



RICHARD HUISH TRUST BOARD MEETING

10th October 2025 at 11.15am

Redwood Suite, Richard Huish College

Directors Present:

Jade Renville (Chair)
Catherine Christie (Vice Chair)
Tim Duffen – via MS Teams
Pat Flaherty
Tina Wilkes
Stuart Hill
Andrea Marshall

In attendance:

John Abbott (CEO)
Paul Lonsdale (CFO)
Steve Chattell (CPO)
Richard Anderson (Director of IT & Facilities)
Roz Abbott (MIS Manager)
Jess Doyle (Finance Manager)
Adam Driver (Director of Behaviour & Intervention)
Heidi Screech (Director of Nurseries)
Mike Wright (Headteacher of Cotford St Luke Primary School)

Clerk:

Helen Wells (Governance Specialist)

Safeguarding update

Led by: Matt Nolan (Senior DSL and Director of Student Services and Safeguarding Lead for RHC)

Attended by: Andrea Marshall, Steve Chattell, Pat Flaherty, Dominic Lynch, Catherine Christie, Tina Wilkes, Roz Abbott, Paul Lonsdale, Jade Renville, Helen Wells

Apologies – Tim Duffen

Directors attended a Safeguarding update prior to the full board meeting commencing. Key points included:

- What it means for Huish directly
- Statistics and data relating to national and Huish related safeguarding incidents.
- Noted updates to the KCSiE for 2025, but no significant changes but these are pending.
- Prevent update including reference to current right-wing activism locally.

Directors discussed the reporting percentages to the trust, that whilst things seem to be calming in terms of what is being reported there are open and supportive channels for young people to come forward.

How do you engage with college students to garner feedback about how well the impact is working from the procedures they are supported by?

Signed:.....*Jade Renville*..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

There is a college survey and a department survey. The overarching college survey is very positive. The department's survey is issued to students who receive specific support. Feedback is taken once a term and acted on. There is also a student wellbeing council who link in closely to the college's mental health team.

Where is the data being drawn from? From the databases used across the trust to gather safeguarding data.

Is there a correlation between safeguarding and SEND data? There is a correlation in this data and this is being looked at more closely as a metric now.

Dominic Lynch left the meeting.

MINUTES

RHT
25/01

1. MEETING FORMALITIES

Action

This followed item 2.3

1.1 Welcome and apologies for absence

The chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and introductions were made. Dominic Lynch was unable to remain for the meeting, his apologies were accepted.

RHT
25/02

1.2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 16th July 2025 were agreed as an accurate record. The Chair agreed to her electronic signature being used to sign them off.

RHT
25/03

1.3 Matters arising

Directors discussed the matters arising paper and agreed they were either all completed or were satisfied they were in progress and had been brought forward to this meeting or a relevant committee.

RHT
25/04

1.4 Declarations of interest

Directors confirmed that the summary declarations of interest for publication on the website were accurate, pending updates from Tina Wilkes. There were no declarations of interest declared in relation to items on the agenda for the meeting.

ACTION: Ensure declarations of interest for TW are checked and changes made as necessary.

Clerk

Signed:.....Jade Renville..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

2. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 Strategic overview

This followed item 1

RHT
25/05

The CEO gave a presentation on recent strategic developments. Key points included:

- KS2 SATs results were 58% for Reading Writing and Maths (RWM) combined outcome, the national average last year was 62%, the Local Authority (LA) 59%; Huish were below both but are in the top quartile locally.

RHT
25/06

- KS4 results for Pyrland School showed an improvement since the last set of benchmarked data available; there remains significant opportunity for further progress to be made.

RHT
25/07

- The college's results were exceptional, including progress made and that there is no disadvantage gap for A Levels, which is highly unusual in the sector. Achievement of GCSE Maths and English was also exceptional.

Directors noted that the disadvantaged agenda is a key focus for the DfE and queried how this could be promoted to external stakeholders to demonstrate the success young people can expect by attending Richard Huish College (RHC)? The CEO outlined that the post-16 provision is not always taken into account when external stakeholders are forming opinions about the profile of Huish. A trust level report from the DfE is due in the early spring term but the college is not going to be included in the report, illustrating that post-16 provision in MATs is not a focus for them.

RHT
25/08

- Developments at Pyrland School included a major upgrade to their dining facilities, a recent Ofsted monitoring visit took place and the due diligence process is progressing for transfer to Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership (MNSP) with the target completion date of 1st February 2026.

RHT
25/09

- A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) process overview for academies was given including the introduction of a new common priority across the primary schools. The schools have determined the priority as 'The Huish Pledge'. The Academic Performance & Quality (AP&Q) Committee will explore this further.

