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# Whinless Down Academy Trust

# Trust Board Meeting

# Thursday 16th July 2026

**CEO: Kelly Brown**

**Public Minutes of the Trust Board Meeting**

**Held at the Trust Office, St Martin's School at 4pm on Thursday 16th July 2026**

**Board Trustees Present: 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**

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| **1** | **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**<br>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.<br>Apologies for absence were received from Kelly Brown. Apologies for absence for accepted by the Trust Board and the meeting was confirmed to be quorate. |
| **2** | **Declaration of Business and Pecuniary Interests**<br>Trustees were given the opportunity to declare any new business or pecuniary interests. No new declaration of business interests were declared. |
| **3**<br>**3.1** | **Approve Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Tuesday 24th March 2026**<br>**Approval of Minutes**<br>Minutes of the previous Trust Board meeting were made available to Trustees via Governor Hub prior to the meeting.<br>The minutes for the meeting held on Tuesday 24th March 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The minutes will be marked as signed on Governor Hub. |
| **3.2**<br>**3.2.1** | **Matters Arising**<br>In the absence of being able to proceed with the meeting scheduled for May 2026, the following policies which require approval from the Trust Board were approved by Trustees via email:<br>- Privacy Notice for Job Applicants<br>- Privacy Notice for Parents/Carers<br>- Privacy Notice for Pupils<br>- Privacy Notice for Staff |

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| | - Privacy Notice for Trustees/Volunteers<br>- Absence and Ill Health Policy<br>- Stress Management Policy<br>- Whistleblowing Policy<br>- Investment and Reserves Policy |
| **4** | **Governance** |
| **4.1** | LGB Minutes<br>LGB minutes were made available to Trustees via Governor Hub prior to the meeting. The minutes are for information purposes for Trustees. No questions or comments were raised with regards to the LGB minutes. |
| **4.2** | Local Governing Body (LGB) Merge Trial Update<br>Trustees were informed the first merged LGB meeting successfully took place last week; LGB meetings will continue to take place in the new format in the new academic year. The meeting was chaired by Henry Coates, with formal elections to take in the first meeting of the new academic year. |
| **4.3** | Terms of Reference Updates<br>Following changes agreed in the previous meetings, the Terms of Reference for the Trust Board, FSARC and Local Governing Body have been amended and updated. The Terms of Reference will be formally reviewed and approved at the first meeting of the next academic year. |
| **5** | **FSARC Update / Recommendations** |
| **5.1** | Approval of Staffing Structures<br>Proposed staffing structures were presented to FSARC in the recent FSARC meeting. The Trust Board were informed budgets are extremely tight this year; staffing structures have been finalised on the basis of what can be afforded within the available budget.<br>The Trust Board took into consideration the comments from FSARC and approved the staffing structure for Priory Fields School, St Martin's School and Vale View Primary School. |
| **5.2** | Approve 2026-2027 Budget<br>FSARC referred the 2026-2027 budget to the Trust Board, recommending to approve the budget. A Trustee asked if there had been any significant changes to the budget. Trustees were informed that Priory Fields School has reduced the number of classes however, it was noted that the PAN has not been reduced at Priory Fields. It was also noted that it was not viable to keep the School Improvement Lead in the budget for all three schools; the School Improvement Lead role has now been placed permanently in the Priory Fields School budget.<br>The Trust Board approved the recommendation for the 2026-2027 Budget to be approved.<br>2026-2027 Budget was approved by all Trust members present. |
| **5.3** | Budget Forecast Return (BFR)<br>The BFR has been reviewed by the Trust Board and approve the submission of the BFR. |
| **5.4** | Lettings Fee Review<br>Trustees were informed the lettings fee was discussed and reviewed in the FSARC meeting. There will not be an increase to the lettings fee this year however moving forward, a plan will be put in place to increase the lettings fee in future years. Trust Business Manager to explore potential annual fee increase to propose to FSARC for future years. |
| **5.5** | Business and Continuity Plan Approval<br>A few amendments to terminology have been made to the Business and Continuity Plan. FSARC recommended for the Business and Continuity Plan to be approved by the Trust Board. |

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| **5.6** | The Trust Board approved the updated Business and Continuity Plan.<br><u>School Dinner Meal Increase</u><br>The cost of a school meal is currently £2.50. FSARC propose to increase the cost per school meal to £2.70. This is still competitive within the local area and would remain one of the lowest within the local area.<br>The Trust Board approved to increase the cost per school meal to £2.70 per child.<br>TBM will organise for the price change to be communicated with all parents. |
| **6** | **<u>Going Concern</u>**<br>The Going Concern assessment was made available to Trustees prior to the Trust Board meeting. Question 9a, "Is the trust anticipating a drop in pupil numbers that will affect next years funding?" was highlighted red, with the answer to the question marked as yes.<br>Trustees discussed whether this actually posed a significant risk to trust, as there are many schools within the local area and in Kent facing the same challenges with regards to pupil numbers. For transparency, it was agreed that question 9 would remain marked as yes in red due to the reduction in birth rates and the potential impact on the three-year budget.<br>All trustees present reviewed and approved the going concern assessment and concluded that the Trust remains a going concern. |
| **7** | **<u>Policies</u>**<br>The following policies were made available to Trustees prior to the meeting:<br>- Whole School Food Policy<br>- Risk Management Policy<br>- Estates Management Strategy<br>- Trustee and Governor Allowances Policy<br>The Whole School Food Policy is a new policy for the Trust which will need to be implemented across the trust once it has been approved.<br>The above policies were agreed and approved by the Trust Board. |
| **8** | **<u>Pupil Outcomes</u>**<br>There was a delay in the Key Stage Two Statutory Assessments (SATs) being released due to technical glitches at Pearson. Data should have been available from 7th July 2026, but was not released until today. As a result, Headteachers will present their data at the first Trust Board meeting of the new academic year. |
| **9** | **<u>Trust Business Manager Update</u>**<br>Trustees were informed St Martin's have had a few failed CIF applications for the hall roof at St Martin's School. Due to the requirements of CIF funding applications, it was commented that it is unlikely a future CIF funding applications would be approved for St Martin's. When asked by a Trustee if this poses a risk to St Martin's and the Trust, it was noted that it is not considered to be a high-level risk as there are other funding streams that can be accessed and it is believed the condition of the roof is not at immediate risk.<br><br>Since the last Trust Board meeting the following works have been completed:<br>St Martin's School:<br>- Repaired large areas of parquet flooring.<br>- Y6 carpet replaced due to a health and safety hazard. |

