Audit and Risk Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday 12th March 2026, 4:30-5:30pm

Venue: TCAT Professional Development Centre

Chair: Chair to be formally elected on Thursday 12th March 2026

Clerk: Melissa Alexander m.alexander@tcat.uk.com

Committee Members		**Term Ends**	**Attendance**
John Cartwright (JC)	Trustee	23.06.2029	✓
Phil McEwan (PM)	Trustee	14.07.2029	✓
Howard Platt (HP)	Trustee	01.07.2029	✓
John Warren (JW)	Trustee	11.01.2028	✓
Stephen Whatmore (SW)	Trustee	01.07.2029	✓
In Attendance			
Siobhan Archibald (SA)	Internal Auditor		x
Phillip Dyke (PD)	Associate		x
Adrienne Laing (AL)	Operations Director		✓
David Halsall (DH)	Chief Finance Officer		✓
Andrew Moorcroft (AM)	**CEO**, Trustee		x
Nicola Tucker (NT)	External Auditor		x

Clerk: Melissa St. Clair (MS) m.alexander@tcat.uk.com

Documents Shared Prior to the Meeting:

Item 7. Minutes from the previous meeting 04.12.2025
Item 8. TCAT Annual Plan 2025-2026
Item 9. Risk Strategy February 2026 DRAFT
Item 10. Policy Schedule

	Agenda Item	**Allocated time**
1.	**Welcome:** MS welcomed the Committee to the second meeting of the academic year.	**MS**
2.	**Any items for AOB/ Part Two – Confidential:** MS confirmed that there were no items for AOB and one item for Part Two Confidential.	**MS**
3.	**Absence / Apologies / Non-Attendance:** The CEO and PD shared apologies in advance of the meeting. These apologies were accepted by the Committee. The meeting was quorate.	**MS**
4.	**Register of Interests:** No register of interests were declared.	**MS**
5.	**Declaration of pecuniary interests in relation to agenda items:** There were no declarations of pecuniary interests in relation to agenda items declared.	**MS**
6.	**Membership and Organisation:** MS shared that a self-nomination had been received prior to the committee meeting from PM. MS asked the Committee to engage in a vote. **Decision:** ***The Committee unanimously voted for PM to take the role as the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.*** MS handed over to the newly elected Chair of the Committee to lead on the rest of the agenda items.	**MS**
7.	**Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting which took place on Thursday 4th December 2025** a) Approval of the Minutes: The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by the Committee. b) Matters arising: There were no matters arising discussed. **c)** Action log: The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed. All actions had been completed and the Committee were satisfied. **Action Log:**	**Chair**

Minute Reference	Action to be taken	By Whom	Completion Date
7.	Follow up with previous action to ensure Safeguarding Audit is shared with Safeguarding Panel	MS	ASAP
8.	Request approval from Trust Board for to sign the Letter of Representation and send to NT.	DH	12/12/2025
9.	Send a questionnaire regarding the AAR to relevant parties before Christmas in preparation for the end of January deadline	NT	ASAP
11.	Update GDPR policies where required following the Information Commission Office (ICO) meeting on 16/12/2025.	AL	W/C 22/12/2025
12.	Amend the whistleblowing policy to explicitly spell out web links for prescribed bodies, ensuring accessibility for partially sighted users.	MS	ASAP

8. **Internal Audit Update: Verbal Update** **AL**

AL provided an update on the ICO audit, noting that the process had been thorough and wide-ranging, resulting in 52 action points allocated to the Trust. She reported that the follow-up meeting with internal auditors had been extremely positive, and a further meeting is scheduled the last week of March 2026 to review matters relating to recording and data handling.
AL advised that the Trust anticipates receiving only a very small number of remaining actions following completion of the audit and emphasised that the process has offered valuable learning and has been highly beneficial for TCAT's ongoing data governance maturity.

The Chair queried if the ICO audit was an information led audit.
AL explained that the ICO audit was focused on Ed Tech' and digital privacy. AL added that the ICO's main purpose was to carry out research and information concerning practices in these areas. They had randomly selected a number of Trusts~~'~~.

	AL added that the ICO audit invitation was originally noted as not mandatory, however, the Trust agreed to participate to as a tool to learn and develop. AL concluded that the Trust expect to have a very small number of actions following the ICO audit. AL commented that the ICO audit has provided TCAT with useful learning and has been beneficial. AL also referred to the Internal Audit Action Plan, noting that two audits have been completed, and the Trust is awaiting the final reports. The Committee were satisfied that the ICO audit was on track and no further questions were raised.	
9.	**Risk Management: A fresh approach** <u>Introduction to the Revised Risk Management Approach:</u> AL introduced the Committee to the Trust's refreshed approach to risk management, explaining that the previous methodology had been in place for several years and required modernisation to improve clarity, effectiveness, and oversight. AL reminded the Committee that the original Trust-wide and academy-level risk registers had been maintained on an Excel system and captured 11 core areas. Following the internal audit of February 2021, several recommendations were made to strengthen consistency and improve the robustness of risk identification and monitoring. <u>Conceptual Shift: Risk vs Issue</u> AL presented insights from *"Reflections on Risk in Education"* by Sir Steve Lancashire, outlining the distinction between risks (events that may occur) and issues (events already happening). Through a comprehensive review of existing entries, the Trust identified that a considerable number of items previously recorded as risks were, in fact, issues requiring operational management. This analysis led to the development of eight corporate risks, forming the foundation of the updated approach. <u>Structure of the New Risk Management Framework:</u> AL outlined the updated framework, which consists of: • A Risk Register capturing true risks • A Business Scorecard used to monitor issues • Eight defined corporate risks • A maximum of ten operational risks at Trust level within each strategic risk area.	**AL**