RHT
25/10

- DfE and national policy updates including the "Giving every child the best start in life strategy" was published in July 2025 giving a greater focus of the performance of 5 year olds in primary schools. This needs to be measured to demonstrate impact and achievement of Good Levels of Development (GLD) – the expected level at a child age of 5 should reach through best fit judgments by the end of reception and what their school readiness is looking like for Y1, it is teacher assessed through holistic set of measures. **Is it moderated?** Yes, this is moderated through the local authority formally but informally internally across the trust. GLD data is available currently for 2023/2024 and is pending for 2024/2025, the data is mainly above the national averages.

RHT
25/11

Is the intention that GLD will be tracked through to enable a sense of how each child has progressed through their early years and primary school journey? Is there triangulation across the schools to enable consistency about the GLD assessments? Yes, the purpose is to track through each child's learning profile how well they've met each area of development. Huish operates cluster group meetings that include nursery managers and reception class teachers; this collaboration is critical. Directors observed it would be helpful to understand the disadvantaged profile of the children at primary level with data to help explore this further through a committee.

ACTION: Put forward a potential agenda item for a future AP&Q Committee meeting for directors to have oversight of the disadvantage profile for children at primary level.

Clerk
with
Exec

Signed:.....Jade Renville..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

RHT
25/12

- The KS2 SATs grade profile across Somerset has not improved; Somerset outcomes remains one of the lowest achieving areas in the country at KS2. This is likely to remain a significant focus for the government.

RHT
25/13

- There is a significant drop in demography predicted for primary intake nationally over the next 5 years; small rural primary schools are likely to be particularly vulnerable.

RHT
25/14

Directors discussed the tension between teaching and developing pupils to achieve SATs well, rather than pupils being more well-rounded in their education and whether that is measured going into secondary in how they settle and make progress. Attendees discussed that these links are not well developed and this is not measured. Directors discussed how students are tracked and monitored at the college in, noting that this is not common practice in the primary sector for various reasons. They reflected on the challenges of social mobility in Somerset.

2.2 Strategic Development Plan 2026-2029

RHT
25/15

The CEO noted that the plan had been updated following discussions at and since the Strategy Day in June. The strategic drivers enable Huish in their work towards meeting the vision.

RHT
25/16

Directors voiced their support for the increase of focus on primary provision and on the importance of building productive relationships with external stakeholders. Directors reflected on the current political landscape for how larger MATs seem to be the preferred trajectory by policy makers. They reflected on the possible benefits and drawbacks of this model; particularly in whether they are best placed to understand the needs of specific communities locally when their central team is based in a city some distance away. They noted the DfE's High Quality Trust Framework as a point of reference for judging performance by the DfE, but that it does not give any meaningful insights as to how this information is used behind the scenes.

RHT
25/17

A director highlighted that RHC's results this year have caused a stir of recognition within the sixth form sector that something outstanding is happening at the college, but that this is not recognised more widely in national education forums.

Directors discussed the benefits and strategic options for navigating future policy changes.

ACTION: Re-circulate the self-assessment of Huish in relation to the high-quality trust framework which may be of particular interest to newer directors. Clerk

RHT
25/18

Is SEND at the forefront in the medium-term focus for Huish's strategy?

It remains high profile but has not increased in profile, whereas disadvantage has, there remains a significant SEND agenda in Somerset.

The draft plan will be circulated to the committees for input ahead of being finalised.

ACTION: Ensure the draft strategic plan features in the agenda of upcoming committee meetings ahead of finalising the content. Clerk

RHT
25/19

2.3 Cotford St. Luke proposed membership

This was taken as the first item on the agenda.

The Headteacher gave a presentation about the school giving directors a contextual overview and introduction to their approach and values.

Key points included:

RHT
25/20

- The challenge in making progress is well understood following the recent Ofsted visit.

Signed:.....Jade Renville..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

- RHT 25/21
- The school is working on being more outward facing and is open to embracing external input and support to help them make improvements. The support received from Huish was noted as being a significantly helpful development.
- RHT 25/22
- The composition of classroom groups has been an area of focus in relation to the size of the pupil numbers and anticipated local growth.
 - Recent results were summarised.
 - There is a geographical coherence and already a close working relationship between the school and Huish.
- RHT 25/23
- The school benefits from a range of excellent facilities and strong staff body.

RHT 25/24

Directors thanked the headteacher and agreed they are keen to continue working together and to further develop the relationship, noting this marks an early stage ahead of any formal processes commencing.

RHT 25/25

How have the board of governors received the idea of joining Huish?

The board have been discussing the possibility of joining a MAT for some time, there is now direction in terms of where they are seriously considering. Previous conversations have led to exploring larger MATs not based locally. The governors have struggled to understand the benefits of joining a MAT who do not have a focus on the local area specifically.

