

GOVERNOR SERVICES: EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT

ASHTON COMMUNITY SCIENCE COLLEGE (06104)

Minutes of the governing body meeting held at the school on Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 5pm.

Present: Honorary Alderman, Mr J Swindells (Chair)
Mr M Catterall
Mr W Clarke
Miss C Doolan
Mr S Fern
Mrs R Gordon
Mr D Hird
Mr D Holden
Mrs J Hoyle
Mr D Maddox
Mr C Moore
Mrs D Murphy
Honorary Alderman, Mr B Rollo
Miss S Asquith (Headteacher)

Also Present: Mrs J Burbidge (Governing Body Adviser)

Action

25.19 Head Students Report

The headteacher introduced the school's Senior Student leaders to the meeting, which included the Head Boy and Head Girl for 2025/26 and brief introductions were made.

The pupils were invited to attend the full Governing Body meetings in the Autumn and Spring terms and were encouraged to share suggestions on how governors could better support them in their roles and contribute to the wider school community.

Governors were informed of how the pupils were working well as a team and had all been assigned specific roles.

Reference was made to the third Big Question of the year regarding how the Fit Friday provision could be improved, and a summary of the student views from each year group and the staff feedback was provided.

The pupils were congratulated on their appointment as Senior Student Leaders and in response to a question, the pupils described how they would support a pupil who felt unsafe in school, the process they would follow if they felt unsafe in school, the existing provisions in place to ensure student safety and how these could potentially be advertised more.

A governor raised a question regarding the House Points and Merits system, and in response, the pupils explained how Year 10 and Year 11 pupils generally felt that they no longer needed a formal reward system for motivation, as they were already well-supported by their teachers by that point in school. In answer to a follow up question, it was suggested that the competition between the Houses did however become more intense in Years 10 and 11, and the pupils shared examples of House competitions at lunchtimes.

The pupils were invited to suggest ways the school could further enhance and support motivation and rewards, and the Student Leaders were asked to involve the Student Council to gather a wider range of responses.

A governor suggested how alternative rewards could perhaps be offered in the upper school for the winning House team, and the headteacher clarified how the pupils had suggested that they had an intrinsic value of education in Years 10 and 11 and didn't generally need merits to reward hard work.

Governors were reminded of the previous merit system, which included a merit shop and a governor raised a concern about whether the team with the lowest House Points might feel demotivated and consequently put in less effort.

The Student Leaders suggested how this could work one of two ways and described the potential to reintroduce a system for both personal and collective rewards which was acknowledged by governors.

The Senior Student Leaders were thanked for their updates and left the meeting at 5.25pm.

25.20 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr O Mollart.

The headteacher explained that Mr Mollart had requested a 12-month leave of absence from the governing board, which governors agreed they were happy to support, and to keep Mr Mollart's position open on the governing board during his absence.

25.21 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.
- Mr Hird declared that he worked for Eric Wright and had involvement in the maintenance and development of the school premises.

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 confirmed that there continued to be a vacancy for a local authority governor.

It was noted that Mr Fern's term of office would end on 31 August and that the headteacher had already arranged an election to appoint to this governor position, which had resulted in Mr Fern being re-elected as the staff governor for a further four-year term of office. Additionally, Mr Holden's term of office was due to end on 3 November 2025.

Following a discussion, the governing body agreed that they were keen to retain Mr Holden's skills and confirmed their support for Mr Holden to be appointed as the new local authority governor. Mr Holden agreed to complete the nomination form which the clerk was requested to forward to Mr Holden.

Mr Holden**Clerk**

It was noted that this would create a parent governor vacancy, which the headteacher was requested to arrange an election to appoint to this position in the Autumn term.

Headteacher

c) DBS / Section 128 Checks for Governors

The governing body confirmed that all necessary arrangements were in place and that all governors had the required clearances.

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

A governor raised a question regarding the frequency of the DBS checks for governors.

The clerk clarified that there was currently no requirement to recheck governors, however it was good practice to renew a DBS check when a governor's term of office was renewed, usually after four years, but that it was up to the school to decide whether and how often they should rerun the DBS checks on governors.

