

GREAT CHESTERFORD [C.of E.] PRIMARY ACADEMY	LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MINUTES OF THE MEETING	MEETING HELD ON 18 MARCH 2025
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Membership	Type	Office	Term
John Burwood	General Member		10/09/2028
Joe Edwards	Parent		14/05/2025
Jonathan Macdonald	Parent		29/10/2027
Sarah Mitchell	Executive Headteacher		Ex-Officio
Wazz Mughal	General Member	Chair	01/09/2026
Andrew Pickering	Foundation		01/09/2026
Nick Patterson	General Member		01/09/2026
Amy Sargeant	Headteacher		Ex-Officio
Natalie Starbuck	Staff		22/02/2029
Rachel Thackray	General Member		18/09/2028
Ros Woodcock	General Member		16/09/2028
Vacancy	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
<i>* Signifies absence</i>			
Others in attendance			
Clare Eve		Clerk	

The Chair opened the meeting with a prayer.

1/25	Welcome and apologies for absence	Action
	<p>The Chair informed the meeting that Rachel Thackray was running a few minutes late.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Clare Eve to her first meeting since being appointed as Clerk and welcomed back Natalie Starbuck to the role of Staff Governor (term 22/02/2025 – 21/02/2029).</p>	
2/25	Vice-Chair	
	The Clerk reported no nominations had been received for the vacant position. It was agreed to discuss this at the next meeting.	Chair/ Clerk
3/25	Notification of AoB	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding incident reported by Headteacher (HT) <i>[RT entered the meeting at the start of this item]</i> School vision School Council lunch 	
4/25	Notification of business interests	
	<p>a) Rachel Thackray declared her role on the village Parish Council.</p> <p>b) No governor declared that they had received or given any gifts or hospitality that could or could be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the Academy.</p>	
5/25	Risk Register	
	The meeting received the updated Risk Register following the review of the register by each committee and noted the following changes:	

	<p>Strategic Risk – Admissions – Further mitigation actions had been included to counter the lower birth rate. It was agreed there is increased likelihood of declining admissions and subsequent funding.</p> <p>Operational Risk – Security – Manual door checks now in place. It was agreed the likelihood of risk has increased following a recent incident. Solutions to the low wall and scalable gate were discussed. Rachel Thackray to look into feasibility and costs for improvements to gate and fencing along wall.</p> <p>Operational Risk – Health and Safety – High noise levels in the lunch hall – it was agreed the likelihood of risk remains the same. HT confirmed ear protectors provided to staff in lunch hall to reduce potential damage to hearing.</p>	RT
6/25	Headteacher's Report	
	<p>The meeting received and noted the HT's termly report. The following points were highlighted:</p> <p>School Context</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>A class teacher has returned from Maternity Leave, on reduced hours, and without returning as school SENCO nor as part of SMT. HT will continue in the SENCO role, with a view to employing a Trust SENCO from September. The meeting noted the potential benefits of employing a well-trained Trust SENCO, and the precedent for this in other schools. EHT confirmed there will be more information shared on this matter before September.</p> <p>One member of teaching staff is on long-term sickness leave. This role is being successfully shared by two supply teachers, assuring continuity of teaching.</p> <p>One member of Support Staff is on Maternity Leave; this role is being covered by a new member of staff who had previously been a volunteer.</p> <p>A new TA has been appointed to cover the vacancy left by a resignation in the Autumn term. A second TA appointment has been made to fill the vacancy left by a TA who resigned before half-term. A PGCE student is currently on placement at school.</p> <p><i>Governor G</i> asked how staffing absence rates compare to other years. HT did not have that information to hand, explaining the rate may seem high but can be accounted for by two members of staff on Maternity Leave and one staff member on long-term sickness leave. <i>Governor C</i> suggested using 'Absence as a percentage of available days' data to anonymously monitor trends across the staffing body.</p> <p>Admissions</p> <p>Numbers on roll have increased slightly. Admissions for September 2025 are lower than usual; this is a concern. This is the case in several local schools, and there is a significant fall in the number of 'Rising Fives' coming up from the village pre-school. The meeting noted a fall in national numbers, with the next year forecast to be the lowest point - followed by rising numbers. The meeting noted low numbers are beneficial for teaching, but detrimental to funding.</p> <p>HT confirmed that all Y6 children had achieved admission to their secondary school of choice.</p> <p>Recycling</p> <p>New food waste bins have been purchased, following new government waste recycling requirements for businesses. <i>Governor B</i> remarked that the children may want to be involved. NS confirmed the School Council would be briefed on this.</p>	

