



**West Stow Anglo Saxon Village Trust**

**Annual Report and Financial Statement  
for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

**Charity Number: 272897**



## **West Stow Anglo-Saxon Trust Annual Report April 2024 - March 2025**

### **Trustees' report 31 March 2025**

The Trustees present their report together with the financial statements of West Stow Anglo-Saxon Trust for the year to 31 March 2025.

As of the 31 March 2025 the Board of Trustees comprised eleven members of whom five were appointed by West Suffolk Council, one by the Council for British Archaeology, there were two Ex-Officio Trustees one from the Friends of West Stow and one a representative from Suffolk County Council, Archaeological Department. The remaining three trustees are not affiliated to any specific organisation and were elected by the other Trustees.

The Trustees who served up until the date of this report were as follows:

#### **Trustees**

Cllr Ian Shipp\*

Cllr Andy Neal\*

Cllr Susan Glossop\*

Cllr Jon London\*

Cllr Marilyn Sayer\*

Robert Carr

David Addy

Adrian Tindall

Catherine Hills

Faye Minter (Ex-Officio Trustee)

Alan Hamilton (Ex-Officio Trustee)

*\* West Suffolk Council appointees*

Within this twelve-month period the Trustees met formally on three occasions: the first being on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025. During this period the constitution of the trust has remained the same as has Trustees.



The table below shows the visitor numbers for the financial year 2024-2025 and for comparison the preceding four years.

	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Group visits	12,941	13,964	14,947	10,000	456
General Admissions	19,820	19,676	22,155	24,774	11,158
Total visitors to Village (Pay Zone)	32,761	33,640	37,102	34,774	11,614
Total visitors to Visitor Centre (Non-Pay Zone)	77,074	83,539	81,521	70,216	26,681

Overall, total visitor numbers for 2024–25 show a slight decrease compared with 2023–24. This decline is largely attributed to poor weather conditions during the summer months, which affected attendance on several key weekends.

While the number of school visits remained consistent year-on-year, the average group size has decreased slightly, contributing to the overall reduction in visitor figures. Despite these challenges, engagement levels remain strong, and there are positive indicators for recovery and growth in the upcoming financial year.

### **Village project and initiatives**

There has been a concerted effort this year, by the Council’s staff on site, to deliver the final elements of the Brecks, Fen Edge and Rivers (BFER) grant funded projects. This included the completion of the Iron Age Roundhouse which was opened in October 2024. Since opening it has been visited by hundreds of school children and tourists, adding a new dimension to the overall visitor experience. The roundhouse provides a tangible reference to help explain the differences between the Iron age and Anglo-Saxon Age.

Coracle making was a huge success in late summer, 12 participants made up of young people with parents or siblings, built coracles to trial in the River Lark as part of River Edge element of the BFER project. Although the 2-day course had limited numbers due to the activity, 100s of visitors took part in the ‘Float your Boat’ activities alongside the Beowulf and Grendel Theatre in the Park.

For over 50 years the oldest house has stood in the village as a testament to the original reconstruction team that started the project in 1973. With the support of the Trust and Academic Committee it was agreed to take the structure down sympathetically in September 2024. This allowed careful recording of the experimental archaeology and data that could help support future projects, Various partnership groups are supporting this to enable the best results. The plan is to use this information to gain a greater understanding of the deterioration of houses over time. The structure had closed in the late 90s due to internal safety concerns; however, it did still provide an important interpretation aspect in the years after.

The new replacement village assistant has greatly improved the care and repair of the Anglo-Saxon village. This includes basics like door fitting and roof maintenance, but has also seen the inclusion of extra smithing, log boat making, furniture and



public talks and displays on tools and techniques. Having studied Experimental Archaeology at University, Alfred brings an abundance of opportunities to engage with the public.

## **Events**

The site hosted a wide range of events this past year.

Heroes Assembled was a brand-new event held over the easter period bringing an element of 'cosplay' to the village location. Over 100 children took part in roleplaying across the site with activities including weapons training, rune law, puzzle solving and combat. The event was very successful and highly praised by both participants and the audience and will continue as a yearly feature in the events calendar.

