

## **Annual Trustees Report 24-25- Members AGM - December 2025**

This year has been yet another extremely busy, yet productive one. The national headlines have seen a focus on SEND and Attendance, which fortunately was reflected by the key priorities identified within the 24/25 School Improvement plan.

The SEND landscape was an area of concern and development as highlighted by the principal, who ensured there was a robust response plan in place, utilising the skills and support available as part of the management partnership with Education Southwest. This included performance management of a key strategic member of SLT (SENDCo) which ultimately resulted in the need to recruit to post in the early part of 2025.

Although these staffing issues squeezed the capacity of the principal and SLT, the actions taken to remedy the situation (recruitment of SENDCo and SLT restructure) proved to be hugely beneficial in reversing the trends.

Ofsted in March 2025, proved (as you would expect) to be a challenging time for all involved. But as hoped/expected it also reflected the exceptional effort and delivery demonstrated by the principal and her team over the past three years.

Innovative policy making (Smartphone free school) has, like Ofsted, and latterly the 24/25 performance, seen some headline grabbing news.

I will unpack these and other elements later in the report.

The academic year of 2024/25 has proven to be an incredibly successful one and the board of trustees remain confident and reassured by the strong inclusive and ethical leadership demonstrated by our principal and key SLT. This is enhanced by the breadth and depth of skill set possessed by the trustees and the robust way they comply with their statutory responsibilities within the supportive governance framework.

We are currently following the Ofsted framework, with Committees established to oversee:

- Leadership & Management (Including Risk management)
- Behaviours & Attitudes (including Safeguarding)
- Quality of Education
- Finance, Estate & Audit (Including and additional Budget meeting)

This structure is currently under review to ensure we respond to the new Ofsted reporting strands.

As previously, each committee has a nominated lead who takes responsibility for the agenda and content along with the governance professional, they also chair the meetings. The committees meet regularly throughout the school year. The full board also meet regularly on a set schedule. All committees follow an annual cycle of business with clear terms of reference to ensure statutory matters are covered and ratified accordingly. Meetings are set a year in advance, to ensure trustees have plenty of preparation time.

FTB meetings bring together the work of the committees, offering accountability to the individual roles and responsibilities therein.

**Governance** – Following the appointment of a new governance professional in early 2024, this has continued to be a positive area of progress. The breadth and depth of skills and diverse thinking have been further improved following a successful recruitment exercise to ensure resilience is maintained across all committee areas of responsibilities.

The governance professional continues to support systems and processes to ensure we remain compliant with our statutory responsibilities but discharge them with ethical and inclusive focus. This was further evidence by an independent Governance audit completed May 2025, which recognised extensive positives and only offered a couple of areas for development, which were actioned in a speedy manner.

Ofsted noted the strong and forensic governance displayed by the trustees during their inspection (March 2025), while professional colleagues from Education Southwest compliment the school on the skills and commitment levels the trustees bring to the strategic delivery.

I am proud to have participated in the development of governance over the past three years, it has been a hugely rewarding experience, working with good and capable people across all areas. However, it is always healthy to bring fresh thoughts and views to the table which is the reason I decided to step away from the chair this year. We have been fortunate enough to secure Andrew CHAPPLE as the new chair, who brings a wealth of experience not only from within governance and education, but from a successful career in finance.

**Management partnership with Education Southwest (ESW)** - This arrangement continues to be monitored and reviewed through the Leadership and Management committee and has proven to be an invaluable contribution to the continuous development of the school. Several subject audits and reviews have been undertaken, the most significant being SEND. This work has led to a significant response and improvement around the school's delivery of SEND. At the beginning of 2025, during a period of key staff absences, they supported additional executive cover for the principal and SLT, enabling the continuous safe delivery of school business, while allowing the development and progress of key school policies.

They were extremely beneficial during preparations of and during the Ofsted process. They lead a CPD session for trustees to upskill them on the Ofsted Inspection framework, while conducting 1-2-1 peer support for the principal. Which extended to regular support check-ins during the actual inspection (March 25) This continues to be an authentic, open and trustworthy relationship, that sees mutual benefit.

**Multi Academy Trust (continuous review)** – Considering the Government’s updated White Paper and ever evolving guidance on academisation, Trustees continue to monitor the landscape. While reforms remain under discussion, there is currently reduced pressure for standalone trusts to join a multi-academy trust. We remain focused on nurturing partnerships with all local providers while remaining in a management partnership with ESW; a relationship that continues to deliver invaluable support. As part of our ongoing governance process, we regularly update our SWOT analysis and actively seek independent feedback from colleagues across the local education communities, ensuring we remain well-positioned in an ever-changing environment.

**Ofsted** - The Ofsted inspection earlier this year, as anticipated, proved to be a rigorous and demanding experience for all involved. However, it also served as important recognition of the ongoing effort, integrity and ambition demonstrated by the Principal, SLT and wider staff team. The Academy successfully maintained its judgement of ‘Good’ in all areas, a reflection of the strong culture, inclusive ethos and consistently high expectations that underpin the daily life of the school.

Pupils spoke with pride about their school and demonstrated the values that guide them; their conduct, kindness and empathy were highlighted throughout the report.

Leadership and governance were identified as strong, with particular acknowledgment of trustees’ effective balance of support and challenge. The report highlighted the forensic scrutiny applied by the board and the alignment between trustees’ work and the Academy’s strategic priorities.

