

Meeting of Black Firs Primary School
Local Governing Board (LGB)
Date: Thursday 3rd April 2025 at 4:30pm

Governors in attendance:	Shazma Mahmood-Shakoor (SM-S)	Chair of Governors
	Paul Horrocks (PH)	Co-opted Governor
	Emma Perriman-Rabone (EP-R)	Vice Chair of Governors
	Josh Cammiss (JC)	Parent Governor
	Rob Sigley (RS)	Co-opted Governor
	Kathryn Fowler (KF)	Parent Governor
Others in attendance:	Anna Jones (AJ)	Headteacher
	Sarah Lomas	Clerk, TLP
	Allan Howells (AH)	Director of Quality, TLP
	Adam Millington (AM)	Staff observer
	Jen Harrison (JH)	Deputy Headteacher
	Jess Milne (JM)	Staff observer (joined the meeting at 5:03pm)
Apologies:	Jonathon Barlow-Bailey (JB-B)	Parent Governor
	Cheryl Glover (CG)	Co-opted Governor

Minutes – Part 1 – Non-confidential Business

The meeting commenced at 4:34pm.

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	GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	
1.	<p>Welcome, Quoracy, Apologies and Declarations</p> <p>Governors were welcomed to the meeting and quoracy was confirmed.</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from the following governors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CG JB-B <p>There were no declarations of interests made or conflicts of interest with the business of the meeting raised by governors.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising</p> <p>a) The minutes from the previous meeting on 30.01.25 were confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings. Governors approved the minutes. ACTION: Upload a copy of the final minutes from 30.1.25 to Governor Hub and mark as signed.</p> <p>b) The action log from the previous meeting was reviewed and the following items were noted:</p> <p>Item 4 – Consideration was given to the appointed governor vacancy and the advert which had been generated. It was confirmed that despite the advert being posted on a range of platforms, there had, unfortunately, been no interest generated. Governors were informed that JM is leaving the school at the end of the academic year but is still keen to support the school. It was queried whether a former staff member and parent of the school would be a suitable candidate for an appointed governor role. AH confirmed that Trustees are carefully considering the balance of boards in terms of parental</p>	Clerk

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	<p>representation and it had been previously highlighted that it was important for the Board to consider non-parent candidates due to the high number of parents currently on the Board.</p> <p>Governors challenged holding vacancies where interest cannot be generated but an alternative candidate comes forward and countered that the proposal for the next appointed governor to be a non-parent was more of an aspiration than a requirement.</p> <p>It was explained that the recent external review of governance at Trust level has influenced the actions of Trustees.</p> <p>Governors commented that an issue that should be considered is that volunteer reserves are reducing due to a range of reasons including the cost-of-living crisis where people may be working more and have less time to engage in volunteer opportunities. It was highlighted that an appointed governor with the right skill set is preferable to a vacancy or a candidate who does not have the skills required.</p> <p>Item 2 – It was confirmed that the next school improvement visit would take place in early June. The subject of the visit will be confirmed following the outcomes of the latest visit, however, it is anticipated that the focus will be on writing and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) education could be included within a focus on humanities if possible within the time available.</p> <p>ACTION: KF to organise a humanities link visit in the summer term.</p> <p>ACTION: PH to arrange a link visit for art and DT in June.</p> <p>Item 3 – EP-R has reviewed the funding opportunities for school with a paper detailing the findings circulated prior to the meeting. Governors were informed that there are a high level of funding opportunities within the local area. The potential for employee engagement from local employers such as Bentley were considered as to how a strategic plan can be developed to harness the match funding opportunities from employers. It was also noted that there are a range of local grants which could be explored. It may be that these opportunities have been maximised but it would be worthwhile investigating. It was agreed that it would be worthwhile linking with the school business manager to investigate how funding can be approached going forward with a link to sustainability.</p> <p>ACTION: Explore local funding opportunities.</p> <p>Item 10 – It was agreed that the action log for monitoring visits would be carried forward.</p> <p>ACTION: Carry forward the action log for governor visits.</p> <p>Item 14 – The action relating to governors visiting to support a lunchtime duty was considered and governors were thanked for the offer of support. However, it was agreed that this would not be appropriate due to the sensitive nature of situation and the action was marked as closed.</p> <p>Item 3 – Governors noted that the Trust was unable to recommend any specific training on conflict resolution at this time. A request had also been issued to the local authority SCIES team but they were also unable to suggest any suitable training. There is training available via the National Association of Headteacher's Union (NAHTU) but this is not</p>	<p>KF PH</p> <p>EP-R</p> <p>SM-S</p>