In June 2024, West Stow celebrated its flagship Dragon Fest, held over the weekend of 22–23 June. The weather was glorious, and there were around 2200 attendees over the weekend. The festival featured the return of resident dragons Brym and Snarl Junior. Highlights included a dramatic performance of Beowulf by Rattlebox and a variety of interactive activity zones offering archery, axe-throwing, circus skills, wellbeing sessions, and a wide selection of food and drink stalls.

## **2024 Outdoor Theatre Programme – West Stow**

The "Theatre in the Parks" series at West Stow welcomed over 550 visitors across its various shows, offering a lively, family-friendly line-up of outdoor performances. Set within the historic village and surrounding countryside, the open-air format encouraged picnics and relaxed social experiences, while seamlessly blending storytelling, theatre, heritage, and family engagement into an immersive programme. The shows included:

- The Tale of Jemima Puddle duck: A charming adaptation of Beatrix Potter's classic, following Jemima as she searches for a safe place to hatch her eggs. Gentle storytelling, performed outdoors, makes it perfect for young audiences and families.
- Beowulf: An epic retelling of the Anglo-Saxon legend, combining movement, puppetry, and dramatic storytelling. The performance connects strongly with West Stow's historic heritage, bringing the tale of Beowulf and Grendel to life.
- Angelica Sprocket's Pockets: A whimsical, interactive show inspired by Quentin Blake's stories, featuring Angelica's magical overcoat full of surprises. Puppetry, live music, and playful comedy engage children and families alike.

In addition to our scheduled events, West Stow hosts a yearly programme of reenactors, which plays a key role in engaging visitors and bringing the Anglo-Saxon village to life. These immersive experiences create memorable weekends and consistently receive excellent feedback from our guests, enhancing both the educational and entertainment value of each visit.



