

GOVERNOR SERVICES: EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT

ASHTON COMMUNITY SCIENCE COLLEGE (06104)

Minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum, Standards, Personnel and Student Welfare Committee held in school on Wednesday, 15 October 2025 at 4.30pm

Present: Mr M Catterall (Chair)
Mr W Clarke
Mr S Fern
Mrs J Hoyle
Mr C Moore
Honorary Alderman, Mr J Swindells
Miss S Asquith (Headteacher)

Also Present: Mrs J Burbidge (Governing Body Adviser)

ACTION

25.25 Apologies for Absence

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

25.26 Election of Chair

Mr Catterall was re-elected as chair of the committee until the first committee meeting of the Autumn term 2026.

25.27 Election of Vice-Chair

Mr Hird was re-elected as vice-chair of the committee until the first committee meeting of the Autumn term 2026.

25.28 Declaration of Interests

- The headteacher declared that her brother provided environmental drainage services to the school.
- It was agreed that if a conflict of interest arose, the headteacher would leave the meeting.

25.29 Committee Terms of Reference

Governors reviewed the current terms of reference for the committee and following a discussion, the terms of reference for 2025/26 were approved without amendment.

25.30 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 7 May 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.

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

Chair**25.31 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

25.32 Analysis of School Performance Data

Mrs Hoyle summarised the analysis of school performance data which had previously been issued to governors, and governors were reminded of how there was no progress data available due to the pandemic.

Mrs Hoyle described how the school had been delighted with the Summer GCSE results, which were stronger in all areas, and how the Attainment 8 had increased from the 2024 figure.

It was reported that in terms of the basic headline measures for English and Maths, these had improved in all areas, and that the Attainment 8 scores for the four elements of English, Maths, EBacc and Open had also all increased compared to 2024 however, there was a slight anomaly with the EBacc, which Mrs Hoyle explained how she was not too concerned with.

Governors' attention was drawn to the comparison with the previous year's Attainment 8 data, and Mrs Hoyle provided a summary of the key findings from this analysis.

Mrs Hoyle demonstrated how the 2025 data was the best set of results the school had seen, and how the gap of -0.18 for 2025 against the national figure, which was still to be confirmed, would be potentially 0.25 of a grade better than in 2022 or 2023, and 0.38 of a grade better than 2024.

Mrs Hoyle illustrated how this would reflect a quarter of a grade higher attainment against the national average for every single entry compared to the schools previous best years, which would represent a big step forward, and Mrs Hoyle emphasised how the outcomes for 2025 were the best the school had achieved.

Governors expressed their thanks and gratitude for these results which Mrs Hoyle was requested to pass on to the staff, and the importance of maintaining this momentum was noted.

A governor described how the school adviser had also congratulated the school on the Summer results particularly compared to some of the other local schools.

Mrs Hoyle explained how the provisional school performance data and tables were due to be published tomorrow, and that in comparison to the other Lancashire secondary schools, how the school had made the fifth highest increase in Attainment 8 which was a significant improvement for the school to be proud of. In addition, how every pupil had improved by at least half a grade in every subject.

25.33 Curriculum Update

Mrs Hoyle provided a summary of the curriculum update which was in the same format as previous.

Reference was made to the plans for the 2026 GCSE exams and how a BOOST evening had already been delivered to the Year 11 pupils and parents.

Mrs Hoyle described how the school's revision programme had also been launched again, and how 87% of Year 11 pupils had voluntarily attended the revision sessions this week.

It was noted that there were still some pupils accessing the Alternative Provision pathway, which included one SEND pupil, who was waiting an appropriate specialist setting, and was 92 weeks outside their statutory EHCP assessment period.

Mrs Hoyle summarised the subject updates and the information about the Quality Assurance and the monitoring and evaluation of the education across the school.

The department plans for subject reviews were noted, and Mrs Hoyle demonstrated how the departmental QA continued to be closely aligned with the Ofsted framework.

The individual departmental updates were also noted, and Mrs Hoyle described how Mrs Pilkington had shared her vision and focus for the core principles of teaching and learning this year. In addition, the current focus and developments were noted, to how the school was continuing to develop a consistent approach to pedagogical techniques ensuring that strategies shaped by academic research were applied in the most effective way across the school.

Governors attention was drawn to the whole school INSET programme for the year, and that in addition to this how there were 9.5 hours of department led INSET.