Governors agreed to adopt this recommendation.

Mrs Murphy confirmed that she would like to continue to attend both of the working committee meetings and governors were reminded of the option to join meetings remotely.

25.22 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 2 April 2025, 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

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

25.23 Staff Wellbeing

The governing body discussed the suggested questions on the agenda, and the headteacher confirmed that the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) was advertised to all staff on a weekly basis.

It was reported that a staff survey had just been conducted, which was due to close tomorrow. The headteacher described how this had focussed on the schools culture, what the school was doing well and what it needed to improve, which encapsulated wellbeing, and that the feedback from the survey would be shared with governors in the Autumn term.

In response to a question, the headteacher confirmed that the survey was conducted anonymously and that the responses received so far had been very positive with constructive feedback.

In answer to further questions, Mr Fern clarified how staff didn't need to be reminded and were aware of not including any personal details in their responses that could easily identify them.

The headteacher confirmed that any new staff were also included in the staff survey and the chair concurred how he had seen evidence of the EAP being advertised to staff.

The headteacher described how staff had used the EAP for a variety of reasons, which was a very useful service fully funded by the local authority, and reiterated how the service was appreciated and used in school.

25.24 Reports**a) Committee Reports**

Governors noted the minutes from the following committee meetings:

- Curriculum, Standards, Personnel and Student Welfare Committee meeting held on Wednesday 7 May 2025.

Mr Swindells apologised for not attending the meeting due to having the wrong date in his diary.

Mr Catterall highlighted how the committee also reviewed how staff were being supported in addition to the pupils, and that he was quite satisfied with the programme of support the school was providing at the moment.

- Resources Committee meeting held on Wednesday 23 April 2025.
- Resources Committee meeting held on Wednesday 21 May 2025.

Mr Maddox informed governors of how Ms Cummins had settled in well, and commended Ms Cummins for her hard work with the school budget and financial monitoring.

b) Nominated Governors

The following reports were received:

- Mr Moore provided a verbal report regarding Music and the planned improvements in the Summer with the development of the facilities in school.

The headteacher further described how partnership funding had been generated to support the development of the Music Room, the refurbishment of the Library, and for a contribution towards the new Changing facilities connected to the 3G pitch and how there was a significant amount of investment in the school at the moment.

- Mr Hird explained how he had been unable to meet with the Languages lead at the moment, due to currently being involved with guiding the building work in school along with the DofE programme.
- Mr Catterall provided an update on Geography, PSHE and English, and described how staff had worked very hard and were hopeful that the results this year would show this. Mr Catterall emphasised how it was noticeable that the staff had been working very hard this year, and how this needed to be applauded.

The headteacher clarified how all staff in school were working very hard, and how no member of staff could have worked any harder this year, particularly with the amount of additional revision sessions and exam prep etc.

Governors were reminded of how there had been very high percentages of attendance at all of the revision sessions, and the headteacher described how staff had delivered these sessions purely on a voluntary and unpaid basis for the benefit of the pupils in school.

The headteacher pointed out how many other schools did not offer as much as the school did and that the school was very blessed to have such committed and dedicated staff.

Mrs Hoyle expressed her frustration with the lack of progress measures available this year, and a governor described how as a parent they could see the amount of effort the staff had made and demonstrated how the staff in school were a credit to the teaching profession particularly compared to other schools. In addition, the significant amount of support the staff had provided during the pandemic was acknowledged, and a governor specifically praised the Maths and Biology teachers, for their support and encouragement in addition to the substantial amount of work the teachers had done for free for the benefit the pupils.

Another governor echoed these comments sharing how their child in Year 7 had also greatly benefited from the nurture and encouragement, extra interventions and consistent support, and how their child felt supported and able to achieve due to the dedication and care of the staff, which the governor requested be fed back to the staff.

A governor raised a question regarding the additional voluntary hours staff had worked and what protections had been put in place to ensure that staff had not breached the protected minimum wage. The headteacher clarified how this was not directed time, and was the member of staff's own choice to deliver the additional revision sessions. The headteacher pointed out how the teaching profession in general was very high for unpaid labour, and in response to a further question, the employee protection rights were further explained.