RHT 25/26

The CEO noted that the school governing body have already formally expressed an interest in joining Huish.

RHT 25/27

What would it mean operationally for the school to join Huish?

The headteacher gave an example of how support has already been benefitting them with being able to access specific people with expertise on systems both organisations use; that level of support and response is simply not available from the local authority. The CEO noted that strategically the focus is moving towards specialising in primary support.

RHT 25/28

Is the school eligible for the Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence (RISE) funding or something similar?

The school is not eligible for RISE but is in a core group with the local authority. There is support being given directly by the Director of Nurseries at Huish, but there is no formal structured support package in place.

RHT 25/29

Directors reflected that it is positive to hear the support from governors about wanting to engage with a local MAT that understands the local context.

RESOLVED: Directors agreed in principle to work towards a formal academisation process for the Cotford St. Luke Primary School to join Huish.

RHT 25/30

Directors expressed that they were also supportive of the trust continuing to work in partnership with Cotford St. Luke Primary School.

The Headteacher left the meeting.

RHT 25/31

Directors commended the professional generosity of support being given to the school and how it is a positive way of working towards building relationships. Directors discussed possible future impacts on data and the risk register in the longer term, noting this would be explored more fully as the relationship grows.

3. GOVERNANCE AND PEOPLE

This followed item 2.2

3.1 Equality objectives

Signed:.....Jade Renville..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

RHT 25/32	The CPO gave a contextual overview about how equality objectives are determined. The objectives are monitored on an annual basis from each academy, as shared with directors.	
RHT 25/33	<p>Do the academies share these documents with each other?</p> <p>This is not a formal activity. Directors noted that there are good quality responses but there are different approaches across the responses where some are more strategic than others. Directors agreed that they felt assured through this update.</p> <p>ACTION: Consider facilitating the sharing of approaches across the academies in reporting on how they are meeting their equality objectives to enable a more strategic response overall.</p>	Exec
RHT 25/34	<p>3.2 Pay award – college support staff</p> <p>The CPO gave an overview of the latest pay award for support staff in sixth form colleges; Huish is signed up to a nationally agreed pay and conditions framework for the sixth form sector as well as for the one for schools.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the pay award in line with the national pay and conditions for sixth form college support staff.</p>	
RHT 25/35	<p>3.3 Safeguarding and SEND governance</p> <p>The Governance Specialist summarised key points in relation to the supporting paper detailing the need for the board to ensure it meets its compliance obligations in relation to appointing a lead director for safeguarding and either a lead for SEND, or a committee that has specific responsibility for monitoring it.</p>	
RHT 25/36	The board agreed that based on her previous experience and skills that Tina Wilkes was well placed to take on the lead safeguarding role.	
RHT 25/37	<p>Directors explored whether SEND would be best placed with a lead director or a committee. Andrea Marshall offered to take on the role as the lead director, noting her current involvement in SEND in her work.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Directors approved in principle for Tina Wilkes to be the lead safeguarding director and Andrea Marshall to be the lead SEND director.</p> <p>ACTION: Ensure that the appointments for lead safeguarding and SEND directors are brought forward to the matters arising for the December meeting to assure the board that they are in place.</p>	Clerk
RHT 25/38	<p>3.4 Board and LGB updates and appointments</p> <p>Directors noted the associated papers with updates and requests for approval.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Stuart Hill was approved to join as a member of the Audit & Risk Committee and the Governance & People Committee.</p> <p>RESOLVED: LGB appointments and ratifications were approved as specified in the supporting paper.</p>	

Signed:.....*Jade Renville*..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

4. FINANCIAL MATTERS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR INTERNAL CONTROL

RHT 25/39 4.1 Oversight Report including Management Accounts – July 2025

The CFO gave a summary of the key points of the management accounts including that the trust is on track to meet the 5% reserves threshold this year. The financial position was looking positive overall.

RHT 25/40 4.2 Strategic Risk Register 2024/2025

The CFO noted that the register had recently been considered robustly by the Audit & Risk Committee and that there were no substantive changes since the board had last reviewed it. Directors noted the draft minutes from the committee.

RHT 25/41 4.3 Budget update

The CFO highlighted that the key consideration for the budget are the projected demographics; the F&GP Committee would explore this in detail at their next meeting. The college's recruitment remains buoyant. This is not reflected in the primary school's recruitment, which will have an impact on budgeting arrangements for next year. The forecast recruitment for future years is being tested and worked through with headteachers to help understand how accurate their predictions are and what they are based upon in terms of an evidence.

Tim Duffen left the meeting. The meeting remained quorate.

RHT 25/42 Does the recent presentation by the Nerrols headteacher at A&R Committee reflect the local demographic trend?

