



Minutes
Workington Academy LAB Meeting
Monday 29th September 2025, 5.30pm

Present	Mark Bedford (MB) Headteacher Kerry Rourke (KR) Chair Stephanie Hughes (SH) LAB member David Tennyson (DT) LAB member Dave Bailliff (DBa) Parent LAB member Gemma Dooling (GD) Staff LAB member Des Bird (DBi) Director of Secondary Claire Felters (CF) Senior Finance Manager Barry Simpson (BS) Deputy Headteacher Blake Hendren (BH) Deputy Headteacher Chris Kearton (CK) Assistant Headteacher
Apologies	Neil McNicholas (NM) Vice Chair Marie Steele (MS) LAB member
Minutes taken by	Emma Graham Clerk to the West Coast LABs
Quorum required	3
Members present	7

Member support, questions and challenge in red

Responses in green

Actions in bold

		Action	Who
1	<u>Welcome and apologies</u> Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Neil McNicholas has agreed to do a second term of office. Gemma Dooling has agreed to do a second term of office.		
2	a) <u>Declaration of Interest</u> None raised. b) <u>Notice of any other business</u> SEN LAB lead (discussed in item 2e) LAB member visit (discussed in item 6) c) <u>Approve minutes from meeting on 16th June 2025</u> <u>Matters arising:-</u> Surveys to be added to next agenda Head – surveys were undertaken in the spring term, and we saw improvements in quite a few areas. The work done over		

	summer will also help. Curriculum information is now on the website and easier to find. Chair – as Head, what have you taken from the survey results? Head – high level behaviours referred to in the surveys were from very small numbers, which is why we did 9 permanent exclusions. We are already seeing some benefits from the reflection room, so behaviour is better. Chair – one area identified was that students do not find the work challenging and they were not getting feedback, plus some bullying. Head – I don't believe we will ever be able to eradicate bullying, but we will do our best to manage it. We have a real push on consistency. BS – we have strong and experienced staff, so we have created a Teaching and Learning handbook to support staff. CPD is focused on staff development which will strengthen teaching and help improve. Staff LAB member – lot of work has been done on KS3 curriculum over the summer, to streamline the assessments. Chair – there were comments from staff about lots of assessments. Was that one or two people or were they the 'voice' of the staff body? Head – during the surveys, there was a period of lots of KS3 assessments which are time-consuming. We are trying to be more flexible with staff, so they can take PPA off-site if they want. Staff LAB member – some staff who have PPA last lesson have been assigned a bus duty, so they can't go off-site. Moving to another day would be helpful. • Dba to investigate possible sponsorship for tuition • Head to provide full staff organisational chart with job titles. • Head to arrange a meeting with NM and LT • Head to send forthcoming event dates to LAB members The minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair. d) <u>Approve Terms of Reference</u> LAB Approved e) <u>LAB Safeguarding lead/LAB Health & Safety lead</u> MS – safeguarding lead NM – Health & Safety lead DT – SEND lead f) <u>LAB Work Plan for 2025-26</u> Taken as read. g) <u>LAB Meeting Schedule for 2025-26</u>	Dba Head Head	ongoing ongoing ongoing √
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	Taken as read. h) LAB member Declaration of Interest for 2025-26 Action: Clerk to check who is still to complete	Clerk	
3	Education: a) <u>National Assessments: Review of results from summer term and key actions</u> <u>Raising standards action plan</u> We improved on all measures in KS5, but we know our A level is not where we want it to be. We are working on how we can support and improve academic outcomes for our students. At GCSE, we wanted 40 points or more and achieved 40.5, and we have improved on virtually every measure. English didn't do as well as hoped on the day. Maths did better, as did some other subjects. Overall predictions were accurate. However, English is a concern, and we had an exam review meeting today. There is already a plan in terms of staffing, support, after-school tutoring has already started. We are also looking at tutoring support in a morning, but we need to make some staffing adjustments i.e. moving a form group. Paper 2 and writing, in particular, are the clear areas where we need to work on and we have already built this into the curriculum. Changed KS3 to focus on the writing element lower down the school, to help when they get to GCSE. Lots of real positives, Geography did much better. The weekend sessions are very effective, as students arrive fresh and not trying to study after a day in school; it paid dividends in Geography especially. Sport science have a really good system, and each student achieved 1.5 grades higher on average. Using some of the systems they use to support other vocational subjects. Boys outperformed girls by two thirds of a grade, which is very different to the national picture. Lots of girls, were school refusers or not engaging for a variety of reasons. Performance is looking to be closer with this year group. DBi – How did SEN students' progress? Head – several had significant needs, so they performed below average, but they were able to complete entry level qualifications. DBi – did they all secure onward destinations? Head – most SEN E students are at Lakes College. DBi – what about SEN k? Head – there were 25, and they were in line with national in terms of scores. Lots found apprenticeships or appropriate placements. DBi – disadvantaged gap, has been monstrous in previous years; what about this year? Head – about the same this year. Non-pp hasn't done as well as equivalent national and gap is mirrored. Boys are pretty much at national average, but the girls are under.		

