

Governing Board

Minutes



Date 19th March 2026	Time 6pm	Location St Thomas'
-------------------------	-------------	------------------------

<p>Member Present</p> <p>Paul Davies (HT) Chris McGowan Gemma Duff Lynsey Cooper Danny Millington Fiona Ashworth</p> <p>In attendance: Kathryn Knapp Sarah Allchurch (Clerk)</p>	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Jo Jones Jo Lubbers Lisa Rodrigues Jon Strefford Nicola Weeks</p> <p>Meeting was quorate and started at 6pm after a tour of Little Pioneers and the new library.</p>
--	--

TOPIC	NOTES
1. Welcome and Opening Prayer, Apologies	FA started the meeting with a prayer. Welcome from the Chair.
2. Pecuniary interests	None.
3. Minutes from previous meeting on 28 th January 2026	Approved.
4. Chairman's comments	Little Pioneers looked fantastic, particularly working within the available budget, making it easier to attract interest now parents can see it.
5. Headteacher's report (verbal)	The SEFs for both schools have now been written. The SEF for the infants is still in draft and yet to be sent out, however. EY

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LLPR visit at St Thomas' on 5th March • Parents' evening updates • SBN update • Updates against the FIP • Staffing and staff wellbeing update 	<p>is predicted to be assessed as 'strong standard', and this should have been verified by the LLPR visit in March. It is worth bearing in mind now which governors will attend the Ofsted inspection as questions will be put to them. Alison Rhodes would have liked to see a variation of governors at the LLPR visits, rather than CM and FA again. A pool of governors should be prepared and ready to step up on the day, if needed.</p> <p>One tricky question put to CM and FA at the LLPR at the infants was whether there was a different focus for improvement at the infants to the juniors, and they did not have the relevant expertise to answer this. The focus for T&L is different at the infants to the juniors; the T&L expectations are different. For example, the phonics is a big focus at the infants, but this needs to be developed further at the juniors for those who have not met expectations in phonics.</p> <p>GD suggested adding in another tick box on her monitoring plans to indicate which school a topic relates to.</p> <p>There were lots of positives to take from the LLPR at the infants, although it did not go quite as well as had been hoped. The HT was not well on the day, and there were a few things that might have been better challenged. Year R, however, came out as very strong, and was described as 'idyllic'. Another positive was the phonics teaching across the school, and GD confirmed this on her visit to the school today too. The children spoke positively to the inspector and there was a good focus on vocabulary in year R, who were engaged in purposeful activity. Wider provision was considered excellent. The expectation is that 80% will be assessed at the 'good' level, which will be a 10% increase on the last visit.</p>
--	--

There were also lots of positives in years 1 and 2, and high aspirations were evident, although the teaching was sometimes muddled and needed further development. The half a morning visit was not enough time to get an accurate reflection. A research exercise year 1 was doing on owls was deemed not age appropriate and too advanced. Consistency in SPaG needed to be ensured in books across all subjects. SLT will spend more time in classrooms going forwards until the inspection. GD carried out an English learning walk with Caroline today and HT carried out a maths learning walk with Tom yesterday, and these visits will be more regularly carried out, as leaders do need to be at the infants more often. Feedback on the LLPR report has been given to staff. Staff also need to be more confident about talking about the SEF.

SIP:

The maths learning walk with Tom yesterday was very positive. Tom needs to complete the Calculation Policy and ensure teaching expectations for each year group are stated within it and that approaches at both schools are aligned. Governors need to familiarise themselves with this policy, which is a localised HCC policy. Tom will finalise this when back from paternity leave.

It is important to note that the reason the Standards Team was introduced was to get both the maths and English teams working together to align the visions and approaches for each. All staff can be part of this team; it is a vehicle for setting the approach.

GD carried out the English learning walk with Caroline today. (SEN and outdoor learning will be the focus of the summer term.) GD did not visit upper school as they were in the

middle of SATs preparation, but Caroline explained what they were doing and that she is happy with the delivery of lessons. She had liaised with KK about the delivery of SEND provision, where there is variation and adaption for individual learners in each class. This needs more work in upper school, as variation for those with ECHPs in years 5 and 6 is not meeting the needs of those individuals and this has been fed back to staff. Variation for this cohort is much more embedded in the lower school, where the ECT is well supported, and work is shared across the three classes. Variation in foundation subjects is a focus for the inset day next week. There is no need for specific training on the topic, however, as staff are aware of what needs to be done to support this cohort. AI can be used as a tool for adapting text for a child with SEND needs, for example. This would enable the child to work independently rather than having to rely on TA assistance. There are a high number of children with ECHPs in years 5 and 6, so this is especially important, where 1:1 support is not available.

Oracy was also discussed at the last Standards meeting, and how this is being taught in each class. Caroline will be focusing on this to embed this further.

GD saw some excellent teaching at the infants; class teachers were strong in the delivery of their lessons and children were engaged and able to complete the tasks set. Dictation was effective, where the same sentence was focused on all week and SPaG was developed.

Caroline is pleased with the improvement she has seen in the English teachers at the juniors teaching in the Woolton Hill way. Teachers are gaining independence through careful planning and are moving away from the need for support. TAs, however, needed to support the children more,

and this again comes down to planning and the teacher directing the TA as to what they should be doing in lessons and how they can help the pupils. This will be discussed at the inset day.

