



MINUTES OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING
DARNHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL
HELD ON THURSDAY 25th JANUARY 2024 AT 17.30pm

Members of the Governing Body

Name	Category of Governor	Date of end of tenure	Designated Role	Attended
Mrs Sarah Tomlinson	Headteacher		Headteacher	✓
Mr Richard Strachan	Co-opted	19/05/2028	Chair SEP 25	✓
Ms Jackie Stringer	Co-opted	20/05/2025	Co Vice Chair Jan 24	Apologies
Mrs Steph Crane	Co-opted	09/05/2027	Co Vice Chair May 24	✓
Mr Chris Bate	Co-opted	09/05/2027		✓
Mrs Hayley Rigby	Co-opted	19/10/2026		✓
Mr Andrew Robinson	Co-opted	01/03/2027		✓
Ms Chloe Lupton	Staff	21/10/2025		Apologies
Mr Richard Mault	Parent	19/10/2026		Apologies
Mrs Lyndsey Tasker	Parent	25/03/2025		✓
Mr Colin Meachin	LA	09/07/2024		✓
Vacancy	Co-opted			
Also in Attendance				
Davie Kindon	Teacher			✓
Charlotte Chappell	Teacher			✓
Stephen Ewell	Clerk to Governors			✓

Part One Non-Confidential Minutes

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received in advance of the meeting from Jackie Stringer, Chloe Lupton and Richard Mault.

RESOLVED:

- That the apologies received from Jackie Stringer, Chloe Lupton and Richard Mault be accepted.
- That the meeting was deemed quorate.



2. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of pecuniary interest for this meeting.

RESOLVED: that there were no additional declarations of pecuniary interest for this meeting.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE FGB

Governors considered the position of Co-Vice Chair and noted that Jackie Stringer's term of office was due to expire in January. Governors discussed the matter and resolved that Jackie be re-appointed as Co-Vice Chair until May 24, which would then synchronise the terms of office of both Co-Vice Chairs.

RESOLVED: that Jackie Stringer be re-appointed as Co-Vice Chair until May 24.

Governors had reviewed the Co-opted Governor vacancy at the Governors Development Session held earlier in the month, and it was determined that the key requirement was for a Governor with project management experience.

The Chair informed Governors that he had recently met with Ali Ahmed who is a Lecturer at Preston college with experience in planning. Ali had expressed an interest in supporting the school and the Chair felt his experience would be very useful. The proposal was to appoint Mr Ahmed as an Associate Member for a period of twelve months due to his particular experience which would help support the planned capital project at the school.

RESOLVED: Ali Ahmed be appointed as an Associate Member for a period of twelve months.

The Chair added that he was proposing to pay Mr Ahmed travel expenses at the standard public sector rate if he had to visit the school. The Clerk stated he would check that the payment of travel expenses was permissible per the Governance Handbook.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Governors considered the non-confidential minutes of the previous meeting held on 30th November 2023, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the non-confidential minutes of the previous meeting held on 30th November 2023 were confirmed to be a true record.

The minutes would be signed electronically.



5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no actions carried forward from the previous meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO.	ACTION	BY WHOM	UPDATE

6. CURRICULUM TEACHING AND LEARNING – ENGLISH CURRICULUM CHANGES

Hayden Baxendale had prepared a report on English Curriculum changes which was shared on screen for Governors to review.

The Report highlighted the school's decision to transition away from Pathways to Write to Literacy Count's 'Ready Steady Write'. The decision was made after a critical assessment of the current English teaching practices. Pathways to Write has been used by the school for eight years now, and it was recognised that more recently there had been some stagnation evident in the desired impact on writing outcomes.

Q. *What will the cost of the new scheme be?*

A. *Initially it will be £2,500 in staff training which is already included in this year's budget.*

The school will now focus on one genre of writing in the units of work. This should help the children and it will also link in with sticky learning. The school is not proposing to move to Ready Steady Phonics at this stage as Read Write Inc continues to be effective for phonics.

