



COWES PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING

Held on Thursday 27th March 2025 at 4.15pm in school

Attendance:	
John Cross (JC)	Sandra Klemmt (SK)
Katie Flood (KF)	Stephanie Praetig (SP) Headteacher
Rachael Groves (RG)	Sue Cox (SC) Chair of Governors
Also Present: Donna Robinson (DR) School Business Manager and Tina Jarvis (TJ) Clerk.	
Apologies: Alex Osborne (AO)	

Attachments issued before the meeting are on page six and pre meeting questions are on pages seven and eight.		
1	<u>Welcome and Apologies</u> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from AO and were accepted.	
2	<u>Pecuniary & Business Interests</u> None were declared for this meeting.	
3	<u>Minutes of Previous Meetings & Action Points</u> The minutes of the meetings held on 23.01.2025 and 13.02.2025 had been distributed before the meeting. The minutes were agreed and were delivered to the Chair for signing. Action Points; 141124/2 - Governors to complete forms for Autumn term monitoring visits and send to the Clerk. Some forms remained outstanding. The Chair reminded all Governors to complete forms. Carried Forward. 230125/1 - KF to prepare a draft report of the parent survey results to send to parents, and share with SC and SP. This had been completed and issued. Item Closed. 230125/2 - SC and RG to prepare a report of the staff survey results to release to staff. This had been completed. Item Closed. 230125/3 - JC to draft an initial consultation response on behalf of the Governing Body and share with Governors. Completed. Item Closed.	
4	<u>Teacher Presentation - Computing</u> The presentation had been cancelled due to other priorities.	
5	<u>Business Manager's Finance Report</u> Copies of the confidential SBM FGB report and associated papers were circulated before the meeting. A number of pre-meeting questions had been raised and had been answered by the School Business Manager and circulated to Governors. DR outlined that at the end of February the expected budget spent should be at approximately 91%. Expenditure was actually at 85.6% budget and income at 95.3%. DR advised that the final pupil premium funding amount will not be received before the end of March cut off. The amount will therefore be included as an unreconciled credit in the close down accounts.	