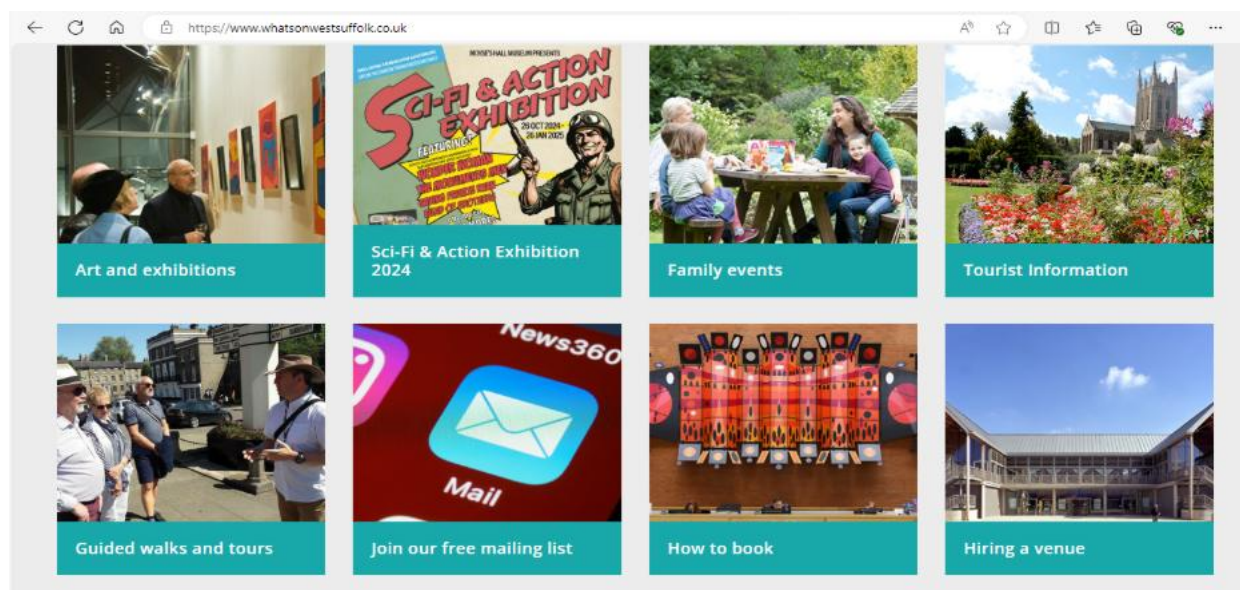
## Health and wellbeing

The BFER project has helped establish a Wellbeing programme at West Stow featuring outdoor yoga, forest bathing, sound baths, and a mindfulness trail. In August 2024, a Drumming Residency ran from 15–20 August, with daily drumming circles in the Great Hall and demonstrations of sacred drum making. These wellbeing activities link the Anglo-Saxon Village to the wider landscape, encouraging visitors to engage with nature, heritage, and personal wellness together.

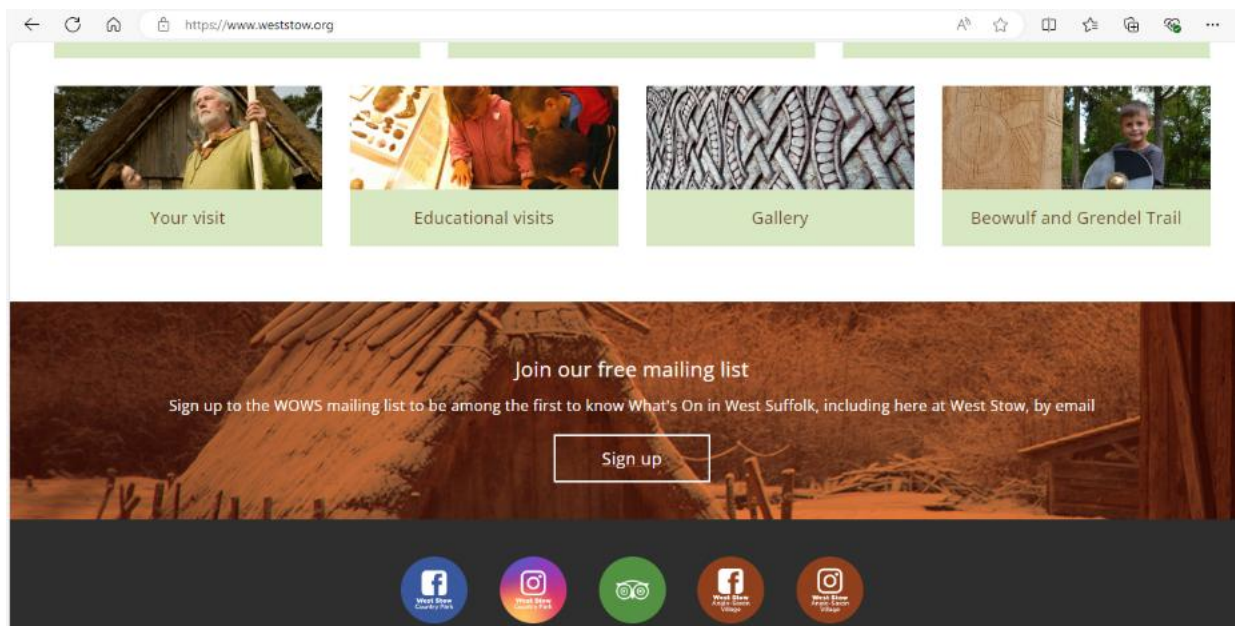
## Marketing strategy

The Heritage email database has now grown to over 33,000 customers, who have all agreed to receive information about events and exhibitions at West Stow Anglo-Saxon-Village and Country Park. It has been our strategic vision for a number of years now to prioritise growing this database, as it provides a detailed insight into who these customers are, where they live and what type of events they purchase tickets for.

The Heritage Service is now benefitting from this significant direct route to market. The database has also provided the marketing team with the data needed to run audience development campaigns and to target people who have previously booked for arts and cultural events in West Suffolk, but who may have not visited or booked tickets for an event at WSASV. Furthermore, it also allows the marketing team to communicate with existing WSASV customers to encourage them to make a repeat visit, or book for a specific event or festival.