It was noted that there were currently five Early Career Teachers (ECTs) across the school; three in year two of their induction and two in year one. Mrs Hoyle described how all of the ECT's were doing very well, and how the report outlined how they are settling into their roles and the support structures in place to ensure their continued development and wellbeing.

Governors were informed of how Reading remained a priority and key area of focus for the school, and Mrs Hoyle referred to the summary of actions the school was taking.

Mrs Hoyle provided an update on Personal Development, and how the Personal Development curriculum was one of the schools strengths. It was noted that the Year 11 1:1 careers guidance meetings had already begun, and how the destination data for last years leavers had shown that 183 pupils from 184 had now begun their post-16 pathway. Mrs Hoyle explained how the remaining pupil had moved out of area to Newcastle, and how the school was working with this authority to see what could be done to support this pupil, which was above and beyond what the school needed to do.

Reference was made to the PSHE / SMSC update, and the schools current SEND profile across the school.

Mrs Hoyle also provided an update on the BUD provision, and governors were reminded of how the different aspects of the schools SEND provision had been combined to enable the staffing resources to be maximised and the curriculum opportunities enhanced.

Mrs Hoyle outlined the school's plans for developing a BUDI provision, highlighting that some pupils were currently working at PIVATS levels.

Mrs Hoyle described the challenges the school faced in delivering an inclusive curriculum that effectively met the diverse needs of these learners and shared the proposals to introduce a more inclusive curriculum, with a particular emphasis on Literacy and Numeracy and a personalised curriculum for some pupils.

It was suggested that a further update could be provided at the next meeting, once these plans had been finalised.

Governors attention was drawn to the update on Assessment, Interventions and Impact, and Mrs Hoyle described how a new Numeracy intervention programme had been introduced this year, how the pupils that required further support would be identified, how the impact of this intervention would be monitored, and that it was hoped this would have a significant impact on the outcomes in Maths.

Reference was also made to the Year 11 revision programme, and the introduction of the new KS3 assessment system to help monitor the progress of individual pupils and to identify the need for any additional support or interventions.

Mrs Hoyle provided a summary of the number of educational visits that were planned for the Autumn term which included a Battlefields Trip from 23 October.

Mr Fern was commended for his work as the EVC Co-ordinator. Governors were advised to note the recent introduction of a new local authority EVC Policy, and were reassured that the school was confidentially meeting all the requirements set out in the updated framework. Mrs Hoyle expressed her thanks to Mr Fern for ensuring that the school remained fully compliant.

Governors were provided with an update on the school profile, which included a breakdown of the number of students per year group and gender.

Governors were asked to note that from the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), 41% of the school cohort lived in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods which was an increase of 2% since the last report and 3% lived in the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods which was a decrease on last term's figure of 9%.

Mrs Hoyle demonstrated how the school had more pupils living in deprived areas, and fewer living in the less deprived areas, which would obviously impact on the current cohort.

The headteacher further explained how GPA was shrinking each year due to the demand for places in school.

Mrs Hoyle was thanked for her very comprehensive reports.

In response to a comment from the Chair, a governor praised Mrs Hoyle for the clarity, depth of information and thoroughness of her reports.

A governor raised a question regarding the pupils performing at Primary levels and whether there was any best practice the school could learn from.

Mrs Hoyle demonstrated how the pupils in Year 7 would have been in Year 1 during the lockdown and how these pupils would have missed all their basic and formative teaching and learning. Mrs Hoyle explained how this was another wave of challenges schools were facing from the pandemic, and systematic of the lack of places available in Special Schools.

Mrs Hoyle explained how some pupils were not considered suitable for mainstream education, how the school had notified the local authority of its inability to meet the needs of certain pupils, and how the school needed to do the best it could for these pupils. Mrs Hoyle shared an example of a lesson she had witnessed where some pupils had been unable to work out basic Maths calculations.

The headteacher explained that the school was not unique in facing challenges with weaker Year 7 pupils, noting that this was a common issue across schools. The headteacher acknowledged the validity of Mrs Hoyle's comment regarding the impact of the pandemic, and highlighted how the school's BUD provision was recognised by the local authority as an example of good practice, and was currently "blazing the trail" with the local authority.

The headteacher emphasised how the pupils were some of the weakest the school had ever had, and in answer to a question, it was suggested that these issues would continue into next year before the situation started to improve.

Following a discussion, governors recognised how the successful exam results would not be achieved without the significant amount of support and work with the revision sessions, and the headteacher was asked to pass on governors thanks and appreciation to the staff for continuing with the revision programme this year.