<p>QUESTION</p>	<p>There is £8,120 of devolved capital to carry forward to next year.</p> <p>[Further discussion is considered Confidential and is included in the Confidential Annex to these minutes.]</p> <p>DR advised that having spoken to the Local Authority (LA) about expectations for the 2025/26 budget, they have advised the school should do two budgets, one for the five month period to 31st August 2025, and one for a full three years. This will obviously take extra time and SP has approved overtime if needed.</p> <p>The LA have advised that they will be sending out guidance about closing a school. The school have sought guidance about the non-teaching staff pay award, which is due in April but historically does not get agreed or paid until later in the year. This will affect redundancy payments and can affect staff pensions.</p> <p>The last payroll run by the current provider, Strictly Education, will take place at the end of March. The first run by the Local Authority will be April 2025, and reports will be released during the Easter holidays.</p> <p>As service contracts expire they are being reviewed on an individual basis and where appropriate being renewed to the end of August only.</p> <p>Governors recognised that during the next five months there would be additional tasks for staff related to the school closure, as well as for areas such as the change in payroll provider and the need to prepare two budgets for the Local Authority. This would all take place while children were still in school and day to day tasks continued.</p> <p>Governors suggested that overtime should be included within the budget for these tasks. Governors also suggested budget be included for legal and professional advice, and a contingency to cover other items such as waste disposal.</p> <p>SP asked about the expected budget for staff training. So far two requests have been received.</p> <p>Governors asked what is usually spent on training in a year? DR advised it was usually around £11,000.</p> <p>Governors suggested a budget of £10,000 for the five months to August 2025, to help staff be trained for the future.</p> <p>Governors also recognised that a budget maybe needed for Learning Support staff or support staff to cover staff training or when teachers are undertaking additional tasks.</p> <p>It was agreed that DR and SP would review the budget for each staff cost centre to include overtime as discussed.</p> <p>DR asked whether JC could audit the school fund as in previous years. JC confirmed he would be available to perform the audit subject to approval by the Governing Body.</p> <p>JC left the meeting to allow the Governing Body to discuss and vote on the issue. The Governing Body agreed JC should be allowed to audit the school fund.</p> <p>JC returned to the meeting and was advised on the decision.</p>	
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<p>6</p> <p>QUESTION</p>	<p><u>Head Teachers Report</u></p> <p>A written report along with attendance and progress and attainment data had been circulated before the meeting.</p> <p>Attendance – SP advised that whole school attendance is currently 95.3% which is above national. As per the report, there is little variation in attendance rates for vulnerable groups. Persistent absence is below national rates. The last attendance meeting of the year will be held with Gurnard Primary as part of the transition.</p> <p>Target data – Progress and attainment data had been circulated before the meeting. SP reported that, as shown in the report, the majority of progress is either outstanding or good. Any exceptions are being managed.</p> <p>High impact teaching plans have been reviewed to link into updated targets and progress. Given the current situation all staff and children are performing amazingly. Tracking and attendance meetings are continuing as usual. Staff continue to strive for the best for the children and maintain high expectations. During recent school visits the children have been praised for being the best behaved children visiting.</p> <p>Governors thanked the staff for the continued high progress rates.</p> <p><i>Governors asked whether the few inadequate progress areas are often representing only one child?</i></p> <p>SP confirmed they were. The school uses the Bell Foundation assessment grid, to monitor any smaller changes in progress.</p> <p>The School Development Plan (SDP) has been reviewed for the Spring term and a new version has been created for the Summer term reflecting the school closure. SP will review the Governor items with SC.</p>	
<p>7</p> <p>QUESTION</p> <p>QUESTION</p>	<p><u>Place planning update</u></p> <p>SP has had a number of calls with the Local Authority. As reported in the local media, the Diocese have said they will be making a case to the adjudicator concerning whether the Local Authority closure process followed the correct procedure. It is unclear how this will affect the closure, or timing of closure, of Cowes Primary. SP has received different answers from the Local Authority, Diocese and the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT).</p> <p><i>Governors asked if the Diocese had contacted SP at all?</i></p> <p>SP advised they had not.</p> <p>SP advised that she had contacted the NAHT for advice about HR meetings with staff, given the expected adjudication, as the Local Authority had started scheduling these.</p> <p>There is a four week window, from the decision on the 20th March, for referral to the adjudicator. Adjudicator reviews can be as quick as two weeks, but can also be longer. If the review determines that the process was not correctly followed then it would go to judicial review. If the process has been followed the school could still close on 31st August, but contractually teachers may get paid to October half term.</p> <p><i>Governors asked if anyone can refer the matter to the adjudicator?</i></p> <p>SP advised a Governing Body of a voluntary or foundation school can refer to the adjudicator. The Governing Body of a Local Authority maintained school cannot refer to the adjudicator.</p> <p>The Parent Governors highlighted there were mixed messages being sent from the Local Authority to parents about children transitioning schools, with letters referring to different options given the</p>	