There is always a caveat in relation to local housing development and specific growth that may buck the broader predictions. The school has opened their reception intake up to a PAN of 60 to ensure that children progressing from the nursery can rely on getting a place at the school, which was not always the case previously. Directors discussed the catchment being unique for the school as it is not defined in the same way as the other schools.

RHT 25/43 How much is the trust prepared to market themselves in seeking primary applications?

This is an area that could be explored further as there is opportunity to promote schools more widely in some instances.

RHT 25/44 How well understood is the Huish MAT locally, with regard to when parents consider which primary schools to apply for?

The reputation of Huish has been strong historically, however, the specific link between the Huish brand and its primary schools is not as well established. Directors agreed there is an opportunity to explore this further.

ACTION: Provide the G&P Committee with an update on the approach in exploring approaches to primary school recruitment.

**CPO
with
Exec**

Directors were supportive of the suggestion to first explore this with the primary headteachers.

5. MINUTES

RHT 25/45 5.1 Written resolutions since last meeting.

Directors noted the written resolution agreed since the last meeting in relation to pay awards.

RHT 25/46 5.2 Minutes from recent Trust Board Committees

Directors noted the recent minutes from the Trust Board Committees.

Signed:.....Jade Renville..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

RHT
25/47

5.3 Minutes from recent Local Governing Boards (LGBs)

Directors noted the minutes from recent LGB meetings.

6. POLICIES AND OTHER MATTERS OF NOTE

6.1 Key documents reviewed by committees for information

RHT
25/48

a) People update and strategy

Directors noted the latest People Update and Strategy that had recently been reviewed by the Governance & People Committee.

RHT
25/49

b) Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) Tracker for 2024/2025

Directors noted the tracker checklist that had also been reviewed by recent committees in relation to meeting the ATH 'musts' in the previous academic year. Directors noted that it provided a level of reassurance that Huish judges itself to be compliant in these areas.

RHT
25/50

c) Health & Safety Monitoring Report – Term 3 2024/2025

Directors noted the H&S monitoring report recently reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee in relation to noting relevant risk factors.

6.2 Key documents for information

RHT
25/51

a) Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2025

Directors noted the latest KCSiE update.

RHT
25/52

b) Huish Nurseries report – Summer 2025

Directors noted the latest update from the Nurseries.

6.3 Key documents/policies recommended for approval by the Governance & People Committee

RHT
25/53

a) Summary overview

Directors noted their thanks for the summary overview of changes and updates to policies recommended for approval by the Governance & People Committee, and noted the changes in relation to the policies recommended for approval.

RHT
25/54

b) Board Self Evaluation 2024 updates

Directors noted the progress updates to the recommendations made as reviewed by the Governance & People Committee at their recent meeting. They noted the recommendation by the committee for the board to undertake evaluations on an annual basis along with reviews of directors.

RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the introduction of an annual board self-evaluation and director reviews.

RHT
25/55

c) Code of Conduct – Staff & Volunteer

RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT
25/56

d) Grievance Procedure

RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT
25/57

e) Pay Policy

RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT
25/58

f) Recruitment of Ex Offenders Policy

RESOLVED: APPROVED

Signed:.....*Jade Renville*..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....

RHT 25/59 g) Safer Recruitment Policy
RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT 25/60 h) Whistleblowing Policy
RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT 25/61 i) Absence Policy
RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT 25/62 j) Low Level Concern Policy
RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT 25/63 k) Safeguarding Policy
RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT 25/64 l) Probation Policy
RESOLVED: APPROVED

RHT 25/65 6.4 SEND Policy

There were no substantive updates to the trust wide policy that was introduced in the previous year, replacing the policies that has previously sat with each academy. Directors asked for specific mention to be made to the Link SEND Director in relation to the role of the SENCo working with them. They agreed this should be the same within the Safeguarding Policy in relation to the Lead Safeguarding Director role.

ACTION: Prior to publication amend the SEND Policy to include in relation to the role of the SENCo reference made to the Link SEND Director. CPO

ACTION: Update the Safeguarding Policy to make specific reference regarding the role of the Safeguarding Lead Director. CPO

RESOLVED: Directors APPROVED the SEND Policy subject to the noted amendment being made.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

RHT 25/66 7.1 Any other business
There was no other business.

RHT 25/67 7.2 Consideration of confidential content of the minutes
There were no confidential items for the minutes, any papers marked as confidential would remain as such.

RHT 25/68 7.3 Agenda for next meeting
Directors noted the agenda for the next meeting.

RHT 25/69 7.4 Next meeting dates
Directors noted the next meeting dates.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 1.18pm.

Signed:.....Jade Renville..... Date:.....09/12/2025.....