

**GREAT TORRINGTON SCHOOL**  
**Academy Trust**  
 Company Number 769819.  
 A Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England  
**Full Governing Board Committee Meeting**  
**7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 3.30pm in the Boardroom**



Attendees	Initials	Position	Comments
Beer, Emma	EB	Member Appointed	Present
Bloodworth, Andy	ABL	Headteacher	Present
Machin, Michael	MM	Co-opted Governor	Present
Newberry, Ian	IN	Member Appointed – Chair of Governors	Present
Rhymer, Matt	MAR	Staff Governor	Present
Smith, Doug	DS	Co-opted Governor	Present
Sparrow, Annie	ASP	Staff Governor	Present
Wall, Lesley	LW	Co-opted Governor – Vice Chair of Governors	Present
Whewell, Barry	BW	Member Appointed	Present
Wynne, Colin	CW	Co-opted Governor	Present
Pateman, Jo	JMP	Clerk to the Governing body	Present

## MINUTES

Agenda Reference	Agenda Item	Minutes	
2023/24/ FGB/ 22	<b>Apologies</b>	IN and MAR had both advised that they would join the meeting slightly late.	I
2023/24/ FGB/ 23	<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>	No conflicts of interest were declared and there were no updates to business declaration forms.	I
2023/24/ FGB/ 24	<b>Minutes and Matters Arising</b>	<p>2023/24/FGB/7 – Governors also agreed, wherever possible, to provide any questions relating to reports etc., prior to meeting. It was agreed to add that questions are always welcome in meetings too, not only in advance.</p> <p>Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting and approved to be signed.</p>	<p>I</p> <p>D</p> <p>D</p>

		<p><b><u>Matters arising and action points from the last meeting:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank you letters sent to JAS and DM.</li> <li>• LW has attended safeguarding training.</li> <li>• Terms of Reference on agenda.</li> <li>• Parent Governor vacancies – all parents/ carers contacted on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023, and we already have 2 applications! The closing date is Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023, the Clerk is contacting the 2 candidates to invite them to meet with ABL and IN.</li> <li>• Review of progress against the SIP has been added as a standing agenda item.</li> <li>• As requested, T&amp;L discussed <i>What is the strategic response to dealing with increased numbers of pupils with SEN?</i> Please see T&amp;L minutes.</li> <li>• Business Continuity Plan will go to FGB on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024.</li> <li>• T&amp;L Policy and Curriculum Statement updated and added to the school website.</li> </ul> <p><u>Outstanding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion/ decision regarding appointing a <i>Disadvantaged Pupils Governor</i> i.e., to cover SEN, PP, CiC – to discuss when IN joins the meeting.</li> </ul>	
2023/24/ FGB/ 25	<b>Committee Matters</b>	<p>Items brought to FGB from the T&amp;L and Resources committees</p> <p><u>Teaching &amp; Learning</u></p> <p>The Bullying Policy was recommended by T&amp;L, this was ratified by the full board. <b>Policy approved.</b></p> <p>The Admission Policy was recommended by T&amp;L, this was ratified by the full board. <b>Policy approved.</b></p> <p>LW provided feedback from the TL&amp; Meeting, the Assistant Head had provided a report on the extended TLAC and systems of observations, explaining how SEN pupils are supported. This is entirely the work of GTS and is an amazing piece of work which has taken significant time. LW will be visiting the school shortly to meet with the Assistant Head, any governor wanting to join this visit is welcome to. The INCo provided a report, as requested by the Members, detailing how the school are coping with the increased numbers of children with SEN. The Deputy Head shared the Pupil Premium Strategy with the committee, this was large piece of work but one of great benefit and all three items i.e., TLAC, SEN and PP reports, fitted together beautifully.</p> <p>Q – what was the actual impact of this meeting on outcomes for pupils?</p> <p>LW – the impact was that governors evidenced clearly joined up policies of how excellent teaching is the clear route to improve standards for all. We also reviewed the anti-bullying policy after a long discussion on the strategies and tactics within this policy.</p>	<p>D D I</p> <p>Q I</p>

