

GRANTA SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY MEETING

THURSDAY 27th March 2025
6.00pm
at Granta School



MINUTES

Governors present:

Liz Hunt (LH) Co Chair, – chairing this meeting, Laura Jeffs (LJ) Co Chair, Sarah Crouch (Headteacher), Mary Abeyasekera (MA) (*not present for item 13*), Jeff Andrews (JA), Chris Clarke (CC), Hilary Crooks (HC), Paul Illott (PI), Tony Orgee (TO), Kim Pilsbury (KP), Gill Taylor (GT),

David Jones (remote attendance)

Associate Members present:

Linda Alefounder (LA)
Lucie Calow (LC) *Not present for item 13.*
Emma Stubbings (ES)
Richard McEwan (RM)

Ann Abineri, Camclerk.

The meeting was quorate.

1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies for absence received and accepted: Jill Broadley (JB) and Amy Killa (AK).</p> <p>Pecuniary Interests: No interests declared that are not already on the Register. It was noted that MA and LC will leave for item 13.</p>	Actions
2.	<p>Approval of Minutes of Full Governing Body meeting Thursday 12th December 2024.</p> <p>Approved. Chair to sign electronically.</p> <p>Actions arising; None not already on Agenda.</p>	
3.	<p>Governing Body Membership : <u>Replacement of Ian Wilson (co-opted vacancy)</u></p> <p>LH explained that discussion has taken place and it was agreed that recruiting a person with Business and Financial acumen is desirable. Possible sources of interest were discussed and it was noted that the school has historically had most success with publishing FGB vacancies in the Linton News.</p>	LH to contact Linton News.

<p>4.</p>	<p>Committees: Updates from Chairs + Governor questions on meeting minutes</p> <p><u>Curriculum meeting 4th March:</u> HC summed up key points of the meeting, unapproved minutes of which have been made available. HC confirmed that this cmt currently has sufficient members.</p> <p><u>HR meeting 4th March</u> Unapproved minutes have been made available PI summed up key points of the meeting which included staff sickness improvement, lower agency spend and full complement of Midday Supervisory Assistants. Staff morale good. Pressures on Senior Leadership Team continue. In response to a Governor question SC confirmed that another round of teacher recruitment is underway.</p> <p><u>H & S 4th December 2024</u> JA reported: training audit, the breadth of 'health and safety', data analysis underway. He emphasised that H & S goes across all committees and the full GB. A Governor asked whether a compliance tracker is in use and JA explained this is a good question as the committee recognise the need for systemic in depth analysis. MA suggested some compliance tools and packages were discussed. SC suggested arranging a trial of a package. A Governor on the H & S cmt commented that raw data shows that incidents have occurred but does not demonstrate resulting actions and the impact of actions. A Governor pointed out the importance of 'scope for improvement,' 'root cause analysis' and 'near miss analysis'. JA pointed out that with flexi time for staff and agency staff cover, training is an issue. LAF agreed that the 'I am Compliant' package may be the best option. MA outlined how this package gives alerts. JA asked if this package works with the complexity of special needs pupils and MA said that in her experience, it does.</p> <p>Business Continuity Plan: LH to check if updated information has been made available.</p> <p><u>Finance meeting 10th February and 13th March</u> TO reported on this. Unapproved minutes have been made available. He explained that the VAT refund for quarter 2 has been in contention although VAT for quarter 3 was agreed. LAF explained that this has now been resolved.</p> <p>Follow up letter to Cambridge Council has been posted on GovernorHub for comments. A Governor queried whether Arbor is now working. LAF confirmed that it is but the connection with the banking package is not. LAF explained she had procured interim reports but was not able to provide full reports. LH confirmed that there is still an issue about support for LAH.</p>	<p>Action SC to share info on 'I am Compliant' and set up a free trial. JA and MA to examine this package.</p> <p>LH to check Business Continuity Plan progress.</p>
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<p>MA pointed out that there is a proforma letter titled F40 which Special Schools are using to flag up that funding information has not been made available and funding is inadequate but this is a long term fix. Governors agreed that this letter should be sent. A Governor questioned whether the letter goes to the MP for the area in which Granta is situated and following brief discussion it was agreed to send it to MPs of all areas in which Granta pupils reside.</p> <p>A Governor asked if the deficit is cumulative and LAF explained last year's carry forward was £360,000, and the deficit was £106,000. £106,000 funding was received. It was noted that all maintained Special Schools had significant deficits.</p> <p>LAF reported predicted end of year (2024-25) deficit to be £206,000. LAF explained that all maintained school business managers are experiencing similar difficulties.</p> <p>A Governor asked about the cost of Arbor. LAF explained it is a considerable cost and we are still paying for the previous service as we are tied into a contract.</p> <p>A Governor asked if Arbor are in breach of contract but LAF explained we access Arbor via the ICT Service. SC and LAF stated that Arbor was recommended by the LA ICT who now deny recommending it. Another 15 or so schools also signed up to Arbor. LAF explained the ICT service are generally helpful.</p> <p>A Governor asked about LAF's confidence in budget building based on the lack of accurate information available. LAF explained the key point is that the loan of £150,000 needs paying back and therefore the draft budget does not balance.</p> <p>In response to a Governor question, LAF explained that the tool does not provide cash flow forecasting as it should. A Governor pointed out that the LA is not supporting the school in this.</p> <p>A Governor pointed out that the FGB has an obligation to set up a budget deficit reduction plan, despite the lack of information we have. MA suggested the Co Chairs speak to the FGB of another Special School who are working on this for their school.</p> <p><i>This section of this item was subject to a Confidential Minute</i></p> <p>LAF confirmed that basic funding (SFA) has been received but does not cover increased National Insurance (NI) payments for staff for whom the increase is applicable. It was note that a grant was received towards the NI for teaching staff. She confirmed that she has included increased NI in her calculations.</p> <p><u>SFVS</u> Circulated via email. Due to be submitted by 31st March 2025. Several comments were received e.g. regarding financial reporting and whether the document puts the school's situation in too positive a light. General consensus of the meeting was that the SFVS needs to be realistic.</p>	<p>MA to send SC and Co Chairs F40</p> <p>Co Chairs to contact the other Special School mentioned.</p>
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	<p><u>Budget</u> LAF has had budget meeting with Finance Officer, LA. Budget setting 24th April. Extra Finance Cmt meeting arranged for 22nd April 2025. Budget submission date: 21st May 2025.</p> <p>A Governor asked about the new catering contract. SC explained the contract starts after Easter.</p>	Co Chairs and LAF
5.	<p>Visit and monitoring reports <u>Cyber security.</u> JA reported that the training he attended highlighted how schools are highly vulnerable to attack. In response to a Governor question SC stated that currently our only strategy is to contact ICT. It was agreed that we should record this in the Business Continuity and Critical Incident plans.</p> <p>MA has uploaded a Behaviour Report to GovernorHub.</p>	
6.	<p>Governor Skills and Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor safeguarding training – proposed new date: 6pm 2 hrs, 4th June 2025. • Finance training for full FGB. LAF said that LA advisor could offer this as a day time training. <p>Revised monitoring Report Document to be circulated for comment</p>	<p>All Governors to attend</p> <p>All Gobs to feed back to LJ.</p>
7.	<p>Governors Strategic Monitoring document update <u>Governor Charter</u> LH pointed out that the school has a Charter and recommended that the GB should have one. It was noted that GB members already have Code of Conduct based on LA model. It was noted that this is a busy time to undertake this but it was agreed that it is best practice. Agreed that LH and LJ will draft this to be reviewed at the Away Day.</p>	LH and LJ to draft and circulate.
8.	<p>Safeguarding JB's report in Visits Folder. ES outlined key points of JB's visit which included attendance monitoring and lockdown procedure. Next visit to focus on Online Safety</p> <p><u>Health and Safety Audit</u> SC reported on interim audit which stated that the school is 88% compliant and the gaps are in risk assessments. These gaps have been addressed and further report is awaited.</p>	
9.	<p>Head's Report SC has circulated her report and questions were invited.</p>	