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	<p>feasible at the current time due to budget constraints. It was noted that a member of the office staff had undertaken alternative training which had developed their confidence in dealing with conflict situations and the school continue to undertake regular wellbeing checks with frontline staff.</p> <p>ACTION: Carry forward to consider in the next academic year 2025-26.</p>	AJ
3.	<p>Membership Update</p> <p>a) Consideration of current vacancies (1 x appointed governor) was discussed under item 2 of this meeting.</p> <p>b) It was noted that JC and KF's terms of office expire on 09.07.25. Both KF and JC expressed a desire to remain on the Board for a second term of office and this was supported by the Board. It was also noted that SM-S's term of office expires on 12.09.25 and support was also given by the Board to propose SM-S be appointed for a second term of office.</p> <p>ACTION: Put SM-S, KF and JC forward to the Trust Governance Committee for approval for a second term of office.</p> <p>PH confirmed that he will step down as appointed governor at the end of the academic year.</p> <p>ACTION: Update Governor Hub with membership changes re KF, JC, SM-S and PH as required.</p>	<p>AH</p> <p>Clerk</p>
	STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND PROGRESS AGAINST PRIORITIES	
4.	<p>a) School Improvement Plan (SIP) (to receive an update on progress)</p> <p>AJ requested that this item of the meeting be recorded for training purposes. All parties agreed to the recording.</p> <p>Governors confirmed receipt of the meeting papers including the Headteacher's report and SIP which had been circulated prior to the meeting. AJ proceeded to summarise the key points within the documentation as follows:</p> <p>In terms of the vision, values and ethos of the school, there is significant focus on sustainability and the school are working with the waste management company on waste collection provision to ensure recycling is maximised in line with the school's statutory duties. There has also been work on planting and composting with a £2,000 grant from the William Dean Trust to support this work. There was a large amount of planting left over from the Woodland Trust works which have been planted elsewhere on the school site by volunteer parents as part of a living legacy project. Further planting sessions have taken place to create a living hedgerow area, and the school has applied for additional funding to support improvement works to retain the pond area.</p> <p>The school are actively working to generate an interest in the environment within the school community. The school has also been asked to take part in a case study by the National Nature Forest and as part of this project will showcase the work that has been done in the school grounds.</p> <p><u>Self-evaluation Update</u></p> <p>The last school improvement visit took place on 20.03.25 and comprised of lesson observations in Year 3 and 4. Governors noted that the visits are very focussed and the school benefits from the experience of the Trust Director of Primary Education as an</p>	

