

**GREAT CHESTERFORD [CoE] PRIMARY ACADEMY
LOCAL GOVERNING BODY
Minutes meeting held on 21 March 2023**

Membership	Type	Office	Term
Andrew Farrimond	Foundation	Vice-Chair	01/09/2024
Alex Jeewan	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
* Gary Benn	<i>General Member</i>		<i>21/02/2025</i>
Jayne Greenwood	General Member	Chair	01/09/2024
Wazz Mughal	General Member		01/09/2026
* Nick Patterson	<i>General Member</i>		<i>01/09/2026</i>
Andrew Pickering	General Member		01/09/2026
* Laura Saunders	<i>Parent</i>		<i>15/06/2023</i>
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		

The Rev Alex Jeewan opened the meeting with a prayer

1/23 Welcome and apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Gary Benn and Laura Saunders.

2/23 Notification of AoB

No items for later discussion under AoB were raised.

3/23 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 given or received any gifts or hospitality that could or be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the Academy.

MAIN BUSINESS

4/23 Risk Register

The Teaching and Learning Committee and the Finance and Premises Committee had each reviewed the risks that fall within the remit of each committee.

Strategic Risk 2 - Absence of key persons had been updated with the continued difficulties with long term staffing absence and recruitment issues including recruiting a Trust Finance Manager.

Strategic Risk 3 – Admissions had been updated to reflect lower than expected admissions level for 2023-24 due to a lower birth rate for that cohort of children. This would affect the General Academy Grant receivable in the following year.

Financial Risks 4 and 6 – Funding gap had been updated to reflect the likely impact on costs with the cost-of-living increases and the extent that schools will receive additional funding to meet the staff pay increases when agreed.

Operation Risk 14 – SEND had been updated to reflect the increased impacts on the budget, staffing and teacher workload with the current high level of pupils with Education and

Action

Health Care Plans [EHCPs] with further applications being considered by Essex CC and the potential for more.

Financial Risk 18 - Financial information accuracy had been reviewed and updated to reflect the appointment of a new Responsible Officer and the restructuring of School Business Manager's role between a Premises Manager and Finance Manager. The changes were being closely monitored by the Chair of the Finance and Premises [F&P] Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee.

Operational Risk 25 – Attendance had been reviewed and updated to reflect the lower-than-normal attendance levels due to extended period of home learning for some pupils; increased anxiety linked to Covid-19 and return to school; increased possibility of further susceptibility to viruses; increased chance of parents taking children out of school for holidays because of rises in cost-of-living and affordability.

Operation Risk 32 – Industrial action had been updated to reflect the current situation on teacher pay awards.

The meeting discussed the attendance levels, and the following points were made.

- Attendance levels were lower than pre-Covid levels but better than similar schools in Essex.
- Awards for good attendance had been tried in the past but had had limited success as attendance is often beyond pupil control at primary age.
- Parents working at home made it easier for children to be looked after at home.
- Letters had been sent to parents of children with lower attendance levels.
- It was important to monitor attendance to identify any trends and patterns that might be appearing such as pupils not attending when siblings are also absent or non-attendance on Fridays when more parents work at home.

5/23 Headteacher's Report

The Headteachers' termly report was taken as read and the following questions were raised.

Admissions and Roll

In answer to a question raised by the Chair, the two children coming to the Academy after Easter would join Classes 1 and 4.

Safeguarding, Behaviour and Safety

Andrew Farrimond asked about the reported misuse of mobile phones outside of school. Amy Sargeant reported the pupils' parents had been made aware of the incident and there had been a discussion with pupils on the appropriate use of mobile phones which forms part of the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education [PSHE] teaching as well as when needed.

Staffing

In answer to a question from Andrew Farrimond, Sarah Mitchell reported a member of the teaching staff previously on long-term sick leave hoped to return to the school next term. Following an extended absence, the return will be phased with the support from Occupational Health.

Alex Jeewan asked whether the Learning Support Assistants and Teaching Assistants [LSAs and TAs] were expected to carry out Midday Supervisor's [MS] duties.

Amy Sargeant reported that many had combined roles which reduced the requirement for further MS recruitment and was a benefit for the children with familiar adults.

Sarah Mitchell reported the main challenge facing the school was the time of a number of staff, including members of the leadership team, being spent on monitoring, and supporting a few children with high educational and behavioural needs and the time working with external agencies also supporting the children. She felt this was a short to medium term challenge.

