



MILVERTON COMMUNITY PRIMARY AND PRE-SCHOOL

FGB MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday 29 January 2025, 18.00

Governors Present		In Attendance	
Linda Burton (Chair)	LA Governor	Gloria Hamlet (items 1-4)	Finance Officer
Clare Adams	Parent Governor	Kathryn Lanning	Clerk
Martin James	Co-opted Governor		
Stephen Jones	Co-opted Governor		
Chris Mann	Co-opted Governor		
Kieran Neale	Parent Governor		
Stephen Penny	Staff Governor		
Nicola Stoddart	Headteacher		
Fiona Taylor	Co-opted Governor		
Emily Weiss (from item 4.6)	Co-opted Governor		

Item 1 – Apologies and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were accepted from Gwil Wren. Apologies for lateness were accepted from Emily Weiss.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda.

Item 2 – Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 The Board approved the minutes of the FGB meeting held on 27 November 2024.

Item 3 – Matters Arising / Action Tracker (paper)

- 3.1 The Board noted progress on outstanding actions as follows:

FGB Meeting held on 12 July 2023			
Para 5.4	Create Asset Management Plan template		Done – MJ took this on and prepared a template
FGB held on 17 July 2024			
Para 5.1	Update school's RSHE Policy once new DfE guidance issued	HT	DfE guidance not yet issued. HT to review existing policy.

Para 9.1	Publish an action plan for delivery of high-quality music provision	HT	Done
Para 11.1	Business Continuity Plan	SJ	Review on behalf of the Board – done Latest version to be added to GovernorHub
FGB held on 2 October 2024			
Para 6.1	KCSIE: Governors to confirm on GovernorHub that they have read the whole document	All	All done
Para 9.2	Code of Conduct: Governors to confirm on GovernorHub that they have read and accept	ALL	SJ, CM still to do
Para 11.3	Governor monitoring visits: circulate sample questions	HT	Sent to governors 14/1/25
FGB held on 27 November 2024			
Para 6.1	School website: ensure compliance with DfE guidance	GW	Review undertaken; some updating required (see item 12h)
Para 6.1	Ensure school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place	KN	Monitoring visit confirmed that all working well; 2 minor actions to follow up (see item 12g)
Para 6.1	New model Pay Policy: consult with staff	HT	Done (see item 13b)
Para 6.1	Appoint a sustainability link governor		Done – MJ agreed to take on this role and will liaise with SP who agreed to be the School's Sustainability Lead.
Para 7.3	Explain acronyms in future HT reports	HT	To do

Item 4 – Finance

a) Month 9 Finance Report (paper)

- 4.1 GH reported that the Month 9 report showed a surplus of £3,073 of which £2,469 is committed and £604 is uncommitted, a significantly improved position since Month 6. Funding balances had increased since Month 6 due to receipt of additional funding, in particular Core Schools Grant and additional Early Careers Framework funding.

Question: The report shows additional funding carry forward of £86.5k for 2023/24 – is that typical?

Response (GH): it has been higher in the past, but at the moment we have an in-year deficit/funding shortfall of -£33.5k and are predicting a carry forward of only £604. However, there is still room for figures to fluctuate between now and the end of the financial year.

- 4.2 GH took governors through variations against individual cost centres as set out in the Report Notes. The Teaching, Supply and Education Support Staff budgets were significantly overspent. The HT reminded governors that the past 18 months had been very expensive for the school given the number of staff absences, interim/new headteacher costs and high supply cover costs.

Question: Are there any asbestos issues that the school might need to address?

Response (GH/HT): asbestos removal is being project managed by County and regularly checked, but we only have a small amount in our school, primarily in the boiler cupboard.

- 4.3 The After School Club was predicted to make a surplus of £23k, £17k more than originally estimated in the business plan – largely due to improved monitoring and collection of income. However, some of this income had not yet been allocated by County Cashiers. GH estimated that County Cashiers were holding onto approximately £38k of parent mail income which should have been passed on to the school, some of which dated back to 2021/22. No parent mail income has been credited to the School since the Month 7 reconciliation. Although school income is ringfenced and should be passed on to the school, as time goes by and personnel change it becomes increasingly difficult to recover. If this income continues to be withheld it will be difficult to avoid an end of year deficit. The HT commented that processing schools' income was part of the Core Offer that schools pay for.

