



**TEES VALLEY EDUCATION – MULTI ACADEMY TRUST
(Company No. 09630999)**

MINUTES OF Discovery Special Academy LOCAL ACADEMY

**COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON Monday 3rd November 10am
AT Discovery Special Academy**

Actions from this Meeting

ITEM	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	DUE	STATUS
1.5	To ensure draft minutes are circulated to the PA to the CEO in readiness for Trust Board meeting in Spring term.	Office Manager	17 th November 2025	Pending

Outstanding Actions from Previous Meetings

DATE	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	DUE	STATUS



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MINUTES OF Discovery Special Academy LOCAL ACADEMY

BOARD MEETING HELD ON Monday 3rd November 2025

AT 10am
AT Discovery Special Academy

Present:	
Chair:	Andrew Stogdale
Head Of Academy:	Ann Titchener
Staff Representative:	Sian Lamb
Parent Representative:	Lisa Casey
Community Representative:	Anne Kelly
In Attendance:	
Clerk	Sally Keane- Business Administrator
Apologies:	
Parent Representative:	Phillipa Booth

NO.	AGENDA ITEM	ACTION
1.	WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND INTRODUCTION	
	<p>There were no apologies received.</p> <p>Ann Titchener explained that the change from Local Advisory Committee (LAC) to Local Advisory Board (LAB) would not affect any existing roles, responsibilities, or operations. The Department for Education (DFE) considers the new name to better reflect the function and purpose of the group.</p>	
2.	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING	
	Minutes from the previous meeting held on Monday 9 th June 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record	
2b.	MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES AND ACTION UPDATES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING LOG (If required)	
	It was confirmed all actions were completed and there were no matters arising that were not covered in the agenda.	
2c	LAB MEMBERSHIP UPDATE	

	There was no membership update.	
3.	WORK PROGRAMME PRIORITIES	
	There was no work programme priority for discussion	
4.	HEADTEACHER REPORT	
	<p>The following was highlighted and discussed at the meeting:</p> <p>Academy Context – Pupils</p> <p>Ann Titchener confirmed there was 172 pupils currently at Discovery. One child in attendance was a year 10 pupil, although would remain in year 9.</p> <p>An incident with a student led to x 1 suspension. The student had been successfully reintegrated into school and x 2 half day Trust isolations had taken place.</p> <p>Q Andrew Stogdale queried where did the students go for Trust isolation?</p> <p>Ann Titchener explained that the children were taken to Brambles Academy during their isolation period. The process was outlined: when a pupil received a trust isolation, they were placed in an alternative school within the trust for the agreed duration. A member of staff accompanied them, and appropriate work was provided. This arrangement offered the pupil time and space for reflection and supported restorative conversations before returning to Discovery.</p> <p>Q Andrew Stogdale: Was there any new information regarding the Y9 pupil and their ongoing absence?</p> <p>Ann Titchener confirmed that regular contact was being maintained with the family. The LA advised the pupil's place should be kept open, as the pupil was expected to return. The pupil was currently in long-term recovery following surgery.</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Whole school attendance was at 93%, which was higher than the national average for special schools.</p> <p>Ann Titchener stated attendance was significantly above the average for special schools, and Discovery continued to have high expectations for attendance. The target was to achieve a minimum attendance rate of 95%. They continued to work closely with families to support regular attendance and were committed to reaching this goal together.</p> <p>School visits/ Visitors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A wide range of visits had taken place, offering pupils valuable experiences both within and beyond the academy. Highlights 	

included visits to Stewart Park, Pendragon Sensory Centre, therapeutic and confidence-building horse riding sessions, inclusive cycling activities promoting teamwork and physical wellbeing, and a creative Middlesbrough Art Week workshop that encouraged pupils to explore new artistic skills and express themselves through a range of media.

- Visits to Middlesbrough College and The Northern School of Art helped Year 8 and 9 pupils explore local opportunities and better understand what's on offer beyond school.
- The school welcomed the local PCSO to the academy, who delivered informative and interactive sessions with the secondary pupils. The focus was on understanding the causes and consequences of anti-social behaviour, promoting respect within the community, and empowering pupils to make positive choices in their daily lives. These sessions supported the ongoing commitment to personal development and community awareness.