Q. *When will it be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the new scheme?*

A. *The training has not been completed yet, although some free webinars have been accessed to gain some experience. The ECTs are also going to undertake some lesson observations of the new scheme in use at The Grange. The plan is to go live after Easter, so the first evaluation with staff would take place at the end of the Summer Term.*

The Headteacher added that it was a good time for the school to launch the new scheme, which always takes some bedding in, as they were now the other side of the Ofsted Inspection.



Governors discussed the proposal and noted that it will also support addressing one of the Ofsted action points identified.

Governors thanked Hayden for his comprehensive paper.

RESOLVED: Governors approved the transition to the Literacy Count's 'Ready Steady Write' scheme.

Steph Crane joined the meeting at 17:52pm.

7. FINANCE

Finance Committee Minutes 18th January 2024

The latest Finance Committee minutes had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The SBM had also prepared a Finance Report for review by Governors. The following areas were highlighted:

- **Review of Finance Action Plan 2023/2024** – the Finance Action Plan was provided with actions taken highlighted in green.
- **SFVS** – the SFVS action document details all actions completed and outstanding. The school is waiting for this year's version of the SFVS to be provided for completion.
- **MIFP** – The Manual of Internal Financial Procedures (MIFP) had been reviewed fully by the Finance Committee and the appendices document with the main items agreed was attached. Governors were asked to approve the MIFP and the Scheme of Delegation which was included as Appendix A3a.
- **Gifts and Hospitality Register** – there are currently no items listed on the Gifts and Hospitality Register to be reviewed within the MIFP.
- **Health and Safety Review** – the document was provided which included an update on actions required. Hayley Rigby, Richard Strachan and Richard Mault to conduct Health and Safety site visit on 29th February 2024.

One area of the MIFP has been updated to include new rules on contract management that require a tender with three quotes to be undertaken for all contracts over £5000 in value. The school has noted that this may be a challenge for some smaller traders, which then may lead to larger companies winning these tenders at a potentially higher cost for the school.

RESOLVED: Governors received the Finance Committee Minutes 18th January 2024.

RESOLVED: Governors approved the MIFP including the Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED: Governors received the Gifts and Hospitality Register.



The Chair thanked Jackie Stringer, Hayley Rigby and Lyndsey Tasker for their support in attending a number of meetings and reviewing the MIFP.

Grants for Visits and Trips.

The Headteacher informed Governors that for a number of visits and trips funded from grants, the staff may receive a payment utilising some of the grant funds. The proposal was for the rate of pay to be made equitable across all staff, at a rate of £20 per hour, and £25 for the Lead of the visit. The payment of staff has worked well in terms of supporting these trips, that otherwise might not take place.

Q. Will this change help make the grant funding go further?

A. The change is more about fairness and ensuring that everybody is treated the same. The change may also encourage more staff to volunteer to support these trips. The pay element doesn't cover all the time the staff are supporting the trip, and it is just a good will gesture from the school.

Q. Has there been any wider staff consultation?

A. Not at this stage, but it will benefit the majority of staff.

Governors discussed the proposal and noted that there might be an issue with losing the support on these visits from some of the higher paid staff, who would also tend to be the leaders. The Headteacher stated that the staff aren't really doing it for the money, and it is just a goodwill gesture from the school.

Governors approved the proposal and determined that it would be appropriate to review it in a year's time.

RESOLVED: Governors approved the proposal to pay an equitable pay rate for visits of £20 per hour, and £25 for the Lead of the visit.

Family Takeaway Night

The Headteacher informed Governors that the school was arranging a Family Takeaway Night providing parents with a boxed pizza takeaway at the school. The night would cost circa £1,200 funded by a mixture of grant funding and some PTA funding and would take place on the Friday during February Half Term.

Budget Monitoring Report and Three-Year Plan

Governors reviewed the Budget and Three-Year Plan. The summary is detailed below.



SECTION 1 - SUMMARY MEDIUM TERM PLAN		Actual 2022-23	Forecast 2023-24	Forecast 2024-25	Forecast 2025-26
(A) Balance Brought Forward (previous E)		-48,515	13,402	11,596	-30,636
(B) Projected Income (From F)		2,712,482	3,112,720	3,118,014	3,188,911
(C) Projected Expenditure (from D)		2,650,565	3,114,526	3,160,246	3,273,708
(D) In year surplus/-deficit (B-C)		61,917	-1,806	-42,232	-84,797
(E) Projected Carry Forward (A+D)		13,402	11,596	-30,636	-115,433

The projected carry forward for 23/24 is £11,596. However, the purchase of the new English scheme will impact on this, as well as the permanent appointment of a new Welfare Assistant following a very successful trial.

