

SUTTON ON THE FOREST CHURCH OF ENGLAND
VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED PRIMARY SCHOOL

DRAFT MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
WEDNESDAY 26th MARCH 2025 6pm

FINANCE/RESOURCES MEETING

Small school, big heart, aiming higher together

Our vision is to “value everyone” to enable them to develop curiosity, ignite a love of learning, discover talents and reach their full potential in a caring and secure environment.

*This vision is rooted in our Christian values of **respect, compassion, friendship and perseverance** that are at the heart of our school.*

1 Peter 3.8: ‘...be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.’

Proverbs 22:6: ‘Start children off in the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.’

Core Functions of a Governing Body

The core functions of the governing body include ensuring:

- that the vision, ethos and strategic direction of the school are clearly defined
- that the headteacher performs their responsibilities for the educational performance of the school
- the sound, proper and effective use of the school’s financial resources

PRESENT: Prof H Hall (Chair), Mrs H Pye (Headteacher), Mrs T Comfort (Deputy Chair), Mrs C Allan (online), Mr N Boycott , Mrs H Morris, Mrs J Neill, Mr J Plant, Ms J Porter

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms C Knights (clerk), Miss Alex Hatley (shadowing clerk)

Minute No. _____

Gov 1 Prayer

The Chair opened the meeting with the school prayer.

**Gov 2 Apologies for absence, consents and declarations of interest.
Reminders regarding confidentiality, gifts and hospitality.
Notification of AOB.**

There were no declarations of interests, gifts or hospitality.

The Chair reminded Governors of the need to respect confidentiality.

There were no items of AOB.

There were no apologies. Mrs S Hodgkinson and Mrs J Reynolds were unexpectedly unable to attend.

Gov 3 Approve minutes for signature

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2025 were approved. The Chair signed the minutes and passed them to the Headteacher to be filed in school. The approved minutes would be available on the school website.

Gov 4 Matters arising from 26th February 2025 minutes and Action Plan

There were no matters arising not covered in the Action Plan update or agenda.

Action Plan update

1. Governor biographies on school website. Ongoing. Photographs of Mr Boycott and Mrs Hodgkinson were still needed. The photographer would be in school on 27th March if this would be a useful option for these Governors.

2. Veritau. The Headteacher had started to review the audit and would provide feedback on actions when the review is complete.

3. Annual Governance Statement. Ongoing.

4. Maintenance. The Headteacher had sent out an update to parents about the new gate and adjustments to the spring and to the sensitivity of the opening mechanism. The Headteacher noted that a keypad might be necessary for exit (as well as entry) if the sensitivity cannot be set at an appropriate level

5. Safer Recruitment training. Ongoing. The Headteacher noted that Safer Recruitment training needed to be renewed at least every three years. Mrs Morris noted that she believed she was still within this time period.

(Ms Porter arrived at this point in the meeting – 6.10pm)

6. Bring SIAMS SEF to Governing Body. Deliver SIAMS training to Governors. Pupil/parent voice on Church Distinctiveness and enrichment. It was agreed that this would be brought to the next Governing Body meeting with a focus on School Improvement (July 2025)

7. Quotes for extractor fan in kitchen. The Headteacher had been advised that the extractor fan was as good as it could be and that the solution to improving ventilation in the kitchen would be a bigger window opening. The Headteacher is currently seeking quotes for this.

8. Circulate asset management plan template to Mr Boycott. Ongoing.

9. Include values on annual agenda of Governing Body. Date to include this on the agenda still to be finalised.

10. Explore how to survey staff in a small school through the Headteacher group. The Headteacher would be attending the cross-authority network meeting in Doncaster and would raise this question there.

11. Governors to consider a risk register. The Chair and Mr Boycott commented that a risk register could be time consuming and did not always add value. Mrs Morris noted that in her experience a risk register had been of value. Mrs Morris would review the risk register template and feedback her views. The Chair emphasised that many aspects are covered by insurance, and the risk register should focus on the uninsured.