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	<p>Ofsted inspector. Feedback was very positive on the writing offer along with the consistency in the delivery of the writing scheme by staff across all year groups.</p> <p><i>JM joined the meeting at 5:03pm.</i></p> <p>The school highlighted that internal alterations within school to remove the open plan classroom issues and enable single year group teaching has improved the consistency of teaching including the relocation of the Reception class which governors were invited to visit following the meeting.</p> <p>SM-S obtained pupil voice during an English link monitoring visit and pupils were very positive about the changes in school and the new schemes of work that are in place.</p> <p>The school confirmed that a remaining challenge is the reliance on teaching assistants to facilitate single year group teaching in the morning sessions, but staff have voiced their desire to continue this method of teaching for the benefit of pupils. This has been particularly beneficial to Year 2 to address the identified gaps in learning.</p> <p>Additional items relating to staffing and finance were discussed under Part 2 of this meeting.</p>	
	EDUCATION	
5.	<p>Pupil Numbers</p> <p>Pupil numbers for September 2025 are high with 49 first choice places for Reception. At a previous meeting the high costs of admissions appeals were discussed and there was a suggestion of whether it would be more cost effective, given the expansion plans, to accept pupils if they would ordinarily gain a place. The school know that all families that appealed were allocated a place. However, there are currently 46 pupils in Year 1 and it is important to ensure that classes have a maximum of 30 pupils except where an EHCP is allocated. The school cannot be in a position where additional pupils require additional staff as funds for additional staffing are not currently available. The school will plan to consult in December on the proposals to expand.</p> <p>ACTION: Governors challenged that it should be communicated to the Trust that the Board are of the view that admissions appeals should continue to go ahead at the present time to minimise the risk of additional pupils requiring additional staffing which is not currently financially viable.</p> <p>Governors noted that pupil numbers in Year 3/4 had increased, and the school confirmed that there were three teachers across the three mixed age classes and teaching assistants led teaching of smaller groups.</p>	AJ
6.	<p>Attendance</p> <p>In terms of attendance, levels are high which is very positive and the school continue to track levels of persistent absence and work with families. Work is ongoing to monitor attendance of any pupils in the Trust who may be unrecognised young carers and work is underway in school through assemblies to identify pupils who may be young carers and then work with them to put support plans in place as required.</p>	

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	<p>Q: In considering the attendance data, what is the reason for the difference in attendance in Year 1?</p> <p>A: There are a high number of pupils in this cohort with specific medical conditions requiring time out of school to attend appointments. There was also a chickenpox outbreak which impacted attendance.</p>	
7.	<p>Rewards and Behaviour</p> <p>It was confirmed that the awards scheme for behaviour is working well, and behaviour overall is positive across the school. The reading awards scheme is also proving successful and motivating children. The school reading ambassadors were taken on a reading trip to the local library and also purchased books for the school library.</p>	
8.	<p>Progress and attainment update</p> <p>Data had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting for review.</p> <p>The school confirmed that the curriculum changes are having a positive impact however there are some year groups where attainment is lower than expected. Progress, it was noted, is impressive across the school and staff have worked hard to implement the curriculum changes to enable the improvements. It was highlighted that Year 2 has seen significant improvements with 67% of pupils on track to meet expectations.</p> <p>Q: Is Year 2 where the biggest improvements have been seen?</p> <p>A: Year 2 is not yet at the target level but this year group have seen the biggest improvements. Year 5 is also a focus and there are still some concerns about this year group. Regular reviews of knowledge and practice sessions are undertaken to ensure that knowledge is secure.</p> <p>Q: When was the most recent data reporting undertaken?</p> <p>A: At the beginning of March.</p> <p>Q: If Year 2 is considered, how accurate is the data?</p> <p>A: This year group started the year with very low levels and phonics had to be repeated which was a significant indicator of the issues. There has been a substantial improvement in all areas. The school acknowledge that this year group will not reach the expected levels and there is significant SEND need in this cohort. There has also been a huge improvement in behaviour and attitudes to learning so there are key areas of progress that cannot be seen from the data.</p> <p>Governors noted that the trial programme that the Early Years leads developed for continuous provision was very successful for Year 1 and consideration will be given to continuing this provision next year. It was also noted that Trust wide and external moderation had taken place in the autumn term and that there are different methods of assessment some of which assess where pupils are now and some of which assess where they are predicted to be at the end of the year.</p> <p>The digital books as part of the phonics scheme were raised for discussion and governors enquired whether hard copies of books would be sent home in the future as parent feedback was that the digital books are not utilised. The school confirmed that hard copies of a range of books had been purchased and all books are matched to ability. Governors queried if there could be information provided to parents to enable them to purchase books if they chose to.</p> <p>ACTION: Investigate the potential to share details of phonics books as an optional purchase for parents.</p>	AJ

