in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It was highlighted that trustees are aware that attendance and behaviour will continue to be an ongoing risk for Priory Fields and Vale View school. There are high aspirations at both schools however it was noted that the parent mental health can often have a negative impact on pupil attendance and in turn pupil mental health. It was also highlighted that the new Ofsted framework does not support those schools with high levels of deprivation as well as those less deprived.
8	**MAT Strategic Plan** The CEO informed trustees the sustainability and digital strategy are still in the processes of being developed. Sites have been assessed for suitability for installing electric charging points. The only site whereby this would be possible (due to infrastructure and electrics) is at St Martin's, but it would not be available to the public and therefore not considered to be best value. Lighting has been upgraded to LED lighting where appropriate, with solar panel assessment scheduled to take place in the near future. To further support leadership and governance across the trust, there are plans for the local governing bodies to merge together and trial the new meeting setup in the last meeting of the academic year.
9	**FSARC Update** The Trust Board received an update from the FSARC Committee following its meeting on 12th February. FSARC Chair informed the Trust Board that finances across the Trust remain tight. Monthly budget monitoring continues to ensure that expenditure is closely scrutinised and that financial performance is carefully managed. Pupil Premium strategies from each school were reviewed. Headteachers provided detailed reports on the support and interventions available for disadvantaged pupils. The Committee recognised the significant challenges posed by constrained staffing and budgets and commended schools for maximising the impact of the resources available. The Trust's risk register was reviewed, with particular attention given to the continuing reduction in certain funding streams, especially SEND funding, and reduction in pupil roll numbers.

	Pupil numbers across the Trust were discussed. Vale View continues to experience lower than anticipated Reception admissions, with sixteen (16) pupils currently offered a place for September 2026. It was noted that numbers at Priory Fields are slightly lower than last year, but typically increase following late applications. Wraparound care was discussed, noting that more children from St Martin's attend the external wraparound care provided at the St Martin's site. It was highlighted that there has been a decrease in bookings for some school based after school clubs and breakfast club. **<u>TBM Update</u>** <u>Internal Audit Update</u> The Board received an update on the most recent internal audit. As the appointed auditor is leaving the company, the planned spring and summer audits were combined into a single four-day audit, rather than the usual two-day visit. The audit outcomes were very positive, with full compliance achieved across all areas except four light green recommendations, all relating to risk management and representing best practice improvements rather than areas of non-compliance. These recommendations were: • The Anti-Fraud Policy should be reviewed annually, rather than every three years. The Trust's policy review schedule will be amended accordingly. • The Fraud Risk Register should include greater detail regarding fraud-related risks to align with best practice guidance. • The Whistleblowing Policy should also be reviewed annually. It was noted that the Trust had received a total of six light green recommendations across the entire year, demonstrating a strong level of compliance. The Board thanked all staff involved for their continued work in maintaining high standards. <u>Estates Update</u> The Board received an update on estates works undertaken across the Trust. It was noted that the majority of works completed over the Easter period related to statutory compliance. St Martin's Toilet Refurbishment The Board considered proposals for the refurbishment of the key stage two toilets at St Martin's. Quotations had been obtained from Lawford's for both toilet blocks, with proposals including the removal of urinals in the boys' toilets and the installation of additional cubicles to provide more inclusive facilities. The quoted costs were approximately twenty thousand seven hundred and ninety-five pounds (£20,795) for the boys' toilets and twenty four thousand eight hundred and eighty pounds (£24,880) for the girls' toilets, with an estimated saving of around one thousand pounds (£1,000) if both toilets are completed at the same time. The Board discussed the procurement process and noted the challenges in obtaining multiple quotations, as some contractors were unwilling to quote without previous experience of providing services for the trust. Previous projects, including key stage one toilet refurbishments and toilet works carried out at Vale View by Lawfords, were referenced to demonstrate value for money and the quality of previous works. Lawford's quotations were considered to represent best value. Members discussed the condition of the existing facilities, including concerns regarding odour, deteriorating finishes and the need to remove existing wall tiles before installing hygienic wall and ceiling finishes. The importance of providing safe, clean and welcoming facilities for pupils was recognised from both a health and safety and pupil wellbeing perspective.

	It was proposed that the project be funded initially from the Trust's reserves, with St Martin's repaying the costs through a future payment plan once its current capital repayment commitments had concluded. Following a detailed discussion regarding procurement, costs and funding, the Board agreed in principle to proceed with the refurbishment. The works are expected to be undertaken during the summer holiday period to minimise disruption.
10	**<u>School Resource Management Assessment (SRMA)</u>** The SRMA was uploaded to Governor Hub for all to access prior to the meeting. It was noted there were a few new questions in the SRMA this year. An action within the SRMA is for the trust to work towards the six core digital standards by 2030. Trustees were informed the target date to have a strategy in place is 1st September 2026. All trustees present approved the SRMA which was subsequently signed by the Chair of the Trust Board.
11	**<u>Minutes from LGB Meetings</u>** Minutes from the most recently approved Local Governing Body meetings were made available to the Trust Board for information purposes. No additional questions were raised.
12	**<u>Policies</u>** <u>Gifts and Hospitality Policy</u> A trustee asked if the thirty pound (£30) limit is shared with parents. Trustees were informed the monetary value has not been shared with parents, but it was also noted that this has not posed a problem to date. <u>Stress Management Policy</u> Trustees were informed the Stress Management Policy is due for renewal however, more work is required to develop the policy further. <u>Risk Management Policy</u> Trustees were informed the Risk Management Policy will be updated to include actions following the most recent actions. Risk Management Policy to be presented at the next Trust Board meeting.
13	**<u>GDPR</u>** The Trust Business Manager informed trustees there were no data breaches to report.
14	**<u>Any Other Business</u>** <u>Ofsted</u> Following the Ofsted training provided by Graham Chisnell, the training video has been uploaded to Governor Hub.
15	**<u>Confidentiality</u>** As per agenda item number 6 and 8.
16	**<u>Meeting Dates</u>** It was proposed and agreed that the next two FSARC and Trust Board meetings would take place on the same day. FSARC meetings would commence at 2:30pm, with the Trust Board meetings due to start at 4pm.

Actions
- *Governance Professional to send AGM Minutes to all those in attendance for agreement of minutes.*

Minutes taken by Governance Professional Katie Banes