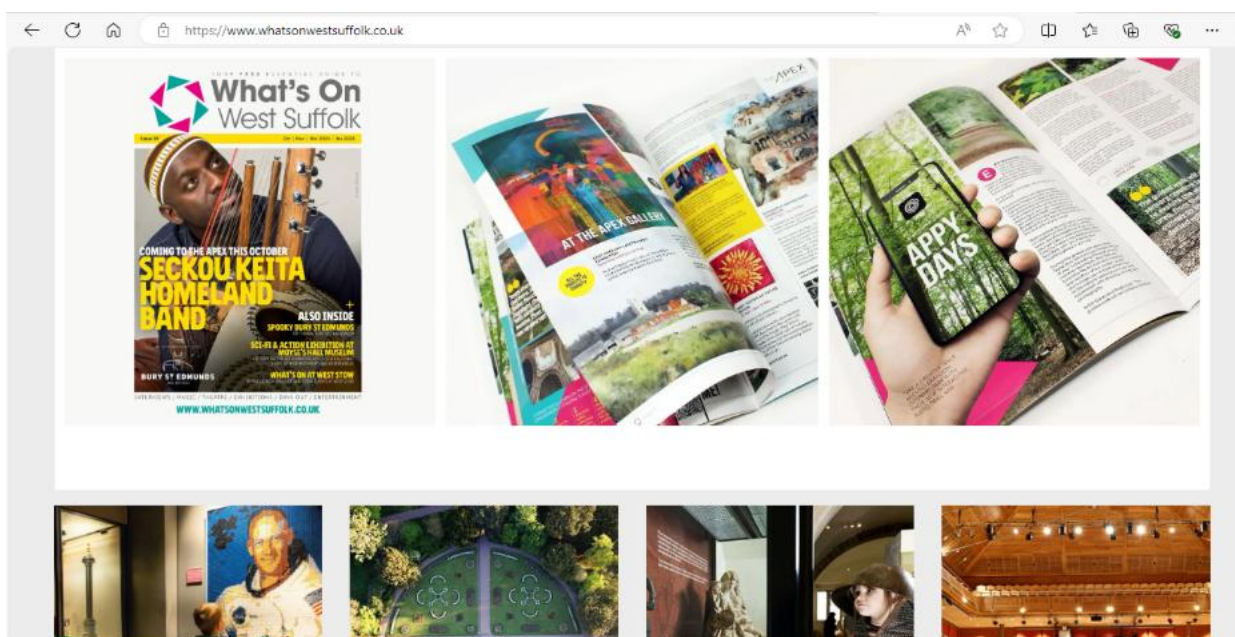






## What's On West Suffolk

West Stow events are included in the digital magazine, What's On West Suffolk (WOWS), which is emailed to the heritage and WOWS database three times per year and made available via WOWS and West Stow ASV and Country Park social media accounts.



The increased and diverse range of events now taking place at WSASV, such as well-being events including yoga, sound bathing, Pilates and meditation as well Theatre in the Parks and Dragon Fest, have all helped to attract new visitors to the village.