The headteacher reassured governors of how the teachers in school were very well protected by their Professional Associations, Unions and the Teacher's Pay and Condition's, and how there was plenty of opportunity for any recourse through the Unions. Additionally, how the Directed time was rewritten every year, which ensured the hours teachers were expected to work, and how this was significantly below the maximum number of hours teachers were required to teach at the moment.

The headteacher emphasised how the school did not intentionally exploit any member of staff, and in response to a further comment from a governor, the headteacher described how the teachers were salaried, how the support staff that were paid on an hourly basis had less pressure and much more structure roles, and Mr Fern concurred how ultimately the teachers managed and set their own work loads, and that the revision sessions were the teachers own choices.

In answer to a question, the headteacher confirmed that the school had no expectations regarding how salaried staff spent their time during the Summer holidays, with the exception of staff on the leadership scale, who were expected to remain available throughout the year.

Additionally, a governor highlighted the management structure that was in place in school that provided support to staff.

The headteacher expressed her hope that, following the conclusion of the staff survey, staff would continue to feel overwhelmingly well supported and cared for.

Mr Fern shared an example of how Mrs Hoyle had recently supported him and considered his workload, and Mrs Hoyle highlighted the importance of ensuring that what staff were being asked to do was helping to raise the standards in school particularly at this point of the academic year, and how some work was never ending.

Mr Fern also spoke about the strong bonds and attachments staff developed with the pupils particularly during the revision sessions, and expressed how rewarding he felt teaching was.

Nominated governors were thanked for their reports and continued support.

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 attended most of the RAP meetings.

Reference was made to the very comprehensive AI generated notes that had been produced from the RAP meetings, and the chair described how a key question that was always raised was the department's resilience in the event of losing a subject leader which had been answered very well, and had emphasised the strong collaboration among staff and supportive environment where no one was left to manage alone.

The chair also described how he had asked all of the Heads of Department to thank their staff for the number of hours they had worked this year, and the headteacher was requested to thank all staff for their hard work this year.

Headteacher

25.25 Safeguarding

Governors noted the safeguarding and child protection training requirements set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education. The suggested questions on the agenda were discussed, and it was noted that staff training was up to date, which was renewed annually and how a premises check was conducted on a regular basis.

25.26 School Improvement and Headteacher's Report

a) School Improvement

The headteacher updated governors on the progress of this year's improvement priorities.

The headteacher described how two documents had been created, and Mr Catterall was thanked for making the suggestion of providing an AI generated version of the School Improvement Plan.

Governors were reminded of how the School Improvement Plan had been separated into four key priorities for this year: Be Here, Behave, Be Engaged and Be Ambitious and how a comprehensive update had been provided within the headteacher's report and at the committee meetings.

b) Headteacher's Report

Governors had received the headteacher's written report in advance of the meeting and the headteacher provided a further update on staffing.

It was reported that Shannon Farley had also made a flexible working request to reduce to 0.8, which the headteacher confirmed could be managed in school.

Additionally, Steph Westland in Science had made a request to relinquish her TLR for 12 months, to provide her with opportunity to see if her work life balance would improve, and the headteacher described how this could be approved in the event of another member of the Science staff taking the TLR on.

The headteacher described how a TA in the Deaf Support Department had requested a sabbatical due to a job opportunity in Ireland, and in the event of her not being offered the job. The headteacher explained how she was willing to approve this request due to the very tragic and unique circumstances of this member of staff.

It was also reported that Michael Ashworth was due to return from St Helena in September as the Head of Computing, and the headteacher drew governors attention to how the Docks to Disney event was due to raise funds in memory of the Year 9 pupil Ewan Farrow and for two local charities.

The headteacher provided an overview of the Docks to Disney event, and how a teacher from the Deaf Unit had committed to running 100k this year. In response to this, a governor suggested that a fundraising application should be submitted to the Eric Wright Trust Fund.