Q. *Is the new Welfare Assistant a local person?*

A. *Yes, she lives in Winsford and also has proven to be very good with the children.*

Governors reviewed the pupil numbers, with the current number of funded pupils 373. This is projected to increase by 9 to 382 next year. Governors noted that Reception and Years 1-3 are all now full. Years 4-6 still have spaces because the higher PAN of 65 is retained as that particular cohort progresses through the school. The Headteacher added that there had been three new starters join the school today.

RESOLVED: Governors received the Budget Monitoring Report and Three-Year Plan Update.

Lyndsey Tasker joined the meeting at 18:15pm.

8. SFVS

The SFVS had been discussed during Item 7.

9. HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

The following reports had been circulated for Governors' consideration:

- Capital Building Proposal 2024.
- Attendance Report Autumn 23.

Capital Building Proposal 2024.

The Headteacher provided the context around the proposal. There are currently 446 children on roll, and 166 (44%) of these children qualify for Free School Meals. There is also a specialist Resource Provision Base for 12 children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, and there are currently 15 children within Resource Provision.



There is currently funding available for supporting Resource Provision within schools in CWAC, and twenty-eight schools have submitted a proposal. Some of these schools will have empty spaces which is not the case for Darnhall. The school has requested capital funds and has highlighted the track record and expertise already in place at the school for supporting SEND children. The school will find out at the end of February whether the proposal has been accepted.

The report was shared on screen, and the Headteacher stated that the school was focussing on Option 1, as detailed below.

Scenario 1 6 mobile unit spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•4 mobile classroom units plus 2 unit spaces for toilet facilities•Unit space 1 and 2 – Year 6 classrooms•Unit space 3 and 4 – Year 5 classrooms •This would allow us to bring Year 2 over from the Early Years/Key Stage One site to the Key Stage 2 site and have a meeting room on our Key Stage 2 site also.•We would then be able to split our two year old nursery and three and four year old nursery into two separate teaching spaces (<i>Futureproof - Government funding changes ahead</i>).•In addition, we would be able to have a resource provision on our Key Stage 1 site.
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Blacon school has some mobile classrooms that are only two years old and are now surplus to requirements. The Headteacher will visit Blacon tomorrow to assess the suitability of the classrooms.

Q. *There is a new facility being established in Middlewich, is it likely that some of these SEND children will choose to go there?*

A. *CWAC want local SEND children to be educated locally, and the school should be serving its own community and strengthening that community.*

Q. *What is the likely cost of these mobile classrooms?*

A. *Blacon is a CWAC school, and we hope that we can get them transferred across for some consideration. The original cost of the mobile classrooms was £75k each.*

Q. *Does Blacon need the money back?*

A. *Yes, they have a new build part of the school that has replaced the requirement for these mobile classrooms.*



Governors discussed the proposal and were in support of it. It was suggested that £50k would be an appropriate amount to offer for each of the mobile classrooms. The Headteacher stated that an update would be provided at the next FGB meeting.

RESOLVED: Governors received the Capital Building Proposal 2024 and approved a negotiating position for a £100k bid for the two mobile units subject to Darnhall obtaining the funding.

Chloe Ashworth has now taken over responsibility for monitoring attendance and had produced the latest report.

- Whole school attendance 93.8%.
- Persistent Absence (PA) = 69 Children which is 19%. Three of these children are now no longer on roll.

Of the PA children, nine are in Resource Provision, where the distance from the school can be an issue, and also some of these children arrive after the register has closed.

The Headteacher added that for a year-on-year comparison the attendance in January 23 was 93%, and this has improved to 94% for January 24. In addition, compared to the national average, Darnhall attendance for w/c 11th December 23 was 92.7%, which is 1.1% above the national average of 91.6%.

Unauthorised absence has reduced to 1.61% versus 1.89% in 2023. The Headteacher stated that if any child's attendance falls below 96% this will generate an increased focus by the school.