Headteacher

A governor enquired whether the school had noticed any difference in the response to the pandemic between the different feeder schools, and whether any schools had been more effective in preparing their children during that period.

In response, Mrs Hoyle explained how this was hard to identify, was also very dependent on the children, and was not really consistent with the GCSE results.

Governors were informed of how a lot of Year 7 pupils this year carried teddies or fidget toys, how some pupils were very young in their years and had unusual behavioural issues. In addition, the headteacher described how this was also loosely linked to the increase in deprivation, and how well the pupils had been prepared or had accessed online learning during the pandemic.

After further discussion, Mr Clarke demonstrated how there was a pastoral difference between the feeder primary schools, and the pastoral support to remove barriers or provide support in the classrooms. Mr Clarke suggested how the same primary schools had been identified but how this was also dependent on individual pupils.

A governor observed how the ongoing COVID enquiry highlighted the Government's lack of preparedness in supporting schools during the pandemic. Mr Fern recalled how unfamiliar platforms like Zoom and Teams were at the time, and the headteacher described the time as "torrid" and had been a very steep learning curve.

25.34 School Improvement Plan 2025/26

The headteacher presented the updated School Improvement Plan working document for 2025/26. Governors attention was drawn to the school context and the headteacher described how the numbers were very fluid.

Governors were informed of how the main areas of the School Improvement Plan were regularly reviewed by the SLT, and how the position statements would be updated at the end of each term.

In response to a comment from the chair, the headteacher clarified how the progress updates would be RAG rated.

25.35 Student Update

Mr Clarke presented the attendance summary report and described how an external auditor had visited the school today, who had commented that rapid gains were being made with attendance.

Mr Clarke reported that the school was currently way above the national average and how the school was aiming to return to pre-pandemic levels of attendance.

It was noted that the overall attendance for last year had been 93.2%, which was 1.8% greater than the national average, and an increase of 3.3% from the previous academic year. In addition, the Persistent Absence had been 19.8% which was 3.4% less than the national average, and had been a significant decrease of 11.5% from the previous academic year.

Mr Clarke described how the school was working towards the Inclusive Attendance Kite mark, which the school was well on the way to achieving, and how a further update would be provided at the Spring term meeting.

It was noted that the attendance of pupils in care, looked after or EHCP pupils was slightly lower than their peers. Mr Clarke pointed out how these were very small groups of pupils, and how the data was skewed due to two Year 10 pupils.

Mr Clarke provided a recap highlighting the significant increase in attendance across all areas compared to the previous year.

Reference was made to the update on Student Behaviour for the last academic year and governors were reminded of the significant changes the school had made following the successful implementation of the Ashton Way and the Positive Behaviour Curriculum.

Mr Clarke summarised how one of the most notable amendments to the schools Behaviour Policy had been the restructuring of the detention system and that as a result, more students were attending detentions, and how the graduated approach was expected to reduce the number of students missing valuable classroom-based learning with specialist teachers due to the time spent in isolation.

Mr Clarke provided a brief overview of the other main changes to the policy, and it was noted that the number of C3 and C4 sanctions being issued to pupils had significantly decreased year on year over the last three years. Additionally, how there had been a significant reduction in the number of pupils being removed from classrooms and lessons, due to the more consistent approach and language being used by staff.

Governors were informed of how there had also been a significant reduction in the number of internal isolations, and how there were currently two particular year groups that were more consistent in attending the provision.

Mr Clarke described how the current Year 9 had demonstrated a significant increase in the number of visits to internal isolation, and suspensions for serious incidents and how this year group had received additional support throughout the year; however, three pupils had been escalated to the Governors Discipline Committee last academic year and a further one this year.

It was reported that Year 10 (current Year 11) had shown the greatest improvement and significantly reduced the number of visits to internal isolation, which was in line with the pupils focusing on their options and starting their GCSEs.

Mr Clarke described how it was hoped that the outcomes and results would continue, as the current Year 11 pupils had made a good start to the year so far.

Governors received a summary of the suspensions and exclusions from the last academic year, and it was noted that the number of suspensions had returned to pre-pandemic levels and were broadly in line with 2018/19. Governors were reassured of how this would continue to improve.

Mr Clarke provided an overview of the changes to the Pastoral Team, and the continued use of the school's multi-tiered rewards system. Governors were reminded of the use of the "Big Question" and Mr Clarke described how student feedback about the existing rewards and recognition would be provided at the next full governing body meeting.