In answer to a question, the headteacher confirmed that the funds raised from the Docks to Disney event would be donated to the North West Children's Support Group Charity and Derian House Children's Hospice.

Following a discussion, all governors were invited to attend the Control Tower at the Docks to Disney event on 28 June. The headteacher described how any participants or spectators were encouraged to make a voluntary and affordable contribution. It was noted that the event typically attracted at least 500-600 attendees including running groups and members of the general public, with the event running from 8am to 6pm.

The headteacher was thanked for her comprehensive report.

25.27 Arrangements for 2025 Exams

The governing body noted the information regarding the GCSEs and the chair highlighted that the suggested questions concerning pupils' mental health, wellbeing, and the overall exam culture within the school had been discussed during the RAP meetings.

One governor shared a comparison based on their experience at another local high school, noting that the pupils in school had been much more supported and encouraged, and had had a much more positive experience of the GCSE's compared to pupils in other local schools.

Another governor echoed these sentiments, commenting on the intense pressure faced by pupils at other local schools during the exam period, which had adversely affected their performance. A third governor confirmed how they had also observed similar experiences this year at other local schools.

The headteacher and Mrs Hoyle described how a member of the SLT had been in every exam this year to help the pupils keep working, and how any anxiety had been managed with the wraparound care in school.

A governor further described how the outside perception had indicated that the exams and pupils mental health and wellbeing had been very well managed in school.

Mrs Hoyle also described how the schools strategies had already begun with Year 10, with the pupils conducting two exams in the Sports Hall and being exposed to the exam conditions.

In answer to a question, it was noted that no Year 10 pupils had been entered for GCSEs this year. In response to a comment from a governor, Mrs Hoyle explained that early entry was not always in the best interest of pupils and how these exam entries were not included in the school's attainment measures.

The headteacher also added that Ofsted did not view early GCSE entry favourably, and how there were potentially lower outcomes due to the younger pupils' mindset and lack of maturity. Additionally, how there was a risk that early entry could negatively affect some pupils' future engagement and performance in Year 11.

A governor enquired how many pupils had applied for higher or further education, and it was reported that 100% of pupils had applied for either College or an Apprenticeship, with the majority making College applications.

25.28 Unavoidable School Closures

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

25.29 Educational Visits

Mr Fern confirmed that there were no educational visits to approve at the time of the meeting and that any recent visits in relation to the impact and benefits for pupils had been reviewed at the Curriculum, Standards, Personnel and Student Welfare Committee meeting.

The chair commented on how the school's social media presence was currently very good, and promoted the opportunities the school was providing for pupils.

In response to several questions, the headteacher clarified which staff members were responsible for managing and updating the school's social media accounts, and the headteacher also explained that the engagement with the school's social media activity tended to fluctuate, which was probably similar to most other local schools.

The chair demonstrated how it was also good to see pupils being recommended and nominated by their peers for any successes with out of school activities etc.

The headteacher described how the school was involved with Facebook and Instagram, and a governor described how they had extensive social media experience and recommended the use of Blue Sky, Facebook and potentially TikTok.

Governors reviewed the internal arrangements and procedures for approving educational visits and following a proposal by Mr Fern, it was agreed that in order to support staff planning and improved reporting to governors, the EVC arrangements would be updated for the next academic year to Option 5:

A Committee of Governors/Focus Group of Managers to work alongside the Headteacher/EVC to approve all Type A visits and to approve Type B visits prior to submission to Lancashire County Council.

The decisions to be reported to the Governing Body /Management Committee meeting each term.

Following a discussion, Mr Fern provided an example of the trips that would need approval, and it was noted that the local authority Educational Off-Site Visits Team would need to be notified of the changes to the schools arrangements.

The chair highlighted the impact and benefits of the trip to the university of Oxford, and Christiana Pongourou was credited for her work with running this trip annually.

In response to a question, the headteacher explained that, over the years, three pupils from the school had gone on to study at Oxford University.

25.30 Finance

The governing body noted the school's outturn position for 2024/25 and the significant differences between the estimated and actual outturn for 2024/25.

