

# Governing Board

## Agenda & Minutes



Date 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2025	Time 6pm	Location St Thomas'
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### Let Your Light Shine

Matthew 5

**We believe in a child focused approach which aims to challenge, support and engage all pupils and their families from our community**

**We offer exciting learning opportunities to unleash the creative minds of our school community**

**We aspire to create the minds of the future through innovation, passion and enthusiasm**

Member Present Paul Davies Gemma Duff Jo Jones Jo Lubbers (arrived at 6.10pm) Alice Maclean Nicola Weeks Fiona Ashworth Danny Millington Lynsey Cooper  In Attendance: Kathryn Knapp Sarah Allchurch (clerk)	Apologies Chris McGowan Jon Strefford Lisa Rodrigues  Quorate: yes
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TOPIC	NOTES

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer, Apologies	Meeting started at 6.05pm. FA opened the meeting in prayer in the absence of LR. Apologies accepted from CM and JS. Welcome from Chair, GD, who was covering for CM.
2. Pecuniary interests	No pecuniary interests declared.
3. Minutes from previous meeting	Approved. (Minutes from 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2025)
4. Chairman's comments	The Chair thanked everyone for their input and collaboration on the Federation Improvement Plan at the recent SLT meeting on 12 <sup>th</sup> May. Well done to everyone.
5. Discussion and Vote on SBN proposal	HT thanked those who contributed to putting this proposal together and apologised for the short notice in notifying the GB of this proposal only shortly before it went out to parents. It was important to act quickly and get the business plan written to establish whether there was demand for a SBN in the village. The issue has come about from the news that the village pre-school will be closing at the end of this term. But the LA, who look at the need and demand in the whole of the local area, not just the village, are putting up some initial resistance to the idea. They estimate that only six extra places will be needed next year. However, the school looks at it differently and thinks that there should be an offering in the village for those who do not drive or cannot afford the transport costs to place their children in a nursery or pre-school outside of the village. Children in these families would suffer as a result by being unable to attend any

earlier provision and would therefore not be school-ready, when they start at St Thomas' at the age of 5.

Drawing Club and other aspects of school can be applied to children at a younger age ensuring they are ready for school at age 5. The proposal caters for children from the age of two. Creating a demand for places at nursery and school is a key part of the strategy for keeping numbers up at the infant school and ensuring its sustainability. In effect, it would mean aging the infants down to the age of two and would come within the scope of the existing insurance and Ofsted.

*(Jo Lubbers arrived at 6.10pm.)*

The business plan will be sent to the LA shortly, but a quick reply is not expected. Due diligence and recommendations to council officers can take time. A school in similar circumstances has already waited six months to hear from the LA since submitting their business plan and has decided to go ahead with their proposal anyway without LA backing. The GB would take responsibility for that decision and in that particular case, it involved new infrastructure for the project.

This proposal is more manageable as the infrastructure and all provisions are already in place, as well as the expertise to lead and manage a nursery. Nursery assistants would have to be employed; some equipment and resources would need to be purchased, and the curriculum would need writing up. HT has been trying to ascertain what will happen to the resources at the pre-school, although the LA is adamant these should be distributed equally in the local area.

Children coming to the infants from the pre-school have not been school-ready for the most part. The level of education at the pre-school seems to be of a lower quality and this has therefore impacted the EYFS provision, as extra time and resources, such as nurture groups, have had to be put in place to give these children extra support. This proposal ensures these children coming through from nursery will be at the requisite level and this ultimately impacts the year 6 SATs results.

**Q: Are the staff at the infants on board with this proposal?**

Yes, they are very keen to have cohorts that are ready for school and for EYFS. Staff have helped write the vision for the business plan.

**Q: From a Year R perspective, would the stretching of resources not be a concern? Would it be a Year R teacher managing the nursery?**

No. A year R teacher would not be taken away from the Year R children. A nursery manager would be appointed to run the nursery, so it would be a new role, possibly undertaken by an existing member of staff. The manager might need a small allocation of time to undertake some PPA to manage the curriculum. The school budget cannot be used to support the SBN. It would be an entirely separate budget, so it would not impact upon the existing budget. The positive reputation of the infant school would stand the school in good stead to get backing for the SBN proposal and would make a positive difference to the children who attend.

