

GOVERNOR SERVICES: EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT

ASHTON COMMUNITY SCIENCE COLLEGE (06104)

Minutes of the governing body meeting held at the school on Wednesday 2 April 2025 at 5pm.

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Present: | Mr J Swindells (Chair) Mr M Catterall Mr W Clarke Miss C Doolan Mr S Fern Mr D Holden Mrs J Hoyle Mr D Maddox Mr C Moore Miss S Asquith (Headteacher) |
|-----------------|--|

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Also Present: | Mrs J Burbidge (Governing Body Adviser) |
|----------------------|--|

Action

25.01 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr O Mollart, Mrs R Gordon, Mrs D Murphy, Honorary Alderman, Mr B Rollo and Mr D Hird.

25.02 Head Students Report

The head girls were welcomed and thanked for attending the meeting. The chair explained how governors acknowledged that the pupils were due to take their GCSE's in the Summer term, and suggested that a written report would be accepted for the next meeting rather than the girls attend the next meeting.

The pupils were thanked again for attending the meeting and for their hard work over the last year.

Governors were informed of how the Big Question for this term had been about how the school could improve The Diggery for students, and how the school could ensure that every pupil had time in The Diggery. A summary of the responses and actions the school had taken was provided, and reference was also made to which subjects The Diggery could link to and how The Diggery could be used during lesson time if the space was booked out.

It was reported that 74 Year 7 students and 89 Year 8 students had expressed an interest in using The Diggery as a boost club, and how a link had been added to Show My Homework where pupils could add their name for any lunchtime sessions with an after-school club available on a Wednesday for all year groups.

Governors were provided with an overview of the impact and benefits that had been identified with more pupils using The Diggery, and how the school was looking at the possibility of using The Diggery for primary schools, and how PSHE could be used to get more pupils into The Diggery.

The pupils were thanked for their very comprehensive and thorough report, and the chair, in his capacity as the safeguarding link governor, posed a question about the steps the pupils would take if they were aware of or were approached by another student regarding issues of toxic masculinity in school and whether any reports could be made anonymously.

In response to this, governors were informed that pupils could be directed to Synergy, as this could be done anonymously and would ensure that any issues or concerns were directed to the safeguarding team in school.

In answer to a follow-up question about the issues portrayed in a recent TV series, the students indicated that none of these issues were prevalent in school or their personal lives.

The headteacher demonstrated how the boys in school had responded well to the head girls leadership, and that the whole school respected the girls positions, and student leadership duties.

The chair expressed his thanks for the reassurance and officially thanked the student leaders for all of their work this year and wished the pupils every success in their exams and for the future.

25.03 Governing Body Matters**a) Declaration of Interest**

- Mr Maddox declared that he was managing director for Evolve Document Solutions who provided services to the school.
- The headteacher declared that her brother provided environmental drainage services to the school.

It was agreed that in the event of a conflict of interest arising, these governors would exit the meeting before the relevant matters were considered.

b) Membership

The governing body adviser reported that there was currently a vacancy for a local authority governor, that Mr Fern's term of office as the staff governor was due to end on 31 August 2025, Mr Holden's term of office as a parent governor was due to end on 3 November 2025, and that a staff governor and parent governor election would need to be arranged in due course.

Headteacher**c) DBS / Section 128 Checks for Governors**

The chair confirmed that all necessary arrangements were in place, that all governors had the required clearances, that the Single Central Record (SCR) was up to date, and that all details in relation to governors had been duly recorded.

d) Lancashire Governor Services Service Level Agreement

Governors noted the update from Lancashire Governor Services.

25.04 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 27 November 2024, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record.

The chair was requested to arrange for the minutes to be signed electronically via GovernorHub.

Chair**25.05 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

The following matters arising from the minutes were reported:

a) Governance Compliance (minutes 24.9 b) and d) and 24.44 refers)

It was confirmed that all governors had completed the compliance information on their GovernorHub profiles.

b) Review of Committee membership (appointment of new governors)

Following a discussion, Mr Moore was appointed to the Resources Committee.

The headteacher clarified that governors were not limited to being appointed to just one committee. It was also noted that the other two new governors were still to express a preference as to which committee they would like to join.