Ann Titchener explained that the children had the opportunity to explore a police van in small groups. This was a valuable experience, particularly for pupils who may find it challenging to engage in similar activities in busier, more crowded environments. The visit provided a calm and supportive setting for exploration and learning.

- They continued to work in partnership with Career Wave to provide impartial careers education, advice, and guidance for our Year 9 (and year 10 in 25-26) pupils. The dedicated careers advisor, visited the academy once every half term to deliver a blend of small-group sessions and one-to-one guidance. These sessions helped pupils explore future pathways, develop aspirations, and make informed decisions about their next steps in education, training, and employment.
- Secondary pupils took part in Careers Week with Tees Valley Combined Authority, working collaboratively in groups and preparing presentations for an audience of other schools.
- Discovery once again hosted the My Voice Matters conference, bringing together young people from local special and mainstream schools to share their views and opinions with the local authority, helping to shape future provision
- The local fire brigade would be visiting the academy, bringing along a fire engine for pupils to explore. The firefighters led engaging assemblies on fire safety and bonfire night awareness, helping pupils understand the importance of safety precautions and responsible behaviour during seasonal celebrations. The visit provided an excellent opportunity for pupils to connect learning with real-world experiences and meet local community heroes.

Ann Titchener reported that the visit from the fire service has taken place and was a success. The children had the opportunity to explore

the fire engine in small groups, providing a positive and engaging experience in a calm and supportive setting.

- Show Racism the Red Card would be delivering workshops with secondary pupils to raise awareness, challenge stereotypes, and promote equality and inclusion.
- Year 9 pupils would be visiting Kirkleatham Museum as part of their wider curriculum learning on the Vikings, bringing history to life through hands-on experiences and exhibits.

Ann Titchener: confirmed that the children attended the museum and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. The visit provided an enriching opportunity for learning outside the classroom.

Out of School activities including after school clubs:

- During the summer holidays, Discovery offered two weeks of free holiday club provision to support families throughout the long summer break. The club provided a safe, engaging, and nurturing environment where pupils could take part in a wide range of activities, including sports, arts and crafts, outdoor games, and team challenges. 50 pupils from across the academy accessed the holiday club.

Lisa Casey thanked everyone involved in making the holiday club possible. Expressing that the provision was invaluable for families during the school holidays, offering respite for parents and carers, and providing a safe, familiar environment where children could engage in activities and experiences, they may not otherwise have access to. As a parent, it was described as an amazing and much-appreciated support.

- The after-school sports club continued to thrive, with up to 18 pupils taking part each week. Supported by experienced coaches from Live It and Get Active, the club provided pupils with opportunities to develop fitness, teamwork, and confidence through a range of fun and inclusive sporting activities. This club would continue during the 25-26 academic year.
- An after school sensory club was also offered during the summer term and was very popular, particularly with the younger pupils.

Ann Titchener drew attention to the Academy's efforts to expand the afterschool activity offerings for pupils. It was acknowledged that while there was interest, some families may face challenges in enabling their child to attend due to transport limitations. Local Authority transport was only available at the end of the standard school day and did not extend to afterschool clubs, meaning children must be collected by parents or carers.

Sport/Active Opportunities:

- Live it and get active continued to deliver a full day of sport sessions for pupils across the academy increasing physical activity and engagement in physical activity. This will continue during the 25-26 academic year.
- A visiting dance teacher provided by the charity We Can Dance attended the academy one morning per week to offer specialist dance sessions to a range of classes. These sessions gave pupils the opportunity to explore creative movement, rhythm, and expression while developing coordination and confidence. These sessions will continue during the 25-26 academic year.
- The academy now offered inclusive cycling one afternoon per week at Middlesbrough Sports Village. With access to adapted bikes and expert support, pupils develop balance and coordination while enjoying the social and health benefits of physical activity.

Ann Titchener explained that children were provided with regular opportunities to engage in physical activity, including a wide range of sports and exercises. All activities were adapted to meet the diverse needs of our pupils, ensuring they were inclusive and accessible for everyone.

Wider opportunities:

Ann Titchener emphasised that staff and students thoroughly enjoyed residential experiences and confirmed all residential so far have been a great success.