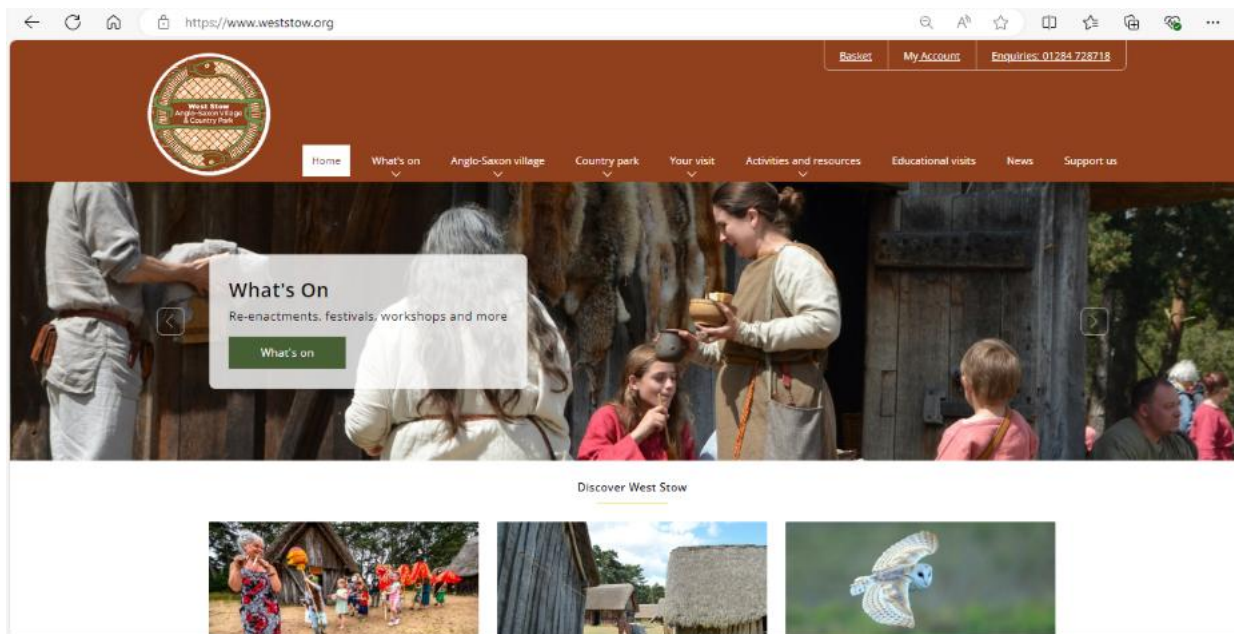
## West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village & Country Park website

In 2024/25, the West Stow ASV & CP website continued to see an increase in traffic. Analysis of Google Analytics for the West Stow website has identified that there were 111,266 visits to the website in 2024/25. This is up from (10%) from 101,224 visits



to the website in 2023/24. As with previous years, website traffic increases during spring and summer and peaks in June and July. The number of visitors landing on the West Stow website via social media generated by the West Suffolk Council Leisure marketing team has increased from 6.1% in 2023/24 to 8.4% in 2024/25.

The number of website visitors coming directly to the website, as opposed to via a search engine has increased from 36% in 2023/24 to 44% in 2024/25. This means visitors have either directly entered the West Stow url into their browser or come to the website via the marketing team's heritage and WOWS email campaigns.



### Website visitor demographics

26% of our audience are between 25-34 followed by 19% that are between 35-44 and 16% between 45-54. This demonstrates we are appealing to young families. We also have a high number of over 65s, the grandparent category. The gender split is 59% female to 40% male, this is higher than some of our other websites.

### Locations

Most viewers who access the West Stow Anglo Saxon Village and Country Park website are, in order of quantity, from the following towns/cities: London, Cambridge, Norwich, Bury St Edmunds, Ipswich, Peterborough, Colchester, Birmingham, and Haverhill.

### Content

The most viewed pages in 2024/2025 were the 'Homepage', 'What's on', 'Your visit', 'About' and 'Admission prices'.



## **Devices**

The most popular means of accessing our website is via a mobile phone (96%) up 4% from 2023/24. We have therefore ensured that our websites remain compatible and optimised to view and navigate on all formats.

## **Social Media**

The West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village Facebook page has continued to grow and now has over 8,500 followers, which is up from 7,945 in 2023/24. West Stow's social media followers are online mostly between 6-9pm. The best time to post to reach the maximum amount of people is 8pm.

Facebook provided 94% of our social media acquisition this year and Instagram provided 4%. Research and analysis have identified that X (formerly Twitter) provides very poor return on investment and so our marketing resource has been focused into Facebook and Instagram. We will continue to monitor this. We will imminently be setting up a LinkedIn account for the Village and Country Park, which will provide a platform to a business focused audience.

In 2024/25, our top Social Media post formats in terms of ranking were:

1. Video
2. Photo
3. Link
4. Status
5. Shared video

## **Video production**

Given that video is proving to be the most impactful format, a new promo for WSASV & CP is currently in production. The footage shot will be used to create one thirty second promo video, as well as providing content for dozens of additional shorter social media posts.