Governors discussed the latest attendance data and noted that it was good to see these improvements in attendance and that the school is working hard with the families concerned.

Q. *What other methods does the school employ. For example, is there an automated email alert?*

A. *The school uses a family focus and certificates are issued at Parents evening. However, the use of email alerts sounds like a good innovation.*

ACTION: Headteacher to investigate what additional school communications could be utilised to support attendance.

The Headteacher added that it was important for the school to find the right balance when focusing on attendance without bombarding parents with messages. In addition, holidays taken in term time continues to be a major challenge, and the fines issued are not proving to be a disincentive.



Q. *What is the current level of fine now?*

A. *It is £60 per parent per child, but parents are getting wise and taking their children out for just 4.5 days which does not result in a fine being levied.*

RESOLVED: Governors received the Attendance Report Autumn 23.

10. POLICIES

The following policies had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

- Managing Allegations Against Adults in School Policy.
- Sex and Relationships Education Policy.
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions and Administration Of Medicines Policy.
- Use Of Force and Restraint Policy.

Governors noted that there were not any substantive changes to the policies and that all appropriate incidents are now being recorded on CPOMS.

RESOLVED: Governors approved the four policies as presented to the meeting.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hayley Rigby, Richard Strachan and Richard Mault will conduct the Health and Safety site visit on 29th February 2024. The SBM will then prepare an up-to-date summary for the next FGB meeting.

RESOLVED: Governors received the Health and Safety Update.

12. GOVERNANCE

The Governors Development Session had taken place on 11th January 2024. The Chair summarised the outcomes as follows:

- Received the Capital Building Proposal with supporting rationale.
- Identified some gaps in Governor skills leading to the appointment of Ali Ahmed as Associate Member.
- Reviewed the FGB meeting schedule and proposed that some meetings take place virtually going forward. The July and November meetings were identified as potential virtual meetings.



- Reviewed the Governor Induction Policy to determine whether it is effective. Lindsey Tasker had shared an alternative induction policy, and both will be compared and reviewed.
- Governors from a non-education background noted that they would benefit from a crib sheet that included a listing of the common acronyms used.
- Considered the Strategic Plan in the light of the proposed building project. The Chair and Jackie Stringer will review and update the Five-Year Plan.
- Governors noted that it was important to keep the FGB meetings focused and to use the time effectively.

RESOLVED: Governors received the outcomes from the Governors Development Session.

13. COMMUNICATION TO THE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS/CHAIRS ACTIONS

The Chair stated that there was one matter to be brought to Governors' attention, which is detailed in the Part Two minutes.

Colin Meachin left the meeting at 19:01pm.

14. DECISION SUMMARY

- Ali Ahmed be appointed as an Associate Member for a period of twelve months.
- Approved the transition to the Literacy Count's 'Ready Steady Write' scheme.
- Received the Finance Committee Minutes 18th January 2024.
- Approved the MIFP including the Scheme of Delegation.
- Received the Gifts and Hospitality Register.
- Approved the proposal to pay an equitable pay rate for visits.
- Received the Budget Monitoring Report and Three-Year Plan Update.
- Received the Capital Building Proposal 2024 and approved a negotiating position for a £100k bid for the two mobile units subject to Darnhall obtaining the funding.
- Received the Attendance Report Autumn 23.
- Approved the four policies as presented to the meeting.
- Received the Health and Safety Update.
- Received the outcomes from the Governors Development Session.
- Received the Confidential Staffing Update.
Received the Safeguarding Report and Update.



15. AOB

There were no additional non-confidential matters for Governors to discuss.

16. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The 23/24 meeting schedule is detailed below.

FGB	Thursday	29/02/2024	17:30
FGB	Thursday	28/03/2024	17:30
FGB	Thursday	16/05/2024	17:30
FGB	Thursday	13/06/2024	17:30
FGB	Thursday	11/07/2024	17:30

Signed: **Date:**

There following actions were carried forward to the next meeting.

ACTION PLAN

AGENDA ITEM NO.	ACTION	BY WHOM	UPDATE
25 JAN 24 Item 9	Headteacher to investigate what additional school communications could be utilised to support attendance.	Headteacher.	