

Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee Minutes

Meeting	Risk, Audit and Compliance Committee	Date	Tuesday, 25 th November 2025
Location	EKC Schools Trust Executive Boardroom	Time	2.30 p.m.
Membership	Peter Goldsack (Chair), Peter Troke (PT), Alan Horton (AH); Emma Wilkinson (EW)		
In attendance	Tammy Mitchell, Chief Executive Officer (CEO); Sharon Hollingsworth, Director of Governance (DG), Dan Lewsey, Director of Projects, Safeguarding and Compliance (DPSC), Claire Edgeworth – Notetaker		
Guests	Duncan Dyett-Cochrane (DD-C) – MHA Auditor (for items 3, 4 & 5) Finance & People Committee - Ollie Loughton (OL), Paul Sayers (PS), Alison Gray (AG) – (for item 4)		

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and apologies for absence	The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees and confirming that no apologies had been received.	
2	Declarations of Interest	The Chair invited declarations of interest. No new declarations were made beyond those already recorded in the Register of Interests.	
3	Independent Meeting with the External Auditors	<i>Officers not in attendance</i> Trustees met privately with the external auditor. This session provided assurance that the audit process had been conducted without undue influence and in line with professional standards. The audit had gone very well; there were no material concerns to report.	

<p>4</p>	<p>Trustees Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31 August 2025</p> <p>Audit Findings Management Letter</p>	<p>The external auditor presented a comprehensive review of the statutory accounts. DD-C commended the finance team for their responsiveness and accuracy under tight regulatory deadlines. He explained that the audit was risk-based, focusing on mandated areas such as revenue recognition and management override.</p> <p>The auditor confirmed a clean audit opinion with no unadjusted misstatements—a rare outcome that reflects strong internal controls. Adjustments were limited to a reallocation within tangible fixed assets and recognition of a pension scheme surplus, which cannot be shown on the balance sheet under FRS102.</p> <p>Trustees engaged in robust scrutiny. Trustees questioned whether automation with SAGE would genuinely reduce manual errors or simply shift risk elsewhere. The CFO responded that automation introduces layered controls and audit trails, reducing human error. The CEO acknowledged historic issues but confirmed new compliance protocols. Trustees queried the recommendation to centralise HR files, citing safeguarding and cyber risk implications. After debate, the auditor agreed to remove this recommendation from the report.</p> <p>Automation supports Trust priorities for operational efficiency and aligns with Ofsted’s focus on governance systems. Safeguarding compliance remains critical for inspection readiness.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED Trustees Report and Financial Statements for year ended 31 August 2025 and the Audit Findings Management Letter</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>RAC Committee Development session</p>	<p>The auditor briefed trustees on emerging regulatory changes, including carbon and ESG reporting, Charity SORP revisions, and the new Corporate Criminal Offence legislation effective September 2025. Trustees expressed concern about resource strain and the risk of diverting funds from education. The CEO shared an anecdote from another trust that successfully integrated sustainability without compromising budgets.</p> <p>Trustees explored implications for governance and Ofsted readiness, agreeing that sustainability and fraud prevention must feature in future risk assessments.</p>	

		<p>NOTED: RAC Committee Development Session</p> <p>ACTIONS: CEO to explore sustainability training options; DL to prepare AI readiness briefing.</p>	CEO/ DPSC
6	Minutes of the RAC Committee meeting held 10 June 2025	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and confirmed as accurate.</p> <p>AGREED – Minutes of the meeting held on the 10 June 2025</p>	
7	Matters Arising not covered by this agenda:	<p>The CEO updated Trustees on Church School conversions, highlighting risks around land transfer delays and payroll timing. Confidential governance changes were noted, including new diocesan trustees joining in April.</p> <p>Trustees queried whether associate membership approvals should have formal delegation; the CEO confirmed operational authority exists but agreed to document compliance rationale. Trustees questioned capacity for additional schools; the CEO confirmed no current capacity for secondary expansion.</p> <p>NOTED: Update on Church School conversions</p>	
8	Terms of Reference for the RAC Committee	<p>Trustees reviewed and approved updates to the committee’s Terms of Reference, including membership increase and removal of ESFA reference.</p> <p>AGREED: Updates to RAC Committee Terms of Reference.</p>	
9	Internal Scrutiny Annual Report 2024-2025	<p>The committee reviewed the Internal Scrutiny Annual Report and approved it for submission.</p> <p>ACTION:: Internal Scrutiny Report to be presented at AGM on the 2 December 2025.</p>	DG
10	Risk Register	<p>Trustees debated residual risk scoring for financial sustainability and new school integration. Cyber risk was highlighted and agreed to be added as a standalone entry. Trustees queried why safeguarding risk remains high despite training; the CEO explained external factors such as</p>	

		<p>staffing shortages. Trustees asked for evidence of impact, prompting Trustees to share an anecdote of improved staff confidence post-training.</p> <p>NOTED: Risk Register</p> <p>ACTIONS: DL to amend risk register and add cyber risk; formal review of church school integration risk at March meeting.</p>	DPSC
11	Draft Internal Audit Plan 2025-26 to include: Financial Controls Internal Audit	<p>Trustees agreed to maintain current auditors for one more cycle before tendering. Emerging priorities include sustainability, AI readiness, and cyber security.</p> <p>AGREED: Internal Audit Plan 2025-26</p> <p>ACTIONS: Explore sustainability training for Trustees and prepare briefing paper for AI</p>	DG/ DPSC
12	Any other business	The CEO advised there will be an article in Schools Week. An FOI request has been received for Sheppey Secondary. It is felt that the information will be used as a comparison to another Trust on the island. The CEO will share the article. The Trustees discussed any associated reputational risk.	
13	Matters considered confidential	There were no matters considered confidential.	
14	Date and time of next meeting, 17 March 2026, 2pm	The next meeting is Tuesday; 17 th March 2025 at 2 pm	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4.05 pm.

Signed: 

Print: Peter Goldsack

Date: 17th March 2026