OLICAT Directors Meeting
20th May 2026
Minutes

Attendees
Directors: Christopher Donnellan, Ilona Bond, Bill Nelson, William Guri (left 7pm)
Executive: Andrew Waterhouse, Catherine Burnham, Asha Morjaria, Nathan Wells, Nathalie Young, David McInally

Apologies: Joe Burns, Catherine Leong

Reflection: Catherine Burnham

Agenda item	
1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda	
2. Minutes & Matters arising 2.1. Minutes accepted as a fair record. 2.2. LPS sale and funds The sale is complete and the money is with the Diocese. We expect to receive it in the form we have asked for, however the Diocese intends to retain 10%. Directors noted no prior discussion had taken place on retention of any part of the proceeds and rejected the proposal. CB will follow up. IB queried if are discussions were proceeding around the pathway. CB confirmed this was underway, Biddenham were approachable and Gemma would progress with Chris Morris. 2.3. Trips 9 Category C trips signed off (listed below). There is still a high level of variation on what has been submitted. CD does check and sample check risk assessments. Process to be reviewed as part of H&S. Ideally EVC and head should be separate. CB noted all schools have a deputy or AHT, and ideally the EVC role should be separate from the head. Directors recognised it is a lot of work and responsibility to run a trip and the Trust appreciates what is done for the children. Trips approved: SJR – Caldecotte SFOA – Canoe Trail SG – Alton Castle OLCP – Go Ape, Northampton Active STMS – Cuffley STB – PGL TBCS – DoE, Savio Residential OLW – Whitmore Lakes STMP – Rock UK	

3. Policies

3.1. Specialist Spaces – new policy

NW introduced the new policy by giving some overall context. It is recognised we have a nationwide SEND crisis, the of which means children with SEND and EHCP plans has increased by 10-12% every year for 5 years. This has increased financial obligation to LAs who are running major deficits. This leads to current 3 legislative changes: SEND white paper; SEND reform paper; Education for all Act. This is a reactive necessity rather than strategy.

This means more SEND children including complex needs in mainstream, and they will increase funding. Reality is it's a very small amount – c13k per year for primaries for and 50k for secondaries. This is for 3 years.

This requires all schools to have inclusion bases – spaces in mainstream offering bespoke individual education. However it comes with no guidance as to what these spaces look like, curriculum, how staffed, how assessed, training needs etc.

These spaces are already cropping up in our schools due to LA pressures. The risks around them are significant. We have made the decision to manage centrally to reduce those risks. At the same time it needs to align with catholic mission and be inclusive.

The policy outlines all our standards, schools will be QA'd and Trust will have a significant oversight. They are intended to allow integration into mainstream.

IB observed she can understand where this is coming from as the consultation finished on Monday and whilst technically a proposal everything read tends to become statutory. If each school is required to have there is a massive implication for capacity and funding. Do they look at SEND needs in relation to funding and is it ringfenced. CB confirmed it is not ringfenced and the guidance is similar to PP. We've said its identifiable in budgets and schools to show us where it is spent now if we're already doing this.

WG queried with the Catholic ethos why it does not fit. NW explained 6 years ago when he joined some schools had a space for complex needs however they weren't inclusive as they were kept out of classrooms, had no proper teacher, and no curriculum. It was a lesser offer and we did not want that to re-occur. Catholic ethos must drive how they are managed and spaces have to offer something equal and reduce barriers. CD noted re-integration is key.

NW reported we have already done a great deal of work to get to this point with schools. The requirement is to be cost neutral and it can be largely managed with LA top up funding but we cannot allow it to eat into wider allocation and reduce mainstream offering.

IB queried if the policy been discussed with school leaders? NW confirmed both Heads and SENDcos have been consulted.

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BN commended the document and reported the process is robust based on the process of review and implementation at St Edwards which in its recent OFSTED report had the highest marks for inclusion.

NW noted behind this document sits very clear ways of working with LAs> it has to be funded to be viable and we will have capacity limits. We are developing a reputation with NNC as holding a hard line.

IB queried if the intent was for all our schools to have? CB confirmed if all are managing in mainstream then we don't need it and we respond to the need that is there.

Directors approved the policy.
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4. Health and Safety
4.1. H&S Report
DM presented the H&S report and flagged key points to note:
• New KPIs for 2026 to reflect high level of compliance with old ones.
• 94 outstanding actions down from 643. These are the 'tough to shift ' ones – ie moles at STE.
• 2027 audits will separate Trust and school items.
• SFOA is a new site so will have a fresh audit done.
• KPI 4 is ensuring we comply with legal requirements of incident reporting (RIDDOR). Specific incident of central team staff member and an after end of school day medical emergency. IB queried if there was a defibrillator on site. Confirmed there is.
• Data can vary at different schools around reporting and recording. Cultural difference in reporting bumps etc.
• Handsam medical log is an additional element. It records medicines and will support allergies policy. We will be registering epi pens with renewal dates and hold own stock.

DMc noted we are waiting to hear on fine details of law for implementation of allergies policy. CD advised to not wait for government, but prepare a draft and update when published.

DMc confirmed we are in process of revising trips policy to align with Handsam module. Do directors want access to approve or as now? Directors confirmed as now but add a confirmation on the current form that the LAC has approved.

IB noted safeguarding reports are provided to Directors, can the same be doen for H&S reports. Agreed and to add folder to governor hub.

NY stated the policy says schools should be planning ahead for the year and taking to LACs. This may need reinforcing.