		<p><u>Resources</u></p> <p>DS advised that the Pay Policy was unable to be adopted at Resources, as it was incomplete. The policy had been finalised and circulated to all in preparation for FGB. The board agreed to adopt the policy. <b>Policy approved.</b></p> <p>Terms of Reference for the finance governor had been circulated to all, CW had suggested one amendment to <i>Academy schools – to ensure trustees are meeting the right standards to achieve a good level of financial health and resource management, in line with the <a href="#">school resource management self-assessment tool</a></i>. no action was listed next to this point, CW suggested this should be R. The board agreed. <b>Terms of Reference approved.</b></p>	I
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			D
2023/24/ FGB/ 26	<b>Safeguarding</b>	<p>The safeguarding governor has attended initial safeguarding meetings at the school, and it has been agreed that she will be more involved in the pupil discussions, not operationally, but so she can have a more strategic awareness and understand the level of discussion the school are having. There are no further safeguarding updates since the updates to T&amp;L and Resources, which are in the committee minutes.</p> <p>Terms of Reference had been provided for the safeguarding governor. <b>Terms of Reference approved.</b></p> <p>The board discussed the potential for catering and cleaning staff to attend safeguarding training at the school. The contactors provide their own safeguarding training, but the school would like these staff to attend GTS training, however the logistics of doing this could be difficult. ABL will investigate further.</p>	I
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			I
2023/24/ FGB/ 27	<b>Headteacher Report</b>	<p>The Headteacher report had been circulated prior to the meeting, ABL invited questions from the board.</p> <p>Q – behaviour, SLT’s strategic focus on changing challenging regarding attendance and behaviour. When we had the last HT report, I asked questions on behaviour, and you said that the weather had an impact, and that with policies etc., it would get better by September. (ABL – I believe I said I ‘hoped’ it would be better). Everything I am seeing in the report seems to imply it is getting worse, I hear that behaviour is getting a lot worse, my thread is what are you doing now to address this, that you were not doing last year? Do you accept it is getting worse? ABL – this report is for the last summer term, the work we put in was in September, the figures for the summer term are not necessarily what the work is relating to. I would suggest the challenges have continued. I think that a small number of pupils are increasingly challenging in behaviour. Is it getting worse, I think the challenges outside the classroom are getting worse, when I say worse...</p> <p>Q – are the challenges of behaviour outside of the classroom becoming more frequent? I would say more pupils are adopting the behaviour, most are new pupils to the school i.e., we had 6 but now 10 are presenting the same behaviour.</p>	I
			Q
			Q

	<p>Q – we are in December now, since September there has been the same behaviour. Are you saying that the same behaviour is being exhibited, but more behaviour is being exhibited, is that correct? Yes.</p>	Q
	<p>Q – in my mind that means behaviour is getting proportionally worse. What are we as a school going to do about that if it is getting worse? ABL – we have another agenda plan for the January INSET with a new tranche of rules and expectations, we are looking at ‘internal school refusers’ because we need to get them into class.</p>	Q
	<p>Q – what do you mean? SLT cannot be the sole arbitrary of behaviour, depending on which of the staff team you speak to, that is a decision we were making. It has to be a team effort. We do not have that balance right yet, it is about the structures in terms of getting kids into classrooms, who is involved, the emphasis on that. Last 2 days I have been walking around all day and if you look at classrooms there is little poor behaviour in the classrooms.</p>	Q
	<p>IN joined at 4.06pm.</p>	I
	<p>Q – that focuses it well, are the children given a regular set of expected behaviours that is consistently enforced? ABL - consistency is the issue. The staff know exactly what they should be doing, the pupils do too, it is the staff’s job to re-enforce it. The pupils have a script of what they need to do all day, the staff’s expectations are the same. As an example, we have 40 tutor groups, if you went into the tutor groups, 35 would all be doing exactly as expected, but 5 will not. From that very starting point you have disconnect, in terms of whether it is taking earrings out, as an example, the consistency comes from that very first point of entry every single day.</p>	Q
	<p>Q – consistency for staff and pupils, the way the staff treat the pupils, how do you enforce that? The teachers need to manage those expectations and when it is not working, they need to follow the procedures.</p>	Q
	<p>Q – that sounds like an excuse? No, it is not, teachers are paid to follow teaching standards and expectations. If pupils are not removing jewellery, there is a process to follow. If pupils are then rude, there is a process to follow, where is the cop out?</p>	Q
	<p>MAR arrived at 4.08pm.</p>	I
	<p>Q– following the policy is an excuse. ABL – to follow the policy is what we all need to do.</p>	Q