**Q: Where are the other local pre-schools?**

The only other council-led pre-school is Burghclere. All the other nurseries are privately run. Children attending Burghclere pre-school often go on to attend Burghclere school.

**Q: How much of the increased quality of nursery provision would be coming through to school? Would it be enough to sustain this proposal?**

Even a small number of pupils has a significant impact. The five pupils in the current Year R nurture group require considerable time and resources, which would not have been necessary, had they had a higher level of education at the pre-school. A lot of time and resources have been invested in the children coming up from the existing pre-school, as they were not school-ready. ECHPs had not been applied for when they should have been, meaning this had to be done too, creating extra work for the EY staff. All this provides a strong case for the SBN proposal.

When the pre-school closes its doors at the end of this term, the existing children in all likelihood will no longer attend a pre-school or nursery as they are not able to get to Burghclere and this has a knock-on effect for the infants. The impact of Covid has already been seen, where children went under the radar and the concern is this might happen again with the closure of the pre-school. It also raises a safeguarding issue. There are currently only about six or seven children at the pre-school; numbers have decreased dramatically. The hours of childcare offered by Burghclere pre-school are 9am-3pm, which is not always viable for working parents.

Offering longer hours and wraparound childcare presents a strong case.

**Q: Is the wraparound care therefore 7.30am–6pm every day for 50 weeks of the year? It is not clear in the proposal.**

Yes, this would be the offering. HT to make tweaks to the business plan so that this is clear. **ACTION.** It would not be competing with Quackers for children at school.

The next step is to submit the business plan and ask for a possible timescale for reply.

**Q: If we wait until September, have we missed the boat with children going elsewhere?**

September is ambitious. It is important to be patient and get the necessary steps in place first.

**Q: How would the provision of meals be dealt with?**

Mealtimes would have to differ from the rest of the school and the kitchen would have to cater to this. Other facilities would also have to be put in place, such as a nappy changing area and a napping area.

**Q: Would the outdoor space for the SBN be separate?**

Yes. The SBN would have the area where the sandpit and wendy house is now. The future of the witch's hat would be considered.

**Q: What would be the situation with parking, and would there be an impact on existing parking?**

	<p>The plan is that parents could park at the village hall once the pre-school has closed. Arrival times would be staggered. HT is also going to approach the local Parish to ask if our current school parents could also use this space for parking. It is appreciated that the village hall has other bookings, but it is hoped these would be at later times, meaning this option would be viable.</p> <p><b><i>The GB voted unanimously in favour of the SBN proposal and to submitting the business plan to the LA.</i></b></p>
6. Discussion on Interim Headship	See separate minute.
<p>7. Headteacher's report (written)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Catering update</li> <li>• School sites discussion</li> <li>• Class structures for 2025</li> </ul>	<p><b>Education Catering:</b></p> <p>It has gone out to tender. Companies are currently responding to the tender process. The new provider should be known by July. Onboarding with the new provider takes place in the autumn term, with the new catering starting in January.</p> <p><b>School sites discussion:</b></p> <p>See separate minute.</p> <p><b>Class/staffing structures for 2025:</b></p> <p>See separate minute.</p> <p><b>SATs monitoring:</b></p> <p>This was carried out successfully and all relevant rules were adhered to. CM submitted his positive monitoring</p>

report. The test results come out in the first week of July and these will be looked at in the July FGB. Confirmation that the school will be moderated has been received and this will be in the afternoon of Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June for the Year 6 writing. They will look at five children's work and will liaise with their teachers. If their work has been correctly assessed, it will be signed off by the moderators. A mix of abilities will be sought.

**Data drop:**

Year 3 has been raised as a concern and boosters have been put in place for this cohort. There is a high proportion of children on the SEN register in this year: 35%.

**Q: How much are these children going to shift?**

The 35% on the SEN register in this year group will not shift enough to meet ARE. The focus is on those who are not on the SEN register and are not meeting ARE. It is still important to show SEN children are making progress but with smaller steps. Regular meetings are taking place regarding these children.

