

GREAT TORRINGTON SCHOOL

Academy Trust

Company Number 769819.

A Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England

Full Governing Board Committee Meeting

Thursday 13th February 2025 at 3.30pm in the Boardroom



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

Minute Reference	Minute Item	Minutes	Action/ Decision
2024/25/ FGB/ 40	Apologies	Apologies had been received from LJC and MM, these were approved.	I, D
2024/25/ FGB/ 41	Training	The board undertook training on Human Rights and the Equality Act. CC arrived at 3.49pm. ABL arrived at 3.56pm.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 42	Conflicts of Interest	None declared.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 43	Minutes and Matters Arising	The minutes of the meeting held on 12 th December 2024 were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting and approved to be signed. Matters arising and action points from the last meeting	I, D I

		- Safeguarding policy – a member of staff had raised contacting parents after a visit to the medical room. This was felt not always needed as often visits can be for minor/trivial things. Suggestion to have a pre-printed slip to give to pupils to take home, advising they had visited the medical room and the outcome. - IN has written to DS formally thanking him for his service to the school on behalf of the board. - The clerk added sustainability to the Resources agenda i.e., agreeing the formation of a sub-committee. However, after further discussion, the Resources committee were recommending that SLT create a sustainability group, which MM will attend as the sustainability governor and report back to FGB. FGB ratified this decision. - EB has circulated the skills audit to the board, a few are outstanding and report back to FGB – circulated, not yet had all back. Will also circulate to the staff governors and report back to next FGB. - The clerk circulated National College log in details to all. - Potential TLR3 for a ‘Head of Fun’ should have been discussed at Resources on 06.02.25 but was missed – further action? ABL is considering the ‘reward’ agenda. ABL to update at next Resources. Recognition and rewards for pupils rather than a sanction-based agenda. Q – are there other schools that have that type of role? Yes, another local school.	I I I I I I
2024/25/ FGB/ 44	Policies	7B – Equality Objectives January 2025 update – this will be presented at the next meeting as JSR was unable to attend.	I, D
2024/25/ FGB/ 45	Wellbeing Survey	JSR was unable to attend the meeting however ABL advised that he could answer any governor questions relating to the survey. Q – there are several suggestions that appear to be repeated i.e., raised by several staff. Are those suggestions being considered e.g., moving parents evenings to Thursdays? This was discussed at MLT this morning and ABL has tasked MLT to discuss further with teams and feedback. However, historically when staff completed a survey, they had expressed a wish to have all after school meetings on a Monday, so that there was consistency and it was easier to arrange childcare etc., In addition, holding parents evenings on a Thursday, would result in departments cancelling extra-curricular clubs whenever there is a parents’ evening, which would impact on pupils. ABL will wait for feedback from MLT. ABL advised that he felt some responses within the survey should be treated with caution, as they do not necessarily represent all staff. There is an example where one comment states that ‘a lot of staff’ however how does that person know that and how many is a lot of staff. In addition, when a negative comment is raised does this relate to an incident that has occurred once, twice or on multiple occasions. ABL would prefer if staff simply spoke to him in person with any concerns. It is also difficult to address lots of points raised in the survey as they are anonymous.	I Q I

	Q – was there anything in the survey that surprised or disappointed you? No huge surprises. It was disappointing that some staff cannot see the reality of what is going on and the work being undertaken. We talk about ‘The Surge’, it is a challenge to get pupils to class and on time and we have established that detentions, parent meetings, suspensions etc., are not having an impact. What is making a difference is when all staff work together and there is staff efficacy. The surge is staff being present and in corridors encouraging pupils to get to class on time and when pupils see all staff doing this, it has a far greater impact than just one member of staff trying to get them to class. However, there are then comments from staff in the survey, that the surge is impacting on their time and they don’t see SLT out and about doing it. SLT are out every single day.	Q
	Q – how will that be addressed? I would like to have an actual conversation with the person who made that comment and I would like to invite them to spend time with SLT and to witness what we do each day. On a positive, during the recent deep dives, we have asked other staff to be on call and I have received lots of feedback saying how enlightening this has been and how staff have appreciated that SLT do each day. I do not want just a SLT at this school, I want a leadership team that involves all.	Q
	Another item mentioned several times in the survey is staff wellbeing days. ABL would like to do this and if governors want to release funds for staff, this could be put into action. We know of some schools who allow staff one day each year, other schools run with a 9-day fortnight and plan all PPA in one day so that staff can be at home on that day, but this all costs money. We have discussed this recently at SLT and ABL has tasked JS to investigate the impact and whether there are positive outcomes for those schools i.e., less staff absence.	I
	Q – at Resources last week we reviewed staff absence and there were huge numbers of staff having time off for appointments. Would giving staff one day off each year resolves those numbers? No, staff would still need to take time off for appointments, however we may see sickness levels drop if we can improve staff wellbeing.	Q
	Q – will you formally reply to staff regarding the survey? Yes, ABL is already doing this by speaking with MLT this morning.	Q
	Q – will you feed back to the whole staff? No, will provide feedback to some on mass, other bits to groups/individuals.	Q
	Q – there are comments from staff acknowledging SLT are aware of behaviour and are trying to find solutions so that proves there is some level of communication. Do we therefore have some staff who are not listening or not acknowledging, or are they commenting on specific incidences?	Q

