

Full Governing Board Meeting 2025/2026

Meeting Minutes			
Date	Wednesday 15 July 2026	Time and Location	3.30 p.m. PPA Room
Attendees		Attendees	Initials
Di Hunt (Chair)		Alison Burholt	AB
Viv Aloy		John Godley	JG
Linda Anderson		Andrew Hunter	AH
Matt Ashdown		Nicci Lorusso	NL
Jennifer Barker		Paul Parker	PP
Colin Brace			

Apologies	Initials
Eva Field	EF
Sue Hatton	SH
Sam Kashmiri	SK
Kimberely Nelson	ML
Jake Terrill	JT

	Agenda	Led by
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	Chair
2.	Declaration of Interest	Chair
3.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 4 March 2026 & 20 May 2026	Chair
4.	Matters Arising	Chair
5.	Urgent Matters	Chair
6.	Headteacher's Report	MA
7.	Chair's Report	Chair
8.	Federation Update	Chair
9.	Budget Monitoring and School Budget Ratification	MA
10.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update	Chair
11.	Agree Committee Membership - Membership of SLL, POW and FAB - Election of Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees - Approval of Committees' Terms of Reference	Chair
12.	Agree Departmental Links	Chair
13.	Policy Reviews: - Children with Health Needs Policy (ratification) - Governors' Allowances Policy - Standard of Conduct of Staff Policy (ratification) - GDPR Policy - Digital Systems Policy	Chair
14.	Review Governor Timeline	Chair
15.	Chairs of Committee Reports – items arising from Committee minutes	CB/EF/LA

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16.	Reports: • Lead Governor visits • Link Governor visits • Governor training • DSA	Chair
17.	AOB	Chair
18.	Co-opted Governor Election	Chair
19.	Election of Chair and Vice-Chair	Chair
20.	Date of next meeting: • Governors' get-together on Wednesday 9 September 2026 at 6.00 p.m. • Wednesday 16 September 2026 at 4.00 p.m. (preceded by Governor/Staff social at 3.15 p.m. in the Schering Suite)	-

Item no.	Discussion	Action	Due Date
	The meeting started at 3.30 p.m. DH explained that, in the absence of a clerk, the meeting would be recorded and the minutes transcribed from the recording. All governors were happy with this.		
1.	Welcome and Apologies for Absence • Apologies for absence were received from and accepted for EF, SH, SK, KM and JT.		
2.	Declaration of Interest • None		
3.	Minutes of Last Meetings – 4 March 2026 & 20 May 2026 • The minutes of the FGB meetings held on 4 March 2026 and 20 May 2026 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.		
4.	Matters arising 4 March 2026 • None Matters Arising 20 May 2026 • None		
5.	Urgent Matters • None		
6.	Headteacher's Report • MA's report had been circulated the previous week in time for Ofsted. • The draft Ofsted report had been sent to school and MA shared it, confidentially, with all governors. MA is very pleased with the draft.		

