

Full Governing Board Meeting 2024/25

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 4 December 2024	Time and Location	3.30 p.m. PPA Room
Attendees	Initials	Attendees	Initials
Di Hunt (Chair)	DH	Sam Kashmiri	SK
Linda Anderson	LA	Mark Longley	ML
Matt Ashdown (items 1-3 only)	MA	Nicci Lorusso	NL
Jennifer Barker	JB	Diana Marsland	DM
Colin Brace	CB	Kimberley Nelson	KN
Clare Brittain	CBr	Lydia Paynter	LP
Paul Dales	PD	Jake Terrill	JT
Eva Field	EF	Mark Wignall	MW
John Godley	JG	Chris Karley (Clerk)	CK
Sue Hatton	SH		

Apologies	Initials
Andrew Hunter	AH

	Agenda	Led by
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2.	Declaration of Interest	Chair
3.	Pupil Premium Strategic Plan	MA
4.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 18 September 2024 & 6 November 2024	Chair
5.	Matters Arising	Chair
6.	Urgent Matters	Chair
7.	GDPR	Chair
8.	Lockdown Procedure	MW
9.	Federation Update	MW
10.	Budget Monitoring	MW
11.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update	Chair
12.	Headteacher's Report	MW
13.	Chair's Report	Chair
14.	Link Governor Report Procedure Governors' Visits Policy	Chair
15.	Policy Reviews: - Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy - Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy	Chair
16.	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	CB/EF/LA
17.	Reports: - Lead Governor visits - Link Governor visits - Governor training - DSA	Chair
18.	AOB	Chair

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19.	Date of next meeting: Wednesday 5 March 2025 at 3.30 p.m.	-
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Item no.	Discussion	Action	Due Date
	The meeting started at 3.30 p.m.		
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence - DH welcomed the three new Governing Board members (JB, PD and NL) to their first full FGB meeting. - Apologies for absence were received from and accepted for AH.		
2.	Declaration of Interest None		
3.	Pupil Premium Strategic Plan (MA) MA spoke to the presentation filed with these minutes. - The principles underpinning the PP strategy are high quality teaching; targeted interventions; an inclusive curriculum; parental engagement and high-quality professional engagement. - No top-up funding has been received this year. Previously this had been used for one-to-one tutoring. - PP makes up 8% of pupils at Downlands against a national average of 20%. This cohort accounts for a degree of volatility in attendance. There is a 50% cross over with SEND pupils. - The aims of the strategy are to have a whole school approach; experience success; build relationships, including with parents; literacy; and attendance. - The main challenges are literacy and numeracy; PP pupils making less progress; behaviour; and absence. - Key teaching initiatives include adaptive teaching / pupil passports and literacy, and targeting small groups, one-to-one mentoring and progress meetings. - Wider strategies include Action Your Potential (AYP), the Build-up initiative to raise self-esteem, EBSA approaches, the new Family Support Worker, the Breakfast Club and character passports. - Last year's progress 8 outcome of -0.22% was a slight improvement on 2022/23 and better than the national average. Attendance is 84.5% against 92% for the school as a whole, up 2%. The PP cohort accounts for 9% of positive behaviour points but 32% of negative points. - Q – Are any of the challenges getting better or worse? - Attendance is improving with EBSA and AYP strategies helping. - Q – Is the PP Strategy pro forma a Government document? - Yes, schools must use this template. - Q – Do the costs include staffing? - Yes, but this is a notional figure.		

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	• Q - Are there any figures yet to show the impact of the Family Support Worker? • As she only started in September it is too early to see the impact. MW noted that PP persistent absence is the biggest challenge. This has fallen to 32% this year from 50% last year but it remains the priority issue. • Q - What is EEF? • The Educational Endowment Foundation, a key body for informed research strategies. • Q – Is there a target for progress this year? • As cohorts tend to be very different from year to year the aim is to achieve incremental improvements. • Q – Where the aim is to challenge assumptions is this amongst the pupils themselves or the wider community? • It is both. Teachers might have had unconscious bias in the past. • Q - How long will it take to close the gap given current funding? • It is not possible to tell; the situation has got worse since the pandemic and there are several societal factors. • Q – With a small cohort are there challenges around being stigmatised? • There is a tendency for PP cohorts to congregate within year groups, but strategies are not for PP alone. • Q – Is the Breakfast Club for PP only? • No, they can bring friends along. • Q – Is the school judged by Ofsted on this? • Yes, and inclusion is likely to become more prominent. MA left the meeting.		
4.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 18 September 2024 & 6 November 2024 • The minutes of the FGB meetings held on 18 September 2024 and 6 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		
5.	Matters Arising - 18 September 2024 • Item 4 – Policies: Equality Impact Assessments ○ LP confirmed that she had circulated the WSCC papers. • Item 6 – Matters Arising ○ CK confirmed that CD would be invited to the Spring Term FGB meeting to present on alternative provision. • Item 7 – Vice Chair Vacancy ○ DH confirmed that EF, JG and CB had met as agreed. • Item 8 – Governors’ Code of Conduct ○ CK confirmed that this now appeared on the school website. • Item 16 – Policy reviews ○ CK confirmed that the ED&I Policy had been finalised at the most recent SLL Committee and that the new pro forma had been added to the Governors’ Visits Policy. • Item 19 – Any Other Business ○ CK confirmed that all Governors had completed the annual Skills Audit, and that he would circulate a summary of the outcome.	CK CK	29.01.25 18.12.24