DMc reported an update on first aid. We are consulting with schools on prescribed medicines but also getting a lot of parent led over the counter medicines being brought in. CB noted we also want to support attendance, so challenge is come with Calpol or stay at home.
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AW to schedule on LAC agenda plan for 26/27
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DMc reported a high focus has been on supporting schools with asbestos and water safety in past year. CD queried procedure for water tanks and legionaires. NY confirmed we have a company that goes into schools for a monthly check.

4.2. Plan of Works

NY presented the scheduled plan of works. As things constantly change, not least of all cost, some will proceed and some will defer to next year now. All priority jobs are on the list. Some alternatives may be cheaper but lack longevity.

Solar panels and battery is now in place at STG. All their energy now is solar. We will monitor for 12 months before considering selling back into the grid.

CD observed this would be desirable across the trust. NY confirmed she is talking to a company but its not covered by grant. Will look at cost vs savings.

4.3. Astro pitch proposal

NY presented the proposal, and Directors are asked to agree to proceed in principle subject to further due diligence and oversight.

The pitch has a lifespan of 10-12 years and we would need to hold funds back annually to maintain and replace (27k – 32k pa). Its anticipated this comes out of the revenue model. Overall cost is in the region of 800k – 1 million, with 7-8 weeks to put an application together and 2 years start to finish (use).

Applications go to a funding panel which give a go ahead or not. The survey takes 3-6 months and planning 13 weeks. We receive 75k from the FA to support planning and by this point we should have accurate costings. Approximately 70% is football federation funding. We'd be looking at cMay 2028.

CD noted if we started putting aside now, final funds are needed in 2 years? NY said we would aim to cover planning within the 75k. CD observed if trying to market ourselves, and the need to keep numbers up, we need to be seen in the market. Consider this a 200k advert. There is value beyond the facility itself.

BN questioned if our contribution is in cash only? NY confirmed it was. BN observed on a project of this size management needs to be tight as fees can bleed off significant resource.

IB noted they have a staff member at BEST who has worked with FA and can put in touch.

Directors agreed in principle to develop the proposal.

5. HR -*deferred to a later date*

6. Finance AM presented the Finance report. Key points to note: • Absence of one finance manager may impact and some information may be lighter than usual or adhoc. • March vs April shows we still have heavy fluctuation month on month. • Current variance is very favourable – large range of factors and we're still working towards building up reliable patterns. • TBCS payment plan agreed. Proposal was 150k per year, agreed on 100k. • BN suggested is it possible to easily to take some of the larger numbers and do a brief note on the large variances. AM agreed the summary is leaning that way. • Starting to look like, overall, the trust might have a surplus. • CD observed the two highest risk school are moving right direction and are under control. CB noted with STMS significantly falling numbers will impact income for next 5 years so we proceed with a note of caution. • CB reported both secondaries met today with external consultant on staffing models. CD queried if the sale income arrives on Tuesday, how does that move through the system. AM confirmed we had to provide a document on how we intended to spend it, based largely on board papers such as IT papers. We aren't just going to spend all the money on the site and maintenance plans – we allocate SCA for projects first. It needs to cover IT, look at trust strategy for growth and building capacity in advance. CD noted and a reserve fund, to allow some wriggle room. CB noted because we spent a large amount in advance on SFOA it impacted reserves and cashflow, so when a roof leaked it was hard to address. Spending request from reserves – SFOA nursery. CD observed the preferred option is very high, and whilst it would be nice to have everything at once it is hard to justify. Is there a phased alternative. IB stated the LAC raised same question but SLT couldnt find a cost effective method of doing that. We do need to take some action as there is little there now and should OFSTED arrive its not a good look. CB stated one element is provision for our children, and this has a lot of extras and nice to haves in it. 2 main things they need now: playground surface is concrete and visually would lift area. Canopy is another as in full sun when outside. Gemma has agreed it can be done just across one door. With surface and shade other things can be added over time. CD given amount already spent, and intake numbers, its hard to justify high level of spend. AM reported school has around 25k in DFC which was thought initially to hold for IT work. However this can now be used. CB noted if reserves are used it will be setting a precedent. CD expressed concern at spending money with a falling roll. IB noted however we may be spending money as a promotional aspect. Directors agreed to allow spend up to £32,713. CB will have that conversation.	**Amount approved, CB to**

	TBCS repayment plan CB stated it's a fair and good response from PMC. He was given a time scale, and came back with this. IB noted he may be a position with surplus in future to address earlier. AM made Directors aware of procurement changes for supply staff that need to be in place for 01 September. The DFE have put a framework on supply, effectively rate capping. If we did it ourselves wed have to evidence compliance. Companies have signed up to framework who have been cleared. AM reported conversations with Catering companies as budgets submitted are not looking good. With pupil numbers dropping, staffing models were based on original numbers. We did increase meal prices last year but are going to suggest increase price to match FSM pricing at £2.61. CB/AM are working through budget meetings with schools. There is a very fine line between balanced and minus. STM a bigger challenge with numbers as is. Cannot see an upward trend in intake figures without significant action on the part of the school. CB reported auditors came in for minimum wage guarantee.. 2 issues raised for further investigation. The Caretakers house at Wellingborough is at market value, but how we subtract it from pay makes it below minimum wage. Other issue was about how do we know how much time people are working, including WFH.	**discuss with head.**
7.	Safeguarding No significant issues to report	
8.	Governance LAC minutes received and noted.	
9.	AOB CB reported meeting with 8 schools outside the MAT in the Diocese. We are looking at building collaborative models and how we can share information and approaches. We have invited them to our SEND conference and Marketing meeting for governors. We continue to look for opportunities to build collaborative relationships. BN reported he attended the marketing meeting which was valuable. However whilst we are focusing on 2027 intake there remain opportunities to make some gains for 2026. HR items rescheduled for additional meeting on 01 June.	