



**Standards Committee Meeting
Tuesday 4 November 2025 at 17:00 – 19:00
via MS Teams**

Those Present:		
Naomi Cooper	Director and Chair	NC
Colin Bradley	Director	CB
Rachel Potts	Director	RP
Phil Bradley	Director	PB
James Hutchinson	Director	JH
Also Present:		
Warren Carratt	Chief Executive Officer	CEO
Jacky Tattershall	Assistant CEO – Quality Assurance & Improvement	JT
Michelle Smith	HR Manager	MS
Rebecca Allard	Executive Assurance Partner	RA
Lyndsay Foster	Governance Clerk	LF
Apologies:		
Richard Webster	Strategic Transitions Lead	RW
No Apologies:		

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	Actions
1.1. To receive apologies for absence Apologies were received from RW.	
1.2. To accept apologies for absence Apologies to accept from RW.	
2. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS	
2.1. Chair to determine any items of urgent business to be considered None.	
3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS	
3.1. Individual Governors to declare any personal, business or other governance interests on any item on the agenda There were no declarations of personal or business interest received.	
4. APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES	
4.1. To approve the minutes of the following meeting: The minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 15 July 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.	
4.2. Review of Action Tracker The outstanding actions on the action tracker were reviewed and updated.	
4.3. Matters arising from the Minutes MS reported that only two colleagues took shared parental leave in the last academic year, but eight are expected to take it in the current year. She clarified the calculation of maternity and shared parental leave percentages for Bader and Lotus. Shared parental leave is not widely accessed, though it offers significant benefits such as up to nine weeks of extra pay. MS explained that 22 staff moved between schools within the trust, which lowered the overall turnover rate to 24.87%. She highlighted that 1.62% of staff were retained due to internal transfers, and this data will be tracked and reported more systematically using Edupay going forward.	
5. ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED	
5.1. The Collaborative School Improvement Update Report JT and RA presented the collaborative school improvement update, covering academy growth, pupil numbers, contextual challenges and the use of the Power BI for data analysis, leading to targeted actions for schools such as Craggs and Kenwood. JT informed the meeting that Nexus MAT currently comprises 19 academies, with Bents Green and Nottingham Hope recently joining, bringing the total to 41 school sites and satellite provisions. Kelford students have returned to The View, vacating Forest View, which	

is now fully utilised by Hilltop. Nexus MAT is also working with Minerva Academy Trust's Stocksbridge High School and this now serves as a satellite provision for Lotus Academy.

Pupil numbers have increased across all regions and special schools, with Nottingham and Sheffield showing the largest growth, due to new academy additions. Sheffield currently has the highest pupil numbers, with Bents Green at 345, Kenwood at 278, and Abbey School in Rotherham at 236. All special academies are experiencing year-on-year growth in both numbers and demand. Craggs is showing a decline in pupil numbers, reflective of national trends. While numbers are expected to rise slightly over the year due to pending admissions, significant growth is not anticipated and an overall reduction in numbers of roll is the forecast trend.

CEO discussed the reduction in Published Admission Number (PAN) to 45 at Craggs and the exploration to reduce further to 30 and protect against under-funded id-year admissions.

RA noted that some of the current issues may be linked to birth rate fluctuations during the COVID period. It was also highlighted that Craggs has taken in a significant number of pupils from St Mary's over recent years, along with some associated challenges.

RA highlighted a key issue identified for Craggs is the under-subscription of their two-year-old provision. This is not uncommon in areas of high deprivation, where uptake of early years places can be low due to a range of factors. Increasing engagement with this provision could help secure future pupil numbers and support longer-term sustainability for the school.

Additionally, there has been confusion around pupil numbers exceeding PAN, with the Local Authority advising that schools cannot take students above PAN, which has caused uncertainty in the managing of admissions.

JT reported that there have been no significant changes to the existing Quality Assurance and Improvement team over the past year. However, new roles have been introduced, including tutors to support vocational areas such as e-sports. Additionally, the Trust has been commissioned to provide provision for Rotherham Council for a young person in care, accessing education other than at school (EOTAS). A teacher has been recruited specifically to support this provision, marking a new development in the Trust's outreach and inclusion work.