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9.	<p>Link Governor Monitoring</p> <p>a) Governors were thanked for the high levels of engagement throughout the term which included a range of link visits including safeguarding and maths. Reports had been circulated to governors for review prior to the meeting.</p> <p>It was considered that it was important to be mindful of governor capacity and the effectiveness of link visits with a suggestion made that visits should link to the SDP priorities. The school confirmed that this method of monitoring had been adopted by the Board.</p> <p>The school thanked governors for their enthusiasm and dedication to the link monitoring areas assigned. The visits provide an opportunity for the Trust to see how the LGB is holding the school to account.</p> <p>b) Future link visits were discussed under Item 2b) of this meeting.</p>	
10.	<p>Pupil Premium</p> <p>a) Governors noted the launch of the Trust disadvantaged study and the new attendance network. The school has been used as a model for other schools in terms of the work undertaken to raise attainment.</p> <p>The Fisher Family Trust (FFT) fluency tests are assisting the school in identifying pupils who may be missing reading input at home and enable the school to put additional support in place for these children.</p> <p>The school are also working to identify pupils in need at the earliest opportunity. There has been an increase in the number of families accessing food banks. Whilst the school do not have a high level of Pupil Premium (PP) pupils, there are a high number of children just above the PP threshold.</p> <p>Discussions have taken place about potential Trust provision for uniform for those families who cannot afford to purchase brand new items and applications can be made by families to DP Sportswear who facilitate uniform provision. There is also the ability to remove personalised lettering from clothing for £5 and create a pre-loved item. The school are encouraging children to recycle their clothing as part of an award scheme for sustainability.</p> <p>This also links to the uniform policy which requires no more than three uniform items with a logo. There is no specific requirement for logos on uniform, this is a choice for parents.</p>	
	WELFARE	
11.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Governors raised the issue of safeguarding pupils on social media following issues on Facebook and Whatsapp. The school confirmed that online safety is a topic that is covered repeatedly in a range of ways. For example, a recent trip to Crucial Crew in Macclesfield was very beneficial to build pupils awareness of social media issues. There are also internal visits delivered on the thresholds of antisocial behaviour.</p> <p>The school highlighted the fact that one of the main difficulties with social media is that the issues arise off site but then these issues spill over into school which staff then have to deal with. The local police have offered to deliver a session to parents. The policy in school is that</p>	

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	Year 6 pupils can bring a phone to school, but it is handed to the class teacher at the start of the day and returned at the end of the day.	
12.	<p>Welfare and Wellbeing – Students</p> <p>Governors noted that the TLP safeguarding network meetings and SCIES DSL network meetings have been attended by DSLs/DDSLs from school.</p> <p>As previously mentioned the focus of part of the Trust disadvantaged strategy is on pupil wellbeing and looking at emotional based school avoidance as a new trust project over the coming 14 months.</p> <p>New attendance network meetings across the Trust have launched this month. These will commence with secondary schools first followed by primary schools.</p> <p>Governors noted that the impact of domestic violence/ coercion and controlling relationships is being seen for some pupils and this forms the main basis of safeguarding case work at present. The school is now working with the GLOW charity on a positive relationships programme for our KS2 pupils and a new Helping Hands project for KS1 to raise age-appropriate awareness of emotionally healthy relationships.</p>	
13.	<p>Welfare and Wellbeing – Staff</p> <p>Q: It was noted that there may need to be a change to the provision for staff to take PPA time at home, what is the reason for this?</p> <p>A: The school need to ensure consistency in all year groups. Therefore, it is essential that the planning and delivery of subjects is at the required level to maintain the arrangement for PPA to be taken at home. This arrangement works well for the staff that go home but it is essential that account is taken of the impact on the wider team where other staff remain in school. Where the team have not planned together for instance, the lessons delivered may lack consistency.</p> <p>It was noted that some staff teams work together even when at home.</p> <p>Governors queried the benefits of staff taking PPA at home. Staff responded that it was beneficial as they were not distracted by matters unrelated to PPA while at school. It was also noted that it is difficult to find the space in school to undertake PPA.</p>	
	Local Matters & Stakeholder Engagement	
14.	<p>Local Policy Approval</p> <p>The following policies had been circulated for review prior to the meeting.</p> <p>a) Uniform Policy</p> <p>b) RSHE Policy – It was highlighted that there was an issue with the graphics in the policy which needed to be checked. It was suggested that this may be due to compression of the file when uploading to Governor Hub.</p> <p>ACTION: Check the legibility of the graphics in the RSHE policy.</p> <p>Q: What is the process for pupils being excused from sex education?</p> <p>A: Parents are notified prior to the delivery of the lessons and can email the teacher directly. Pupils cannot be withdrawn from the science element of the lessons but can be withdrawn from the relationships lessons.</p>	AJ