Following the recommendation of the Resources Committee, and after considering any budget sustainability issues, the governing body approved the school budget plan for 2025/26 as follows:

Revenue income of £8,497,838 and proposed revenue expenditure of £9,026,638 resulting in a net in year deficit of -£528,800.

The governing body considered the effect on school balances and noted the balance of £888,000 brought forward from the previous year which would result in a forecast carry forward balance of £359,200 into 2026/27.

The financial forecasts for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were also noted.

The headteacher confirmed that the Income and Expenditure Form had been submitted to the county council within the required timeframe.

25.31 Staffing Arrangements

In preparation for the performance management of staff in the autumn term, the governing body confirmed that the following arrangements were in place:

- a committee to undertake the appraisal of the headteacher's performance (Miss C Doolan, Mr M Catterall and Mr J Swindells);
- the school had bought into a Schools Advisory Service for advice regarding the appraisal of the headteacher;
- a committee to undertake pay decisions in relation to the headteacher and teacher's pay (Mr J Swindells Mr D Hird and Mr D Maddox);
- relevant training had been undertaken by governors to assist them in fulfilling their duties.

Governors were reminded of how pay was no longer linked to appraisal, and how staff would only not be eligible for pay progression in the event of being on a performance support plan.

The headteacher described the plans for staff to complete their end of year appraisals in September, and in answer to a question, the headteacher clarified the number of staff currently in school.

It was noted that the governing body had already considered the current staffing arrangements and that a reorganisation would not be necessary.

25.32 Governor Training and Development

Governors were reminded of attending the Safeguarding training on 7 July and the courses available on GovernorHub to support their training and development.

25.33 Governing Body's Effectiveness and Strategy for 2025/26

The suggested questions on the agenda were discussed, and it was agreed that governors worked well together and that there was a good spread of skills across the board.

The headteacher suggested that the governing body was not ineffective, and particularly the committees, which were very focussed and received much more intense and detailed information.

The headteacher also demonstrated how the governing body held schools leaders to account through the RAP meetings, the governing body meetings and governor visits into school.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that no changes were needed for the governing body to be more effective, and a governor highlighted the impact and benefits of governor training in order to gain a greater insight and understanding.

The headteacher recapped on how the use of GovernorHub was very beneficial, and the importance of evidencing the governing body's effectiveness to Ofsted.

25.34 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

It was noted that the election of chair and vice-chair would be conducted in the Autumn term.

**Autumn
term agenda**

25.35 Information, updates and items for further discussion as appropriate

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

- a) SEND Inclusion Service updates
- b) Off-site Directions and Managed Moves
- c) Lancashire Governance Association
- d) New Primary Career-Related Learning Resources
- e) Apprenticeship / Careers Team Update.

25.36 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. However, governors were reminded of the confidential information contained within the minutes from the Resources committee meeting.

25.37 Date and Time of Future Meetings

The governing body confirmed the pattern of dates for the 2025/26 academic year as follows:

Autumn Term:

- Full Governing Body Meeting: Wednesday 19 November 2025 at 5pm
- Curriculum and Personnel Committee: Wednesday 15 October 2025 at 4.30pm
- Resources Committee: Wednesday 8 October 2025 at 4.30pm

Spring Term:

- Full Governing Body Meeting: Wednesday 18 March 2026 at 5pm
- Curriculum and Personnel Committee: Wednesday 28 January 2026 at 4.30pm
- Resources Committee: Wednesday 21 January 2026 at 4.30pm

Summer Term:

- Full Governing Body Meeting: Wednesday 24 June 2026 at 5pm
- Curriculum and Personnel Committee: Wednesday 20 May 2026 at 4.30pm
- Resources Committee (Budget Setting Meeting): Wednesday 22 April 2026 at 4.30pm
- Resources Committee: Wednesday 13 May 2026 at 4.30pm

Following a discussion, it was agreed that the time for the full governing body meetings would remain at 5pm, and Mr Fern was requested to provide the online meeting link a week in advance of each meeting.

All governors were invited to attend the Year 11 Prom at Bartle Hall on Wednesday 2 July.

The chair thanked governors for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 6.25pm.