JT reported that the EOTAS offer has so far been very successful. There are ongoing discussions with other local authorities regarding extending this model to support pupils who are currently not in school. This represents a potential area of growth for Nexus MAT, expanding our reach and impact in alternative education pathways.

RP asked about the importance of staff development in this area, highlighting the need to build capacity and skill up teams to effectively support learners accessing education through alternative pathways and queried what the plans are?

JT confirmed that the teacher recruited to support the EOTAS provision was appointed externally, as no expressions of interest were received from internal candidates. This

highlights a potential area for internal development and capacity building, particularly as EOTAS is expected to grow and may require further staffing in future.

JT added that Michelle Hill is overseeing the EOTAS provision alongside herself, providing support to the teacher in post.

JT noted that while the EOTAS provision has been very positive for the young person involved, it does present challenges due to the need for close collaboration across multiple agencies. This highlights the importance of clear communication and joint working protocols as the Trust explores further growth in this area.

JT shared that the Trust's Quality Assurance Framework underwent a thorough review last year to ensure alignment with the updated Ofsted framework. This included revising all associated paperwork, templates, and documentation. The review aimed to strengthen consistency and compliance across the trust's provisions, supporting improved practice and readiness for inspection.

NC asked if there was any information about the new Ofsted framework that JT is surprised about or concerned about?

JT shared that, in response to national guidance, the Trust has developed a more tiered system of support to better allocate resources where need is greatest. This approach was discussed with school leaders at the Heads Away Day, where the majority were supportive. Under this model, all schools receive a baseline level of quality assurance, with the option to request additional improvement support as needed. Schools with greater needs have increased access to resources through the partnership improvement planning process, which was implemented successfully throughout the previous year. The system has enabled targeted support and has been well received, particularly by self-sustaining schools who have benefited from a lighter-touch approach. The team currently has the capacity to respond flexibly to all requests for improvement support, and the model is working effectively.

JT noted that the trust had adopted the deep dive methodology - originally used by Ofsted under the previous inspection framework - as a cornerstone of its quality assurance work. Following discussions with Executive Assurance Partners and Headteachers it was agreed that the Trust would retain the deep dive methodology, recognising its value in driving robust quality assurance and improvement across schools.

CEO noted that, in collaboration with JT, the Trust has been remodelling the schools performance dashboard to align with the new Ofsted inspection framework. Sir Martyn Oliver has emphasised that the revised framework retains the strongest elements of the previous one, but making some aspects more explicit rather than introducing radical changes. However, CEO raised concerns about how the 'achievement' category will be applied to special schools, noting its ambiguity. He referenced the removal of attainment levels following the Rochford Review, highlighting ongoing uncertainty around how achievement will be measured and interpreted in specialist settings.

JH reflected on the positive impact of deep dives in special education, noting that they have significantly increased the credibility and confidence of subject leaders. Compared to seven

or eight years ago, subject leads such as those in art or PE are now better equipped to articulate the intent and sequencing of their curriculum. This shift has led to improved standards, particularly in Nottinghamshire special schools. JH emphasised the importance of maintaining this approach, as it supports professional development and has empowered staff, often leading to career progression. He advocated for the continuation of this practice as a valuable tool for school improvement.

JT reported that the 'Team Around the School' approach, introduced last year in preparation for Ofsted inspections, was well received by school leaders and proved highly effective. Heads appreciated the additional support provided through this model, which strengthened readiness and collaboration. As a result of its success, this approach will continue into the current academic year.

JT reported that inspection outcomes across Nexus MAT schools last year were highly positive, with outstanding feedback received by school leaders from Ofsted inspectors. This was a source of pride for the Trust. In terms of attendance, Nexus MAT special schools are currently slightly below the national average. However, when figures from Endeavour and Lotus – two of the more complex provisions - are excluded, overall attendance aligns with national benchmarks. Targeted support is being provided to Endeavour, Lotus, and Bents Green to address attendance challenges, with one of the Executive Assurance Partners leading this work.

