

Governing Board

Agenda & Minutes



Date 21 st May 2026	Time 6pm	Location WHJS
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Member Present Chris McGowan (Chair) Paul Davies (HT) Gemma Duff Nicola Weeks Danny Millington In attendance: Fiona Ashworth (until her re-appointment as Foundation Governor is resolved) Kathryn Knapp Helen McManus Sarah Allchurch (clerk)	Apologies Lynsey Cooper Jo Lubbers Absent: Jon Strefford Lisa Rodrigues Meeting was quorate and started at 6.03pm.
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TOPIC	NOTES
1. Welcome and Opening Prayer. Apologies.	Welcome from the Chair. Prayer from FA. Apologies from LC and JL. (LR and JS were absent.)
2. Pecuniary interests	None.
3. Minutes from previous meeting (19 th March)	Approved subject to one amendment.

4. Chair's comments	The SATs took place last week. The Chair carried out the SATs monitoring visit and confirmed that the tests were all carried out correctly.
5. Financials: • Approve annual budget plan and 3-year budget plan (by 31st May) • Approve budget outturn reports • Capital account – flooring quotes for Year R classroom • Benchmarking report	Juniors The current year spend for 2025-2026 results in a small in-year deficit, which will eat into the cumulative surplus. However, the carry forward of £77,341 is higher than the predicted £49,427 due to savings having been made in certain areas, including on catering, as well as unexpected income having been received including extra income for EHCPs. (See LC's report to governors.) Fundamentally though, the cumulative surplus is on a downward trajectory and goes into deficit in year three. Capital has been spent for the year on IT upgrades and new equipment, which was partly funded by the PTA, as the capital allocation did not cover the full amount. Staffing costs are broadly in line with other comparative HCC schools. Infants The current year ends with a larger than expected carry forward of £52,404, an improvement against the revised November budget. All capital has been spent, again on IT equipment and upgrades, also partially funded by the PTA. Extra income has been received for EHCPs and for solar panels and there has been a saving on catering costs. Oil and electricity have also been less than anticipated. The cumulative surplus is still on a downward trajectory over the three-year plan and goes into deficit in year three. Pupil numbers are down for 2026/2027, mainly due to the bulge year 2 cohort moving up to year 3 next year. Class structure for next year The proposal is to reduce to four classes at the juniors next year. It is appreciated that there will be an impact on staff and children as a result. However, the deficit will be significant in year 3 if five classes remain. The plan was to reduce to four classes the following year, but

	this is only putting off a problem that will still need to be resolved at some point. It makes more financial sense to address it now. Currently, staffing costs are still slightly high, but a better balance is being achieved now by a mix of more senior teachers and ECTs. The only planned capital expenditure for next year is for the Year R flooring. Quotes are being obtained for this. Replacing the flooring in Little Pioneers has also highlighted the need for new flooring in year R. A buffer for new kitchen equipment also needs to be built up, as this is now in the federation's remit. SBN Numbers for the SBN are not yet available, but staffing costs have been included in the nursery budget. A fabulous job has been done in getting the SBN ready. The remainder of the Sports Premium allocated to the infants was used for the outdoor area, which was a good way to spend this money. The £4k for the SBN flooring was paid out of the St Thomas' budget and will need to be repaid by the nursery. Q: Are the sports coaches no longer coming to school? Yes, they are, but they are on a cycle. Q: If JJ had not left, what would happen then? It was always the plan to reduce to four classes. The ECT employed on a fixed term contract can now remain and be offered a permanent contract because of JJ's departure. Fixed-term contracts can be offered where financial cuts are anticipated. Q: If the PTA had not been able to cover the costs of the IT upgrades and equipment, what would have been the outcome? The PTA often has to step in to cover a shortfall in necessary expenditure. Q: If the Federation goes into deficit soon and there is no money, what happens? These financials always make a situation seem catastrophic, but in fact the situation is hard to predict as unexpected income is often
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	received. The 3-year plan is the worst-case scenario, but it is often better. EFS do not seem worried either. Q: It should be raised as a wider issue as to why some budget shares are higher per child in certain areas than others. This is an issue for the government, and it is too big a scope for the school to worry about. What is most important now is to focus on the Ofsted coming up. 85% of the budget is spent on staffing costs and the federation does not receive any deprivation funding; overall, there are not many spaces available. Numbers are now up to 27 at the infants for next year and numbers are over PAN at the juniors. The SLT are doing all they can to manage the budgets. A good Ofsted and the success of Little Pioneers will go a long way to attract new pupils, and that is the immediate focus. Q: Every year we are told the Sports Premium may not be paid to the federation, but so far it has continued. The criteria for this changed a year ago and became narrower making it harder to find things to spend it on. The premium is not supposed to be used for capital items, so creative ways to spend it have to be thought of. Subject to discussions below, the budget documents were approved. <i>(See confidential minutes for further discussions here.)</i>
6. Headteacher's written report Other updates: • Class structures for 2026 update – 4 class structure	Class Structure Next year, there will be two lower school classes and two upper school classes at the juniors. There will be a TA in each class as well, on either full-time or part-time schedules, as well as a 1:1 TA where needed. It is appreciated that smaller classes are better, but the reality is this is not financially viable. In any case, in line with the benchmarking report, a class of 34 pupils is comparative and considered usual. Q: Do the parents know about the new class structure for next year? No, but there is speculation. Once it is clear what staff will be here next year, the conversations can take place and planning can begin.

