

**GREAT CHESTERFORD [CoE] PRIMARY ACADEMY
LOCAL GOVERNING BODY**

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2024

Membership	Type	Office	Term
* Andrew Farrimond	Foundation		01/09/2024
Vacancy	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
* Laura Saunders	General Member		15/06/2027
Jayne Greenwood	General Member	Chair	01/09/2024
Wazz Mughal	General Member	Vice Chair	01/09/2026
Nick Patterson	General Member		01/09/2026
Andrew Pickering	General Member		01/09/2026
Jonathan Macdonald	Parent		29/10/2027
Joe Edwards	Parent		14/05/2025
Sarah Mitchell	Co-Headteacher [Joint]		Ex-Officio
Amy Sargeant	Co-Headteacher [Joint]		Ex-Officio
Natalie Starbuck	Staff		21/02/2025
* <i>Signifies absence</i>			
Others in attendance			
Tom Bennett	Clerk		

Action

1/24 Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Andrew Farrimond and Laura Saunders.

2/24 Notification of AoB

- School meal prices
- SATs

3/24 Notification of business interests

No governor declared a potential conflict of interest with any items to be discussed at the meeting or that they had received or given any gifts or hospitality that could be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the Academy. Nothing was declared for listing in the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

MAIN BUSINESS

4/24 Risk Register

The meeting received and noted the updated risk register.

Sarah Mitchell reported the Risk Register had been reviewed by the Finance and Premises Committee at the last meeting who had made the following changes:

Strategic Risk – Admissions – Further mitigating controls had been added, being increased awareness of the potential increase in mid-year applications due to London Road building developments.

Financial Risk – Funding Gap – Additional actions had been included, being additional monitoring due to the potential of additional financial pressures arising from the funded and unfunded salary changes and to bring forward the budget preparation for 2024-2025 to identify any adverse financial trends.

The meeting noted the recent teachers' pay award would be part-funded by the government and the increase in the employers' teacher pension contributions would be

funded by the government for the following term but details of the value to be awarded had not yet been received – it was unlikely to cover the full cost.

All Support Staff had been awarded a pay increase greater than the 4.5% budgeted with a lump sum added to each pay scale point. The increase had been back dated to 1 April 2023. This that had resulted in the forecast surplus for the year becoming a deficit.

Action was being taken to mitigate the impact, such as not replacing some Support Staff leaving the school or at the end of fixed term contracts.

There were two pupils at the school with high level special needs requiring one-to-one support that had not been budgeted for, given their starting points.

A full review of the utility contracts had been undertaken and significant saving for the supply of electricity had been identified for the following year.

A review of the insurance cover for staff on long-term sickness had been carried out and the school was considering a number of new insurers to reduce future costs of this provision.

Operational Risk – Staff Morale – Action taken had been updated to reflect the additional support/ communication being provided by HT and Governors to staff relating to the current Headteacher recruitment.

Strategic Risk - Parental / community engagement - Action taken had been updated to reflect the additional communication being provided during Headteacher recruitment.

5/24 Headteacher's Report

The HT's termly report was taken as read and governors were invited to ask questions on the report.

The Chair reported Andrew Farrimond had sent the following questions on the report, in his absence:

Building and grounds works

"I see in HT Report the consideration of deferring roof clean. I understand the financial pressures but am wary of deferring. Are there enough days to do the work in the holidays after the year end but before the Autumn term starts?"

Sarah Mitchell reported that this would be reviewed.

Finance - Unfunded Pay increases

"I have always been uncomfortable with unfunded pay rises and would be keen to understand how the Directors are viewing the finances. Are they mindful that they approved the pay rise without supporting funds and sympathetic to an in-year overspend or are they adamant about balancing the budget? My take is that we should be very careful and review everything as you are being/doing but that an overspend is reconcilable in the current circumstances and we have sufficient reserves as long as it isn't a recurring looking problem."

Sarah Mitchell reported the Directors had, when approving the 2023-24 budget approved the Local Authority recommended pay award for Support Staff as all other schools were implementing the recommended pay award and not to do so could impact staff retention and morale.

Admissions – Nick Patterson asked whether the level and range of school preferences that parents made when selecting a school for their children was normal.

It was reported that the number of parents applying for September 2024 was higher than 2023. The marketing approach had been changed with a greater number of Open Mornings / Open Afternoons with a new format: formal presentation, tours and question and answer sessions. However, it was difficult to determine whether the increase was

due to this new approach but the sessions were extremely well attended with lots of positive feedback.