12. Clarify who needs to give official permission for sale of school land (owned by LA). Mrs Morris had identified that this is Marjorie Wileman, however she still needed to research this further. Mrs Morris would send all the paperwork to the Headteacher to be filed in school.

13. Progress investigations of options for new /improved classroom. See agenda item 14.

14. Headteacher to arrange access to NGA for Mr Boycott. Ongoing.

15. Governors to inform HT of any comments on SG audit. Governors had no further comments and SG audit was submitted in accordance with the deadline.

Gov 5 Chair's opening remarks

Succession planning

a) The Chair discussed with Governors the importance of succession planning, noting his own departure from the Governing Body at the end of the academic year and the retirement of the clerk at Easter. Ms Porter had written to the Chair to suggest that discussion would be useful at this point to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.

b) Ms Porter confirmed that she is happy to put herself forward for the role of Chair. She also emphasised the importance of a competitive process in the election of a Chair of Governors.

c) The Chair invited Governors to come forward if they are interested in standing for election. The Chair also stated that nominations from Governors would be welcome. If nominations were received, the Chair would approach the Governor nominated to discuss whether they would be willing to stand for election.

d) Miss Hatley noted that some schools found it useful to have joint Chairs and Ms Porter stated that she would also be willing to act as joint Chair if there was anyone who was interested in this approach.

e) The Chair then outlined the role of Chair of Governing Body, noting also the induction pack he had prepared and circulated to all Governors. The Chair highlighted the importance of leading the Board, leading on vision and purpose, leading on setting the strategy and ensuring this fits with the school development plan. He noted the legal and statutory responsibilities involved in the role, and the importance of adhering to the Nolan principles. The Chair emphasised the importance of maintaining a strategic focus. The Chair noted the visible aspects of the role, not only chairing Governing Body meetings but also in relationships with stakeholders. The Chair described the Governing Body meeting agenda setting process. He also emphasised that the role can be done by anyone, whether retired, or working full-time/part-time. It could involve as much time as the individual finds works for them. To conclude, the Chair mentioned that there was plenty of training and reading available to support the role.

A Governor questioned how long it was before the Chair himself felt comfortable in the role. The Chair stated that he had been comfortable from the beginning and that if colleagues were comfortable as a Governor, then they could also be comfortable as Chair. For him, the biggest challenge was going through all the policies because this had not been kept up to date. This is not the case now. The Chair emphasised how well the school is now managed.

f) It was agreed that it would be helpful to identify the next Chair of Governors as soon as possible in the Summer term, and for this person to attend the agenda planning meetings etc held during the Summer term alongside the current Chair, to ensure smooth transition. The clerk state that the usual timing had been for the election to take place in June or July, and the Chair noted that the election could take place at any time in the academic year.

g) It was agreed that Governors would contact the Chair if they are interested in standing for election.

Gov 6 Order of business
Agreed.

Gov 7 Headteacher update

a) Staff update. The Headteacher reported that a teacher (early career teacher) had been successfully recruited to cover Mrs Neill's maternity leave from May half-term. There would be a two-week handover and the Headteacher would be her mentor.

b) Pupil numbers. The Headteacher reported that there had been 19 first choice applications for the school's September admissions. The school would

be accepting 15 pupils, in accordance with the PAN (published admission number).

c) Finance. The Headteacher reported on a £10k variance in the budget arising from two dual registered children. Sutton on the Forest had budgeted as the main school, with the other school as the subsidiary school. However, the main school funding had been allocated to the other school. The Headteacher was working to resolve this.

d) Parental concern. The Headteacher described an incident that had happened outside school alongside an issue with messaging between children also outside school, with particular reference to a game circulating at the moment. The parents of the child involved had met with the Headteacher, and subsequently with the Headteacher and a Governor to express their concerns. Governors discussed the school's open door approach and building up good relationships with parents as a village school. Governors considered the strategies required to underpin this. The Headteacher emphasised that the child is fine and happy at the school.

A Governor questioned whether the children have their mobile phones in school. The Headteacher confirmed that mobile phones were not allowed at school.

Gov 8 PAN (published admission number)

The Headteacher confirmed that the PAN is 15.

