

GREAT TORRINGTON SCHOOL

Academy Trust

Company Number 769819.

A Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England

Full Governing Board Committee Meeting

Thursday 12th December 2024 at 3.30pm in the Boardroom



Attendees	Initials	Position	Comments
Balman, Sharon	SB	Parent Governor	Present
Beer, Emma	EB	Member Appointed	Present
Bloodworth, Andy	ABL	Headteacher	Present
Chipperfield, Caroline	CC	Parent Governor	Present
Machin, Michael	MM	Co-opted Governor	Present
Newberry, Ian	IN	Member Appointed	Present
Wall, Lesley	LW	Co-opted Governor	Present
Whewell, Barry	BW	Member Appointed	Apologies
Wynne, Colin	CW	Co-opted Governor	Apologies
Pateman, Jo	JMP	Clerk to the Governing body	Present

MINUTES

Agenda Reference	Agenda Item	Information and Action Required	Action/ Decision
2024/25/ FGB/ 23	Apologies	Apologies had been received from BW and CW, these were approved.	I, D
2024/25/ FGB/ 24	Welcome	Governors welcomed Lizzie Cox, who is interested in becoming a staff governor. Lara Couch has also expressed interest in joining as a staff governor but was unable to attend this meeting. Lizzie introduced herself and left at 3.35pm.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 25	Conflicts of Interest	No conflicts declared.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 26	Vote of thanks	IN expressed a vote of thanks to Doug Smith for his long service to the board and the school as a governor. IN will write to Doug thanking him formally on behalf of the board.	I

2024/25/ FGB/ 27	Minutes and Matters Arising	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>ABL still to construct a letter to parents.</p> <p>MM advised that he had met with JMB to discuss sustainability and forming a subcommittee.</p> <p>Q – anything from the DfE re: when we need to implement carbon reduction plans? Effectively, it is 2025. MM would like to see something formalised at the end of the school year.</p> <p>Q – any specific knowledge required? MM contacted the Met Office, anything we want we can get from there in terms of expertise. MM has information on how to set up the climate action plan and has attended a training course. Governors agreed to add this to the next Resources agenda and agree the formation of a subcommittee.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2024 were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting and approved to be signed.</p> <p>NMM joined at 3.40pm.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>I</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>D</p> <p>D</p> <p>I</p>
2024/25/ FGB/ 30	Policies	<p>JSR was in attendance for this agenda item.</p> <p>The Menopause policy had been circulated to the board, most schools in Devon do now have a specific menopause policy and it has previously been raised by the unions. LW requested that the paragraph referring to 2017 be removed, with this amendment the policy was adopted.</p> <p>CC joined at 3.44pm.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>D</p> <p>I</p>
2024/25/ FGB/31	Wellbeing	<p>At the request of the board, JSR had created a Wellbeing Survey, which had been circulated to EB and CC as requested. The board requested that question 10 be changed to ‘<i>Do you feel you can access</i>’ and then agreed that JSR would circulate the survey in the New Year and feedback to FGB in February. JSR left at 3.48pm.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>D</p> <p>I</p>
2024/25/ FGB/ 28	Committee Matters	<p>Items brought to FGB from the T&L and Resources committees:</p> <p>T&L – work has been completed on deciding how to improve results next year and an action plan is in place. The school are adding an additional option and changing the length of the day. There was a lengthy discussion around the SIP and reviewing progress to date.</p> <p>Resources – Griffins were in attendance to discuss the external accounts. There was a cladding update and discussion around seeking further quotes. The catering contract was discussed at length and the committee agreed to go out to tender on a similar option to what we already have. The risk register was also reviewed.</p> <p>It was noted that this was the first audit with new auditors which has gone very well and feedback has been positive. IN advised that he had signed the final account this afternoon.</p> <p>The following policies had been approved by the Resources committee and were ratified by FGB:</p> <p>5 – Safeguarding policy – agreed to ratify following approval at Resources.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>I</p> <p>I</p> <p>D</p>