PB raised a query to JT regarding persistent absence at Kenwood, noting that although it has not triggered a concern under the current RAG rating system, the rate has worsened by 6%.

PB asked whether there is any identifiable reason for this increase and if further analysis could help understand the underlying causes?

RA responded that Kenwood has a significant number of pupils on part-time timetables, which is impacting their Persistent Absence (PA) and severely absent rates. Although some pupils are not expected to be in school full-time, their absence still contributes to overall attendance figures. This presents a challenge in accurately reflecting attendance data and highlights the need for further consideration around how part-time provision is recorded and reported.

JT suggested exploring a model similar to that used at Kingfisher, where pupil attendance at Chapel House is tracked through in-reach and outreach provision using C2 codes. This approach could be adapted for Kenwood, where there is currently a high number of pupils with medical absences. The proposal aims to better monitor and support these pupils through a structured framework.

CEO noted that persistent absence and school refusal in special schools is often linked to pupils experiencing anxiety or belonging to medical cohorts. These factors contribute significantly to attendance challenges. He emphasised the importance of recognising the complexity of these cases, which often require coordinated support across health, education, and social care sectors to meet the needs of the young people involved.

ACTION: JT to look at a specific analysis report for Kenwood for Autumn term.

**ACTION:
JT
23/02/26**

MS left the meeting at 17:57.

NC asked for clarification on the difference between in-reach and outreach provision, noting she wanted to ensure she had it recorded accurately.

JT explained that in-reach refers to pupils who attend a designated building to access their learning, while outreach involves staff working with pupils in alternative settings, such as their homes or other environments. Last year's Section 175 safeguarding audit focused on five key areas: safer recruitment, working with wider agencies, child protection, cultural safeguarding, and safeguarding management. Schools self-assessed against detailed criteria within each area, which were then quality assured by the Executive Assurance Partner.

There has been a 6.8% overall improvement in compliance, with five schools currently achieving 100%. However, ratings are subject to change as new risks - particularly online - emerge and are addressed. The most significant progress was in collaboration with wider agencies, improving from 86% to 97.1%, driven by stronger partnerships and better communication. Cultural safeguarding saw a 5.9% increase but remains the most challenging area due to the fast-paced nature of online safety, requiring ongoing support and adaptation.

PB noted that Child criminal exploitation has been identified as one of the greatest safeguarding risks within our schools, highlighting the critical importance of proactive engagement with parents. This issue, particularly relevant given the nature of our schools, requires a coordinated approach that includes raising awareness, building trust, and ensuring parents are equipped to recognise and respond to potential threats. Strengthening these partnerships is essential to safeguarding children effectively and addressing the evolving challenges linked to exploitation and online safety.

JT expressed the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) forum plays a vital role in strengthening safeguarding practice across the trust. It provides a collaborative space for DSLs to share effective strategies, discuss emerging challenges, and learn from each other's experiences. This peer-to-peer support is especially valuable in responding to rapidly evolving risks such as child criminal exploitation and online safety, ensuring a consistent and informed approach across all schools.

JT informed the committee that a key outcome from last year is that all schools are now completing a new online safety audit. This enables a more focused analysis of common themes, particularly around emerging areas such as artificial intelligence. The audit supports a trust-wide understanding of online risks and informs how best to strengthen central support for DSLs. Additionally, data on children in care, those on child protection plans, and children in need has been collated to provide a clearer picture of safeguarding needs across the trust.

JT discussed exclusions and suspensions area of the report stating Nexus MAT schools remain below the national average for exclusions in special schools, with a trust-wide average of 10.3% compared to the national figure of 12.6%. While exclusions have been notably higher at Lotus and Endeavour, targeted support is in place particularly at Lotus to improve curriculum and provision, and therefore reduce behavioural incidents. Lisa Suter and Rebecca Allard are actively working with the school leadership to accelerate progress.

Excluding Lotus and Endeavour, the Nexus average drops significantly to 5.3%. Additionally, Crag's suspension rate stands at just 0.7%, well below the national primary average of 2.27%, reflecting strong behaviour management and inclusive practice.