**Mrs Gordon
and
Mrs Murphy****25.06 Teacher Wellbeing**

The governing body discussed the suggested questions on the agenda, and the headteacher summarised how her wellbeing was very well supported by governors and by the leadership team, particularly the two deputy headteachers who were very mindful of her wellbeing and workloads, and who took the time to regularly check in with her.

In terms of what the school was doing to improve wellbeing for different groups of people, the headteacher demonstrated how the school was ever mindful of wellbeing, with any changes being workload assessed, and how the school tried to make sure that it complied with the teacher's terms and conditions, and didn't take PPA from teachers etc. In addition, the school very rarely asked teaching staff to provide cover and regularly expressed gratitude and thanks to colleagues.

The headteacher also described how the school tried to accommodate any leave of absence requests during school hours, and tried to support any colleagues with families that wanted to attend family events etc.

The headteacher summarised how the school tried to strike a balance between looking after the pupils in school and help colleagues look after their own children, by allowing colleagues to attend events that involved their families.

The headteacher suggested that the School Vision didn't explicitly include a commitment to improving mental health and wellbeing, however this approach to wellbeing was part of the schools culture, and included the wellbeing of each member of the school family.

A governor enquired how the school had coped with the recent bereavements and whether any lessons had been learnt from how these had been dealt with.

The headteacher described how the school had been unable foresee or to predict either event, and that she wouldn't have changed anything about the way the events had been dealt with, which had been dealt with and handled by staff openly, honestly, compassionately and emotionally.

Governors were reminded of how both of the individuals had been commemorated in school, additionally, the school community had engaged with charity fundraising to honor the memory of these two members of the school family.

Mr Fern also described how a trainee teacher had commented on how they had seen compassion throughout the school following the second death, and how this had solidified the idea that the school was a family and worked together as a family.

25.07 Reports

a) Committee Reports

Governors noted the minutes from the following committee meetings:

- Curriculum, Standards, Personnel and Student Welfare Committee held on Wednesday 29 January 2025.

Mr Catterall described how the school continued to deal with the challenges of behaviour and discipline in school and how a Pupil Discipline Committee meeting had been held yesterday.

Governors were informed of how the outcomes from the Pupil Discipline Committee meetings were not always a forgone conclusion, and the chair highlighted the concerns that had been raised regarding the Governments plans for pupils to return to mainstream education after 12 weeks following an exclusion.

The headteacher further explained how the timeframes were out for consultation at the moment, and how it was a "fine line" between getting a pupil back into education and a pupil returning to mainstream education quickly after being excluded and without being given the opportunity to learn new behaviours. Additionally, how all of the headteachers within District 6 felt the same with the 12-week timeframe not being long enough.

- Resources Committee held on Wednesday 5 February 2025.

Governors were asked to note how Ms Cummins had settled in well, had grasped the role very quickly and was doing a really good job in school.

b) Nominated Governors

Although there were no reports from nominated governors, Mr Catterall praised the leadership team, especially the headteacher, for their continued hard work, and described how this was very much appreciated.

Mr Catterall also acknowledged the challenge posed by governors and described how staff were happy to take these challenges on board, and reiterated his thanks to all the staff for their hard work in school.

c) Chair's Action

The chair reported that it had not been necessary to take any urgent decisions on behalf of the governing body since the last meeting however he had recently completed Prevent training and had reviewed the Single Central Record.

25.08 Safeguarding

It was confirmed that all governors had received safeguarding training in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 requirements.

The suggested questions on the agenda were discussed, and the following was noted:

The governing body had appointed a safeguarding link governor, and had received a number of sessions on safeguarding training to allow the management of safeguarding in school which was provided on a regular basis.

The headteacher pointed out how the suggested questions had mainly been answered within her headteacher's report, and governors were satisfied that a comprehensive update had been provided.

25.09 School Improvement Plan and Headteacher's Report**a) School Improvement Plan (SIP)**

The headteacher updated governors on the progress of this year's school improvement priorities and presented the RAG rated SIP.