		<p>Q – do we need to improve the carrot? SLT had this very discussion earlier this week, there is a position in another school called ‘Head of Fun’ we spend a lot of money and time on response to negative behaviour but not as much on the positive behaviour. Potentially a TLR post, however SLT are so busy trying to solve the daily behaviour problems and don’t necessarily have the scope to do the ‘fun’ bit right now. Pupil voice could provide sensible suggestions for the fun rewards however pupils were asked to suggest rewards last year and didn’t raise anything worthwhile but we could revisit. NMM will identify pupils with 97% and above attendance and those with a good level of reward points to receive £20 Amazon vouchers.</p> <p>Governors discussed the suggestion of the LA to reduce permanent exclusions by imposing a levy of £21k on schools for each pupil permanently excluded. The board felt this demonstrated that Devon is in crisis with suspensions and exclusions, this led to a discussion around Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice. GTS are already promoting inclusive practice via our training and work of Paul Dix. The school can understand governors may feel slightly frustrated by behaviour but GTS are ahead of the curve in what we are trying to do and County are now doing this too but will be taking 2.5% from our budget to work on this.</p> <p>The board agreed that IN and ABL would contact the Head of Education to discuss our views. The behaviour policy was adopted.</p> <p>9 – Managing unreasonable behaviour – no changes, GTS version of what was a DCC policy. Governors adopted the policy.</p> <p>34 – Pay Policy – model policy. Governors adopted the policy.</p> <p>48 – Probationary policy – DCC policy. Governors adopted the policy.</p> <p>51 – Menopause at work policy. Governors adopted the policy.</p> <p>53 – Support staff appraisal policy (general update and reformat). Governors adopted the policy. Governors discussed whether support staff have training in conducting appraisals as there could potentially be a knowledge gap. Clerk to investigate potential training. Governors also requested that ABL consider support staff appraisals and how to encourage staff to view these as a positive tool for training and progression, rather than a tick box exercise.</p>	<p>Q</p> <p>I</p> <p>D</p> <p>D</p> <p>D</p> <p>D</p> <p>D</p>
2024/25/ FGB/ 32	Safeguarding	<p>NMM presented the safeguarding report to governors which both designated safeguarding leads had completed.</p> <p>The report had been raised at a recent safeguarding meeting and a comment section had been added. Summer term 1 there as 1 MASH enquiry, whereas we have made 5 this term. CP and CiN are the same but likely to increase as there are currently a number of ongoing social service assessments and numbers may therefore increase.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>I</p>

	<p>The school need to be able to collate and evidence how many TAFs there are and who within the school is the lead professional. A sub category has therefore been added to CPOMS to enable the school to analyse this data.</p>	I
	<p>22 pupils currently on reduced timetables.</p> <p>Q – there is a concern nationally that part time timetables are being used to deal with behaviour? At GTS we use par time timetables to assist with medical or mental health issues as a short term intervention to assist pupils who may be struggling with their attendance. NMM recently attended an EBSA course (emotional based school avoidance) and would argue that a percentage of our internal truanterers are suffering with EBSA. One of the strategies recommended for pupils with EBSA is to adapt and/or reduce their timetable. This should not be used to off roll pupils, it is purely a support strategy. ABL has tasked NMM with maintain a record of these pupils and their Annex R, along with a background case study to evidence why the school have used this strategy with each individual pupil.</p>	I Q
	<p>Fixed term suspensions, 172 last term compared to this term, as of today 296.</p> <p>Q – how does it compare with this time last year? Numbers are far higher.</p>	I Q
	<p>Q – it is one particular cohort? No, we are seeing behaviours around internal truancy, staff try to get pupils back into lessons but they refuse and walk around the site disrupting other pupils and lessons. This often leaves the school with only one option, which is to suspend and send home.</p>	Q
	<p>There is an argument that the only quick and easy way to reduce suspensions is to ignore internal truancy. There are a number of pupils who simply do not relate to others in their class and/or have genuine anxiety and these pupils walk quietly around the school. However, others regularly disrupt and even if they are not disrupting, they are potentially encouraging other pupils to internal truant.</p> <p>Q – could you try ignoring these pupils for one day and gauge the response? It is felt that it would take longer than one day to serve any point. There is also a danger that by seeing what happens we could end up with really large groups of pupils out of classes that would be incredibly disruptive.</p>	I Q
	<p>Q – are pupils avoiding every lesson or just certain subjects? A mixture.</p>	Q
	<p>We currently have four pupils 4 on offsite directions (OSD).</p>	I