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	<p>Q: Does the school have any concerns that children are aware of topics before they are taught?</p> <p>A: In some cases, but the importance is pupils understanding and knowing that the content is not secretive but that there is a responsibility with how they share information. It is also very important that lessons are delivered by a staff member that knows the children well.</p> <p>c) Accessibility Plan – This is a longstanding document that required review. There were no changes required upon review and the school remains compliant with requirements. Governors approved the above listed policies a) to c).</p> <p>Governors confirmed receipt of the following Trust policy:</p> <p>d) Permanent Exclusion Policy Statement</p>	
15.	<p>Governor Training Update</p> <p>a) The following training had been undertaken since the last meeting: PH – Active bystander training</p> <p>Governors noted that all governors across the Trust had been requested to complete exclusions training for awareness as this was both a local and national issue of increasing frequency. Following training, there will be a request for governors to sit on exclusion panels as they arise.</p> <p>It was confirmed that panels usually take place in person and that in the first instance observing a panel meeting could be arranged where governors have an interest in serving.</p>	
16.	<p>Stakeholder Engagement – Parents / Carers</p> <p>Information relating to parent stakeholder engagement had been discussed earlier in the meeting.</p>	
17.	<p>Stakeholder Engagement – Wider Community</p> <p>The school highlighted the S.106 monies that had previously been discussed whereby the school were informed that there were unclaimed funds that could be potentially be available to the school. Unfortunately, clarification has been sought and it has been confirmed that there was an error in the way that funding is reported and that there are no funds available for the school.</p>	
18.	<p>Communication – to Trust</p> <p>As noted during the meeting, actions were taken to communicate the issues with staff absence costs particularly relating to cleaning staff along with the concerns about the occupation health additional costs being incurred.</p>	
19.	<p>Communication – from Trust</p> <p>A skills audit will be launched following the Easter holidays for all governors to complete.</p> <p>A reminder was issued about the Governance Conference on Saturday 14th June and governors noted that registration details would be issued via Governor Hub.</p> <p>Feedback on the recent Chair's forum was provided which centred on the effectiveness of local governance. A number of topics were explored including communication and the fundamental challenge of ensuring that the work of the Trust education team dovetails with the governance work being undertaken at the local level.</p>	

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	<p>The visibility of the Trust to governors was raised for discussion and it was suggested at the Chair's Forum that the Trust newsletter is shared with all LGBs which has been done today.</p> <p>It was suggested that it would be beneficial to increase the visibility of the LGB in the parent and local community which may help attract governors and that a section on the school newsletter could be reserved for governor news.</p> <p>ACTION: Consider reserving a section on the school newsletter for governance updates to parents.</p>	AJ
20.	<p>AOB</p> <p>The proposal for a governor social had been raised previously for consideration but it was agreed that following the recent turnover of staff it would be useful for governors to attend an event to meet new staff. The summer show was suggested as an opportune event and governors were invited to attend.</p> <p>ACTION: Send details of the school summer show to governors.</p>	AJ

The meeting moved to part 2.