Question: do we have an accurate record of what is owing from each year?

Response (GH): I am confident that we have accurate records detailing this from when I joined the school.

- 4.4 GH advised that the SEN overspend is offset by additional High Needs Funding.

Question: does this cause an issue with the High Needs Funding budget?

Response (HT): no, the funding is being spent on SEN as it should, this is just an accounting anomaly which will be reviewed and made clearer in the budget for next year.

Question: did you manage to recover the funding for the two children from Devon who joined the school last year?

Response (GH): yes, that was around £10k.

- 4.5 Work continues to improve the management and accountability of pre-school income which was currently showing an overspend due to inaccurate estimates being used in the original budget plan. Pre-school numbers had been lower than anticipated as some parents had applied in the mistaken belief that places would be funded for two years and then withdrew when this proved not to be the case. The original budget plan anticipated a pre-school surplus of £26,690 but at Month 6 it had been estimated that pre-school would have a deficit of -£19,919. However, this was now estimated to be £12k. The HT advised that GH had done a great deal of work to improve processes and records for pre-school billing and funding and to ensure that all funds for which the pre-school is eligible are claimed. GH also advised that, as pre-school is making a profit, the decision had been taken not to apply for a sustainability grant (approved by governors at the last FGB meeting) as it was not felt this would be appropriate.

Emily Weiss joined the meeting

b) Schools Financial Value Standard (paper)

- 4.6 Governors noted the draft SFVS submission and thanked GW for his work on this. GH offered to look at the draft SFVS and offer additional information/advice. The final version would be approved at the next FGB meeting in time for the submission deadline of 2 May.

c) Financial Benchmarking (link on agenda)

- 4.7 The HT took governors through the 2023/24 DfE financial benchmarking data for Milverton – <https://financial-benchmarking-and-insights-tool.education.gov.uk/school/123703>. She highlighted the fact that total staff expenditure was very high, but there were a number of reasons for this:
- The school had a large number of High Needs/SEN children requiring additional support

- Supply costs were high due to high staff sickness levels
- Additional costs had been incurred due to the need to employ an interim HT and then a permanent HT
- Sport coach and midday supervisor costs were high.

However, the HT pointed out that the school did not have a deficit budget so was not spending beyond its means. Governors noted that the benchmarking data was a relatively blunt tool and did not necessarily make like for like comparisons.

Question: why do we seem to have roughly average numbers of SEN children but receive higher than average income?

Response (HT): some children can attract very high levels of funding. Although an EHCP normally provides £3-4k funding, one of our children receives £30k pa.

Question: if the current in-year deficit is -£33.5k, presumably we need to be very careful with expenditure?

Response (GH): the in-year deficit does not take into account the £85k carry forward from 2023/24.

Question: does the data raise any red flags for next year?

Response (GH): not in the data, but the cause for concern next year is the falling pupil roll which currently stands at 187. This will mean a drop in funding of £34k for next year.

Response (HT): on a more positive note, we have had 31 first place choices for Reception in September 2025 (1 over our PAN of 30). However, the benefit of extra funding will not be felt until 2026/27.

GH left the meeting at this point

Item 5 – Chair’s Update (oral)

5.1 The Chair had nothing additional to report.

Item 6 – Governor Services Update (paper)

6.1 The Board noted the update from Governor Services.

Item 7 – Headteacher’s Report (oral)

7.1 The HT advised that specialist support had been engaged to review the pre-school and EYFS in order to develop an action plan to improve practice and develop stronger links between the pre-school/EYFS and the rest of the school.

7.2 The HT explained that a very thorough tendering process had taken place for essential tree works within the school grounds. The best quote received was £5,570 from Wessex Tree Surgeons.

Governors agreed that this quote should be accepted and approved the expenditure.

7.3 *This item is contained in confidential Part B minutes.*

7.4 The HT advised that in December the DfE had released comparative performance data for 2023/24. This showed that:

- the percentage of the school’s pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in their KS2 SATS was 83%, compared with 56% for Somerset and 61% nationally.

- the percentage of pupils achieving a higher standard in reading, writing and maths was 24%, compared with 7% for Somerset and 8% nationally.
- average scores in reading and maths were also higher than those for Somerset or nationally
- although the pandemic meant that some school years had not undertaken the year 2 assessments, the results of which would normally inform value added data, the school was considered to be performing 10% better than similar schools.
- boys and girls were performing to a similar standard at Milverton.

Individual pupil progress continues to be assessed termly by the class teacher, with input from the HT and SENCO as necessary.

- 7.5 The HT also presented a spreadsheet produced by the local authority that compares pupil attainment and progress for all Somerset schools. The table is split into 4 quartiles and Milverton appears in the top quartile for 2024 KS2 SATS. However, the school's EYFS appears in the 3rd quartile, underlining the need to develop an EYFS Action Plan (see 7.1). The school was also in the third quartile for attendance and every effort was being made to improve this. The HT explained that in the previous two weeks she had sent out around 30 letters to parents regarding unauthorised absence and teachers were regularly flagging issues with parents, making them aware of the penalties for this.
- 7.6 The school was reviewing the number of pupils qualifying for EAL support as children are eligible for £300 funding for each of their first three years at school if they have a parent whose first language is not English.

Item 8 – Safeguarding

- 8.1 The HT reported that she had completed the safeguarding audit, supported by EW as safeguarding link governor. A number of actions had been identified and these were being worked through. Examples included ensuring that all volunteers have completed Prevent training and that the pre-school has a deputy manager. The clerk commented that local authority advice was that Boards should approve the safeguarding audit before it is submitted, but that if a Board does not meet until after the submission deadline (31 January), the FGB should still see the audit response in full for consideration and should monitor the action plan at future meetings.

ACTION: HT

- 8.2 The HT advised that a racist incident had occurred during an off-site sporting event. She was confident that this had been dealt with by staff supervising the event and will be reporting the incident to the local authority. The school would be promoting the importance of valuing and respecting difference.
- 8.3 Staff wellbeing had been a discussion topic at the recent INSET day. Communications, empowering staff to deal with poor behaviour and celebrating staff successes were identified as areas for improvement.

Item 9 – SEND Report (paper)

- 9.1 CA, the SEND link governor reported on an initial meeting with the SENCO, at which they had agreed plans for future monitoring visits. Governors noted the SEND report.

Item 10 – School Development Plan (paper)

- 10.1 The HT advised that, due to high need, implementation of a nurture hub had been brought forward and this was now successfully up and running each morning. Four children, with bespoke learning plans, were currently using the hub. Governors noted updates to the School Development Plan.

Item 11 – School Vision (paper)

- 11.1 The HT advised that teaching and non-teaching staff had spent half of the recent INSET day discussing what the school's vision should be and how this could be summarised in a clear statement. She circulated a list of vision statements from other schools and asked governors to comment on them to help inform the school's thinking on the development of a statement for Milverton.

Item 12 – Governor Monitoring (papers)

- 12.1 Governors noted the governor monitoring schedule and governor monitoring reports on the following:
- Safeguarding
 - Single Central Record
 - Pupil Premium
 - PSHRE
 - EYFS
 - IT Online Safety
- 12.2 Governors thanked GW for carrying out a compliance check on the school website and highlighting areas where improvements needed to be made or where information needed to be easier to find.
ACTION: HT
- 12.3 Governors agreed that Fiona Taylor would be the link governor for MFL.

Item 13 – Policies (papers)

- 13.1 **Governors noted the policy schedule and approved the following policies:**

- **Pay Policy 2024/25**
- **Online Safety Policy**
- **Health and Safety Policy**
- **Complaints Policy**

Question: should the school have a Sexual Harassment Policy?

Response (KL): advice from County (set out in the Governor Services Update – item 6) is that schools do not need a stand-alone policy but that they are reviewing HR model policies to make sure they reflect the statutory requirement for employees to take all reasonable steps to prevent employee sexual harassment. The HT said she would also check.

ACTION: HT

Item 14 – Any Other Business

- 14.1 There was no other business and the meeting finished at 7.55pm.

Date of Next Meeting: 26 March 2025 at 6pm

Kathryn Lanning
Clerk to Governors

Attachment: Confidential Part B minutes