	Q – another common theme is food on INSET days, is that a quick win? Is that a suitable way to spend taxpayers money?	Q
	Q – lots of comments around community building, wellbeing days and staff wanting to feel part of the community, is there work to be done there? SLT have regularly paid for food and drinks at the end of term and only a handful of staff will attend. We previously had a staff association but that folded, we have asked staff to lead on events and nights out but it has not materialised. Staff sport Monday and Friday is well attended.	Q
	Q – comments on recognition and thank you to staff, there are also comments acknowledging thanks you but a feeling that these are too generic? SLT regularly thank staff including at briefing each Monday. We do this by naming individuals, rather than being generic. SLT email staff with thank you messages.	Q
	Q – will the survey results be shared with the staff? Yes.	Q
	Q – does there need to be more consistent communication from SLT i.e., there is no immediate solution to behaviour but we are working hard on this, we appreciate your comments and views and we continue to explore options? Yes and that is exactly what we have done during the last three INSET days.	Q
	Q – what is the comment around clinical supervision? That is for pastoral staff who are working with children who may have suffered bereavement, abuse, assault etc., education is the only profession when staff working with those issues do not receive clinical supervision.	Q
	ABL understands the survey is a useful tool and appreciate all comments and feedback, however it is disappointment to learn that some staff feel that SLT are not working on behaviour. Governors acknowledged that survey responses can depend on your feelings at the time of completing the survey.	I
	Q – what are your views on a requirement to work at the weekends and late into the evening? Teachers are directed by 1265 however the teacher standards clearly state that 1265 is not enough time in which to fulfil the job, so there has always been an expectation to work slightly outside of the 1265. 1265 is not a standard 37 hour week either and in addition, teachers have long holidays. However, ABL acknowledges and recognises that teaching has become more involved, staff need to be 'on top of their game' throughout the entire week and all lessons and that is really tiring. A workload survey would be useful but staff would need to answer the survey genuinely and be completely open and transparent. ABL does not want staff working too hard and too long but we would need to understand this before being in a position to address.	Q

		ELC did not that this is specific to GTS, but believes it is a view of teaching staff nationally i.e., that they are working long into the evening and at weekends. Q - could the 'head of fun' could also have a role amongst the staff? ABL agrees but worries it could be a difficult task, he is the third headteacher during his time at GTS and staff have always commented on the lack of recognition and thanks to staff. Q – is it linked with recognition, you thank staff but what is the benefit, are they more likely to achieve a promotion or receive a bonus? Bonus payments are not possible, we do try to promote from within however it comes down to the most suitable candidate on the day and often that can be an external candidate, and that can have a negative impact on staff within the school. SLT work hard to recognise staff and we always pass on our thanks and positive comments from parents too. The board discussed and agreed that governors are happy that the survey has been completed and are satisfied this is being addressed and acted upon by SLT, where they can. It was agreed that no further action is required at this time. The clerk will check and confirm recommendations for how often a wellbeing survey should be completed by staff.	
2024/25/ FGB/ 46	Committee Matters	Items brought to FGB from the T&L and Resources committees T&L – the committee reviewed and questioned extensively pupil performance data including attendance percentages and the issues arising from attendance, as well as where the school stands compared to local and national figures. In addition, the committee reviewed current PFG data for Year 11. Resources – long discussion regarding the cladding on the J block, this is still an issue and we have tasked the school to liaise with contractors and provide suggestions and quotes to the next resources, as it is not viable to mitigate the risk. The committee approved the lease of the minibus for one further year; however this cannot be extended beyond that and the school are investigating future options and costs, which will be discussed at Resources in September. Exam costs have gone into budget but there is a fairly significant overspend, the school are looking at a cost breakdown to identify what those extra costs are, mostly additional resources and EEA, but further work needed. IN reminded the board of its legal obligations, one being the health and safety of staff. There has been an item on the H&S committee which is ensuring that all risk assessments are up to date and reviewed, IN can now advise that all are complete and up to date with the exception of 2.	I I I