	DBi – will have to provide explanations, as we would with SEN results. It would be good to have some case studies from those disadvantaged girls. Head – we will definitely have this through attendance, and mental health was a real issue for those girls. Have some significant SEND, but they able to achieve some qualifications appropriate for them e.g. catering In March, we had 12 students with expected achievement of zero and ended the year with only 1. This took a monumental amount of effort from staff to get students into their exams, and they have achieved some qualifications. DBi – the English score sticks out; how are you going to monitor this, so it doesn't happen again? Head – for the trial exams, we need to make sure boundaries are as accurate as they can be we believe we may have overpredicted the grades. We also need to improve in-class writing skills. Chair – is it likely that students aren't performing in other subjects if they are struggling with writing skills? Head – that will have an impact; if a student does not have high level reading skills, they cannot access the curriculum. Chair – as a LAB, we have to make sure we are providing that focused challenged with results. Chair – please pass on our thanks to all the staff who put in phenomenal effort to support students to get these results. Head – the raising standards action plan has already started. SLT have already done their progress evening, and we are targeting specific students to work in squads and have tutoring ans. BS – we have started it earlier based on feedback from parents. b) <u>Pupil Premium (PP) Strategy: Approval of PP strategy</u> This document is a statutory requirement and will go on the website once ratified. Chair – how do we hold the school to account against it? What are we looking for? Head – attendance, disadvantaged outcomes etc. this plan is to increase PP students' life chances. Smaller things such as in-class measures, educational visits, etc. DBi – given the new framework it is likely that the next Ofsted visit will be hugely focused on SEND and PP. Clerk to add Pupil Premium to next agenda. c) <u>School OKR's: Sharing and approval of school OKR's</u> BS – the OKRs (Outcome and Key Results) include three broad foci from the Trust, and we have identified 3 school foci; positive behaviour, outcomes, pupils feel valued and respected. Learned last year, that we need to research so have used EEF to look at how to implement our key outcomes/results. We have identified key actions, how to implement them, and how to measure them.		
		PP on next agenda	Clerk

	Chair – there was a really positive atmosphere from Open Evening. LAB member – has there been any feedback from staff about changes? Staff LAB member – they sit with Curriculum Leaders initially, so it's different for staff members BS – CPD feedback has been positive so far. Lot in early stages, so see more as feedback Chair – what process is there to get this information from staff? Head – will have the usual surveys. BS – we have an open forum after CPD, and from LM meetings. No dashboard or matrix, but we will get feedback. d) Attendance and Behaviour Suspensions have all been in Year 8 and are very low in all other years. Need to move some of those Yr 8 students into alternative provision. We have tightened up processes with mobile phones and uniform. Girls are now wearing trousers, rather than the school skirt. Chair – feedback from parents? LAB member – my daughter chose trousers, as have most of her friends. Head – we had the worst attendance start to term in about 3 years, with the absence of Nic Tweddle, and it has taken about a week to catch-up. Melissa Relph is now clawing this back. Not as good, but still about average. We need to keep our eye on it, as we don't have that buffer. DBI – national picture on attendance is no better. We are better than the national, as are the groups SEN, PP etc. but we're only 3 weeks into term. e) <u>SEND report 2025-26: Approval</u> This is a statutory document for the website. It is a comprehensive document. As a school, we are at a crossroads and have had to raise concerns about the number of EHCP students we are receiving and have been directed to take. Cockermouth School has the largest number of EHCP students in the area, and they have a separate building for resource provision. We are projecting we will reach 83 EHCP students by Christmas, which will exceed Cockermouth. It is not the fact we can't meet the needs of these students; it is from a Health and Safety issue what we don't have the space to meet their needs. We have met with the Local Authority to discuss our concerns, and we are open to conversations to expand and have a building to be able to meet those needs. We cannot be directed to take students without raising those concerns. Equally, we don't want		
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	to lose community support as families want to send their children here, but we may end up in a position very soon, where we have to decline applications. We do have agreement from the LA, that where a family has not requested Workington Academy, they will be directed elsewhere. Chair – queried the reasons we would turn students away? KEK – we can decline due to not being able to meet the needs as in section f, but we may still be directed to take. This may then mean we have to inform families that we may not be able to meet the needs of their child. If that happens, the LA have indicated that we need to make this equitable for all SEN students i.e. we can't fall short of meeting the needs for one or two students, it will have to be all SEN students. The SEN system is not sustainable and not equitable, so there is due to be a full review nationally. We do not know what the future looks like. DBi – it is a huge number and need to keep an eye on this. SEND review could have big impact on funding, but we can only wait and see.		
4	Safeguarding: a) <u>Safeguarding training for LAB members by DSL</u> KEK provided documents to pick up with updates and happy to do offer further training if members would like. b) <u>Safeguarding dashboard – summary of key trends</u> Provided key updates in the report and also created a document for LAB members based on information from NGA.		
5	School Management: a) <u>Finance: Budget and information on key issues</u> Report shows the draft outturn position for the end of the academic year, period 12. This is still subject to audit over next few weeks. The summary position shows outturn was surplus of £120k which reflects over 1% of the overall budget. Lots of unders and overs on a number of budget lines. Since last report, increase in SEN funding, PEP funding and other government funding from ECT and ITT funding. Staffing costs under budget, reflect lots of staff changes, maternity leave, and how vacancies were managed. The 2025/26 support staff pay award was paid in August so not accruing into next year. Total cost of £30k for tutoring and there was no tutoring grant. Agency costs, excluding maternity and vacancies, exceeded the budget by £23£k. Non staffing costs exceeded budget. The summer term surplus funds were invested in curriculum areas, as detailed in the Heads comments in the report.		