	<p>Q – that is at that level, I will hold that for now, I take your point. ABL – behaviour is challenging and is probably getting more challenging without a doubt.</p> <p>Q – why is there inconsistency with the staff, are they overwhelmed, lack of time, what? ABL – all of the above.</p> <p>Q – overwhelmed being the main one? Some of them feel overwhelmed, some lack confidence, some feel they are doing it every day and run out of energy, all of those things. It's not easy, the children will do it because they are children, you cannot exclude a child for wearing jewellery, you have to challenge, that is the policy, the governors agreed to that policy.</p> <p>Q – is there more pressure on staff if they are coming out of lessons at the beginning to welcome pupils, they are doing discipline, they take the register and teach, are they running in circles? It is all part of the TLAC strategy, you welcome the pupils in, that helps to manage behaviour in the corridor at the same time, pupils then enter on time because staff are visible, the pupils enter classes rather than doing another lap.</p> <p>Q – but if teachers are changing from a Year 7 to Year 11 class, they probably want to move resources around? Yes, and that is a challenge, but if you want to manage the corridors, we all need to do that, I cannot employ people just to be in the corridors to manage behaviour.</p> <p>ASP – there is more pressure, I am not talking as a whole staff, but in our department, we are beginning to see signs of non-compliance in the classroom creeping in because of corridor behavior and classes being distracted by those not in lessons. The most difficult thing is when those pupils are coming in late, there is the disruption of sending an email, you do the register but then you stop because you have to send an email for a pupil not there, then they arrive so you have to change the register and all the time you are trying to manage a class of 25 or 30.</p> <p>ABL – as EB witnessed today, I spoke with 2 pupils today and EB just happened to be present. We went through that very scenario that ASP has just described and the effect of their being late. I met with their parents (late in the evening as they were unable to attend during the school day), I explained the processes we have to go through and the effect on learning when their child is late to class. Their response was that we had a complicated system, and they did not want to have uncomfortable conversations with their child as they do not want to have that type of relationship!</p> <p>ABL – there are one or two pupils in this school whom we need to know exactly where they are, because they are unsafe.</p>	<p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>I</p> <p>I</p> <p>I</p>
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	<p>Q – is that a lot of the behaviour you refer to as outside the classroom? ABL – breaktimes in the corridor, which is always made worse when it is wet and windy. Then there are the pupils who have not gone to lessons.</p>	Q
	<p>Q- is that the same behaviour you were talking about earlier? ABL – yes, but we are still only talking about 10-12 pupils, but they impact resources and lessons.</p>	Q
	<p>ASP – the general lateness thing is a bit more widespread; some pupils are very late and not in lessons. It is not unusual for them to be 5 or 6 minutes late, I constantly put on my register when they are late. I challenge them every time.</p>	I
	<p>Q – why are they late?</p>	Q
	<p>MAR – pupils make choices.</p>	I
	<p>Q – is there ever any justification? Not really.</p>	Q
	<p>MAR – my personal experience, our basic thing is keeping children safe, that system can't change, we can't wait time to see whether they are arriving or not, ABL alluded to it we have pupils who are extremely unsafe in very private spaces , we can't have them missing from lessons, we need to know where they are. We have to safeguard against them, learning comes second in making sure they are safe. Yes, there is a knock on effect on teaching staff, it would be amazing if pupils turned up on time, there is significant amount of work from teachers, pupil coaches, etc., but pupils will still make choices, we can educate, we can sanction but they may still make a choice we don't want them to make and we need to have systems and we need staff to follow it through. We cannot permanently exclude a child because they are consistently late.</p>	I
	<p>Q- people keep saying they have to log in and out of registers (the board were reminded they were drifting into operational).</p>	Q
	<p>Q – there is a trend in the fixed term suspensions table, Year 7 in 2020/21 = 23 FTS, the same cohort in 2021/22 = 35 FTS, and the same cohort when in Year 9 2022/23 = 51 suspensions. That clearly shows the behaviour trend. Are we hoping to see a downward trend by using TLAC? ABL – I would hope to see it plateau first, that would be pleasing but I would be satisfied if I could see a downward trend. The trouble is the lives around these pupils are moving so fast we are sprinting to keep up. Some people's views are that we should target a few and make a difference. However, that will not change the suspension figures and the complexity around permanent exclusions is only going to get higher. Some Local Authorities are now saying they are a 'non-permanent exclusion' authority, which may happen in Devon too.</p>	Q