A Trustee queried the rationale for capping operational risks at ten.

AL confirmed that without a cap, risks became repetitive and diluted in focus, whereas limiting them ensures meaningful oversight.

AL also confirmed that the Trust had begun developing its articulation of risk appetite, supported by the visual shared ahead of the meeting. AL described how some areas present moderate tolerance levels, while others—such as safeguarding allow for low risk, due to statutory and moral obligations.

A Trustee requested specific clarification on safeguarding risk.

AL emphasised that the Trust operates on a zero-tolerance approach, offering examples such as stringent DBS checks and due-diligence processes for new appointments.

Another Trustee observed that the emerging Risk Appetite Statement helped consolidate and contextualise the risk landscape.

Business Support Scorecard Development

A Trustee asked whether the Trust had a Business Support Scorecard.

AL confirmed that TCAT had not previously implemented one but that development work is underway and will be presented to the Finance, HR & Operations Committee.

The Chair highlighted the importance of capturing non-academy-specific risk areas at Trust level. AL agreed and confirmed this will be incorporated into the developing scorecard framework.

Overview of Outputs and Demonstration of New Tools

AL introduced the Risk Strategy and outlined the definitions that underpin the new framework. AL provided a live demonstration of the TCAT Risk and Control Matrix, explaining how operational risks are captured, assessed, and monitored across the following categories:

- Health & Safety
- Safeguarding
- Curriculum & Teaching
- Personal Development, Behaviour & Attitudes
- People
- Finance
- Operations
- Legal & Regulatory

AL demonstrated how residual risk scores are generated and how these may be RAG-rated differently based on the Trust's risk appetite.

	A Trustee queried whether the "Risk Mate" system was being used; AL clarified that the visual layout had limitations and was not currently preferred. ***A further question was asked*** about whether the residual risk score remains once all controls are implemented. ***AL confirmed*** that residual risk remains, as risks cannot be entirely eliminated, but the level may significantly reduce through effective mitigation. <u>Monitoring, Ownership and Review Cycles</u> ***The Chair asked*** how frequently the Risk and Control Matrix is updated and who holds responsibility for it. ***AL confirmed*** that updates will be made on a regular review cycle, the OPCAT Team will oversee the matrix And each operational risk is assigned to a specific responsible officer. AL referenced the Bridgewater High School fire incident as an example of an operational risk that triggered a Trust-wide review and the development of updated Fire Strategies across all academies. ***A Trustee asked*** whether reputation risk was considered. ***AL confirmed*** that reputation is embedded across all operational risks. ***A Trustee also asked*** whether risks are ever removed from the matrix. ***AL explained*** that risks remain until they no longer present a material concern, for example, if playground accident rates reduce to safe levels, that risk could be removed. ***AL asked*** for approval for the Risk Strategy and the Risk Appetite. ***The Chair asked*** for views and approval from the Committee. A Trustee highlighted the significance of using a 4x4 operational risk matrix to measure risks on a Risk Register. The Committee were in full agreement and supported this. **Decision:** ***Both the Risk Strategy and Risk Appetite were approved by the Committee.***	
10.	**Policies:** AL confirmed that there were no policies to review. AL highlighted that the Committee have access to the Policy Schedule which provides access to the Trust Wide policy tracker.	**AL** **5 Minutes**
11.	**AOB:** There was no other business discussed during this meeting.	
12.	**Date and time of next meeting:** Thursday 25th June 2026 The next meeting will take place at the earlier time of 4pm to ensure there is sufficient time to go through all agenda items.	

13.	**Part Two – Confidential** Part Two was captured in a separate confidential set of minutes.	

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 16:42 and thanked all committee members for their time and contributions.

Actions:

Minute Reference	**Action to be taken**	**By Whom**	**Completion Date**
8.	Provide an update relating to the ICO audit at the next meeting.	AL/ SA	25/06/2026
9.	Complete the unpacking of the curriculum and PD operational risks, with Ben to check and finalise these sections.	AL and BL	Ongoing
9.	Explore the possibility of the risk register being added on to the RiskMate platform. Liaise with Dawn Golden.	AL	ASAP
9.	Produce the finalised risk register and initiate the usual review cycle once all operational risks are completed	AL	Ongoing

Actions relating to Part Two confidential items have been captured in a separate Part Two Items document.