	<p>Quality of Education</p> <p>Inspection data The OFSTED statutory outcomes were in line with national outcomes, except for Multiplication Times Tables and Reading outcomes - both of which were significantly higher. The upward trend in Phonics outcomes was noted; Phonics is a high priority and will continue to be monitored. Monitoring reveals a greater consistency in KS2-wide use of the Writing Checklist, alongside a whole school focus on writing.</p> <p>Performance Management HT confirms the completion of all teacher performance management observations.</p> <p>Behaviour and attitudes</p> <p>Safeguarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One TAF meeting had recently taken place, with a follow-up meeting scheduled. • Missing In Education had been in contact, regarding children who are no longer on roll. • HT used the Essex Early Help Drop-in facility to successfully seek advice on a safeguarding matter. • The Safeguarding audit is due at the end of term. <p>Suspensions and Exclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was noted there were no suspensions or exclusions. <p>Personal Development</p> <p>SMSC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new MIND practitioner has been working with a class group. • A link with a Ugandan school has been made by a TA. <p>Pastoral Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral support included Learning Mentors and MIND outreach <p>Extended Curriculum Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Governor G</i> questioned the lack of curriculum opportunities for two classes. HT confirmed was the case last term, but stressed all children had benefitted from recent theme weeks and events. - AP commended school on the wide range of opportunities available to the children. <p>Music Lessons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36% of children currently receiving peripatetic music lessons in school, which HT would like to increase. NS commented the take-up of orchestral instruments (over the oversubscribed piano lessons) would increase Orchestra membership. <p>Church School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Diocese Schools Advisor will visit to monitor RE. - <i>Governor C</i> questioned the frequency of religious assemblies. HT confirmed that while all assemblies are religious in nature, there is at least one assembly a month led by Reverend Ella or other church representative. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Governor C</i> expressed a hope for frequent visits from the local clergy, which HT agreed to discuss with the new incumbent. <p>Pupil Views</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair will attend a School Council lunch to see how pupil view ideas are progressing. <p>Leadership and Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HT gave notice of a consultation on the current OFSTED system and encouraged engagement with this. 	HT
7/25	School Development Plan	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HT commended the new English lead on successfully developing the consistent use of the Writing Checklist and all governors agreed with this statement. Progress in English continues to move forwards. English lead is planning a Parent Workshop to explain the Writing Checklist and how English is taught. • Gemma Lincoln to take on MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) role. • Holly Gent has worked with the HT and DT lead from Debden Primary Academy to improve the quality of school's DT (Design Technology) provision. • There will be a focus on History in the summer term. • Foundation & Early Years children continue with ongoing activities, small group listening and social skills. Children not meeting developmental goals are receiving targeted interventions. • A successful 'Healthy Habits' theme week encompassed First Aid training, sports, resilience workshops, sleep, diet, e-safety, and linked to the Growth Mindset theory. • TPP (Trauma Perception Practice) training course now completed with teaching staff and soon to be concluded by Support Staff. HT and NS expressed a wish to roll out TPP training to parents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Governor C</i> asked what 'TPP' training is: HT explained the acronym, and confirmed the school's Relationship and Behaviour Policy is underpinned by TPP. 	
8/25	Safeguarding	
	Andrew Pickering informed the meeting he had met HT once each half-term, with a special focus on managing school trip risks (especially residential trips), as outlined in the Safeguarding monitoring schedule.	
9/25	Policies	
	<p>Policies The meeting received the updated policies, and agreed they were happy with HT's new 'tracked changes' format for presenting changes to policy.</p> <p>Exclusion <i>Governor C</i> asked for clarification on the formation of a Pupil Discipline Committee. HT confirmed this would be formed as and when needed. All changes agreed by the board.</p> <p>Business Continuity Plan <i>Governor C</i> asked why appendices were not circulated with the BCP (Business Continuity Plan). The Chair said this was to protect personal data. Appendices 3 and 4 were then circulated to members of the F&P committee. <i>Governor C</i> raised a concern that the BCP is too descriptive and would benefit from more practical check lists and</p>	