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	• In the new Ofsted criteria Safeguarding is either met or not met which seems to be unkind due to how exceptional Kate Turner (KT) has been in putting so much in place since she joined Downlands. • At our last inspection, it was noted that we need to work on our reading, use and development of language. Language is now excellent and a relentless focus on reading has had a clear impact. A brief summary of the draft report is as follows; Achievement • The gradient for achievement and the language is really positive, well above the national average at Key Stage 4 and pupils are ready for the next steps. Disadvantaged pupils achieve significantly better and progress well through the curriculum. • Pupils across the board produce high-quality work. Curriculum and Teaching • Leaders have a clear oversight and expectations and help to ensure consistently high-quality teaching across the school. • Teachers check pupils' understanding carefully, adjust lessons so that pupils can learn what they need to. The inspectors recognised the big push in adaptive teaching. • Teaching is highly inclusive, which is very positive as it is the main focus this year. • Leaders are highly focused on developing language and communication skills. Leadership and Governance • Leaders provide a clear direction for the school. • They understand the school's strengths and identify areas for further development. • Leaders make decisions that are in the best interests of pupils, including disadvantaged, are ambitious for their pupils and believe the school can be even better. • Downlands is a high achieving school but recognise there is always work to be done. Leaders monitor the quality of education carefully, use expertise in external networks and provide professional development which meets the needs of staff. • Leaders consider staff workload and wellbeing when making decisions. • Those responsible for governance understand the school well. • Governors hold leaders to account for effective scrutiny and ask informed questions regarding the school's work. • Governors monitor how leaders use resources and evaluate the impact of key decisions. • Governors understand the school's equality and diversity work well and provide appropriate support and challenge to help drive improvement across the school. • The Ofsted inspectors were very interested in the Challenge and Development minutes and felt they showed that in terms of knowledge and understanding school strategy, the scrutiny was very good.		
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	Personal Development and Wellbeing • Personal development opportunities at the school prepare pupils for life beyond school extremely well. There is a broad understanding of important topics including healthy relationships and consent. • Leaders place a clear focus on developing pupils' character. The school's values promote resilience, optimism, community, kindness and self-awareness. • Pupils speak highly of opportunities for residential trips and forest school. • Many pupils participate in enrichment activities and attend clubs. • Pupils are proud that they have leadership roles available to them. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND also have high levels of engagement in these opportunities. Attendance and Behaviour • Leaders have a clear focus on improving attendance. • Leaders analyse attendance information regularly. • Attendance is improving across the school. • Staff build positive relationships with parents/carers to identify and overcome barriers to attendance. • Pupils' positive behaviour and attitudes to learning are a strength of the school. • School is a calm place that many pupils describe as a community. • Pupils know that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. • Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Inclusion • Leaders identify pupils' needs accurately at this inclusive school. • A range of assessments are used to ensure support matches pupils' individual needs. • Leaders have identified the need to further strengthen systems in order to support the most vulnerable pupils. • Leaders provide effective training to give staff the knowledge and skills needed to support pupils. • Leaders have developed a well-considered pupil premium strategy. • Leaders and staff develop positive relationships with parents/carers. • Leaders make use of alternative provision. MA took the decision to take the lead inspector to the new inclusion spaces, of which he is rightly proud as to how it has developed since last September. The pupils were very polite and respectful, and they are the ones that can be quite challenging. Staff gave a brilliant account of what they do in the spaces. Subsequently suspensions have reduced by 70%. The pupil's attendance marks have gone up, they feel safe, supported, making progress and engaging in learning. However, there is still an issue with disadvantaged student attendance. The inspectors could see that we have only just begun developing these spaces, but we are also seeing the beginning to meet pupils' needs. At break and lunchtime, the inspectors spoke to large numbers of pupils and on day 2 had a session with pupils. The feedback from pupils was excellent		
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	and the inspectors were very impressed by the extensive extracurricular offers, competitive sport offers and also how disadvantaged pupils get involved. As DH stated, the inspection was really collaborative, painless and actually more of a celebration about what the school has done this year. Q: Do you envisage, on the back of the report, because it is overwhelmingly positive, that there could be some complacency? A: No, I don't. We still have work to do on attendance and other areas, but we have implementation plans for all our strategies. Governors offered their congratulations to MA and asked that he passed on their congratulations to all staff. Once the final report is received, it will be shared with all staff, governors, parents/carers and published on the school website.		
7.	Chair's Report • DH advised that a Stage 2 complaint panel had taken place. • There had also been a PEX panel. • The Governing Board are currently without a Clerk, and adverts will go out in September. • DH thanked everyone for their support over the past years and wished all governors all the best for the future. DH retires on 31 August 2026 following 30 years as a governor at Downlands.		
8.	Federation Update • The Federation Heads and Chairs had met earlier in the day. • Heads have been meeting to plan for further Federation work next year which will include looking at an inclusive strategy. • There had been a trip to Greenwich attended by 3 of the Heads to look at a Trust of primary schools which had started out as a soft federation. Not much was gleaned from the information as it was all related to primary, a very different context to secondary and it wasn't particularly positive feedback. • The Chairs found it interesting that we hold a strategy meeting annually, especially in the light of Ofsted and our preparation for the inspection. • Half-termly meetings will continue between the Head and half termly meetings between Heads and Chairs.		
9.	Budget Monitoring Update & School Budget Ratification • The budget figures had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The last column is the important one - standing at 25% of the year so far. Some figures were higher than 25% but that is because certain things are paid in full and not spread over the financial year. The ongoing budget remains tight. • All information had been closely looked at at the Finance and Buildings meeting and governors voted 100% to ratify the budget.		