• Staffing decisions and extension of TLR • Little Pioneers update • Updates against the FIP • Staff wellbeing	Q: What are the other options? There are no other options; staying at five classes will result in significant deficit. Q: Is it not possible to increase deficit? No. This is not a sensible option; it is the job of the school and the GB to ensure that the school does not get into significant deficit and that it manages its finances sensibly. A restructure is to be avoided at all costs, as is close and constant monitoring by HCC once in such deficit. Children with high needs will be spread across the classes to ensure a balance is struck. Smaller classes may be easier to manage, but research in fact shows that bigger classes have no measurable impact on children's progress and attainment. Of course, consideration needs to be given to the impact the new structure will have on the staff and children; a balance of abilities, genders and siblings needs to be achieved. That said, every year proves challenging in choosing classes and the structure behind them. Years 5 and 6 will be mixed next year, although this is not a long-term plan. The governors voted on the proposal to go to a four-class structure next year. This proposal was approved by a 4:1 majority vote. Budgets were signed by the Chair. HM will start the nursery budget shortly, once the May budget for the federation has been submitted. <i>(HM left the meeting at 7.56pm.)</i> HT report Long-term objectives on the FIP need updating. This will be done after the Ofsted inspection takes place, when the feedback from the inspection can be incorporated into the FIP. Embedding the existing objectives is the current priority, such as retrieval practice, the calculation policy, oracy, and inclusion work. HT and KK have had meetings and started writing the inspection plan, the first draft of which will be produced after half term. There will be feedback in it from all staff.
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	Q: Has there been feedback from other schools on the Ofsted inspection? Yes, it is a hot topic of conversation! The bar has risen, although there is no direct comparison between the old and the new frameworks. The current expected standard is very high and is more aligned with the previous 'good' standard. A key part of the plan ahead of the Ofsted is to develop leadership across both schools. Staff at the infants still feel that they lack a voice within the federation. The standards team is still relatively new and needs to develop, but SLT met recently and conversations took place amongst teaching staff at both schools. The outcome was that the infants staff felt better listened to. There are a range of measures in the improvement plan to address this, which shows that the issue is being addressed. Better collaboration is needed, although teachers need to be mindful that decisions ultimately lie with the SLT and the GB. A good solution would be to have a staff governor from the infants join the GB. This will be raised at the next inset day. Behaviour (See confidential minutes for further discussions.) Q: How do we score severity of exclusions? It is the HT's decision, but the guidelines are unclear. Repeated exclusions and incidents are not sustainable for staff or children. There will likely be more suspensions going forwards. KK has booked the annual reviews for current year 6 pupils with EHCPs and prepared a handover package for another year 6 pupil with high needs but no plan.
7. Committee Update a. Resourcing and Compliance	Policies <u>Complaints Policy:</u> There have been a couple of complaints recently which have highlighted the fact that the federation's complaints policy is not in line with HGS's best practice guidelines. The Chair explained the discrepancy whereby the guideline is for a two-step

b. Policies to review: - Physical Intervention Policy 2026 and DofE guidance - PSHE Policy - Complaints Policy - Accessibility Action Plan - Little Pioneers policies: 1. Parental Feedback and Communication Policy 2. Bottles, Cups and Dummies Policy 3. Food and Nutrition Policy c. Teaching & Learning d. Safeguarding	process rather than a three-step process as is outlined in the school's policy, where a complaint goes to the HT first, then the Chair, then to a governor panel. The two-step process eliminates the need for the complaint to go to the Chair. Whatever is stated in the school policy must be adhered to. The Chair is happy to leave the policy as it is but will review it again and this will be discussed at the next FGB. ACTION. Little Pioneers Stacey Macdonald has written these three policies where the content was not covered by existing policies. <i>Apart from the Complaints Policy, all policies on the agenda were approved.</i> Teaching & Learning GD is carrying out a learning walk at the infants on 17th June at 11.30am, in which she will go through the monitoring plan. The walk will start with a 15-minute chat with Stacey, followed by a visit to Little Pioneers and then year R. DM and NW agreed to attend too. Safeguarding NW carried out the SCR check a few weeks ago and is doing another one on 3rd June. NW will also have a chat with HT about safeguarding as well as seeing HM at 9am at the infants to go through pre-appointment checks. The FIP will contain a section on safeguarding.
7. AOB - GB meeting structure	1. GB structure: The Chair put forward the option of moving to a flat structure where there would only be FGB meetings and no committees. The advantage of this is that all governors would attend and be party to all discussions, even though the meetings would inevitably be longer to cover all agenda items. The other alternative would be to keep the existing structure and send all agendas out to

	the whole GB, so any governor could attend if they wish. The GB will give some thought to this, and it will be discussed at the next FGB. ACTION. 2. Ofsted readiness plan: A governor will be assigned to each of the topics within the plan. FA will cover inclusion, NW will cover safeguarding and CM will cover leadership. Other topics to be covered are Early Years and T&L. 3. Bewley Homes: BH have sold to another developer and therefore the planning permission will have to be re-submitted. This delays any potential extra pupils coming to the federation. 4. SIAMS inspection: this will not be happening next year as the federation is not on the list for next year's inspections. <i>Meeting ended at 8.10pm.</i>
9. Next meeting(s) 9th July 2026 6-8pm at St Thomas'	