Governors were reminded of the four key areas for the school improvement, and the headteacher summarised how some areas would not be expected to be completed until the end of the academic year, and that some of the performance indicators were too stringent in some areas. It was reported that the school had committed to review the SIP in the Summer term and update it ready for the next academic year, and to make these performance indicators more realistic and achievable.

b) Attendance

Governors noted the guidance on attendance, including their responsibility to support schools with this.

It was noted that a very comprehensive written report had been provided by Miss Connon, Assistant Headteacher, which had addressed all of additional questions set out in the agenda and supporting information booklet.

Governors acknowledged how the school's overall attendance was the best it had been in a long time and the headteacher praised Miss Connon for her tenacious approach to improving attendance, and expressed hope that as attendance continued to improve, student outcomes would also improve.

c) Inclusion

The governing body discussed the suggested questions from the agenda, and confirmed the following:

The school had been asked to reintegrate one pupil recently after being permanently excluded from another local secondary school however, this application had been rejected without any initial work being done with the pupil by the Pupil Referral Unit. The headteacher explained how the pupil would join the school after working with the Larches High School in Preston, and how the school did take the approach to reintegrated pupils on a case-by-case basis.

It was noted that the exclusion rates had been discussed earlier in the meeting and that the numbers of Electively Home Educated pupils had been reported in the headteacher's report.

The chair raised a question regarding the 16 pupils that were being Electively Home Educated, and the headteacher described how this was a combination of pupils that remained home educated due to the families lifestyle choice, some that had attendance issues and decided to home educate to avoid the inevitable fines, and some pupils that left and returned, with the shortest home education period being two days.

Mr Clarke described how the reasons to home educate were generally made on an individual basis and demonstrated the difficulties with some families making the choice for the wrong reasons, which left gaps in knowledge and social etiquette etc. Mr Clarke also explained the difficulties with reintegrating pupils back into the learning environment and plugging the gaps in learning.

In answer to a question, Mr Clarke provided an overview of the number of fines the school had issued, and how there was a mix of some fines being paid and some not. Governors were informed of how the persistently absent families were that hardest to fine, and how on occasions this was not having the required impact. Mr Clarke illustrated how fines were only used as a very last resort, as they could negatively impact family engagement and harm the school's relationships with families.

Following a discussion, the headteacher indicated how the main issue the school had found with Elective Home Education was "weak" parenting, and how the school did offer early help support to some parents through the Early Help Assessment and the Children, Family and Wellbeing Service.

The headteacher also pointed out how the attendance data was skewed due to the pupils that were being Electively Home Educated.

The chair enquired about the pupil another local authority had wanted to fund to attend the Deaf Department, and the headteacher explained how the EHCP had been reviewed and changed to reflect the need for a Level 3 signer which the school could provide.

The headteacher illustrated how the school's specialist provision did continue to attract pupils from other local authorities, and in answer to a question, clarified how the request for a Level 7 interpreter had not been a mistake. Governors were informed of how the school had prepared a provision map for this EHCP, which had reflected the salary cost for a Level 7 interpreter to be around £52,000 a year.

In answer to a further question, the headteacher reported that there had not been any improvement with the timescales for EHCP's and that the local authority was prioritising the transitions from Year 6 to Year 7 at the moment.

d) Headteacher's Report

The headteacher's written report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting was received and noted.

The headteacher explained how she had tried to shorten her report due to much of the information already being reported and covered in the working committee meetings, and how several appendices had been added for information, to ensure that all governors had a comprehensive understanding of the school.

Reference was made to the analysis of school performance and exam predictions, and the headteacher highlighted the positives for the schools current trajectory for the performance at KS4 along with the reasons to also be cautious.

Governors were informed of how the school was at the point of the academic year where the revision plans were ongoing, and how 75% of the whole Year 11 year group were attending the revision sessions and 90% of the pupils who were physically able to attend.

The headteacher indicated the significant commitment by the teaching staff to provide the revision sessions, which were currently being held after school every night Monday to Thursday, in addition to the Easter Extended Study Period sessions for Year 11, which were due to be delivered for seven out of nine days of the Easter holidays.

The headteacher emphasised how the school was doing everything it could to support the exam results, and in answer to a question, Mrs Hoyle clarified that there had been no change to the exam boards for Year 11, but that some changes had been made for Year 10.