6/23 School Development Plan [SDP]

Amy Sargeant reported the SDP 2022-23 had been updated to record the actions taken and the progress made in achieving the key priorities during the Spring term.

The meeting noted a lot of work had been done under Priority 1 to develop the curriculum and provision for pupils at Early Years Foundation stage.

The work carried out and progress under Priority 1 had also been supported by the work and progress on Key Priority 2, implementing the new phonics scheme.

Following recent monitoring of writing, it was evident that the new phonics scheme has positively impacted reading and writing within the Early Years. The implementation of the new scheme has required a great deal of time and resources to implement it across the school.

A lot of work had also been done and progress made with Key Priority 3: Special Education Needs and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) including work with Learning Mentors, sharing the core Strengths assessment tool with teachers, and updating the Behaviour and Relationship Policy to reflect the introduction of the new Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) approach.

The main area of work under Key Priority 5, to ensure the school's leadership at all levels supports school improvement, had been focused on embedding the new leadership structure and the appointment of a new Deputy Headteacher at the school.

Governors were delighted with the progress being made in light of the staffing difficulties and expressed their thanks to all staff.

7/23 Safeguarding

Andrew Pickering, the governor responsible for safeguarding, had talked with Amy Sargeant about safeguarding and the overlap with pupils with high education and care needs.

Some children with high education and health care needs could present safeguarding risks to other pupils and staff. External agencies were also working with the school to provide support in managing these pupils.

Some children with high education and health care needs required one-to-one support and more that impacted on staff resources, creating an additional strain on the leadership team.

This presented the school with a significant issue that Andrew Pickering would be monitoring and providing regular updates to governors.

Essex Termly Safeguarding updates were now being provided to the governor responsible for safeguarding.

Natalie Starbuck was scheduled to undertake a Safeguarding Children Level 3 course in April.

Andrew Farrimond asked whether the school had received any comments from parents and pupils on the level of individual support being provided to the pupils with high education and care needs.

Andrew Pickering reported one parent had come into the school to express their concerns about the impact on the teaching and learning of other pupils. The parent had been informed of the measures implemented to minimise the impact on other pupils.

Andrew Pickering reported that the parent had left feeling their issue had been heard and noted. The issue had not been raised again by the parent.

Sarah Mitchell reported that there had been three further meetings with parents who had raised concerns relating to behaviour.

8/23 Industrial Action

Amy Sargeant reported two teachers had taken part in the national industrial action on pay and conditions, and that in light of the short notice provided and with some members of staff on sick leave, this had resulted in the closure of two classes for two days.

Andrew Farrimond asked whether there had been any acrimony amongst other members of staff to those taking industrial action.

Amy Sargeant reported there had been none.

Wazz Mughal asked whether there was a minimum number of teachers before the school had to close.

Amy Sargeant reported the Senior Leadership Team needed to ensure the school could open safely and assessed the risks of opening if the level of staff at school dropped significantly.

9/23 Policies

a) Exclusion Policy

Sarah Mitchell reported the policy had been updated to reflect the changes introduced in the Autumn by the Department for Education [DFE].

The policy set out the detailed procedures, roles and timescales when considering an exclusion. It was important to follow the prescribed guidance and procedure to ensure the final decision on whether to exclude or not was fair and balanced.

A key change was changing the term for a fixed term exclusion to the previously used term, a suspension.

The DFE's guidance included a large section on off-rolling, the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without using a permanent exclusion, when the removal was primarily in the best interests of the school, rather than the best interests of the pupil. This included pressuring a parent to remove their child from the school roll.

It was **agreed** to adopt the updated Exclusion Policy.

b) Volunteer Policy

Sarah Mitchell reported she had reviewed the policy and felt that it was still up to date and met safeguarding requirements. Only the section on confidentiality had been updated.

It was **agreed** to adopt the updated the Volunteer Policy.

c) Business Continuity Plan

The Business Continuity Plan had been reviewed in detail two years ago and remained current and relevant. It had only been updated to reflect the new staff structure and changes in staff.

It was **agreed** to adopt the updated Business Continuity Plan

d) Anti-Bullying Policy

Amy Sargeant reported the policy had been reviewed and agreed by the Teaching and Learning (T&L) Committee.

The school council had been included in the review and had drawn up a child friendly flow chart to help pupils identify bullying.