Gov 9 Budget monitoring

Governors reviewed the February 2025 Budget monitoring position. Discussion taken together with agenda item Gov 10.

Gov 10 Draft budget 25-26 for consideration

a) The Headteacher explained that this draft had been produced by the Bursar in order to give Governors the chance to discuss the budget but that more work was needed between now and May when the budget would come to the Governors for approval.

b) The Chair noted the difference between the in year position of -£35,612 and the expected out turn of -£37,172 and questioned the reason for this. The Chair highlighted also the balance brought forward from the previous year of £98,579 and the balance to carry forward to next year of £61,407, in the context of a variance to budget of -£1560. Mr Boycott noted that this was a slightly bigger loss than expected. The Headteacher explained that part of this was due to the allocation of funds as a subsidiary school rather than the main school (see agenda item 7c). She also noted that the pupil numbers had been lower than expected but that the numbers would increase at this year's

census. She emphasised that she would be discussing this more with the Bursar on Monday the following week.

c) **The Chair questioned** how the February monitoring included an expected out turn of £61,407 but the balance carried forward on the 2025-2026 draft Start Budget is £71,100. The Headteacher would check this with the Bursar in the meeting the following week.

d) The Chair commented that the forecast for 2026/27 and 2027/28 did not include all LA funding streams because finance that had not been confirmed was not included. This meant that the forecast would change.

e) Governors discussed training available for them on understanding school finances. The Chair highlighted training available on the NGA (National Governance Association website). Mr Boycott agreed to run a training session on school finances for the Governors, including a meeting to discuss the Start Budget ahead of the May Governing Body meeting. Several Governors expressed an interest including Mr Plant, Ms Porter, Mrs Morris and Mrs Allan.

f) To conclude **a Governor questioned** whether the school budget position was satisfactory. Both Mr Boycott and the Chair confirmed that there is nothing for Governors to be concerned about, and the Chair noted that it is very useful that funding can be carried forward to the next financial year(s).

g) The Headteacher confirmed that the Bursar would be attending the May Governing Body meeting and that by then the Start Budget 2025-2026 would be further refined.

Gov 11 Update on impact of Sports Funding spending 24-25

The Headteacher had circulated the Sports Premium report 24-25 and the Sports Premium report 23-24. Governors noted the variety of sports offered. The Headteacher stated that BMX had now been arranged.

The Chair questioned whether the Headteacher is happy with all the organisations who are delivering the sports for school. The Headteacher confirmed that she is happy with them.

There were no further questions or comments.

Gov 12 Update on impact of Pupil Premium funding spending 24-25

See minutes of Governing Body meeting held on December 4th 2025.

Gov 13 Safer internet:

- **GDPR and IT compliance of the school**

The Headteacher confirmed that the school is compliant in terms of Safer Internet. She noted that information on safe use of the internet is sent out to parents monthly.

Gov 14 Premises update including new classroom

a) The Headteacher summarised the findings of the two architects who had so far visited school. One architect had provided a costed proposal for a full feasibility study of three options. The second architect had been asked to focus on the annex.

b) The Headteacher emphasised that the architects had stated that the annex building currently being used for a Year 5/6 classroom is at the end of its life and is also too small for the number of pupils needing to be accommodated. Both architects would be able to prepare a feasibility study, and this would provide evidence that this classroom needed to be replaced.

c) The Governors discussed the cost of replacing the structure, estimated at £70k - £80k. Mr Boycott noted this was similar to the cost of a Portakabin (excluding the base and delivery). Governors discussed the possibility of this being financed by the local authority, the Diocese and the school together.

d) The Chair emphasised that before spending money on a feasibility study, the Governors and Headteacher needed more information on whether the local authority and Diocese would be willing to finance the new classroom. The Headteacher noted that the fee for a feasibility study focusing on just the annex would be less than that quoted so far (which covered 3 options).

e) Mrs Morris stated that she could approach a contact for a 3rd quote for a feasibility study.

Gov 15 Health and Safety update

The Headteacher reported that there had been a Health and Safety advisor visit and that she would be reviewing the actions. The Headteacher would report back on this to Governors at the next Full Governing Body meeting.