It was reported that the new Student Leaders were excelling in their roles, and how the four deputies had all been given a direct area that they wanted to make a significant change in, which they were well underway with, and would be reported on at the next full governing body meeting.

Mr Clarke described how, as a group the student SLT had made a really good start to the year, and had represented the school fantastically at the Celebration Evening and Open Evenings.

Reference was made to the BOOST extra-curricular programme, and Mr Clarke demonstrated how there had been a significant increase in the number of pupils accessing this provision last year. It was noted that Year 11 had not been included in the data, due to their attendance being limited due the afterschool revision sessions, and Mr Clarke described the plans to improve the revision profile, and include in the recording systems for next year.

Mr Clarke indicated how there were a couple of key cohorts that were not engaging with the BOOST activities, and how a Pupil Voice and further research was being conducted on these particular groups of pupils.

Governors received an update on how the Duke of Edinburgh expedition had been completed at the end of the last academic year with 23 pupils completing the Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Mr Clarke described how the award had been relaunched for this academic year, and how two pupils that had had to withdraw from the expedition last year would be offered the opportunity to recomplete the expedition with the 2025/26 cohort. Additionally, how the number of pupils wanting to complete the award had significantly increased.

Mr Clarke provided an update on Safeguarding, which included reference to the key updates to KCSiE, the updates to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the staff training and refresher courses, and how the number of DSL's in school had been increased.

It was reported that Claire Parkinson, one of the DSL's was currently absent due to ill health, and Mr Clarke reassured governors of how the school was continuing to ensure that all pupils were safe and free from harm.

Mr Clarke also referred to how the 360 safeguarding audit and work with Compass Bloom was continuing.

Mr Clarke summarised how the local authority had recently updated its guidance on pupil movement and managed moves between schools which were now referred to as off-site directions.

Governors were reminded of the varied success of the managed moves/off-site directions, and Mr Clarke demonstrated how the school had successfully supported two Year 9 pupils in transferring permanently onto roll in September. In addition, how there were currently four students on off-site directions, three pupils coming in and one going out, along with another pupil reintegrating from a local PRU following a permanent exclusion from a local school.

Mr Clarke credited the school for offering these pupils a second chance, and how the pupils were currently thriving in school.

Mr Clarke was thanked for his very comprehensive report, and thanks were extended to both Mr Clarke and Sarah for their hard work and reports, which Mr Clarke was asked to pass on.

A governor shared the local authority's priority to get home educated pupils back into mainstream school, and Mr Clarke described how he could understand the rationale for this, and how the number of home educated pupils was currently too high.

Mr Clarke described how the school always encouraged home educated families to return to school, and how the school generally informed families that home education was not in the best interests of most pupils.

Additionally, the headteacher further described how the school tried to signpost families to the most appropriate provision to meet the needs of the pupils and shared an example of the provision that had just been secured for two pupils.

The headteacher recapped on how all parents were informed of how home education was not in the best interests of pupils, and Mr Clarke summarised how roughly one in four home educated pupils returned to the school, the challenges this presented and how the school did its best to make the return to school succeed.

A governor explained how they regularly raised questions during RAP meetings about contingency plans and specifically, what actions would be taken if a key member of staff were absent, and when additional support would be brought in.

Mr Clarke described how he felt comfortable with the support being provided in the current absence of Mrs Parkinson, and reiterated how he felt that the school was fully compliant in everything it was doing and keeping pupils safe and free from harm.

Mr Clarke demonstrated the challenges he had faced with the network of contacts and knowledge Mrs Parkinson had, which was missing at the moment, however, the school was still able to ensure that no pupils were missing out on any help or support.

Mr Clarke reassured governors of how the school was doing well at this moment in time with ensuring full compliance with child protection and safeguarding. In addition, it was noted how the headteacher had provided assurance that this could be re-evaluated at any time and how there were other plans and a backup available if needed.

The headteacher echoed these comments, and described how staff had been informed that they had to speak up if things were getting too much, and how support from the local authority could be provided if needed.

A governor proposed how network and contact information could be shared more moving forwards, and Mr Clarke further described how the work had been delegated between three members of staff, who were all working in different areas, which would benefit and help the team for the future. Mr Clarke also shared an example of the impact and benefits of a link he was due to meet tomorrow, and the current opportunities to meet new contacts and network more.

Another governor commented on the complex landscape of the external support and agencies that were available to the school, and how staff perhaps needed to have opportunities to absorb this for longer. Mr Clarke agreed that the longer he was doing the job, he would know more of what was available and how staff would continue to develop their knowledge and where best to signpost families to.