<p>QUESTION</p>	<p>adjudicator review. This is causing uncertainty for parents, children and staff.</p> <p>SP confirmed a plan has been prepared, by staff, to capture tasks to be undertaken relating to a school closure. There had been no communication from the Local Authority following the announcement last week, until they sent a draft letter to parents to SP to check this week.</p> <p>SP has spoken to the Local Authority to ask for a meeting for the cabinet to explain to the Headteacher and Chair of Governors the reason for voting as they did for only two of the five schools to close.</p> <p>Governors suggested it would be good for the public to know the reasons too.</p> <p>Governors asked what had happened about the previous Local Authority suggestion to retain the Cowes Primary site for use by Gurnard Primary?</p> <p>SP advised that the cabinet decision was for all children to move to the Gurnard Primary site. Mobile classrooms would be needed.</p> <p>Governors recognised the uncertainty of closure had been going on for two years and the related stress this caused staff, parents and children. Governors discussed making a complaint to the Local Authority regarding how the potential closure had been handled. It was agreed a letter of complaint should be drafted.</p> <p>ACTION POINT: A letter of complaint to the Local Authority to be drafted and circulated to Governors.</p>	<p>JC</p>
<p>8</p>	<p><u>View from the Chair</u></p> <p>Skills Audit – The summary report had been circulated before the meeting. The lowest scoring question was regarding whether Governors have experience of Chairing meetings. There is related training available.</p> <p>The theme of the comments was around supporting staff through the current time and also getting advice on the school closure process.</p> <p>ACTION POINT: The Clerk to contact Governor Services for advice on how Governors can best support staff and what the Governing Body need to do with regard to school closure.</p> <p>On behalf of the Governing Body, SC thanked all staff for their continued work. SC acknowledged there had been uncertainty over the last couple of years due to the handling of potential closures by the Local Authority. SP agreed to pass the message to all staff.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>9</p>	<p><u>Policies to review and ratify</u></p> <p>The following policies had been made available to Governors before the meeting;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme of Delegation • Governor Visits • Lettings policy • Record Management policy • Exclusion of pupils • Uniform policy • Child protection policy, and • Complaints policy. <p>Some grammar, spelling and formatting issues were noted in relation to the Exclusion of pupils policy and the Uniform policy.</p> <p>SP advised that the Uniform policy had been widened, from black trousers or tights, to allow grey trousers and grey tights as well. This was to help parents, as the Gurnard Primary uniform is grey.</p>	

	<p>Governors supported the broadening of the policy, and suggested red tights could also be considered.</p> <p>The eight policies were approved by the Governing Body.</p>	
10	<p><u>Local Authority/DfE policies to be adopted.</u></p> <p>The following policies were circulated before the meeting;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment screening • Equality policy, and • Children missing education. <p>The three policies were agreed for adoption by the Governing Body.</p>	
11	<p><u>School Development Plan (SDP) update</u></p> <p>This had been covered under the Headteacher Report (Item 6).</p>	
12	<p><u>Safeguarding Update</u></p> <p>SP confirmed the Island based multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) was now in operation. One positive thing was that staff can now speak to them by telephone, rather than just email. The team does not yet have a permanent Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) so two social workers are currently sharing the role.</p> <p>[Further discussion is considered Confidential and is included in the Confidential Annex to these minutes.]</p>	
13	<p><u>Monitoring Update</u></p> <p>The Clerk advised that a number of forms for Autumn term visits had not yet been received, as discussed under open action points. The list of forms received since the last meeting had been issued before this meeting.</p> <p>The list of open actions was reviewed. It was suggested that Item 14 (Attendance data) could be closed as there was no long term benefit to analysing data further. It was agreed this item could be closed.</p>	
14	<p><u>Governor Training Update</u></p> <p>No training had been attended since the last meeting. DR confirmed that the Service Level Agreement with the Local Authority had been renewed for six months, and Governors could continue to access associated training.</p>	
15	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>SP advised that the July meeting date may need to change, depending on the school closure actions needed. This will be kept under review.</p> <p>SC advised that she could not attend the May meeting. Given the timing of half term and the deadline for budget submissions it was agreed not to change the meeting date. The Vice Chair will be asked to act as Chair.</p> <p>It was agreed there would be no further teacher presentations. The May presentation would fall during Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) week and would add increased pressure for staff.</p> <p>SP asked for volunteers to support the SATs testing. KF and SK offered support and will speak to SP directly.</p>	
16	<p><u>Impact</u></p> <p>The Governors agreed on the following impact achieved at this meeting;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review of the uniform policy aims to try to reduce the expense of school changes for parents. • Governors recognise that staff continue to operate to a high standard despite the pressure they are under. This is appreciated. • From discussion at the meeting, and observation whilst on site, Governors observed that the children were still in a caring environment and education outcomes were on track. 	