Performance management of staff – Jonathan Macdonald asked what the general outcome had been following the staff performance management reviews.

Sarah Mitchell reported that only meetings with staff to set targets had been held so far. Mid-year reviews would take place to review the progress to date of these targets.

Attendance - Jonathan Macdonald asked whether the level of Persistent Absence [PA] had improved.

Amy Sargeant reported that this had and levels of PA were lower.

Pupil progress and standards - Jonathan Macdonald asked whether any new data had been added to the pupil progress and standards data since the last meeting in November.

Amy Sargeant reported the data for Year 6 pupils had been updated to reflect the results of those pupils who had recently joined the school.

Safeguarding, Behaviour and Safety - Jonathan Macdonald asked what “*Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings*” involved.

Amy Sargeant reported TAF was the first stage process of addressing identified additional needs / support for a family and was attended by supporting professionals.

6/24 Headteacher Recruitment

Sarah Mitchell provided an update on the recruitment of a new Headteacher.

There had been a good level of interest and number of applications for the forthcoming vacancy. Interviews had been held on Tuesday 19th March 2024 and two applicants were shortlisted for interviews. One of the shortlisted applicants had withdrawn their application prior to the interview.

The remaining applicant had undertaken an interview and a comprehensive range of assessment activities at the school throughout the day. Each activity had been observed and reported on by the recruitment panel.

Further information was being sought and the recruitment panel would make their recommendation to the full governing body as soon as they were in a position to do so.

Andrew Pickering felt it was wise to take sufficient time to ensure the right candidate was recommended and selected.

Jonathan Macdonald asked whether the school could re-open the invitation for further applications should it be necessary.

Sarah Mitchell confirmed it could.

Jonathan Macdonald asked whether there were processes in place to ensure a successful transfer of knowledge and continuity on how the school operated to the successful candidate.

Sarah Mitchell reported that she was continuing as the Executive Headteacher of the Trust and would be able to provide the necessary information and knowledge to the new Headteacher, who would also be supported by the Deputy Headteacher, Natalie Starbuck. Handover meetings would also be scheduled.

7/24 School Development Plan [SDP]

The meeting received and noted the updated the SDP 2023/24 and the progress being made in achieving the key priorities.

Nick Patterson asked how the leadership team would be able to assess whether all staff had the knowledge and skills to teach English to a high standard and also what the term “*paired teaching*” meant within Key Priority 2.

Amy Sargeant reported the objective within the priority was to improve the consistency of English teaching to ensure it was of a high standard across the school and that this would be achieved through class observations by all teachers as well the leadership team. The use of aids such as writing checklists and Talk for Writing were also used to raise the knowledge and standards of English across the school.

Jonathan Macdonald asked when the new phonics scheme recently introduced would begin to show a positive impact.

Amy Sargeant reported Year 1 were already showing good progress in writing but there was less evidence of progress for pupils in Reception.

8/24 Safeguarding

Andrew Pickering reported there had been a possible safeguarding issue raised but on investigation this was not the case. This had been very challenging for the leadership team. External support had been sought, who had endorsed the actions taken by the leadership team and school.

Andrew had attended the E-Safety workshops provided to all pupils under the “2 Johns” scheme that he felt was excellent and good value for money. Children from Years 1 to 6 learnt a great deal and Andrew felt it be particularly helpful for those children going on to secondary school. Workshops were also provided for staff and parents.

It was noted the E-Safety workshops would continue on bi-annual basis.

9/24 Policies

a) Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy

The meeting received and noted the updated Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy.

Sarah Mitchell reported the policy had been updated and followed the Department for Education’s guidelines on Suspension and Permanent Exclusions.

It was noted that the term fixed term exclusions had been replaced by suspensions that could now be cancelled and the definition of the term “off-rolling” had been clarified in the guidance.

It was **agreed** to approve the updated Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy.

b) Business Continuity Plan

The meeting received and noted the Business Continuity Plan that had been reviewed and approved by the Finance and Premises Committee.

HT

ROUTINE BUSINESS

10/24 LGB Membership

The meeting noted that Andrew Farrimond’s and Jayne Greenwood’s current terms of office as governors would end on the 1 September 2024.

Jayne Greenwood confirmed this would be her last year as a governor and she would not be putting herself forward for re-appointment.