A governor asked whether the local authority could offer any additional support or information and in response, Mr Clarke explained that both the available information and the local authority's offer were improving. However, he noted that the training alone still wouldn't fully prepare someone for the role, and how he was gaining the most knowledge through hands-on experience of the job. Additionally, how the other member of staff had been trained and developed for the role, and how Mrs Parkinson had provided the foundation and next steps for staff.

The headteacher further described how the school had almost deliberately planned for the safeguarding leads to share an office, how the staff had been emersed in the environment, and how Mrs Parkinson had continued to make herself available to the school and the other DSL's.

In addition, the headteacher demonstrated how the staff had a collective experience, knowledge and understanding.

The chair shared an example of the previous succession planning, and how this was not just confined to safeguarding and was across the board.

The headteacher pointed out how it was sometimes very difficult to have more than one person doing a job in school and shared an example of how the Exam Officer role had previously been covered.

25.36 Staffing Update

The headteacher described how a comprehensive staffing update had been provided at the Resources committee meeting, which was available to view on GovernorHub.

It was reported that there were no current vacancies, and that the school had recruited a new Exams Officer.

The remainder of this update was deemed confidential and was minuted as such.

In answer to a question, it was noted that a number of governors were safer recruitment trained which Mr Moore also offered to complete.

Mr Moore

All governors were reminded to confirm on GovernorHub that they had read and understood Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 and to complete the safeguarding training available on GovernorHub.

All to action

25.37 Educational Visits

Mr Fern confirmed that there were no educational visits to approve and governors were reminded of the recent change to the internal arrangements and procedures for the approval of any educational visits.

25.38 Policies and Procedures

Governors reviewed and approved the following policies:

- Teaching & Learning Policy
- Behaviour Policy

It was noted that after this review, the Behaviour Policy would move to be reviewed in the Summer term, so that it was in place for the start of each new academic year.

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2025/26
- SEND Policy (Including EAL)
- SEN and Disability Local Offer
- Access Arrangements Policy (including word processing)
- Assessment, Recording and Reporting (ARR) Policy
- Attendance and Punctuality Policy

In answer to a question, the headteacher clarified how the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy 2025/26 and the SEN and Disability Local Offer were local authority model policies tailored to the school, and how the other policies were all local to the school.

Mr Clarke described how in response to the Inclusive Attendance review, part of the feedback had been to update the SEND Policy, and how an additional paragraph had been added, which governors also agreed to approve.

25.39 Confidentiality

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

The committee 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 it was agreed that part of item 25.36 was deemed confidential and was minuted accordingly.

25.40 Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next committee meetings had been scheduled to be held in school at 4.30pm on:

- Wednesday 28 January 2026
- Wednesday 20 May 2026

Following a discussion, Mr Moore agreed to join the Curriculum, Standards, Personnel and Student Welfare Committee.

Governors were thanked for their attendance and input, and the meeting closed at 5.50pm

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CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION

25.36 Staffing Update

The headteacher described how there had also been a number of new appointments at the start of September, and one ongoing disciplinary, which had now been resolved with a management instruction.

Reference was made to the current staff absences, and how Mr Walsh had returned on a phased return following an operation. It was noted that the Head of Maths was currently on shared parental leave, and how Mr Fern was covering the Head of Maths role at the moment.

The headteacher described the plans to ensure continuity and stability for the Maths Department, and the importance of maintaining the progress and momentum Mr Fern had worked very hard to create.

In answer to a question, the headteacher confirmed that the parental leave would be a full return and how the school and department had changed and moved on in the member of staffs absence and in the best interests of the pupils.

Thanks was extended to Mr Fern for providing this cover, and for his dedicated hard work.

The headteacher also reported how Mr Ashworth had returned to post following secondment to St Helena and how Bethany Smith was due to return from maternity leave after October half-term.

In response to a question, the headteacher explained how she would like Mr Pugh to continue in his current role at the school, and for Mr Phillips to remain at the school with the intention of offering him a permanent contract in April.

The headteacher informed governors of her intention to retire from her role as headteacher at the end of the spring term 2026. Governors noted the plans for the headteacher recruitment process, which all governors were encouraged to attend, and were requested to inform Miss Harrison of their availability.

All to action

Following a discussion, the headteacher described how the vacancy was due to be advertised from 22 October, how staff and governors had been informed and how the pupils and parents would be informed next week.