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	<p>A Governor asked about a reference to Cambridge Therapeutic Thinking and SC confirmed that she has received a response.</p> <p><u>Attendance</u> LH, as meeting Chair, commented on the usefulness of this data and the opportunities for comparison it enables. MA reported on work she has done across the county on attendance of SEND pupils and explained that Granta comes out very high. A Governor asked how we achieve this and MA explained that it is based on support strategies – monitoring and support meetings and clear guidance on attendance. SC added that the school has put in considerable effort to provide personalised plans for children who are school refusing. SC gave an example of what has been put in place to support an individual pupil. ES highlighted the importance of personalised communication with parents. JA commented that data shows that staffing strategies i.e. flexible working and use of agency staff lead to good staff morale.</p>	MA to provide a summary of her work on this.
10.	<p>Policies Review None</p>	
11.	<p>Friends of Granta School (FOGS) CC gave an informal update.</p> <p>SC explained that information is now available on what funds are held and what they can be used for. A Governor asked if books for the library have been obtained, SC confirmed this. In response to a Governor question it was confirmed that Equality and Diversity resources have been provided.</p>	SC to bring info back to FGB.
12.	<p>School Council/Pupil's Voice Update from 7th March meeting LH gave an update and outlined pupils' ideas including Red Nose day activities. She explained that pupils had asked for more responsibility and responded well to being asked to carry out a review of the book and library facilities. SC agreed that the pupils and the staff are all very active and committed to the School Council and Pupil Voice. Pupils have had input into the new menus and the catering company has responded well to these menu suggestions. LH to thank Eva on behalf of the GB.</p>	LH to thank Eva on behalf of the GB.
13	<i>This item was subject to a Confidential Minute.</i>	
14	<p>Any Other Urgent Business Cambridge Joint Playschemes: LAF responded to a query from a Governor, confirming that this organisation is well known to the school and meets standards required for a hirer.</p>	
15	Date of Next Meeting: 6pm 10 th July 2025.	

Meeting closed: 8.25 pm.