Governors attention was drawn to the Health and Safety update, and the headteacher described how the school endeavoured to keep the pupils in school safe through the fire evacuation practices and invacuation practices that had been held.

The headteacher described how the fire evacuation practices were continuing to improve, and how she had been very proud with how the pupils had lined up and the conduct of the pupils during the fire evacuations, which was testament to the hard work all of the staff had done to get the pupils self-regulating and disciplined.

Reference was made to the emergency invacuation / lockdown practice which had taken place and the headteacher described how the school had been locked down for 5 minutes.

The headteacher highlighted the unexpected partial lockdown which had happened earlier in March, and how the school had prevented two youths from accessing the school grounds. Governors were informed of how the Police had not treated the incident as a priority, and that the headteacher had felt that as a school, the lockdown of the front entrance had been very effective, and how the whole school family had worked together to prevent any further escalation and keep the school site safe.

In answer to a question, the headteacher explained how the back entrance gate to the school was locked during the day and that razor wire had been installed on the fencing.

A governor enquired about the possibility of installing a tannoy system in school, and the headteacher explained that the cost for a tannoy system in the main school had been estimated at around £15,000, making it a luxury that the school could not afford at the moment.

In response to a further comment from a governor, the headteacher pointed out how the school already had an on-call radio system, and how the school could be at risk of disrupting classes, and more pupils becoming "curious" in the event of installing a tannoy system with regular announcements.

Thanks were expressed to the teaching staff for providing the catch-up lessons and study sessions over Easter.

Governors noted the additional information provided with the headteacher's report which included the most recent Lancashire School Information Profile (LSIP) and the curriculum update which had been presented to the Curriculum, Standards, Personnel and Student Welfare Committee.

The headteacher was thanked for her very detailed and comprehensive reports.

25.10 Unavoidable School Closures

The headteacher confirmed that there had been no full or partial unavoidable school closures since the last meeting.

25.11 Educational Visits

Mr Fern reported details of the proposed educational visit to France and Disneyland from 31 March to 3 April 2026 which was considered and approved.

In answer to a number of questions, Mr Fern summarised how this would be the eighth time the trip had been run and was embedded within the school family. Additionally, how there was a minimum of 43 attendees every time the trip had been run.

Mr Fern described the purpose of the visit and the intended outcomes, which included enrichment opportunities for the pupils to experience a difference culture, to expand pupils' cultural capital and to develop resilience and independence.

Mr Fern pointed out how a tour of Paris had now been included in the visit, which included a lot of cross-curricular opportunities, and how the pupils would not miss any curriculum time in school.

Thanks were expressed to the staff for taking the pupils to France in their own time every year, and Mr Maddox offered to provide Mr Fern with the details of a contact that could provide a tour of Paris.

The headteacher highlighted how the school also had a pen pal scheme which the French Department had arranged, and the chair also praised the school's high levels of social media engagement following any trips, as well as the celebration and nomination of pupils' successes by their families.

25.12 Finance**a) Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)**

The governing body ratified the SFVS and related party transactions template which had been approved by the Resources Committee.

The headteacher confirmed that the approved standard and related party transactions template had been submitted to the local authority by the required deadline.

b) School Budget 2025/26

The governing body delegated the review and recommendation of the school's budget plan for 2025/26, and a forecast for 2026/27 and 2027/28 to the Resources Committee.

It was noted that this had to be submitted to the county council by Friday, 17 May 2025 and that the Resources Committee budget setting meeting was due to be held on Wednesday 23 April.

The budget and forecasts would be presented for approval at the next governing body meeting.

c) Lancashire Schools' Forum

The governing body noted the information provided about the Schools' Forum election process and delegated to the chair the responsibility for voting on behalf of the governing body should an election take place in the summer term 2025.

**Resources
Committee****Governing
body****Chair**

25.13 Personnel**a) New Legislation – Mandatory Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment**

The governing body noted the duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment of their employees.