- The residential visits to Carlton for year 6-8 pupils, and to Beamish for year 9 pupils, had been extremely successful, with pupils engaging in new experiences and enjoying time together outdoors, developing independence and resilience. Following the two successful residential during the summer term, planning was already underway for 4 residential visits this academic year: Trust London visit, Carlton Outdoor Centre, Beamish overnight stay and new to the offer, an overnight stay in York for year 10 pupils.

Q Andrew Stogdale: Why had York been selected for a visit?

Ann Titchener clarified that York has been chosen as the proposed location for the residential due to its proximity, which allowed flexibility, should any students need to return home early. It was acknowledged that some children may find it challenging to complete the full residential or may only be able to stay one night.

The aim was to offer students a city break with enriching educational

opportunities, including visits to the National Railway Museum, JORVIK Viking Centre, and York Castle Museum. The city also offered a youth hostel where a dedicated section can be booked exclusively for academy staff and students.

Ann further explained that the trip was still in the planning stages. York was considered a premium destination and was expected to be costly. If this went ahead, the residential would likely take place next September, pending ongoing negotiations between the academy, accommodation providers, and activity venues.

The academy was hopeful that the trip would take place, although it remained unconfirmed at this stage. Ann Titchner also welcomed suggestions for alternative residential opportunities, noting that the academy was always looking to expand the range of experiences offered to students.

Board members discussed Durham as a possible place for a residential as it has a multitude of different Museums, castles, parks and gardens for the students to visit.

- Pupils from the choir took part in the Trust Summer Choir Festival at St. Nicholas Church in Guisborough and took part in the Diamond Standards event, joining with students from our other academies for wonderful celebrations and performances.
- Discovery pupils thoroughly enjoyed participating in the Trust production of Shrek, taking on exciting roles such as singing solos and contributing to the ensemble choir. Forty pupils and staff attended the dress rehearsal performance, further enriching their experience by enjoying a live theatre setting.
- The summer enterprise event was extremely well attended by parents and families. All pupils contributed to the event by making items to sell based on a theme of sustainability, with older pupils managing stalls, handling money and interacting with visiting parents and families.
- During autumn 2, plans were in place for year 9 and 10 to see a performance of A Christmas Carol at the Forum theatre, a large scale academy trip to see the pantomime at the Arc, a visiting sensory pantomime, a visit from Mr and Mrs Claus, Christmas dinner, and our popular Christmas enterprise and family singing events.

Ann Titchener explained that the academy aimed to provide students with the opportunity to attend a pantomime or theatrical performance each year. This initiative recognised that some families may face barriers or circumstances—that make attending such events difficult. By organising these visits, the academy ensured that all children could enjoy cultural experiences in a supportive and inclusive way.

Ann Titchener encouraged everyone to visit the Discovery Academy

website, where a wide range of photos and videos were regularly shared. These showcase students participating in everyday school activities as well as external events, offering valuable insight into the learning experiences and opportunities provided.

Review of Pupil feedback:

- Staff think creatively to capture the voice of all pupils in Discovery, using symbols, visuals, video, alongside traditional pupil surveys. Themes for the year were – what am I good at? and who can help me? The academy website features a dedicated section highlighting pupil voice.
- As part of the Autism Accreditation assessment, pupil voice was gathered using a survey created by the National Autistic Society. Pupils were asked if they thought academy staff knew what they found hard and what they were good at, and if staff helped them to do the things in life that they want to do. Results were overwhelmingly positive, and a formal report will be provided by the National Autistic Society once completed.

Ann Titchener explained that, as part of the accreditation process, students participated in a survey that had been adapted to meet their individual needs. The survey was conducted verbally to ensure accessibility and understanding. All responses would be formally recorded and included in the final accreditation report once received.

Parental engagement and feedback

Review of Parent/ Carer feedback:

- Parent coffee mornings continued to offer parents the opportunity to meet other parents and academy staff and to share common topics and discuss any support they would find useful.

Sian Lamb reported that the coffee mornings continued to be extremely well attended. The most recent session included visits from external agencies such as Early Help and the local dentist scheme. Michelle Armour (Senior Assistant Head) also spoke to parents and carers about the sleep training staff had undertaken, sharing helpful information and tips for supporting children who struggle with sleep. The academy planned to continue inviting a range of agencies and organisations to future coffee mornings, with the aim of offering further support, guidance, and resources to families.