	<p>Q – can they do that if we are an academy? Yes, they can.</p> <p>Q –GCSE exam results ATT8, please could you remind me of ATT8? That is Attainment 8, the average point score, this was lower than previous years, but it was a much lower cohort. Their starting point was weaker but overall, it was a positive outcome.</p> <p>Q – current learner characteristics, year 10 there is a considerable difference between boys and girls, has that presented any challenges in itself? ABL – yes, they are the worse hit covid generation. Boys by definition are worse performing in schools and in our year group there are significant numbers of EHCP and SEN. Having more boys by definition creates more issues. They are the most affected covid generation in terms of SEMH issues. We are very aware of it. Just putting more boys in an environment with less girls is challenging.</p> <p>Q –contextual data 3-year trend, page 3, 2023 data missing? Apologies, the clerk will send this to the board.</p> <p>Q – PP update, is the school website compliant, it states it was last checked in 2022? Yes, that was an official check by Babcock. <b>The board discussed and agreed that the finance governor would check the website moving forward.</b></p> <p>Q – who is on the behaviour working party? It is open to all staff, numbers have dropped since the last meeting, there are now only 3 staff.</p> <p>Q – do you feel that is representative? No, I would love more staff to be involved.</p> <p>Q - is there a reason they are not involved? ABL – the idea was to allow them to lead on it and feedback without any SLT involvement. I can only guess why, perhaps time issues.</p> <p>Q – how was the hybrid parents evening received? ABL – it was the same as when we did the survey, the parents who did the survey loved it, some staff loved it, some did not. I had a lot of feedback last night from a parent wanting to come in for parents’ evenings. It works well for some, does not for others, we will always be in that split opinion – for me as a SLT having parents come in is a must.</p> <p>Q – a well-being survey has not been completed recently? Each time we review a policy we consider the wellbeing of staff. It is probably time for another wellbeing review.</p>	<p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q D</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p>
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	<p>Q – workload expectations, have these been reviewed? ABL – yes, we consulted with the behaviour working party, this fed directly into the Reconnect agenda when it was launched. We consulted middle leaders about lesson lengths, timetable changes were consulted with staff, we consulted staff with regards to INSET days, disaggregated days etc., the staff are regularly consulted.</p>	Q
	<p>The board commented that the absence figures were high and were not presented in the same way as the absence report shared with the Resources committee. Action – Clerk to present the absence figures in a consistent format.</p>	I
	<p>Q – average teacher salaries, the figures are hard to interpret. I believe our teachers are worth every penny, however the report states that our average teacher salary is above the LA, but the pupil teacher ratio is below the LA level, why is that? ABL – the two different figures are not related, the teacher’s salary is the average, we have very experienced members of staff, and we are very lucky, however, they cost more, but the school is lucky to have them. Our average class sizes we work really hard to keep our class sizes down, that is an important question when we look at resources and budgets you may ask if those class sizes are sustainable.</p>	Q
	<p>Q – is the average teacher salary everyone? Yes, we have a disproportionate number of UPS 3 teachers.</p>	Q
	<p>Q – absences, authorised and unauthorised, any reason why an increase this year, there is an increase in both – if they are not in school they are not learning, are there explanations as to why these numbers have increased? ABL – increases in authorised is due to increased medical evidence parents are obtaining to suggest their child should not be in school, the unauthorised is the increasing number of pupils who parents are taking their children out.</p>	Q
	<p>Q – what can the school do to improve that? ABL – there is lots of chat nationally and in the news, a record number of people are getting fined for non-attendance, but figures are still going up. Lots of national discussions at the moment. Amanda Spellman report discussed the parental disconnect between parent contract with schools, and the attendance figures mirror that.</p>	Q
	<p>Q- what are we as a school doing? ABL – we hold SAM meetings, various meetings before there. MAR – based on number of session absences a tutor SAM meeting is held with parents, and the pupil is monitored, no improvement and a head of learning SAM meeting is held, and the pupil regularly monitored again. The next stage is an attendance improvement officer stage 1 letter and a review every 2 weeks. It is quite a dragged-out process, but it is Country not the school.</p>	Q I