Our social media audience are in:

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Bury St Edmunds | 6. London      |
| 2. Ipswich         | 7. Thetford    |
| 3. Cambridge       | 8. Sudbury     |
| 4. Norwich         | 9. Newmarket   |
| 5. Ely             | 10. Stowmarket |



**WEST STOW ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGE TRUST**  
**FINAL ACCOUNTS 2024/25**

Actual Total Funds 2023/2024 £	<b><u>RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT</u></b>	Note	Actual Unrestricted Funds 2024/2025 £	Actual Restricted Funds 2024/2025 £	Actual Total Funds 2024/2025 £
	<b><u>Receipts</u></b>				
469	Interest	1	290	107	397
0	Central Government Business Grant	2	0		0
124	Donations	3	215		215
72,776	Visitor Charges	4	74,847		74,847
79,126	School Parties	5	70,246		70,246
152,495	<b>Total Receipts</b>		145,598	107	145,705
	<b><u>Payments</u></b>				
0	Archaeological Consultant	6	0		0
2,690	Other Expenses (Insurance - Premises)	7	3,423		3,423
151,901	Service Charge	8	145,093		145,093
154,591	<b>Total Payments</b>		148,516	0	148,516
-2,096	<b>Net Receipts/(Payments)</b>	9	-2,918	107	-2,810
9,644	<b>Cash funds last year end</b>		5,513	2,034	7,548
7,548	<b>Cash funds this year end</b>		2,595	2,141	4,737

**WEST STOW ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGE TRUST**  
**FINAL ACCOUNTS 2024/2025**

Actual Total Funds 2023/2024 £	<b><u>STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES AS AT 31ST MARCH 2025</u></b>	Note	Actual Unrestricted Funds 2024/2025 £	Actual Restricted Funds 2024/2025 £	Actual Total Funds 2024/2025 £
	<b><u>Cash Funds</u></b>				
5,513	Accumulated fund	10	2,595		2,595
2,034	Match funding account	11		2,141	2,141
7,548	<b>Total Cash Funds</b>		2,595	2,141	4,737



**WEST STOW ANGLO-SAXON VILLAGE TRUST**  
**FINAL ACCOUNTS 2024/2025**  
**NOTES**

**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT**

1	Interest	Interest on investment was earned at an average rate of 5.265% in 2024/2025.
2	Central Government Business Grant	
3	Donations	
4	Visitor Charges	} See note 8 below.
5	School Parties	
6	Archaeological Consultant	Suffolk County Council Archaeology Service now employs the Archaeological Consultant (w.e.f. 1st April 2005).
7	Other Expenses	This expenditure relates to the cost of the insurance premium payable on the houses.
8	Service Charge	This sum is equal to the income received from visitor charges and school parties (notes 4 and 5). It arises because of the management agreement with the District Council which is in a form acceptable to the Charity Commissioners.
9	Net receipts/(Payments)	After reviewing its financial position, the Trust agreed in June 1998 that future budgets be prepared on a break even basis (excluding any match funding payments).

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES**

10	Accumulated fund	The low level of balances reflects past decisions to draw on reserves to fund deficits.
11	Match funding account	This account is set up to provide the possibility of match funding other outside grants when this is a condition of grant aid. It was set up by a generous grant from Suffolk County Council's locality budget arrangements.





**Section A**

**Independent Examiner's Report**

**Report to the trustees/  
members of**

West Stow Anglo Saxon Village Trust

**On accounts for the year  
ended**

31 March 2025

**Charity no  
(if any)**

272897

**Set out on pages**

2, 3 & 4

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 03 / 2025**.

**Responsibilities and  
basis of report**

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

**Independent  
examiner's statement**

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

**Signed:**

**Date:** 01/12/25

**Name:**

Lorna Heather Jenkins

**Relevant professional  
qualification(s) or body  
(if any):**

MAAT

**Address:**

West Suffolk House

Western Way

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3YU



Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

**Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.**

There are no matters of concern.



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