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| | - Drainage clearance.<br>- Three large trees in the pond area have been taken down to stump level, drilled and killed roots off.<br><br>Vale View:<br>- Underneath of external stairs have been cleared.<br>- Car park and playground drainage, with drains installed at the top and bottom of the stairs.<br>- Privacy netting placed around Year R fence.<br><br>Priory Fields School:<br>- Portakabin carried out works in the school hall and banks during the Easter holidays.<br>- New fencing installed at the bottom of the banks, installed by Portakabin.<br>- Drainage works<br><br>Summer Works<br>Necessary works on fire doors will be carried out at all three schools to ensure fire doors are air tight and within fire regulations.<br>Vale View staff room is due to be refurbished over the summer holidays.<br>Pupil toilets at St Martin's are due to be replaced and renovated.<br>Portakabin are due to go back to Priory Fields to continue works on the hall, school field and banks.<br><br>Trustees were informed that the Poultons building by Vale View is being sold by Kent County Council (KCC). The TBM has been in communication with KCC and has acquired some of the land and gained full access to the nursery slope. Access rights to the front of the school will also be withdrawn. All legal fees for land and access rights in relation to Poultons will be funded by KCC.<br><br>The PA to the CEO left in November 2025. This role has not yet been replaced. It was noted that it was likely the role would be replaced with an Admin Assistant, rather than replacing the PA to CEO role as it is felt this would be more appropriate. It is hoped the new role will be advertised in September 2026.<br><br>The falling roll at each of the schools will have an impact on funding. At Priory Fields, roll is expected to change from 326 pupils to 306, Vale view is expected to change from 190 to 180 and St Martin's is expected to stay the same at 178 pupils.<br><br>The trust will be in the final transition year with the new Kent scheme for support staff pay; this has already been budgeted for. There has been an announcement that teachers will be getting a 3.5% increase; a 2% increase was already in the budget, 1.5% will be funded.<br><br>The Trust has worked hard to achieve the Cyber Essentials accreditation for 2026. Cyber essentials is an important part of ensuring the Trust meets the requirements within the Trust insurance.<br><br>The Trust have signed up to a new incident and reporting programme called Medical Tracker. This was a recommendation from the Health and Safety audit which took place last year. It is |

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| | expected that the new system will be implemented in September, removing the use of current paper-based systems.<br><br>The Trust was part of a Health and Safety audit which was carried out on Monday 13th July by an external company, Safety Mark. Early feedback indicates the Trust have performed well, with the potential to achieve the platinum award if the level of achievement is 90% or above. Trustees thanked the TBM and Headteachers for their hard towards achieving the Health and Safety mark.<br><br>Due to the implementation of Benedict's Law, a new Allergy and Anaphylaxis Policy will be devised and implemented across the Trust. Schools will have emergency EpiPens in all three schools, with staff undertaking the relevant training for September 2026.<br><br>The Trust Business Manager acknowledged that the past two terms had been particularly challenging due to staff shortages and additional pressures. Thanks were expressed to the Governance Professional for their work on personnel and safeguarding minutes, which has heavily consumed their role, thanks to the Headteachers for their teamwork and additional thanks to the Chair and Vice Chair of Trust for their support and assistance during these times. The Trust Business Manager was also thanked for going above and beyond their role during this demanding period of time. |
| **10** | **<u>Safeguarding</u>**<br>Staff across the Trust have received additional training updates on sexualised behaviour.<br>See confidential minutes. |
| **11** | **<u>GDPR</u>**<br>The Trust Business Manager reported there were no data breaches or concerns to report. |
| **12** | **<u>Meeting Dates 2026-2027</u>**<br>The Governance Professional presented suggested meeting dates for 2026-2027. Meeting dates were agreed. Governance Professional to upload meeting dates to Governor Hub. |
| **13** | **<u>Any Other Business</u>**<br>The Letter to the Accounting Officer was shared with Trustees via Governor Hub. |
| **14** | **<u>Confidentiality</u>**<br>As per agenda item 10. |
| **15** | **<u>Publication of Minutes</u>**<br>The minutes of this meeting will be approved and published at the next Trust Board meeting which will be held on Thursday 15th October at 4pm. |

| **<u>Actions</u>** |
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| - *Governance Professional to upload meeting dates for 2026-2027 to Governor Hub.*<br>- *Trust Business Manager to explore potential annual fee increase to propose to FSARC for future years.*<br>- *TBM to communicate school meal increase to parents.* |

Minutes taken by Governance Professional Katie Banes