		<p>Bullying and racist incidents – ongoing issue with bullying and also ensuring that the term is being used correctly. This term 2 racist incidents, none reported to DCC but 14 logged on CPOMS so we need to ensure we are transferring this information across. Worth noting that a member of staff may report it as a racist incident but when investigated further it may be deemed as not a racist incident.</p> <p>15 homophobic incidents this year so far, all logged on CPOMS, an increase again and indicating a potential lack of tolerance within pupils.</p> <p>Q – any thoughts on what is driving that lack of tolerance? Society as a whole, thoughts, beliefs and ideas often come from the internet and/or home. Often comments can be used as a one off in an unkind way, rather than meaning to be purposely homophobic.</p> <p>CIC increased from 7 to 10, PP around the same, PPN 25 this year so far compared to 17 previously.</p> <p>Q – children being removed and EHE, is the school consistent with investigating these? Yes, NMM invites parents in for an exit meeting but increasingly the school is receiving what looks like a standard letter stating that parents are not obliged to attend an exit meeting. If parents fail to attend, a list of work and a voluntary parental questionnaire is sent home which is forwarded to County, who then step in. All EHE pupils are discussed with the EWO, she recently commented that it is a similar picture in others schools and that EHE numbers are dramatically increasing.</p> <p>Actions – the school needs to appoint a strategic lead to complete mental health training and a Prevent self-assessment needs to be completed. NMM left at 4.53pm</p>	<p>I</p> <p>I</p> <p>Q</p> <p>I</p> <p>Q</p> <p>I</p>
2024/25/ FGB/ 33	SIP	Work in progress, the T&L committee continue to monitor and address.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 34	Training	<p>EB Reminded the board that a skills audit will be circulated after Christmasy and asked all to complete and return this as soon as possible. This will identify gaps and help to formulate a training plan.</p> <p>Training was discussed further by the board, it was noted that many of the Devon Education Services were during the day and not suitable for those governors who worked. The Clerk will re-send instructions on how to log in to the National College website, as there are numerous training and webinar opportunities for the board. IN encouraged the board to undertake a variety of training, as areas such as safeguarding and finance cannot be left simply to the link governors, there is an expectation for the entire board to have a basic knowledge and understanding.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>I</p>
2024/25/ FGB/ 35	Parental Engagement	Discussion re: parental engagement and fundraising for roof repairs. (Governors were asked at FGB 03/10/24 to submit any ideas prior to this meeting)	I

		<p>Historically, a PFA has struggled at GTS, there is currently no PFA. Governors suggested planning for the summer awards ceremony now and how to address parental engagement i.e., attracting new governors, PFA.</p> <p>The board discussed holding one big fundraiser each year with one focus rather than regular PFA fundraising. CC suggested Tesco vouchers as an example, provides 10% to the school, small amounts but all add up. Also crowd sourcing and direct debits, Amazon can add the school as a charity so that the school earns money each time parents buy items from Amazon. The school could send a virtual Christmas card to thank parents for their support and advise that the school will be in contact in the New Year with ideas of how to work more closely with parents. This could fall under the remit of a 'Head of Fun' whose purpose is to fundraise money with parents for rewards and interventions, as discussed earlier in the meeting. Potential for a TLR3 post, to be discussed/raised at the next Resources meeting.</p>	I I
2024/25/ FGB/ 36	Governor Visits	<p>LW will provide a report but advised that she had been visiting as part of the SIP review when the partial lockdown was enacted last week. All pupils and staff had been calm and she thought the process was well handled.</p> <p>MM advised that he had met with JMB in school to discuss sustainability.</p> <p>SB has met with staff as part of reviewing the SIP, reported were saved to the visit folder and feedback had been provided to T&L.</p> <p>CC has also met with staff this week to review the SIP, visit report to follow.</p>	I I I
2024/25/ FGB/ 37	Items Through the Chair	<p>The meeting moved to Part 2.</p> <p>The academic term dates for 2025/26 had been circulated, these were approved.</p> <p>Governors were reminded that all are invited to the Christmas Concert on Thursday 19th December at St Michael's Church starting at 6pm and Christmas lunch at school on Friday 20th December.</p>	I D I
2024/25/ FGB/ 38	Final Point	The board have reviewed the behaviour policy and scrutinised a report on safeguarding. Discussions regarding engaging with parents and positive rewards for pupils, as well as agreeing a wellbeing survey for staff and reviewing school safety.	I, D
2024/25/ FGB/ 39	Dates	<p>T&L 30th January 2025</p> <p>Resources 6th February 2025</p> <p>FGB 13th February 2025</p>	I

Meeting finished at 6.02pm

Agenda Reference	Agenda Item	Action Required	By Whom/ When
2024/25/FGB/26	Vote of thanks	IN to write to DS formally thanking him for his service to the school on behalf of the board.	IN 13.02.25
2024/25/FGB/27	Matters arising	Clerk to add Sustainability to the next Resources agenda and the board to approve the formation of a sub committee.	Clerk 06.02.25
2024/25/FGB/34	Training	EB to circulate a skills audit to the board in the New Year. All governors to complete ASAP and return to EB.	EB and All 13.02.25
2024/25/FGB/34	Training	Clerk to circulate log in details for The National College.	Clerk 20.12.24