The T&L meeting has been moved back a week to allow for the data drop to be analysed this week, quality control to take place next week and pupil progress meetings the week after Easter.

SBN:

A huge amount of work has been done on Little Pioneers. An excellent team is in place with Stacey Macdonald as the EY leader, Juels Marsh as nursery manager, and Alex Ferguson as nursery assistant. (Alex is about to qualify at level 3.) The nursery has the same set-up as Hedgehogs, so it will be a smooth transition into year R for the children. Juels is excellent in her current role and will make a fantastic manager. However, she needs a minimum level 3 qualification, which it turns out she does not have, as she started the course, but did not finish it. She was assured at the time that she could be signed off at level 3 on the part she had completed and has since had ten years' experience. Qualifications have been tightened up since then, and HT has not been able to complete the checks. This has delayed her start date. There is a possible solution, if the Montessori school she was at is not willing to sign her off at level 3. This is the 'experienced based route', where a highly experienced person, who does not have the requisite qualifications, can be assessed by the school themselves on the number of hours of experience, of which Juels has more than enough. This is not a transferable, external verification, however. Stacey will assess her. Juels will also have to do a

certification for the required level of maths. Her English is sufficient.

Both Alex and Juels start their positions on 13th April. Nicola Baker will replace Juels for the final term of this academic year.

Applications:

There have been 18 first choice applications for year R for September and 40 applications in total. Numbers are down generally. This will have an impact on the budget and therefore implications for staffing levels, and whether it is sustainable to support SEN children and the large number of ECHPs. The junior school will shift to a four-class structure in September, which will mean larger classes, but the same number of TAs can remain.

The financial impact of the falling numbers at the infants will not be evident this year, it will be the following year that the budget will start to decrease. TAs have been employed on fixed term contracts or 1-year contracts to allow for flexibility in the future. In HCC, after two years' service, an employee accrues the same rights as a permanent worker and a restructure down the line is to be avoided. Not only is it a huge amount of work, but it is also bad for staff morale, so the resourcing committee needs to carefully look at the numbers over the 3-year plan in the summer term.

Q: Are we highlighting staff who are close to the two-year mark in the budget?

Yes. There is also flexibility of moving staff to the junior school to get round it. The budgets for both schools are entirely separate and are not allowed to cross over.

	<p>Three children across the federation are on a reduced timetable and governors need to be aware of this, as it impacts attendance and behaviour (the latter as a result of exclusions and suspensions). The LA must be notified of a child on reduced hours, and this is reviewed every six weeks. The LA keep track of it.</p> <p><i>(See confidential minutes for further discussions.)</i></p> <p>Q: Are HT and KK still doing lunch covers?</p> <p>Only occasionally now, but generally the staffing situation is back to normal, and we are fully staffed at both schools.</p>
<p>6. Committee Update</p> <p>a. Resourcing and Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFVS approval • Policies to review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little Pioneers Admissions Policy <p>b. Teaching & Learning</p> <p>c. Safeguarding</p>	<p>a) The benchmarking data was looked at in the recent resourcing meeting and HM will prepare a brief report on this for governors. There is a lot of data available, and quite a few of the questions in the SFVS document concern benchmarking, so it is important the governors understand it. The documents for both schools are otherwise broadly similar to last year's. The documents were approved by the GB and signed by the Chair ready for submission at the end of March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to one amendment in the introduction (the Government "has introduced" entitlement from April 2024, rather than "is introducing"), the Little Pioneers Admission Policy was approved. <p>b) T&L already covered and nothing to add.</p> <p>c) NW was not at the meeting, so no update on safeguarding this time. It will be discussed at the next meeting.</p>
<p>7. AOB</p>	<p>WGB Training:</p>

- Feedback on WGB training on 5th February and update on next training on Ofsted

Q: The training highlighted the high level of children with ECHPs at our schools, but the local area generally also has a high level. Is this not a good thing?

This can be seen as a good thing, as it means staff are doing their job correctly in highlighting those with extra needs and supporting them. Staff should be taking the time to apply for ECHPs. There is often resistance in making the applications as they are costly (schools fund the first £6,000 themselves) and incredibly time-consuming. Our schools are in line with the area, so it is not a red flag. KK has applied for all the ECHPs at the federation.

Q: Are we applying for them early enough?

Yes, definitely. KK is currently applying for one for a child about to start in Little Pioneers. This will come under the infant school budget for when he starts in year R.

ECHPs do not often cease once they start. However, under the Government White Paper, this will change and plans will be removed at the end of year 6. There are probably more ECHPs in affluent areas as parents have the means and knowledge to apply for them, which is a positive. The definition of the 'local area' is unclear; it is more local than Basingstoke and Deane.

AOB:

Q: Is HT aware of the new guidance on the new Sex Education policy?

Yes: it will be reviewed and discussed in due course.

Q: Do we have a cyber security policy?

No. We should do. Chair to look at this. **ACTION.**

St Thomas' has been selected as one of the Tesco blue token charities and this will help raise funds for the pond.

It will be JJ's last day next Thursday. Governors will buy her a leaving gift. HT is planning a leaving do at school at 10.45am that day which governors can attend.

	<i>The meeting ended at 7.52pm.</i>
8. Next meeting(s) 21 st May 2026 6pm at WHJS 9 th July 2026 6pm at St Thomas'	