It was **agreed** to adopt the updated Anti-Bullying Policy

e) **Relationships and Behaviour Policy**

Amy Sargeant reported the policy had been reviewed and agreed by the T&L Committee.

There had been a lot of changes following a change in focus to relationships and the introduction of Trauma Perceptive Practice [TPP], an Essex approach to understanding behaviour and supporting emotional wellbeing.

Training for staff and work with parents on the new focus and approach would be set once the new approach has been evaluated and validated.

It was noted by the Chair that she felt the school was already implementing much of the TPP approach and that she was in very much in favour of this.

It was **agreed** to adopt the updated Relationships and Behaviour Policy.

f) **Attendance Policy**

The meeting noted the Board of Directors had approved the updated Attendance Policy applicable to all the academies within the Trust.

Sarah Mitchell reported the policy followed Essex guidelines and now included a new provision on penalty notices.

The Board had felt that it was important for the SLTs to have a policy that gave them the ability to issue a penalty if this was deemed to be the appropriate action.

It was questioned whether a financial penalty would improve attendance of all groups.

Joe Edwards asked whether the SLT felt pressured into issuing penalty notices.

Sarah Mitchell reported that low attendance had become a big national issue and having the ability to issue penalty notices, if required-

Amy Sargeant reported the school should be consistent on the criteria and circumstances when sanctioning parents that could involve a lot of staff time and resources in managing, particularly if challenged.

Andrew Farrimond felt there appeared to be an inconsistency in the DFE's guidance on the roles of managing attendance and what schools were expected to do. He felt there was a clear correlation between attendance and pupil outcomes and that was why it was a national priority.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

10/23 LGB Membership

The meeting noted Laura Saunders' current terms of office as a parent governor would end on the 15 June 2023.

It was **agreed** to review the LGB membership as a whole and any governors considering standing down should advise the Chair or Sarah Mitchell as soon as possible.

11/23 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 15 November 2022 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

12/23 Matters arising

No matters arising from the previous minutes were reported.

**All
Chair/
SM**

13/23 Committee Reports

a) Finance and Premises Committee

The meeting received the minutes of the F&P Committee meeting held on 28 February 2023 and noted the committee's discussions and decisions on:

- Estate management and capital expenditure that was detailed in the HT's Spring Term report.
- The risks on risk register within the committee's remit.
- Health and safety.
- The latest financial management accounts and forecasts.
- Ensuring services provided value for money.
- A review of contracts and leases.
- The results of an Information and Communications Technology review and survey.

b) Teaching and Learning Committee

The meeting received the minutes of the T&L Committee meeting held on 8 March 2023 and noted the committee's discussions and decisions on:

- Religious Education Curriculum and Policy.
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- English Policy.
- Computing Policy.
- Year 2 and Year 6 targets [agreed] and current Year 5 targets for the end of Year 6 [agreed].
- Governor visits.
- Curriculum priorities progress on SDP.
- The risks on risk register within the committee's remit.

14/23 Chair's action

The Chair reported she had approved the renewal of the Staff Absence Insurance policy following quotes and recommendations from F&P. The decision was to continue with School's UK due to them having additional benefits, good service, and continuation of cover.

The Chair also reported that she had signed off the purchase of 20 new iPads, which were being funded by the Friends and Herts and Nash Charitable Trust. Three quotes had been sought in order to ensure value for money spend took place.

HTs PMR

The Headteacher's PMR for 2021/22 was completed in November for Sarah Mitchell. New targets were set for 2022/23 for both Sarah Mitchell and Amy Sargeant. An interim review has recently taken place.

15/23 Correspondence

The Chair reported she had received a letter from a parent and had met the parent.

16/23 Governor training

It was **agreed** to:

- Provide SM confirmation and feedback on courses attended by governors.
- Ask SM for any guidance or help to access online governor training courses.

17/23 Any other business

The meeting considered holding a social event in the summer term and it was **agreed** to propose some dates before the next meeting.

All

All

Natalie Starbuck asked whether a governor would be available to visit the school to observe the SATs exams taking place and **agreed** to send an email to all governors setting out the dates.

All/ NS

18/23 Date/time of future meetings

- Tuesday 27/06/2023

All meetings commence at 18:30 hrs.

Committees to organise their meetings to feed into these meetings.

Approved by the Board on 27 June 2023