The headteacher confirmed that the school was aware of the new legislation and mandatory duties and that the school had adopted the local authority Bullying and Harassment Policy which had been updated in line with the new legislation and was readily available to all staff. In addition, the updated Code of Conduct had been shared with staff and return to work meetings were explored to identify whether harassment had contributed to the absence.

b) Lancashire Personnel Policies

The governing body confirmed adoption of the following model Lancashire Personnel Policies and Procedures, and also all generic HR policies:

- Alcohol / Drug Abuse, Statement for Employees (December 2024)
- Appraisal Policy (Teachers) (September 2024)
- Bullying and Harassment
- Capability Policy (Teachers) (September 2024)
- Paternity Leave Policy & Form (November 2024)
- Pay Policy (Teachers) (September 2024)
- Recruitment and Selection (September 2024)
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders (October 2024)
- Redundancy Policy & Procedure (August 2024)
- School Staff Code of Conduct (September 2024)
- Smoke-Free Policy (September 2024)
- Statement of Ethical Standards (September 2024)
- TLR Guidance (September 2024)

It was noted that the local authority model Work-Related Stress Policy had been adopted at the last meeting, which had been signed off by the chair and headteacher.

In answer to a question, the headteacher explained how these policies were not tailored to the school and were just updated with the school name. Governors were reminded of how the school had had taken to the decision to adopt all of the latest versions of the generic Lancashire HR and Personnel policies and procedures.

c) Appraisal

It was noted that the headteacher had confirmed that appraisals had taken place for all teachers and school leaders, that appropriate objectives were in place for the current year, and that arrangements had been made for mid-year reviews within her headteacher's report.

d) Recruitment Process

The governing body noted the required notice period for headteachers and other teachers.

25.14 Governor Training

The governing body noted the recommendation that an annual skills audit be undertaken.

The headteacher informed governors of how the Resources Committee had taken the decision to move away from the local authority insurance scheme and to move to the DfE Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) for schools. As part of this, every person involved with the school would be requested to complete online GDPR training, and that the link to this training would be circulated to governors in due course.

All to note

Attention was drawn to the courses available through Governor Services, including the online training via the NGAs Learning Link, and governors were reminded that all training was now accessed via GovernorHub.

All to note

The headteacher described how GovernorHub was quite user friendly, and in answer to a question, all governors were asked to ensure that any training records were uploaded to their individual GovernorHub profiles including the Hayes safeguarding training that had been delivered in September.

All to note

It was reported that the chair had recently completed Prevent training, the headteacher had just completed GDPR and Prevent training and that Mr Clarke had completed the e-learning course on how to review suspensions and exclusions.

25.15 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The governing body noted the options available for the appointment procedure of chair and vice-chair and it was agreed that the previous arrangements would remain unchanged:

- nominations would be accepted by self-nomination or other nomination;
- nominations would be received prior to the meeting (to the clerk for inclusion on the agenda for the meeting, at least 21 days prior to the meeting) and at the meeting;
- voting would be by a show of hands;
- in the event of a tie, a second vote would be held; if the outcome remained tied then lots would be drawn;
- in the event of only one candidate being nominated for a position the candidate would be asked to leave the room while a vote was held.

25.16 Information, Updates and Items for Further Discussion as appropriate

The governing body noted the guidance and additional information in relation to:

- a) Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill 2024
- b) Employee Assistance Programme

The headteacher pointed out how the Employee Assistance Programme was a standing item on the staff weekly bulletin, how colleagues were regularly signposted to the scheme, which a number of staff had utilised, and how this was a very wide-ranging assistance programme funded by the local authority.

- c) Lancashire Governance Associate
- d) Apprenticeship / Careers Team Update
- e) Lancashire School Improvement Service Guarantee 2025-2026

25.17 Confidentiality

Governors were reminded that all matters discussed at governing body meetings were not for general discussion outside the meeting.

The governing body considered whether any items discussed were required to be recorded in the minutes as confidential; that is, that should not be made available to the general public should a request be received to view governing body papers.

For the purpose of the minutes there were no items deemed confidential.

25.18 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The dates for the Summer term meetings were confirmed as follows:

- Curriculum and Standards Committee: Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 4:30pm
- Resources Committee (budget setting): Wednesday 23 April 2025 at 4:30pm
- Resources Committee: Wednesday 21 May 2025 at 4:30pm
- Full Governing Body: Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 5pm

The chair thanked governors for their attendance and contributions and closed the meeting at 6.10pm.