JH stated Endeavour has historically recorded the highest exclusion rates among Nottinghamshire's special schools, largely due to its intake of pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Alongside Beech, it is one of the few schools within the trust that consistently supports the most complex and challenging children. This context is essential when interpreting exclusion data, as these schools operate with a distinct SEMH profile compared to others in the region. The trust continues to provide targeted support to ensure provision and curriculum are appropriately tailored to meet these pupils' needs.

PB noted that when a child is suspended, it is essential that schools maintain strong communication with parents to ensure they are fully informed and supported. This connection is particularly important in the context of safeguarding concerns such as child criminal exploitation, where time out of school can increase vulnerability. Ensuring that parents are engaged and aware of the risks, and that appropriate support is in place during suspensions, is a critical part of our safeguarding response. It also reinforces the need for joined-up working between schools, families, and wider agencies.

JT explained that Nexus MAT has a clear and consistently imposed exclusions policy, followed by all schools and overseen centrally by line managers as part of oversight of the Headteachers' decision-making process. This ensures that procedures are applied appropriately and fairly. Every student returning from exclusion participates in a reintegration meeting, which includes restorative approaches to support their transition back into school. These practices provide essential scaffolding to help young people re-engage positively with their education and reduce the likelihood of repeated exclusions.

RA shared how to support more effective analysis of pupil-level data. Nexus MAT has developed an internal system - the Portal - where schools input key information for dashboard reporting. While individual Next Step (NX) scores are useful at the school level, the Trust requires broader insights to identify patterns and trends. To achieve this, Power BI is being used to visualise and interpret data across the trust. This tool draws from spreadsheets and existing systems to produce dynamic graphs and tables, as seen in the recent data report shared by JT. The dashboard enables deeper understanding of trust-wide performance and informs strategic decision-making.

RA went on to explain as part of ongoing school improvement that officers are working to incorporate prior attainment data held by schools. While this data may not always reflect current pupil needs - particularly for those with mainstream assessments - it contributes to a fuller picture and enables meaningful comparisons. The special school data does not provide definitive answers but instead prompts important questions, best explored through dialogue with school leaders who know our pupils best. For pupils working within engagement models such as NX1 or NX2, progress may remain within lower levels throughout their time at school. To support this, a new assessment audit will be introduced in the spring term, with school visits led by JT and RA to strengthen quality assurance and deepen understanding of pupil progress.

The report has been well received by leaders, with recognition of its clarity and the strength of its key lines of enquiry. It not only provides valuable insights into current practice but also prompts further questions that will guide future analysis. The approach ensures that each cycle of reporting builds on the last, deepening understanding and driving continuous improvement across the trust.

PB asked about concerns that have been raised regarding Craggs, with several issues flagged through recent data and discussions. PB stated that, whilst these have been acknowledged in previous meetings, it's important to note that additional support has been directed towards the school. Further input from CEO may be helpful to outline the specific actions taken and the progress being made. This continued focus reflects the Trust's commitment to addressing challenges proactively and ensuring improvement is sustained.

RA informed the committee that in order to strengthen school improvement, the CEO has increased leadership oversight and support by involving experienced primary headteachers and Ofsted inspectors across key roles, including a new role of executive director for mainstream primary, a serving Ofsted inspector as Academy Council Chair, and an experienced primary head as Executive Assurance Partner. This has led to more robust data conversations and a higher level of challenge, which has been positively received.

The Nexus MAT Assessment policy has become more prescriptive, with greater emphasis on target setting and tracking progress. Monthly line management meetings now include focused discussions on data, and schools are rolling out a new assessment system aligned with successful practices from Ebor Academy Trust schools. This collaboration is helping to address the unique challenges faced by Craggs, while also preparing the school for its upcoming Ofsted inspection, particularly with a current "Requires Improvement" judgment for quality of education.

JH queried whether the Advanced Provision Unit at Craggs serves children from the wider local area or is solely for pupils on the Craggs roll?

RA confirmed that the provision is currently only for children enrolled at Craggs, with an initial focus on Early Years. This targeted approach ensures tailored support for the youngest and most vulnerable learners within the school community.