- Parent surveys during the termly parent consultation evenings capture parent feedback.

Ann Titchener reported parents evening would take place week commencing 10th November 2025.

Parent Support Offers:

- The Safeguarding, SEND, and Inclusion Manager, along with the Parent and Family Support Advisor, continued to provide pastoral support to both pupils and families, guiding them to additional resources, liaising with relevant professionals, making referrals, when necessary, with a particular focus on supporting our most vulnerable families.
- They continued to hold on-site eye care clinics, where a qualified optician assesses, and prescribes where needed, for all Discovery pupils, alleviating the stress for parents of having to attend such appointments in the community.
- Families had been supported with food hampers and vouchers, particularly to support over holiday periods.
- The first Early Bird parenting group ran once again during the summer term, offering support for parents of children aged 6-11. Further Early Bird courses will take place during this academic year.
- We have now established links with the bed charity Zarach, resulting in three successful referrals and the delivery of new beds to families in need.

Sian Lamb explained that she, along with Donna Cattermole (Parent Family Support Advisor) and Michelle Armour (Designated Safeguarding Lead), could now refer families to Zarach—a charity that provides bedding, and pyjamas. Once a referral is made, Zarach assessed eligibility through a home visit with the family.

Lisa Casey commented that this was a valuable way to support families and shared information about another charity, *Remembering Rebecca*, which offered specialised equipment, grants, and funding. Lisa spoke about her personal experiences with the charity.

Ann Titchener and Sian Lamb thanked Lisa for the information and confirmed that the academy would look into the charity as a potential additional support resource for families.

Ann Titchener reported that the academy now hosted an onsite paediatric clinic led by Dr Barron. The first clinic was a success, with three families attending. This initiative was particularly beneficial for families of children with more complex needs who may struggle to attend appointments at external clinics or hospitals.

Q – Lisa Casey: Will the clinic be a regular provision?

Ann Titchener confirmed yes, the clinic would be held regularly within the school. It provided a familiar setting for children and allowed staff to offer additional support during appointments, helping to reduce anxiety and improve access to healthcare for our families.

Community use:

- Once again, the academy was pleased to have had a supported intern working at Discovery, supporting in a primary class. This term they would continue to support Choices College with placements for young people with SEND needs and the newest intern was assisting with sport lessons in the secondary class. One of Discovery's former interns now volunteers with the academy, while another had progressed to paid employment - clear evidence of the positive impact of the placements.
- The academy continued to support Middlesbrough College by offering placements for T Level students, providing valuable workplace learning while also broadening their knowledge and understanding of complex SEND.
- Discovery had hosted the autumn IQM event, including a presentation on the work of Discovery and a tour of the site. Twenty five teaching and school staff from across the Tees Valley attended the full day event.

Ann Titchener informed the board that the academy currently had one supported intern, with another expected to join soon to assist in the library areas. The trust and academy are proud to offer these opportunities and hope that in the future, our students will also benefit from similar experiences.

During the autumn term, Wilton Academy had been accessing the Discovery site due to a flood in their building. It was a pleasant experience for students and staff, and it was pleasing to have been able to support staff and students during this time.

Ann Titchner explained that the academy had initial teacher training placements for two weeks, during the term.

Q Andrew Stogdale: Which provider were the placements from?

Ann Titchener confirmed that they were from Durham.

Building Proposals/Infrastructure Developments:

- The permanent nursery building was completed in August, allowing pupils to begin in September as planned. The new facility enhanced the excellent nursery provision and included the added benefit of a dedicated sensory room.

The newly installed canopy connecting the reception and nursery classrooms ensured the outdoor area could be used comfortably in all weather, enhancing learning opportunities throughout the year.