It is clear from the report that while there is still work to do, the Academy is firmly on the right trajectory. The improvements implemented this year, strengthened leadership, enhanced procedures and renewed focus on culture, were visible to inspectors and have laid strong foundations for continued progress. The inspection validated the commitment and professionalism of everyone within the school community, and it reflects the collective determination to ensure excellent educational life chances for all our young people.

**Performance and Results – Braunton Academy** has achieved outstanding results this year, placing the school fourth in Devon and seventh in the Southwest, reflecting ongoing academic progress and effective leadership. These achievements have strengthened confidence across the school community and reinforced the culture of

high expectations, with a grade 5 now widely recognised as the standard across subjects. English and Maths continue to be areas of strength, providing a strong foundation for further curriculum development and targeted intervention. This performance places the school well for continued growth, supports its reputation in the region, and underpins strategic planning to ensure all students are challenged and supported to achieve their potential.

**SEND** - This year has seen significant progress with the appointment of an exceptional SENDCo who has led with a strong focus on rebuilding confidence, strengthening relationships with families, and improving transitions. The department has embedded clearer systems, enhanced communication, and widened staff training, leading to positive feedback from the communities and external advisors. Strengthened collaboration with key stakeholders is helping to support early identification of need and widen the pathways and opportunities available to our learners. Looking ahead, priorities include consolidating the consistency of classroom support, further developing intervention strategies, refining assessment and provision planning, and ensuring capacity within the team as demand continues to rise. The department now has a much stronger foundation, and there is a clear strategic direction for continued improvement in meeting the needs of students with SEND. One size does not fit all and greater emphasis on individual need and provision is a priority nationally and locally.

**School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2024/25** – The trustees again joined SLT in the review and priority setting session (June 2025) allowing better clarity for trustees around their areas of accountability and influence within their individual committee responsibilities and ToRs. Trustees acknowledge again the work the principal had achieved in monitoring and reviewing the action plan and the performance demonstrated.

Focus for 2025/26 SIP KPIs reflect national and regional trends. SEND remains an area of focus, with greater emphasis on trustees' contribution with the future proofing of the Academy.

By contributing to this event Trustees have greater involvement and ownership, thereby allowing them to transfer that insight into their individual challenge and support at their committees.

**Skills Audit (Nov 25)** – With the addition of three new trustees this year, the updated skills audit shows an even greater breadth and depth of skills and experience across the board. Completed as part of our annual cycle of business, the audit provides reassurance that the Trustee body continues to offer wide-ranging expertise, diverse perspectives, and constructive challenge in a supportive manner. Independent feedback from representatives of ESW have acknowledged the wealth of knowledge and experience reflected by the board of trustees.

**Staff Survey** – The annual staff survey demonstrates continued strong engagement and satisfaction across the Academy. Completion rates were very high for both teaching and non-teaching staff, with responses showing increased positivity across every question compared to last year. Staff express a clear sense of pride in the Academy, alignment with its vision and values, and confidence in the direction of travel. Work-life balance has improved, and motivation remains high, while targeted initiatives such as the new communication policy and the introduction of SOPs have addressed key operational pressures and enhanced both behaviour and attendance. The survey also highlighted growing awareness of Trustees' roles and contributions. Areas for development were limited and will be incorporated into ongoing strategic planning, ensuring continuous improvement in staff experience and organisational effectiveness.

**Trustee CPD Sessions** – Building on the 2024 session to ensure a focus on succession planning and future proofing, we held a second event in Feb 2025, which combined a review of our skills audit, identifying areas for development and the need to build resilience in numbers and further skills and roles of trustees. This led to targeted recruitment around SEND and Chair.

**Trustee Engagement Day** – This was a new initiative to offer a targeted day of awareness raising and familiarisation with key school personnel and subject areas. Attendance and commitment demonstrated by trustees was, as always, good. Key SLT and HOD delivered presentations in priority areas of school strategy as aligned to the SIP. This was an excellent session and although it takes time and effort to arrange, it pays dividends with relationship building. Both Trustees and staff gave positive feedback and valued the experience.

**Permanent Exclusion Panels** – 2024/25 saw the need to conduct panels for two students (separately) following a linked incident. As has become all too familiar, they both displayed complex needs, which the school had responded to well, utilising the partnership opportunities available through safeguarding multi agency options. In addition, trustees formed a panel to review a student who had met threshold of suspension and faced permanent exclusion as a result. Despite being another complex scenario, school responded positively and together with parent engagement formulated a positive plan to reintegrate the student on a strong action plan and behaviour contract.

Trustees continue to monitor and review suspensions and exclusions via the Behaviours, Attitudes & Safeguarding Committee. We review series and trends and ensure the legitimacy and proportionality of applications, by comparing and supportively challenging practices and outcomes.

The Trustees have continued to develop positively across the year, sharing additional skills and understanding from newly appointed Trustees. All evidence acquired from a raft of external sources show the trustees continue to perform effectively, demonstrating attention to compliance and their statutory responsibilities.



As previously mentioned in this report, I stood down as chair in September 2025 (FTB business meeting). It has been a rewarding three years in role, which has seen busy and challenging times. It is clear the ethical leadership demonstrated by the principal has translated into excellent performance and outcomes, validated by the external inspection processes. It has been a privilege to have contributed to the support of this progress and position of excellent performance, offering a wide range of opportunities for students to flourish and be the best they can.

Julie Fry MBE  
Vice Chair of Trustees  
Braunton Academy  
[JFry@braunton.academy](mailto:JFry@braunton.academy)