CB highlighted that it is really encouraging to see the work around employability coming through Section 7. In particular the apprenticeships data looks very good.

5.1.1 Enterprise Learning Institute Update

JT gave a summary of the report.

RP raised a question regarding the future direction and income-generating potential of the Enterprise Learning Institute. RP asked for initial thoughts on how the Trust envisions growth in this area, particularly in terms of sustainability and strategic development. This opens up an important conversation around how the Institute can evolve to support professional learning while contributing to the Trust's wider goals.

JT expressed the Enterprise Learning Institute is being developed with a clear focus on becoming both self-sufficient and self-improving. This will enable the Trust to expand and

<p>enhance its professional learning offer over time. A key strategy currently underway involves collaboration with Lana Stoyles and the commercial team, identifying growth opportunities by attracting external participants. Increasing external engagement will not only generate income but also allow for reinvestment into the quality and breadth of the Institute’s provision. This approach supports long-term sustainability and aligns with the trusts’ broader goals for workforce development and sector influence.</p> <p>One ongoing challenge is ensuring staff can be released for professional development opportunities. While the Enterprise Learning Institute is focused on expanding and improving its offer, Headteachers face practical constraints in balancing CPD with operational demands. Addressing this will be key to ensuring equitable access to training and maximising the impact of the Institute across the trust.</p>	
<p>5.1.2 CSIF Data and Progress Report</p> <p>Document was discussed under 5.1.</p>	
<p>5.1.3 CSIF Delivery Plan</p> <p>Document was discussed under 5.1.</p>	
<p>5.2. CSIF 2025-26</p> <p>Document was discussed under 5.1.</p>	
<p>5.3. HR Scorecard (<i>discussed as the first item in meeting due to MS needing to leave early</i>)</p> <p>MS overviewed the report. The committee discussed sickness absence rates, with CB raising questions about Kelford's high absence and meeting rates, which MS attributed to compassionate handling of bereavement and serious illness cases. CEO and MS discussed the notably low sickness absence at Endeavour, crediting leadership changes and improved staff well-being.</p> <p>RP inquired about trends in persistent sickness absence, practically at Hilltop and Kelford and also Abbey?</p> <p>MS clarified that Abbey’s spike was a one off due to a long-term sickness.</p> <p>JH sought clarification on paid leave for dependants, MS explained the variation by local authority areas (and therefore TUPE) and also staff roles. Directors asked MS to produce a short analysis report for the next committee meeting, examining correlation between parental leave and sickness absence, to be added as an agenda item.</p> <p>ACTION: MS to provide correlation between parental leave and sickness absence data</p> <p>ACTION: Clerking services to add sickness absence as an agenda item at next meeting.</p>	<p>ACTION: MS 23/02/26</p> <p>ACTION: CLERK 06/11/25</p>
<p>5.4. Summer Term Dashboard</p>	

CEO gave an overview and explained this had been reviewed at the October Board meeting.	
5.4.1 Academies Intervention Report	
CEO gave an overview and explained this had been reviewed at the October Board meeting.	
5.5. Risk Register	
CEO informed the Committee of the updates to the risk register, which was reviewed at the Board two weeks ago, with changes since the last iteration clearly highlighted. No further amendments are being proposed as a result of this meeting.	
One notable update is the inclusion of the new Ofsted framework, which has been added as a risk due to its potential impact and the uncertainty it presents over the next 12 months.	
The register will continue to reflect this as the Trust adapts to the framework and monitors any resulting changes.	
5.6. Minutes of the Schools' Performance & Scrutiny Board meetings.	
For information. No questions were asked.	
6. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS	
6.1. To consider any other urgent business agreed by the Chair	
None.	
7. CONFIDENTIALITY	
7.1. To consider the confidentiality of any items discussed during the meeting	
All discussed.	
7.2. To consider any areas of risk discussed in the meeting	
None.	
8. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS	

Tuesday 23 February 2026	5 – 7 pm	MS Teams
Tuesday 15 June 2026	5 – 7 pm	MS Teams

Minutes approved by Trust Board of Directors

CHAIR	SIGNATURE	DATE/