Date of next meeting		
The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 15th May 2025 at 4.15pm, in school.		
Meeting Ended at 6.15pm		

Action Points

141124/2	Governors to complete forms for Autumn term monitoring visits and send to the Clerk	AO	ASAP
270325/1	A letter of complaint to the Local Authority to be drafted and circulated to Governors.	JC	ASAP
270325/2	The Clerk to contact Governor Services for advice on how Governors can best support staff and what the Governing Body need to do with regard to school closure.	Clerk	ASAP

Attachments for FGB 27.03.2025

The following documents were available prior to the meeting;

1	3.0 CONFIDENTIAL Draft minutes of FGB 23.01.25
2	3.1 Draft minutes of extraordinary FGB 13.02.25
3	5.0 CONFIDENTIAL SBM report for FGB March 2025
4	5.0a Monitoring Statement February 2025
5	5.0b Expenditure by CFR February 2025
6	5.0c Income by CFR February 2025
7	5.0d Budget v Actuals February 2025
8	6.0 Headteacher's report March 2025
9	6.1 Attendance report for Governors March 2025
10	6.2 CONFIDENTIAL Attainment & progress by year March 2025
11	8.0 Collated skills audit February 2025
12	9.1 Scheme of Delegation
13	9.2 Governor Visits
14	9.3 Lettings policy
15	9.4 Record Management policy
16	9.5 Exclusion of pupils
17	9.6 Uniform policy
18	9.7 Child protection policy
19	9.8 Complaints policy
20	10.1 Employment screening
21	10.2 Equality policy
22	10.3 Children missing education
23	13.0 Monitoring form since last FGB
24	13.1 Open monitoring actions

Pre-meeting questions for FGB 27.03.2025

Agenda item	Question	Response	Responder
9.3 Lettings Policy	I spotted a small number of typos: Page 2 - "Maters" to "Matters" page 3 - missing "t" in keyholder agreement Page 7 - "the schools are not" -> "the school is not" Condition 28 - no apostrophe needed in "hirers".	I can confirm that I have updated the Lettings Policy.	DR
9.4 Record Management policy	<p>(a) Around page 26-27, it says staff and Governors will not use personal computers for school work. Governors are not issued with school laptops and so do need to make use of personal computers for school work. The wording looks fine for staff but for Governors, I think it should talk about saving files only in the school's Google drive and school's gmail and minimisation the processing of personal data and other sensitive material as far as possible.</p> <p>(b) In the maintenance section (around page 24), in column 2, it suggests records go to the next owner/occupier of the site which I agree with but in the third column it talks about secure disposal which seems contradictory. I think it best we pass everything to the site owner.</p> <p>(c) Just before the start of section 11, it says consent for school activities will be held while the child attends the school. This might imply that we would destroy the records the day after the child left (no matter when the consent was given) even if the activity had only taken place a few days prior. I think it should be 12 months after the child has left the school or some other reasonable interval (and arguably longer if there is a complaint or anything like that). Perhaps, it might be better to align with the consents for school trips. It isn't my area of expertise but I would be grateful if the staff could look over it. I am eager to avoid staff having to delete large volumes of data on the day the children leave or close to that date.</p>	I agree with all points that you have raised - we shall alter accordingly after double checking the GDPR policy.	SP
9.8 Complaints policy	<p>I was thinking that we should perhaps add something to the complaints policy about what happens if a complaint/concern is still open at the time the school closes. For example, in theory we could receive a complaint on the afternoon of the last day that for whatever reason cannot be resolved quickly.</p> <p>For example, we might say:</p> <p>"All reasonable steps will be taken to investigate and where appropriate address complaints and concerns before the school closes however this may not be possible in every case. Every effort will be made to pass any open complaints/concerns to the local</p>	This is a very good point. I am happy with the suggested wording.	SP

	<p>authority before the school closes. Where a transfer takes place, the person who has made the complaint will be notified that the complaint has been passed to the Isle of Wight Council and that further correspondence should be addressed to the Council. We will also make it clear that it is up to the Council whether or not to investigate the complaint and the fact the school has transferred a complaint/concern does not necessarily mean that the Council has a duty to investigate or take any other action in respect of the complaint or concern. Where practical, the school will make a recommendation to the Council as to how to proceed and provide an indication of where any relevant records may be found. Any serious complaints or concerns will be discussed between the Headteacher and the Chair prior to closure."</p>		
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Signature:

Position:

Name:

Date: