

Meeting of Castle and Dove Bank Primary School

Local Governing Board (LGB)

Date: Thursday 1st May 2025 at 4:30pm at Dove Bank Primary School

Governors in attendance:	Tom Pear (TP)	Chair of Governors (Castle)
	Alex Canning (AC)	Appointed Governor
	Anthony Roche (AR)	Appointed Governor
	David Weaver (DW)	Appointed Governor
	Tom Bourne (TB)	Appointed Governor
	Gemma Plant (GP)	Appointed Governor (joined the meeting online)
	Jessica Trevers (JT)	Appointed Governor
Others in attendance:	Sally Dakin (SD)	Headteacher
	Greer Amison (GA)	SENCO (left the meeting at 5:01pm)
	Allan Howells (AH)	Director of Quality, TLP
	Sarah Lomas (SL)	Clerk
Absent:	Gregory Ellis (GE)	Appointed Governor

PART ONE: NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

The meeting commenced at 4:35pm.

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	GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	
1.	Welcome, Quoracy, Apologies and Declarations The meeting commenced with confirmation of quoracy. One governor, GE, was noted absent without apologies. There were no declarations of interest from any attendees.	
2.	AOB a) Greer Amison delivered a detailed update on the SEND provision at Dove Bank. She reported that 54 pupils are currently on the SEND register, which is significantly above the national average. The predominant area of need is cognition and learning, which contrasts with the national trend of communication and interaction. Governors engaged actively with the presentation, raising several pertinent questions. They inquired whether boys were more represented across all SEND sectors , to which it was confirmed that this was correct and aligns with national trends. Questions also queried the accuracy of reporting , and GA affirmed that improvements had been made over time. Attendance and Medical Needs The meeting opened with a review of attendance data, including pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). It was noted that the school has an effective Attendance Officer who works closely with parents. Pupils highlighted in the red box on the data sheet have significant medical needs, and some experience emotional school-based avoidance. One Year 6 pupil, disapplied from SATs due to emotional needs and working at a Year 1/2 level, has shown improved attendance following tailored support. Q: Is support in place for the Year 6 pupil transitioning to high school? A: Yes. The pupil has an enhanced transition plan. The school has liaised with the Local Authority (LA) as part of the EAPDR process. Although the application was late due to legacy issues, the school prioritised the child's needs over funding eligibility.	

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	<p>Early Identification Pathway The school follows the Staffordshire version of the early identification pathway, which differs from Cheshire's. The process includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal Provision • First Concerns (submitted by teaching staff to the SENCO) • SEN Support Register • EAPDR (Enhanced Assessment and Planning for Development and Review) <p>A flowchart has been created to support staff understanding. SENCOs gather evidence and implement adaptive teaching strategies and small interventions, always in consultation with parents. If needed, individual targets are set through assess, plan, do, review (APDR), and referrals to external agencies or the SEND Inclusion Hub are made.</p> <p>SEND Inclusion Hub and EAPDR The SEND Inclusion Hub is a multi-agency forum involving SENCOs, Educational Psychologists, SALT, and Behaviour Support. Referrals are discussed, and next steps are agreed upon.</p> <p>EAPDR is a step before an EHCP and requires approval. It includes two cycles with Educational Psychologist involvement and a "Team Around the Child" approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current figures: 20 children on the Hub, 9 on EAPDR, and 9 more applications in progress. • The school has the highest number of EAPDRs in the area, attributed to strong professional relationships and robust evidence gathering. <p>Q: Are SEND needs being identified in nursery or only once children enter Reception? A: Many children arrive in Reception with clear SEND needs but no formal status. Reception data shows 56% of children have communication and language concerns, despite most attending nursery.</p> <p>Q: Is feedback provided to nurseries? A: Sometimes the issue lies in staff skillsets. One complex case was refused due to weak paperwork. The school is considering how to support local nurseries more effectively.</p> <p>Q: Could the school generate income by offering support services? A: Potentially, but private nurseries may lack the resources to pay. The school has already supported some with paperwork preparation.</p> <p>Q: Do in-year admissions present similar challenges with unidentified SEND? A: Yes. This issue has been raised with Chris Rogers, SEND leader at the Hub, who is now supporting applications and tracking the origin schools of these pupils.</p> <p>Trends and Interventions DW reported a two-year comparison showing an 8% rise in SEND in the current Year 5 cohort, partly due to new admissions. The school is seen as a "victim of its own success," attracting complex cases due to its strong reputation.</p> <p>The school offers a wide range of interventions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELSA • Mental Health Support Team • SALT • Educational Psychology • Green Room (intensive small group support) 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensory Circuits Bucket Time (EYFS focus) <p>Photos of interventions were shared with governors to demonstrate the breadth of support.</p> <p>Governors commended Greer's leadership and the school's proactive approach, suggesting Dove Bank could become a centre of excellence for SEND.</p> <p>GA left at 5:01pm.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising</p> <p>a) The minutes from the previous meeting held on 4th February 2025 were reviewed and approved without amendments.</p>	
4.	<p>Membership update</p> <p>The board noted one appointed governor vacancy at Dove Bank. A proposal to remove a non-engaging governor will be escalated to the Trust Board Governance Committee.</p> <p>Governors questioned the current status of vacancies and were informed that over-recruitment had occurred. Castle's representation remains lower but is improving. It was agreed that the parent bulletin would be shared with governors.</p> <p>ACTION: Collaboration between AH and AC on governor engagement proposal. ACTION: Undertake parent governor election at Castle. ACTION: Forwarding the parent bulletin to governors.</p> <p>It was noted that DW will be stepping down from the LGB at the end of the academic year. ACTION: Note a co-opted governor vacancy for Sept 2025.</p>	<p>AH/AC SD SD</p> <p>Clerk</p>
	<p>Strategic Direction and Progress Against Priorities</p>	
5.	<p>a) The School Improvement journey at Castle continues to progress positively. A key area of focus at Castle has been the curriculum, which is being supported by Jo Woodward, Deputy Head at Dove Bank.</p> <p>Castle presents a unique challenge due to its mixed-age group structure, but staff have responded with exceptional commitment and adaptability. The work has centred on curriculum cycles and sequencing, ensuring that learning is coherent and progressive across year groups.</p> <p>The team began by focusing on knowledge-rich subjects, laying a strong foundation. They are now moving into skills-based subjects, applying the same structured approach. A guiding principle in this work is that the activity itself is secondary—what matters most is that subject leaders clearly map out the development of knowledge and skills. This is a long-term and detailed process, but one that is being approached with care and professionalism.</p>	
	<p>EDUCATION</p>	
6.	<p>Pupil Numbers</p> <p>a) Castle has received 17 applications for Reception, which is above the published admission number (PAN) of 15. The school has not reached PAN in the past five years, with some cohorts as small as 5 or 6 pupils. Given this context, it was agreed that accepting 17 pupils is a manageable and worthwhile risk, and the decision was approved by governors.</p>	

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	<p>A question was raised about whether the school typically loses pupils from Reception. It was confirmed that Castle does not tend to experience much movement, with only a small number of pupils transferring to middle schools in the past.</p> <p>The main concern with exceeding PAN is the potential impact when the cohort reaches Year 2, as class size regulations would require two teachers if numbers exceed 30. However, this would only be an issue for one year and not a concern in Key Stage 2. Current trends suggest this is unlikely to become problematic.</p> <p>There was also a discussion about the potential to recommend pupils between Castle and Dove Bank. While this is possible, it would need to be carefully considered based on the needs of each cohort and other contextual factors.</p>	
7.	<p>Attendance</p> <p>a) All pupil numbers referenced in the update circulated prior to the meeting are of statutory school age, including those in Reception, who are fully subject to the school's attendance procedures.</p> <p>Historically, the school has not issued fines for term-time holidays. However, due to a notable increase in holiday requests during the Spring and Summer terms, the school will now begin issuing fines to families who submit holiday forms and proceed with absences. This change reflects a firmer stance on attendance to ensure consistency and uphold the importance of regular school attendance.</p>	
8.	<p>Rewards and Behaviour</p> <p>a) There have been no suspensions at Castle, though behaviour remains an area of focus. Staff have taken ownership of the behaviour policy, which is now built around the core values: Ready, Respectful, Safe. This shared language has helped embed expectations across the school. Staff are pleased with the clarity and consistency the new system provides, though there has been a slight dip in behaviour as pupils adjust to staff consistently applying consequences.</p> <p>When asked how parents have responded to the changes, it was noted that feedback has been largely positive. One concern was raised about the shortening of lunchtime, but this was a constructive conversation. It was clarified that play and eating time have not been reduced—only the unstructured, wasted time has been removed. The reclaimed time has been used to increase learning time, which is in line with best practice, as long lunchtimes are uncommon.</p> <p>In terms of statutory teaching time, the school is currently just meeting the requirement, including break times. From September, the start of the school day will be adjusted to ensure learning begins promptly and to align more closely with Dove Bank's timetable. This change is also intended to address the current lack of urgency in morning routines.</p> <p>A parent survey will be conducted in due course to gather feedback on these changes. It is expected that, with clear communication about the benefits of increased learning time, the response will be positive.</p> <p>A question was raised about pupil leadership at Castle, similar to the school council representation at Dove Bank. While Castle does not currently have a formal council, there is</p>	

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	a pupil leadership team working on school values, and the idea of involving pupils in reviewing policies was well received.	
9.	<p>Progress and Attainment</p> <p>a) On 7th March, all teachers submitted updated pupil data, covering all year groups and including information on disadvantaged pupils.</p> <p>Following the data submission, SD conducted pupil progress meetings with each teacher. These meetings provided a comprehensive review of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress and attainment in reading, writing, and maths. • FFT targets, ensuring alignment with pupil outcomes. • Focused discussions on Pupil Premium (PP) and SEND pupils, identifying areas of strength and concern. • Mental health and wellbeing concerns, ensuring pupils' emotional needs are being considered. • Attendance issues and any other emerging concerns. <p>As a result of these meetings, the deployment of Teaching Assistants (TAs) was reviewed and adjusted to better meet the needs of pupils across the school, ensuring support is targeted and effective.</p> <p>An update was provided on pupil progress and attainment across the schools, with a particular focus on key groups including Pupil Premium (PP), SEND, disadvantaged pupils, and gender.</p> <p>While an anonymised pupil progress meeting record was not uploaded—due to the difficulty in fully anonymising the data—an action was taken to share an example at the next LGB meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: SD to show TP an example at the next link governor meeting.</p> <p>There was discussion around the volume of data and how best to present it. Presenting graphical data for all groups would be extensive, so it was suggested that future meetings could focus on specific areas or groups to allow for deeper analysis. This approach was welcomed.</p> <p>TB noted that writing stood out as an area of concern, appearing lower than other subjects. A narrative summary on this would be helpful in future reports to provide context and insight.</p> <p>A question was raised about the dip in the percentage of pupils meeting expected standards in maths in Years 5 and 6, especially when reading percentages were higher. It was explained that this is often due to contextual factors—for example, two new pupils in Year 3 and two in Year 5 who are not currently meeting expected standards. These individual cases can significantly affect percentages, especially in smaller cohorts.</p> <p>It was also noted that percentages alone can be misleading without knowing the actual number of pupils involved. Governors requested that future reports include both percentages and cohort numbers, and it was suggested that SD could provide a narrative summary alongside the data to help interpret the figures more effectively.</p>	SD
10.	<p>Link Governor Monitoring</p> <p>a) There were no link monitoring visits from Castle to report at this meeting.</p>	

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	ACTION: It was agreed that any meetings should be arranged before the next Local Governing Body (LGB) meeting to ensure timely updates and reflections.	All govts.
11.	Pupil Premium There was no additional information provided at this time regarding the impact of Pupil Premium spending. This item will be revisited when further updates or evaluations are available.	
	WELFARE	
12.	Safeguarding a) Castle is now in a much stronger position regarding safeguarding policy and procedures. Staff have developed a solid understanding of safeguarding expectations, both within the school and in the wider local authority context. They are now confident in navigating the referral processes within Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and know where to access the necessary referral forms. This improvement reflects the school's ongoing commitment to ensuring that all staff are well-equipped to respond to safeguarding concerns effectively and in line with statutory guidance. Plans are underway to introduce Junior Police Cadets during the summer term, further enriching this area of provision. Staff CPD and Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SD has received supervision from Emma Hooley, with an additional session scheduled. SD attends termly DSL briefings from Staffordshire County Council and half-termly DSL networking meetings. Emma Chesters continues to receive supervision for her ELSA role. Identified staff at Dove Bank have completed Team Teach training. Staff at Castle have received training on CPOMS, including how to effectively record the voice of the child. Joanne Woodward attended an Early Help network meeting for Staffordshire County Council. Pupil-Focused Safety Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PCSO Niki Daniels spoke with Years 5 and 6 about community safety and hate crimes. Weekly "No Outsiders" assemblies and half-termly lessons continue to promote inclusion and safety. PSHE sessions have focused on staying safe in the community. Year 5 pupils attended Sandyford Fire Station for their "Safe and Sound" session. PCSO Matthew Hough-Clews worked with targeted pupils on respectful behaviour and anti-social conduct. Pupils across both schools participated in Safer Internet Day celebrations. A question was raised regarding the recent increase in Early Help and LAC cases at Castle, with four children now receiving Early Help support and two children identified as Looked After (LAC)—none of whom were previously on roll. It was explained that the LAC pupils joined at the start of the academic year, and the rise in Early Help referrals reflects staff's improved understanding of available support services. Staff are now more confident in signposting families and navigating the referral process, which has led to more timely and appropriate support for pupils and their families.	
13.	Welfare and Wellbeing – Students	

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	<p>As SATs week approaches, the mood among Year 6 pupils at both Dove Bank and Castle is generally positive. Two pupils will be disapplied from the tests due to working below the expected level. This decision has been made with their wellbeing in mind and has had a positive impact. These pupils will join a different year group during SATs and take part in planned activities, while still participating in the breakfast club alongside their peers. In terms of access arrangements, nine pupils at Dove Bank and three at Castle have support in place to ensure they can access the tests appropriately.</p>	
14.	<p>Welfare and Wellbeing – Staff</p> <p>a) There have been no referrals to occupational health at this time.</p> <p>Currently, two teachers are receiving targeted support to improve the quality of provision in their classrooms. This support is being delivered collaboratively across both schools, allowing staff to draw on each other's strengths and share effective practice. The partnership approach is proving beneficial for both individuals.</p> <p>The culture across both schools remains positive. Staff have adapted well to the recent changes in the senior leadership structure and are demonstrating a willingness to embrace change where it benefits the children.</p> <p>Performance development processes are ongoing for all staff, ensuring continuous professional growth and accountability.</p> <p>To further support staff wellbeing, a survey will be distributed to all staff across both schools. The findings from this survey will be shared with governors at the next Local Governing Body meeting.</p>	
	LOCAL MATTERS & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	
15.	<p>Local Policy Approval</p> <p>There were no local policies presented for approval at this meeting.</p> <p>The governing body confirmed receipt of the Trust's Permanent Exclusion Policy Statement. One of the key reasons for bringing this policy forward was to increase consistency across schools, particularly in relation to panel work.</p> <p>ACTION: The Permanent Exclusion Policy Statement will be added to the school website.</p>	Clerk
16.	<p>Governor Training Update</p> <p>Governors shared updates on recent training undertaken:</p> <p>TB confirmed completion of mandatory training on safeguarding and Prevent.</p> <p>AC attended a DfE virtual briefing on monitoring systems and has logged this on Governor Hub.</p>	
17.	<p>Stakeholder Engagement – Parents / Carers</p> <p>a) The newly re-established Castle PTA has had a very positive start, marked by a wonderful Easter event that was well received by the school community. This marks a significant step forward, as previous attempts to set up a PTA had not been successful.</p> <p>The PTA has been properly structured, with key roles now in place, including a co-chair, treasurer, and secretary. A dedicated bank account is in progress, ensuring the group is set up for long-term sustainability.</p> <p>The PTA is already planning and supporting a number of upcoming events, including the Mow Cop Scarecrow Festival, the Summer Fair, and the Killer Mile. The team is described as keen,</p>	

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	enthusiastic, and highly supportive, bringing renewed energy to community engagement at Castle.	
18.	Stakeholder Engagement – Wider Community The school continue to link families to local foodbanks and household support funds.	
19.	Communication – to Trust There were no items identified in this meeting to communicate to the Trust.	
20.	Communication – from Trust A number of Trust-wide and local governance updates were shared: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusions Training: There is a requirement for governors across the Trust to undertake exclusions training which has been driven by a significant increase in the number of panels taking place. • Governor Biographies: Currently, approximately 50% of governors across the Trust have completed their biographies. ACTION: JT's biography will be sent back to her for editing. • Skills Audit: A short-form skills audit is being used to gather updated information from governors. • Governor Conference: The upcoming Governor Conference has been launched, and governors are encouraged to respond. The previous conference received positive feedback, and this year's event will include more workshops. Feedback on workshop preferences is being collected through the registration form. The aim is for the event to be governor-led, ensuring their voices shape the agenda. The Chairs' Forum held before Easter helped inform the programme, and further development of communication is a priority. • AI in Governance: The Trust has trialled using AI to generate short-form minutes for Trustees. This is part of a broader conversation about how to improve communication between the Trust and local governing bodies. <p>Meeting Timing: A question was raised about the timing of LGBs, particularly its proximity to school holidays. It was agreed that future meeting cycles will aim to avoid this issue. The Trust's calendar will be used to inform the scheduling of LGB meetings, and efforts will be made to align meetings with data drops and ensure Headteacher engagement.</p>	Clerk
21.	AOB A number of staffing and strategic updates were shared across both schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GA's Role: GA will now be split across both schools, teaching two days at each and dedicating one full day as SENCO. This new arrangement is designed to help her build stronger relationships and carry out essential SEND work at Castle. • SEND Staffing: A member of the SEND team will be leaving at the end of the academic year. 	

The meeting closed at 6:18pm.