	<p>flow charts. HT referred <i>Governor C</i> to the 'Record of Actions Taken' section in the appendices. <i>Governor G</i> asked who is responsible for setting in motion the initial response to an incident. EHT informed the meeting this is detailed in the Appendices and depends on the nature of the incident. The Chair asked if a copy of the Appendices is held off-site. EHT confirmed it is on Teams, and the Chair asked if 4 people should keep hard copies at home. EHT agreed this could be arranged. A hard copy is kept in the school office Fire Box.</p> <p><i>Governor C</i> was satisfied to find Appendices are available to use in a crisis. All changes agreed by the board.</p> <p>Home School Agreement</p> <p>HT informed the meeting a 'WhatsApp' expectation has been added to the Code of Conduct. <i>Governor G</i> asked if school ever need to use the Code of Conduct, and HT and EHT confirmed it can be useful to remind parents of what they've agreed to in letters/emails. <i>Governor C</i> asked how the school alerts parents to updates in the Code of Conduct. It was agreed that the Code of Conduct should be added to the list of consents required for parents to agree to on Arbor, at the start of each academic year. HT will inform office to add this to Arbor. <i>Governor B</i> asked how the school is finding the transition to Arbor, and that they were aware of schools benefitting from using the 'EduLink' app to support Arbor. The meeting discussed the possibility of including a question about Arbor on the Parental Questionnaire, with a view to offering training to parents if a need is identified. All changes agreed by the board.</p> <p>Relationship and Behaviour</p> <p>The Headteacher informed the meeting this policy is based on the Essex Model Policy for Relationships and Behaviour, recommended because it is underpinned by TPP guidance. <i>Governor C</i> asked for clarification on the definition of 'widen the window of tolerance in which they feel safe and regulated'. HT explained this means helping children build tolerance for everyday challenging situations and giving them coping strategies. HT confirmed it did not mean expecting children to tolerate unreasonable situations. <i>Governor C</i> asked what 'co-regulation' means, and NS explained this is when an adult works with a child to support their return to an emotionally regulated state. All changes agreed by the board.</p> <p>SEND</p> <p>HT expressed a wish to create a similar policy for both Debden Primary Academy and GCPA, particularly if a new SENCO is assigned to both schools. All changes agreed by the board.</p>	<p>EHT</p> <p>HT</p>
10/25	LGB Membership	
	<p>a) It was announced that JE's term is ending soon, and that NS has been re-appointed as Staff Governor as no further applications had been received by the close of nominations.</p> <p>b) Reverend Ella Harris has been appointed as the Incumbent and will hopefully assume membership of the LGB at a later date (not before June).</p>	
11/25	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	All members of the board agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.	
12/25	Matters arising	
	All members of the board agreed there were no matters arising.	
13/25	Committee Reports	