Since writing the HT's report, there have been two incidents of homophobic behaviour at the junior school, which was very disappointing. Conversations were had with these children to see whether they understood what they were saying. It was clear they did not understand the impact or meaning of what they had said and did not

	<p>realise it was so offensive. There will be an assembly in June around Pride week with a focus on this.</p> <p><b>Vision Statement:</b></p> <p><b><i>With the addition of AM's wording and the amendments made by HT, this was approved by the GB.</i></b></p> <p><b>Collective Worship and RE Policy:</b></p> <p><b><i>Both also approved.</i></b></p>
8. Financials	<p>LC talked through the budget report.</p> <p><b>Q: Do the majority of parents contribute to trips?</b></p> <p>Yes. Those who have not paid will be chased up. Disadvantaged families are subsidised, so they do not miss out.</p> <p>The increase in NI contributions has had a big impact. For a member of staff on a £30k salary, an extra £1k in tax has to be paid for NI contributions.</p> <p>The staff changes for the coming year have not been reflected in the budget report, therefore extra money should be available. Hopefully, the figures will look more positive in due course.</p> <p><b><i>The budget report and three-year budget plans were approved by the GB.</i></b></p>

	<p>LC and HM continue to meet three times a year to discuss any financial matters, including the petty cash and asset register.</p>
<p>9. Committee Update</p> <p>a. Resourcing and Compliance</p> <p>b. Teaching &amp; Learning</p> <p>c. Safeguarding</p>	<p><b>Resourcing:</b></p> <p><b><i>The updated TOR for the Pay Panel was approved by the GB.</i></b> Meetings can be moved around next year to fit around the T&amp;L committee.</p> <p><b>Teaching and Learning:</b></p> <p>GC, FA and JL had had their maths learning walk in the morning of 21<sup>st</sup> May. There were some discussions around ICT and working at greater depth, but overall, the walk was really inspiring and positive. Children seemed engaged and happy. GD will write up the report ready for the next T&amp;L committee meeting. Consistency has hugely improved. The governors noted that the use of TAs was very effective. There was a mixture of TAs working within the classroom; one was working with the main group whilst another was working 1:1 with a student focusing on similar work, and children in another breakaway group were also engaged and interacting. Governors were very impressed by the different strategies employed for teaching the mixed year groups and the independence shown by students who were adept at checking their own work. All were on task and all were enjoying it.</p> <p><b>Safeguarding:</b></p> <p>Nothing to report from NW. DM brought to HT's attention that week a child who had managed to leave the classroom and walk out of the school shortly before pick-up time. DM found the child on the path outside and brought him back to school. HT emphasised that he did</p>

	<p>not blame staff in any way for this incident; they have, however, been very upset by it. There must be a safe boundary, which the children are not able to violate.</p> <p>As a result, action has been taken to make the school a safer site at pick-up time. The main gate to the playground will remain closed until 3.15pm Parents can line up on the path next to the playground. DM noted that he thought it used to be safer when the children were released directly from their classrooms.</p> <p>The parents of the child in question had been spoken to in the playground at pick up time on the day and with a follow-up phone call later that day. The parents were ok about the incident. HT was very grateful to DM for finding the child and bringing him back into school and for generally dealing with the incident so calmly.</p>
10. ICT update	<p>One server is now serving both schools following the server upgrade installation that took place after the Easter holidays. Still a lot of teething issues. £12k spent for no tangible difference is frustrating. The computers in the ICT suite are working well with Windows 11, so these do not need to be replaced, which is good news.</p> <p>With regard to the purchase of 30 laptops and 30 tablets for each school, this will be reviewed in November at budget revision time. The PTA were reluctant to contribute towards this cost; it seems they interpreted this more as a cost towards the infrastructure of the school, rather than something the children would directly benefit from. After Woolfest, they will have more funds available, and it is hoped they will choose to contribute towards this cost later in the year. Their input will be needed for this, as it is</p>

	not within the school's budget otherwise. The PTA has to approve the expenditure, so it will be reviewed in the autumn term.
11. AOB	Update on Debbie West: see separate minute.
12. Next meeting 10 <sup>th</sup> July 2025 6-8pm at WHJS	Chair thanked the GB for coming and for their input. Meeting finished at 7.58pm.

**Signed by Chair.....**

**Dated.....**

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>TO BE ACTIONED BY</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>
1. Details re the hours of the wraparound care in the SBN business plan need to be refined.	HT	5.