		<p>Q – that explains what we are doing with persistent absence, what about those who take their kids out for a week in Florida? ABL – they will be fined.</p> <p>Q – is it our policy for staff to catch the pupils up after a holiday? No, it is an expectation of the pupil that they catch up on missed work.</p> <p>Q – attendance by year group – persistent absence PP, what does the sub 85% mean? ABL – the pupils below 85% attendance, it is a frightening figure.</p> <p>Q – I am paraphrasing you; the school is doing everything it can, but you can do nothing about unauthorised? ABL – the problem is with attendance we have increasing parents who do not want to say ‘no’ to their child and simply allow them to stay at home.</p> <p>As quite a small school, a single pupil’s attendance has a significant impact on the overall figures.</p>	<p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>I</p>
2023/24/ FGB/ 28	<b>Census</b>	Governors were advised that the School Census was completed and submitted on the 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2023, and the Workforce Census was completed and submitted on 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2023.	I
2023/24/ FGB/ 24	<b>Minutes and Matters Arising</b>	Brief discussion over whether to have a separate PP governor, or a Disadvantaged Governor to oversee PP, SEN and CiC. The board agreed to re-visit in the New Year, when new Parent Governors would have hopefully joined.	I D
2023/24/ FGB/ 29	<b>SIP</b>	<p>ABL to present the updated SIP and explained the amendments i.e., removing build and bringing to the fore the second piece of work around modifying behaviour and attendance as part of the Reconnect agenda. There were no questions at this time. IN reminded the board that they should be scrutinising the SIP carefully and questioning ABL at each FGB regarding progress against the SIP.</p> <p>The board agreed that each individual governor would contact the Clerk with 2 or 3 suggested areas that that they would like to monitor on the SIP.</p>	I  D
2023/24/ FGB/ 30	<b>Accounts</b>	The accounts had been approved at Resources on 23 <sup>rd</sup> November 2023, <b>the full board ratified this decision and approve the Chair to sign off the accounts.</b>	I D
2023/24/ FGB/ 31	<b>Term Dates 2024/25</b>	The academic term dates for 24/25 were presented to the board, <b>these were approved.</b>	I, D
2023/24/ FGB/ 32	<b>Policies</b>	The Business Continuity Policy will be presented at FGB on 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2024.	I



		<p>ABL advised that there were three options for the bid, the bid is £527,000.00 in total, the school could contribute 5.1% i.e., £27,000.00 and this would equate to 1 point towards the bid. The second option, worth 2 points, is a 10.1% contribution at £53,200.00, or the final option, worth 3 points, is a 15.1% contribution at £80,000.00.</p> <p>Q – what are our current reserves? ABL has discussed with the finance manager, in 23/24 we are forecasting a 5-year deficit of £1 million. This has been run again and we are currently looking at £1.1 million. The board previously agreed a £200,000.00 deficit in July 2023, since then we have carried forward £160,000.00 due to additional PP and SEN funding, plus various grants. If the school were to commit £80,000.00, we would also need to count the £35,000.00 for last year's bid that has not started yet, (fire doors), so effectively £115,000.00 with £160,000.00 carry forward our deficit budget would be £45,000.00, when we have previously agreed a deficit budget of £200,000.00.</p> <p>The board discussed this at length, it was agreed that the roofs would require repairing whether we were successful with the CIF bid or not, however there was some hesitation due to the budget.</p> <p>Q – how confident are the contractors bidding on this work that it will actually fix the leaks, this will be at least the third time we work on the roof leaks? Historically, the leaks have been repairs a small section at a time and are exacerbated by the different roofs i.e., with each new add on to the build. This would be a completely new roof over the whole area leaking, rather than 'piece meal' work. This should resolve the leaks once and for all.</p> <p>Q – has any other expenditure for the leaks been planned before we receive the outcome of the CIF bid next spring? The site manager is working on a scheme of work, prioritising the roofs in order of need.</p> <p>IN suggested the board take a vote on committing 15.1% to the CIF bid. CW advised he would rather vote on 10.1%. <b>The board voted on 15.1%, all voted in favour, CW abstained.</b></p>	<p>I</p> <p>Q</p> <p>I</p> <p>Q</p> <p>Q</p> <p>I, D</p>
2023/24/ FGB/ 37	<b>Final Point</b>	The board have reviewed the SIP, revisited uniform prices, and agreed funding towards the CIF bid.	I
2023/24/ FGB/ 38	<b>Date of next meetings</b>	Teaching & Learning 25 <sup>th</sup> January 2024 Resources 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2024 FGB 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2024	I
2023/24/ FGB/36	<b>Items through the Chair</b>	ASP and MAR left at 5.31pm. ABL advised that there was a request from a member of staff which needed approval from the board. The meeting moved to Part 2.	<p>I</p> <p>I</p>

The meeting closed at 5.41pm.

<b>Agenda Reference</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action Required</b>	<b>By Whom/ When</b>
2023/24/FGB/24	Minutes and Matters Arising	Clerk to continue providing Terms of Reference for those governors with individual responsibilities	Clerk
2023/24/FGB/24	Minutes and Matters Arising	Discussion re: PP or disadvantaged governor to be added to the next FGB agenda	Clerk
2023/24/FGB/27	Headteacher Report	Finance governor to check the school website	CW
2023/24/FGB/29	SIP	All board members to contact the Clerk with 2 or 3 suggested areas of the SIP that they would like to be responsible for monitoring. The Clerk will add this to the SIP and circulate to the board.	All Clerk
2023/24/FGB/32	Policies	Business Continuity Plan to be presented at next FGB	Site Manager