	<p>a) Finance and Premises Committee The board received and noted the minutes of the F&P committee held on 27 February 2025. Jonathan Macdonald, the committee Chair, provided an overview of the items discussed at the meeting. JM commented that finances are very tight, and serious consideration must be given to spending priorities. JM expressed appreciation to staff who had increased fundraising efforts and activities. The meeting discussed at length the options for replacing teaching and pupil laptops, and considered the pros and cons of leasing versus hire purchase. It was agreed that the Finance and Premises Committee should take this forward, once more is known about leasing arrangements.</p> <p>b) Teaching and Learning Committee The meeting received and noted the minutes of the T&L committee held on 26 February 2025. Nick Patterson, the committee Chair, summarised a recent meeting with Amanda Davies, who gave an excellent overview of EYFS and the transition from pre-school to school.</p>	JM
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14/25	Chair's action	
	The Chair reported that he and HT had co-written a letter to parents explaining the current financial situation and outlining the challenges of fundraising in school. This followed an outsourced fundraising event, which prompted feedback from parents concerned that 50% of the income received had been shared with the event company. The Chair clarified that the £2,500 raised by the event was highly beneficial to school funds and that school had not incurred any resource costs in hosting the event. EHT asked if the letter had resulted in further donations and the Chair acknowledged that it had. Recruiting parent volunteers to join The Friends remains a challenge.	
15/25	Parental Questionnaire	
	The meeting received a draft Parental Questionnaire. HT outlined a plan to create an on-line Parental Questionnaire, to support parental engagement. The meeting discussed the best format for obtaining the most useful data, that can be effectively interpreted. <i>Governor J</i> expressed a concern that it is difficult to analyse qualitative data and <i>Governor C</i> advocated the use of closed questions to counter this problem. <i>Governor J</i> suggested a forum to follow-up on any poorly scoring areas would overcome difficulties interpreting qualitative data. It was agreed that the Chair would circulate an amended version to all members, based on the discussion at the meeting.	Chair
16/25	Correspondence	
	HT had received a letter from a company offering a financial donation towards STEM related items. This offer is waiting for formal approval by the Trustees. It was agreed this donation will be very useful, given the IT needs of school.	
17/25	Governor Training	
	EHT outlined a target for all Governors to engage in a NGA (National Governance Association) training course by the next meeting in June. JM, RW, WM and CE had all engaged in recent NGA training and EHT considered the resource to be highly beneficial	All

	to members. EHT noted the importance of logging a training database as evidence for SIAMS and OFSTED.	
18/25	Governor visits	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AP – Safeguarding, ‘Book Week’ and ‘Healthy Habits’ theme week visits. AP praised the range of external speakers to school which enhance the experiences of the children JB – Meeting with Finance Officer, Helen Edwards RW – Observation of SEND interventions, meeting with SENCO, ‘Book Week’ visits and Phonics observations NP – ‘Book Week’ visit, and Early Years visit scheduled for next week WM – has weekly meetings with the HT. Also present for ‘Book Week’ Collective Worship and other Collective Worship. <p>HT thanked members for their visible presence in school and was pleased children are starting to recognise governors around the site.</p> <p>EHT asked HT if there were any areas she would like governors to give specific feedback to in addition to their visit purpose. HT replied that comments focusing on general behaviours and attitude would be helpful, especially since these are supported by TPP attitudes and currently on the SDP.</p>	
19/25	School Publicity	
	The Chair noted that school has recently received some publicity (citing the recent ‘Guinness World of Records’ front page of the Walden Local) and asked for a member to take on the role of liaising with school to distribute press releases for relevant school activities. JM agreed	JM
20/25	IT update	
	Staff and children’s laptops need replacing prior to October 2025 when the current operating system will no longer be supported. HT confirms school currently needs 9 staff laptops replaced. The Chair advised converting the 31 children’s laptops to Chromebooks would overcome this problem, thereby extending their useful working life. This will cost £3000 minimum, which will be aided by a \$500 grant obtained by a parent work donation. The Chair confirmed this must happen by October. JM commented that none of this has been budgeted for, and will exacerbate the deficit, but also noted that laptops are essential for teachers to carry out their duties.	Chair
21/25	Any other business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safeguarding incident HT gave notice of a recent Safeguarding incident regarding the security of the school site. A child left school of their own accord. Staff followed the child, and the child returned to school with the HT. The police and parent were routinely called; both parties attended the incident and met with the child and HT in school. <i>[All members left the room at this point to inspect the school perimeter]</i>. The members agreed that the external doors all need upgrading to the Paxton door system as soon as possible. <p>The board discussed the challenges of keeping a site secure that needs to be accessed by parents and visitors. The board agreed that whilst it is realistic to secure the school building, it may be impossible to prevent a determined child leaving the site. Governor H asked what changes have been made to the child’s Risk Assessment in response to this incident. HT replied that the child</p>	

[illegible]