Gov 16 Safeguarding update from Headteacher

a) The Headteacher reported that there had been no safeguarding incidents or concerns.

b) Attendance. The Headteacher reported that there would be a local authority senior education advisor (SEA) visit by Michele Hattersley to discuss

attendance because the whole school average is below 95%. She emphasised that she had no safeguarding concerns associated with the attendance levels.

The Headteacher provided a detailed breakdown of the statistics for attendance across different school groups. The Headteacher noted the two groups of children with average attendance below 95% and discussed the details around these groups. The average for one of these groups is 80% and for the other 48%.

A Governor questioned what are the thresholds for concern, including for additional local authority attention. The Headteacher explained that 90% is regarded as persistent absence and 50% as a problem level of absence.

The Headteacher highlighted the positive impact represented by 80% attendance by one of the groups. Governors congratulated the Headteacher and staff on the achievement in encouraging attendance at this level by this group. The Headteacher noted the slight improvement in attendance by the second group.

A Governor questioned how the local authority would advise tackling the non-attendance in these cases. So far the Headteacher had not received any advice specific for these groups of children from the local authority.

A Governor questioned whether the meeting with the local authority would be minuted. The Chair stated that it would be important to have minutes for the meeting with the advisor because in fact the attendance of 80% for one of these groups is a success story.

Governors noted that they did not consider that there was a safeguarding concern associated with the attendance figures in these cases.

Gov 17 Any bullying or racist incidents

The Headteacher reported that there had been none.

Gov 18 Supporting mental health and wellbeing

a) The Headteacher reported that the submission for the Healthy School Award renewal had been completed.

b) The Headteacher reported that the Year 5/6 pupils had organised the Easter fair and had enjoyed the responsibility involved.

c) The Headteacher reported that the girls from Year 4/5/6 were working on resilience with York City football club.

The Chair questioned whether the Headteacher had any evidence or feeling that the children are more resilient as a result of all the fantastic work that has been and is being done around mental health and wellbeing. The

Headteacher stated that Pupil Voice had been collected after the Covid lockdowns, and was being looked into again now as part of the work towards the platinum level Healthy School Award.

The Headteacher and Staff Governor stated that the children's resilience does seem to have improved and highlighted examples of the positive impact of the playground initiatives recently introduced. The Staff Governor referenced feedback from one of the children after listening to chimes in class: "I feel really safe and loved in my school and feel really calm after listening to those chimes and I feel really loved by my friends."

d) The Headteacher noted that she was also looking into collecting feedback on staff wellbeing through a survey.

Gov 19 Approval of policies

There were no policies for approval.

Gov 20 Governor monitoring – feedback

There had been no Governor monitoring visits since the last Governing Body meeting but some are planned.

Gov 21 Governor training –feedback and upcoming dates

a) Mrs Allan reported back on the NYC Governors School Improvement Network meeting in March which had covered Early Years, wraparound care and English Hubs. There was also information on preparation for Ofsted. Mrs Allan would log this on the Google Drive.

b) Mrs Morris committed to completing the Prevent training.

c) Upcoming training. See agenda item Gov 10e on school finance training for Governors and SIAMS training for Governors in action plan Item 6.

Gov 22 Correspondence

The Chair reported that no correspondence had been received.

Gov 23 Any other business

None

Gov 24 Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 7th May 2025 6pm to be held in school.

Focus: Finance /Resources

The meeting closed at 7:30pm

Signed:

Chair of Governors

Date:

List of papers circulated by email in advance for this meeting:

1. Draft agenda
2. Sutton on the Forest February 26th 2025 draft Governing Body meeting minutes
3. Action plan Sutton on the Forest FGB February 26th 2025

List of papers shared on Google Drive

All the above and:

4. Sports Premium report 24-25
5. Sports Premium report 23-24
6. Architect's proposal : 3 options
7. Draft Start Budget 25-26 summary
8. Draft Start Budget 25-26 detailed
9. February 25 budget monitoring summary
10. February 25 budget monitoring detail

Shared in the meeting:

11. Pupil attendance report 2.9.25 – 21.3.25