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10.	Safeguarding and Child Protection Update - DH has continued to meet with Kate Turner (KT) monthly, and all governors have received copies of the reports. - NL and DH will be meeting KT on Friday as NL will be taking over as Safeguarding Lead governor in September. - There are no safeguarding or child protection issues at present.		
11.	Agree Committee Membership Membership of SLL, POW and FAB All governors had been asked prior to the meeting if they wished to remain on the same committees. - All Committee members were happy to continue in their present roles. Election of Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees - The following Governors indicated that they were happy to continue in their current roles or had done so prior to the meeting. They were all therefore unanimously elected to continue for a further 12 months. - SLL Committee: LA Chair, JG Vice Chair - POW Committee: EF Chair, AB Vice Chair - FAB Committee: CB Chair, JG Vice Chair Approval of Committees' Terms of Reference Terms of Reference for all Committees had been circulated prior to the meeting. All were unanimously approved.		
12.	Agree Departmental Links The departments which didn't have a link were filled and a copy of the document would be updated and circulated to all governors.		
13.	Policy reviews Children with Health Needs Policy (ratification) - The Policy had been approved by the POW Committee on 17 June 2026. It was ratified unanimously. Governors' Allowances Policy - The policy was approved unanimously Standard of Conduct of Staff Policy (ratification) - Policy had been approved by the SLL Committee on 10 June 2026. It was ratified unanimously GDPR Policy - JT had sent DH and MA some thoughts following issues his primary school had had regarding filming and photos. These have now been shared with Claire Davies (CD) for when she reviews the policy.		

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	- The above policy was deferred to the September meeting. Digital Systems Policy - The above policy was deferred to the September meeting.		
14.	Review Governor Timeline - DH asked whether the document was still useful. It was unanimously agreed that it was. - The 2026/27 timeline would therefore be updated and circulated to all governors	DH	Sep ✓
15.	Chairs of Committee reports – items arising from Committee minutes There were no updates from the Committees other than what was included in the minutes that had been circulated.		
16.	Reports: Lead & Link Governor visits, Governor Training & DSA Visits – Lead Governors - Apart from a Curriculum report still to be sent out, there was nothing further to add from any of the Lead Governors. Visits – Link Governors - Nothing to report. Governor Training - Everything is currently up to date. The National College Safeguarding training is usually out in August and, if so, governors will be informed DSA - The Summer Fair went well although due to the extreme heat, footfall was lower. Mark Dagleish from the site team did an incredible job organising a football tournament in the morning. The whole event raised approximately £4,500.		
17.	Any Other Business JG had been approved by County to become the LA governor from 1 September. The governing board approved this appointment.		
18.	Co-opted Governor Election - Richard Shackleton (RS) had put himself forward to replace Mark Longley as a co-opted governor. Several governors had met Richard informally and all governors had received his CV. - It was thought he would be a good asset to the GB. - RS was unanimously elected to the governing board. - DH will inform RS of his election with a start date of 1 September.	DH	Sep ✓

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19.	Election of Chair and Vice Chair - LA and NL put themselves forward to become co-chairs. After a brief discussion it was agreed unanimously that they be elected co-chairs. It was agreed that DH would remain until her term of office ends on 31 August with LA and NL taking over on 1 September. - As EF was unable to attend the meeting, she had already expressed her willingness to continue as vice chair. Again, this was agreed unanimously. JG stated he would be happy to be Co Vice-Chair if required.		
20.	Date of Next Meetings - Governors' get-together on Wednesday 9 September 2026 at 6.00 p.m. The venue will be decided at a later date. - FGB meeting on Wednesday 16 September 2026 at 4.00 p.m. (preceded by Governor/Staff social at 3.15 p.m. in the Schering Suite) The meeting closed at 4.35 p.m.		