It was reported the Laura Saunders had advised that she would be standing down as a governor at the end of the current academic year but would help to find and recommend a replacement to become a governor with financial skills / experience.

It was **agreed** to confirm Andrew Farrimond’s intentions as a governor for the 2024-25 academic year.

It was noted a new incumbent had not been appointed yet to the Saffron Walden and Villages Team Ministry and the incumbent governor position remained vacant.

Chair/
HT

11/24 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 14 November 2023 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

12/24 Matters arising

No matters arising from the previous minutes not otherwise covered on the agenda were reported.

13/24 Committee Reports

a) Finance and Premises Committee

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the F&P Committee meeting held on the 27 February 2024.

The committee was keen to make improvements to the Key Stage 1 playground, particularly in terms of re-surfacing the playground that had sunk in places allowing water to collect.

The school had approached three companies to provide costs for drawing up detailed feasibility studies and their fee rates to design, contract and manage the project.

The committee had chosen Eddisons in light of the lower fee structure offered, making them the best value for money.

The Committee **agreed** to instruct Eddisons to conduct the feasibility study, subject to the Board of Directors approval.

Amy Sargeant reported the Friends of Great Chesterford Primary Academy, a charity set up by parents to raise funds for the school, were looking to support the improvements to the KS1 playground by applying for grants and donations.

Jonathan Macdonald asked whether parents had been approached for donations.

Amy Sargeant that they had during the last year and a few had done so. Parents / carers are asked to make contributions to the cost of materials for projects as detailed in the Charges and Remissions Policy.

The meeting received and noted the financial report for the period to 31 January 2024. The key points of financial challenge had been covered under the Risk Register item.

b) Teaching and Learning Committee

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the meeting held on the 6 March 2024.

The committee had invited the subject lead subject teachers for Maths and English to the meeting to provide presentations on the teaching of each subject. The committee had found the presentations very informative and had agreed to invite the other lead subject teachers, such as EYFS and Special Needs and Disabilities to attend the next meeting.

14/24 Chair's action

The Chair reported she had signed-off the admissions ranking process for the reception class for the 2024-25 academic year.

The Chair reported she had also approved a change in the provider of Management Information System, Arbor, to secure better value for money and improved services.

15/24 Parental Engagement

The meeting discussed the recent drop-in mornings where parents were able to meet representatives of the Local Governing Body.

SM

	<p>The Chair felt there had not been a great deal of interest by many parents, but the event had been worth doing and asked whether future events should be held on a different day and time to improve the level of engagement.</p> <p>Jonathan Macdonald asked whether governors needed to be more visible, consider what had been done before, agree on the objectives of the events and what actions and follow-ups should happen.</p> <p>It was agreed to set up a working party of governors to consider these questions, the format of future governor and parent events and to devise a parent questionnaire.</p>	JM/ JE/WM/ AS/SM
16/24	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>The Chair had received letters relating to the possible safeguarding issue already discussed at the meeting.</p>	
17/24	<p>Governor training</p> <p>a) Courses attended by governors since the last meeting</p> <p>Wazz Mughal reported he had completed a course on Teacher Recruitment.</p> <p>b) Training needs for the LGB including self-development sessions</p> <p>It was agreed to carry this item forward.</p>	SM
18/24	<p>Governor Visits</p> <p>A number of governors had visited the school since the last meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed that all governors should ensure all visits were recorded in the governor visit log and full governor visit reports were completed where necessary.</p>	All
19/24	<p>Any other business</p> <p>a) School meal prices</p> <p>A review of the school meals prices had been carried out in light of the increased costs in food, catering staff, and other catering/ kitchen costs.</p> <p>It was agreed to recommend an increase in the price of a school meal from £2.50 to £2.70 to set a balanced catering budget. It was noted the new price was in line with other local schools. It was agreed that the price of staff meals would also be increased by the same percentage.</p> <p>b) Year 6 SATs</p> <p>Natalie Starbuck reported that this year's SATs would start on the 13 May 2024 and asked whether any governors would be willing to visit the school to observe the procedures and how the tests were conducted.</p> <p>It was agreed to email all governors with the dates and times of the tests and for those governors that could help to advise Natalie.</p>	HT
20/24	<p>Date/time of future meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 25/06/2024 <p>All meetings commence at 18:30 hrs.</p> <p><i>Committees to organise their meetings to feed into these meetings.</i></p>	NS/All

Approved by the Local Governing Board on 25 June 2024