	2025/2026 was a challenge as mentioned at the last meeting, but all academies now have a final balanced budget for the start of the new year which was approved by trust board in July. Head – we were careful all year, so have been able to use this to invest in IT, display boards and the new reflection room which the LAB are welcome to see. This is proving positive for students. LAB member – what risks identified for budget next year? CF – all non-staffing budget lines reviewed in terms of forecast, and all is reflective of what costs expected to be. Head – costs ultimately come from staffing and cover staff Chair – potential costs for tutoring? Head – no Gov funding so we are in a similar situation, although we do have some funding from WELL. Chair – is it possible to have a tour of the school for LAB members? Head – agreed to arrange Action: The Head to arrange a tour of the school for LAB members. LAB member – have been able to get £2k but just need some more information to complete the request. Action: The Head to liaise with LAB member for requested information. b) <u>Workforce – standard Power Bi report with short commentary to add</u> Head – the bottom line is that we are fully staffed. c) <u>Operations – Update on key operational matters including complaints</u> Nothing operational to update and no complaints. d) <u>Estates Report</u> Previous action for the Head to arrange a meeting with LAB member and Luke Townsley to look at requested CPD courses for site staff, and which are statutory. Chair – first aiders are a risk Head – we do have a short-term plan and are also looking at adapting contracts for the long-term.		
6	Governance: a) Governance Health b) Trust Improvement Plan – sharing of plan to note c) Governance Training Plan 2025-26 Taken as read. LAB member – met with Mr Holliday to talk about Pupil Premium. He did offer parent coffee mornings outside of school which no-one attended, so he has now set up a parent steering group, which I've		

	agreed to attend. I was able to meet with four students who were a pleasure to talk to. They provided open and honest feedback about a variety of topics including, food, bullying, movement around the school. They know who they can talk to if they have any problems and they felt supported. The main feedback was that they felt lessons were a bit too easy. They suggested a short feedback section on how easy/difficult and assessment was. Lots of clubs on offer and how they are notified to students and parents.		
7	Wider Trust Update: <u>CET Capital plan and Estates update</u> Taken as read		
8	Risk: <u>School Risk Register: new risks considered</u> Safeguarding has been identified as a risk as there are lots of high-profile cases which could become quite challenging for the individual and for the school. They reflect the issues in school. School capacity and oversubscription is another identified risk. 6th form numbers have dropped, partly due to increase of subjects offered at Whitehaven. Overall numbers remain an issue, and we need to continue to manage this. First Aid will be added as we need to increase the First Aid provision. Chair – Chair and Vice Chair have offered support in identifying risks and will be happy to spend time with the Head to review the system more fully. DT and SH also happy to support Head – asked members for parent feedback about school? Do children feel safe in school? LAB member – they say it is busy, but they don't feel unsafe. It's a packed school, and it's about managing things. How do LA and Trust support when they are sending more SEN students to an already full school? Head – we have to stay in line with our capacity, so we will have to refuse students. LAB member – is there a section on finance in the risk register? Head – yes, there is.		
9	Policies: for approval or to note: a) SEND report 2025/26 (see Education section) b) Pupil Premium Strategy 2025-26 (see Education Section) c) Child on Child Abuse Procedures (Part 2) d) Child Protection Procedures (Part 2) e) First Aid Policy and Procedures f) Health and Safety Procedures (Part 2 and 3) g) Missing Child Procedures h) Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions Procedures (Part 2)		

	i) SEND (Part 2) j) SEND (Part 3) Action: LAB member to send comments or queries to clerk by 6th October.		
10	<u>Any other business</u> ○		

Next Meeting: Monday 26th January 2026

Meeting closed 6.43pm

Signed: _____

Kerry Rourke, Chair of Workington Academy LAB

Print: _____

Date: _____

Minutes to be circulated to:

Mark Bedford

Kerry Rourke

Neil McNicholas

Dave Bailliff

Stephanie Hughes

Marie Steele

David Tennyson

Gemma Dooling

Summary of actions:

Item No.	Action	Who	By when
2c	DbA to investigate possible sponsorship for tuition	DbA	Asap
5a	The Head to liaise with DBa for requested information.	Head	
2c	Head to provide full staff organisational chart with job titles.	Head	Asap
2c	Head to arrange a meeting with NM and LT	Head	Asap
2h	Clerk to check declarations of interest and contact LAB members who are still to complete	Clerk	Asap
3b	Clerk to add Pupil Premium to next agenda.	Clerk	Next meeting
5a	The Head to arrange a tour of the school for LAB members.	Head	Asap
9	LAB members to review policies and submit comments or queries to clerk by 6 th October.	LAB members	6 th October

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