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	Matters Arising – 6 November 2024 None		
6.	Urgent Matters None		
7.	GDPR There were no issues to raise at this meeting.		
8.	Lockdown procedure - MW explained that he had included the procedures in papers for this meeting as Governors also needed to know what to do in case of a lockdown when they are visiting the school. They would also be included in the emails sent once a lockdown is over. - A lockdown had occurred that day due to a fault with the alarm system which was now under investigation. The alarm company are attending tomorrow to correct it. The incident did upset some pupils. Q – What would happen if a power failure meant that emails could not be sent? - The alarm sounds again to end the lockdown, and the procedure is to stay in the room until then. Q – Has there ever been an actual lockdown? - No, but other schools locally have had them, for a wide variety of reasons. Q- Who lets the school know if there has been a major local incident? - News tends to filter through but there is no formal local government procedure. SH agreed to ask the council about this.	SH	05.03.25
9.	Federation Update - There were no questions arising from the Federation Memorandum of Understanding which had been circulated ahead of the meeting. - MW advised that the Headteachers were discussing the future of the Federation, including the impact of the new Government's education policies. Governors were invited to join in a SWOT analysis to start these discussions. - Downlands was very much part of a soft Federation which was governed by a committee. - The priorities agreed for 2024/25 were more joint Inset days; school to school reviews; leadership and coaching, with the cost of courses being shared; and more student participation, including a Federation dance show, orchestras, sporting events and a public speaking competition. - There had been Governors' cooperation on panels, and this would continue. - Sharing of alternative provision was a possibility. - The Federation had grown organically over seven years with seamless changes of Headteacher in three out of the four schools. - DH noted that Governors might be included in the June Inset day. - MW explained that under the previous Government forced academisation had been under discussion. The new Government's Children's Wellbeing Bill might impact academies as it gives more powers to local authorities in areas such as		

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	admissions, the national curriculum, use of qualified teachers and pay & conditions. There seems to be more interest in federations now. • Q – Is academy funding also based on pupil numbers? • Yes, the same as local government, but academies cannot be closed if student numbers drop. • Q – Is the capacity of local authorities to take on these changes a concern? • No, as they are used to providing these services. • Q – Do any other schools want to join our Federation? • One had enquired but had decided not to. • The Governors participated in a SWOT analysis, the results of which will be taken back to the Federation. The main results were: ○ Strengths: shared knowledge and CPD, financial savings, shared lobbying, skills and cover, general fluidity, controlled managed moves and alternative provision. ○ Weaknesses: meetings felt like one-off events or showcasing; there was not enough time to identify needs; and the demographics of all the schools were similar, though this could also be a strength. ○ Opportunities: Fresh sets of eyes to look at problems; further pupil collaboration; sharing of bank staff. ○ Threats: Group think; another change of Government or minister; the capacity of the local authority; reliance on personalities; and future changes in demographics. • Other suggestions included meetings of senior leaders and Governors, as Governors were not very involved; further alignment short of a hard Federation; and sharing specialist resources. The one Governors' training event had been helpful. • An aim was to get more out of it for all teaching staff, not just the SLT. • MW noted that it had been a good support network for Heads, especially during the pandemic, and also for teachers of the smaller subject areas and specialists such as the DSLs. DH added that the same was true for Chairs of Governors. • DH advised that a Federation update would be an item on all future FGB agendas.		
10.	Budget Monitoring • MW explained that the most recent monthly accounts were for October, and these had already been presented to the FAB Committee. • Salaries are on track. The pay rise is not in yet, but a grant is expected from the Government. • There is a lag in invoicing for Gas and Electricity. MW will report back when Sue Jones has been able to look into these thoroughly. • Insurance and Exams have both been paid for the full school year. • The £250k accumulation fund has earned interest of £11k. The school might dip into this for projects if the overall budget looks sound. • The Sinking Fund is intended to pay for resurfacing of the 3G pitch in six years. • The Section 106 funding allocation of £1.5m is intended to improve provision for students. If it can be used for resurfacing the 3G pitch £60k would be released for other school funding together with £20k from Freedom Leisure (FL). FL looks likely to generate £90k for the school this year.		