	<p>Ann Titchener explained that the permanent nursery building was now in place and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 classrooms • 2 care rooms • 2 sensory rooms <p>Children still visited the main site to use additional sensory rooms. The Cleveland Unit was now co-located at Discovery and used the nursery building. The schedule was as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery children attended nursery on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday • The Cleveland Unit used the nursery on Thursday and Friday <p>The building was split into two sections, allowing both groups to customise their classrooms with the resources they need.</p> <p>Lisa Casey commented that the Cleveland Unit was a really good provision and expressed that it was great that they were now co-located at Discovery.</p> <p>Finance update: Finances were on track with no significant variances to report.</p> <p>Policy Updates: Policies circulated for information and feedback (relevant policies were sent with HT report in advance of the meeting)</p> <p>The following policies have been circulated for information and feedback (all policies are formally ratified by the trust board):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection • Early Years Policy • Pupil Attendance Policy • Positive Behaviour Policy <p>Ann Titchener stated that if anyone had comments or feedback, they were welcome to share. The Academy was always happy to receive thoughts and opinions.</p> <p>No further comments were made at the meeting regarding the policies.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>PARENT AND PUPIL VOICE</p>	
	<p>As discussed during the Headteacher’s Report, both students and parents participated in verbal surveys as part of the Autism Accreditation process.</p> <p>The academy was currently awaiting the written report from the accreditation body, which would provide formal feedback and recommendations based on the surveys and the overall assessment.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>POLICY REVISIONS INCLUDING PROPOSED CHANGES</p>	
	<p>Relevant school policies were reviewed and discussed as part of the Head Teacher’s Report.</p>	

<p>6.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p>	
	<p>Q: Lisa Casey enquired whether there were any plans for the Trust to establish its own Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) service?</p> <p>She acknowledged the school’s efforts in supporting her son and other children but expressed concern that staff were not trained speech and language specialists. She noted that external services had let her down on multiple occasions and suggested that developing an in-house provision could be a beneficial step forward.</p> <p>In response, Ann Titchener acknowledged that speech and language development was a fundamental part of the curriculum and underpinned all learning at Discovery. Ann Titchner highlighted the use of small group and one-to-one interventions, as well as the annual assessments conducted by external Speech and Language Therapy services. While the idea of establishing an in-house speech and language service had not yet been discussed, she agreed it was a suggestion that could be raised with Jennifer Duncan (Executive Headteacher & Deputy CEO) for consideration.</p> <p>Lisa Casey acknowledged that many schools did not offer Occupational Health services in the way Discovery did, and she praised this as an excellent opportunity for the children. She reiterated her belief that having an in-house Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) provision would similarly benefit students.</p> <p>Q: Anne Kelly: Asked for any updates regarding potential building expansion.</p> <p>Ann Titchener advised that there were currently no confirmed updates. However, there had been discussions about the possibility of developing a post-16 provision offsite on land owned by Middlesbrough Environment City (MEC), though nothing has been finalized.</p> <p>Anne Kelly noted that MEC is currently negotiating the use of both new and existing buildings for volunteer purposes. She was monitoring developments closely to keep fellow volunteers informed.</p> <p>Q: Anne Kelly also asked about recent activity at the allotments, after observing work being carried out.</p> <p>Ann Titchener clarified that the site team had completed decking work and secured the area with a padlocked gate. Discovery now had a science teacher who also taught horticulture, and it was hoped that students would begin using the allotment soon.</p> <p>Anne Kelly added that the padlock may also serve as a security measure following a recent break-in and fire at one of the sheds, which was currently under investigation as a suspected arson. Ann Titchner</p>	

	<p>mentioned that although the property had CCTV, it did not cover the affected area. She also noted that the council was now considering replacing the fencing around the property, which had been a long-standing request.</p> <p>Anne Kelly queried whether any further information could be shared regarding Discovery’s potential expansion onto the MEC property? She also complimented the school’s exterior, noting it looked neat, tidy, and welcoming, particularly with the flowerbeds along the walkway.</p> <p>Ann Titchener confirmed that there were no further updates at this time, but emphasised the school’s commitment to maintaining a positive relationship with MEC and the wider community. She assured that any developments will be communicated as discussions progress.</p> <p>Q: Lisa Casey asked whether the school still had the hens?</p> <p>Ann Titchener confirmed that the hens were still on site. However, due to a prolonged avian flu outbreak, students had not yet been able to interact with them as originally planned. The hens were being well cared for in the meantime, and students will be allowed to engage with them once it is safe to do so.</p> <p>Ann also advised that there were ongoing plans to expand the animal area and introduce more animals to support children’s wellbeing and confidence around animals. Additionally, aspirations to develop a meadow area for exploration and enjoyment were discussed, as well as the potential creation of a bike track for student.</p>	
7.	DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING	
	Monday 9 th February 2026 – 10am	

Meeting ended at 11.05am