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	- Another potential use for these funds would be to cover the £370k cost of two new paddle courts. WSCC is looking into this and if agreed work could start soon. It would generate additional income for the school. - Another possibility is a new performance space at a cost of £750k which could also be let out to generate £14k p.a. - Q – Would there still be enough to upgrade the Science labs? - The £250k accumulation fund had been earmarked for that, although that would no longer be enough. WSCC has suggested submitting a capital funds bid for this. The S106 funds cannot be spent on maintenance. - Q – Would new paddle courts benefit the pupils? - The main benefit would come from the overall impact on the school's finances, but the curriculum aspect is being considered. - Q – Would a second 3G pitch be feasible? - This had been raised and remains a possibility. - Q – Were the two new bulge classrooms S106 funded? - Yes. - Q – Will the building of many new houses in the area lead to further bulge classes? - No, as this is more than offset by the falling birth rate.		
11.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update - DH asked that any Governors who had not yet viewed the recording of Kate Stodart's (KS) safeguarding presentation do so as soon as possible. - There were no new issues to report. - DH would be meeting KS on 10 December and the report would be circulated as usual.		
12.	Headteacher's Report MW spoke to the report filed with these minutes. - Changes in how the new behaviour challenges were handled has resulted in a big drop in suspensions. Most of these behaviours do not impact lessons. The usual spike in behaviour issues seen in November has not occurred this year, which might validate the new approach. - All Learning Walks results have been strong. The findings are used to build CPD. The new approach does not involve grading, and the stakes are therefore seen as less high. - Teachers are adapting to the new T&L Policy. It is quite challenging, but standards are improving. - MW thanked Governors for attending the Exam meetings this term, which had been very helpful. - There remain 1.5 TA vacancies. Recruitment to fill these posts is still difficult. - It is hoped that the new 10-year FL contract will be in place before the end of the year. - Parents have complained that the main walking route from Ditchling to the school is unsafe due to the speed and volume of traffic. MW is supporting their case with ESCC. Many of the 70-80 pupils from Ditchling walk along this road. The local MP has been contacted. EF left the meeting at 5.25 p.m.		

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	MW thanked Governors for their support at the Christmas Fayre and at the PTA Quiz. KN advised that the PTA had raised almost £9k this term.		
13.	Chair's Report DH thanked Governors who had agreed to join the current Stage 2 Complaint and Disciplinary Hearing Appeal panels.		
14.	Link Governor Report Procedure - DH explained that this would be discussed in the context of the Visits Policy review. Governors' Visits Policy - Several Governors agreed that it had been helpful to check the accuracy of the reports with the Head of Department involved before it was sent to the Head. - It was agreed that the focus on the School Development Plan was a helpful addition to the policy. - Governors recognised that the purpose of the report was to describe the meeting, but it could be difficult to step away from value judgements. MW's overview was helpful in this respect. - It was felt that the flowchart was a helpful addition to make the process clearer. Q – What if there is no evidence of SDP compliance? - It can be reported that no evidence was seen. Q – Might a model report be helpful? - It could be helpful to refer to previous reports from experienced Governors, which are circulated to all. Q – What proportion of reports are amended, as the policy wording might suggest that it is usual? - Very few. - It was agreed that the flowchart should be amended to reflect current practice, i.e. that the report is forwarded to the Clerk to the Governors who sends it on to the Headteacher and the Head of Department for review. - It was agreed that once this was done the revised policy could be ratified by Governors by email. NL left the meeting at 6.00 p.m.	CK	08.01.25
15.	Policy reviews Early Career Framework Policy - The Policy as approved by the SLL Committee on 9 October 2024 was ratified. SEND Policy - It was agreed that the references to MA in the preamble and elsewhere should be amended to Claire Davies. - It was agreed that specific reference should be made in para 5.5. to adaptive teaching. - Subject to these alterations the Policy as approved by the POW Committee on 16 October 2024 was ratified.		

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16.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes • FAB Committee – CB advised that there was nothing to add to the minutes that had been circulated. • Q – Can WSCC’s report on the difficulties with the bulge classrooms be shared? • CB advised that it was marked as confidential. It would also not be relevant to the new projects being considered as they will be directed by the school, not WSCC. • SLL Committee – LA noted that MW had shared a video of him teaching a class as part of the Learning Walks presentation. The new T&L Policy had also been discussed. It is a very readable document which Governors were encouraged to look through.		
17.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, Governor Training & DSA Visits – Lead Governors • LA had held two Attendance meetings, and the reports had been circulated. • The report from DM’s Curriculum visit is soon to be circulated. It is a new role, so discussions are still developing. • CBr’s SEND visit had highlighted pressures but also a growing awareness of the issues nationally. • KN’s Wellbeing report had been circulated. Visits – Link Governors • DH advised that the report of CBr’s Computer Science Exam meeting in September would be circulated notwithstanding the lack of response from the Head of Department. Governor Training • Governors were reminded to advise JG of any training that they had completed. DSA • KN thanked Governors for their support of recent events which would fund more Character Passport activities. • DH also asked that the Governors’ thanks be communicated to the DSA. • Card payments at DSA events are still a technical challenge.		
18.	Any Other Business • None		
19.	Date of Next Meetings • Wednesday 3 March 2025 at 3.30 p.m. The meeting closed at 6.10 p.m.		

Sara M. Hunt