2024/25/ FGB/ 47	Members	Question raised by the Members during their recent AGM – The Members are aware that there is another, substantial, demographic dip upon the horizon with no end current in sight. School funding is not believed to be at an acceptable level and the reserves of GTS are far lower than when the school previously dealt with a demographic dip. What is the strategic plan of the board and SLT to deal with this? Q – is there any work being done to look at catchment area and transport links? The LA decided to realign catchment areas to try and increase the number of pupils going to Atlantic Academy. That could be a potential issue. The wording used by two schools was not accurate and was retracted. GTS has adjusted PANS to reduce the mid-phase pupil migration but we need to be mindful of the risk of future redundancies if we do not have enough pupils in the school. Q – what are the current figures? This year we could have a 200 intake but this has been reduced to 182 for numerous reasons, one being to allow a reduction in PAN for current year 7 going into year 8 of 182. Pupil numbers coming in then goes down to 175 for three years, reduces further to 150 but is then forecast back up to 170. It is a dip but it's not huge. Q – will pupil numbers not increase with all the building going on in the area? The number of new intake per building site is actually quite low. (Data added after the meeting from the Government Fact Sheet 5: New homes and school places dated 2 November 2023 – 100 new homes would typically include 13 secondary school pupils, 500 new homes would typically include 65 secondary school pupils, and 1000 new homes would typically include 130 secondary school pupils). Q – how much control do we have over applications? None, even as an Academy we do not really have any control over admissions. Q – what action do you want from the board before the next FGB? No action at this time, but the board do need to be mindful in terms of any financial decisions being made. ABL advised that as a school we already consider staffing and whether we can manage without replacing staff when there is a resignation or retirement. There is no flex. We could increase class sizes but that would have an impact on results. We benchmark wherever we can and constantly consider pupil numbers and the budget.	I Q Q Q Q Q I
2024/25/ FGB/ 48	Safeguarding	LW advised that the safeguarding questionnaire during the recent audit had raised whether the board were aware of equality, diversity and the human rights act, which had prompted the training earlier in this meeting.	I

		The school has recently undertaken a safeguarding audit, which went well. There is nothing else to report other than that already raised in T&L and Resources minutes.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 49	SIP	ABL advised that a number of governor visits have been completed as part of governor scrutiny of the SIP. The main focus continues to be around the behaviour agenda. The QA process has recently been reviewed and we are currently in the middle of the deep dives, feedback will be provided to FGB once this is completed.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 50	Skills Audit/ Training	As the skills audit is not yet complete, this will be moved to the next FGB agenda. LW advised that she had attended training earlier in the day on Generative AI, which can answer questions, complete tasks and generate images. This could help with marking and feedback allowing more time for teacher engagement with pupils. This is a tool to enhance, not replicate learning. A lot of governors in attendance at the training were worried about pupils being able to access the technology, however LW was not aware whether the governors were secondary or primary. Boards are encouraged to look critically at AI and their discussion around having an assessment policy, which should take into account data protection, security and technical considerations given to pupils and parents. Sustainability was also discussed as AI uses a huge amount of energy. ABL advised that the North Devon Head's group have recently discussed AI and Petroc is leading an AI discussion development group, which GTS will be part of. There are valid uses but potential pitfalls too. CC informed the board that higher education are using AI and it has massive benefits for teachers and students. The challenge is in setting out the frame and the policy. There is a need to be really clear with students and staff on when they can use AI and the penalties if using it when they should not. IN there is a danger in understanding what AI can and can't do. There is a skill in asking the question to get exactly what you are looking for. CC advised that she has recently completed safeguarding level 2 and is currently undertaking safeguarding level 3 with Exeter University.	I I I I I
2024/25/ FGB/ 51	Governor Visits	IN recently attended the H&S meeting.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 52	Items Through the Chair	None.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 53	Final Point	What is the impact of this meeting on outcomes for pupils in the school?	Q

		Discussed at length staff wellbeing and the issues the survey has raised, including behaviour. The board are aware of finance issues around the demographic dip and the impact that may have. Via sub committees, the board had discussed pupil attendance and staff absence, cementing our understanding as a board of the issues raised by the sub committees.	D
2024/25/ FGB/ 54	Dates	T&L 27 th March 2025 Resources 3 rd April 2025 FGB 24 th April 2025	I

Meeting ended 5.07pm

Agenda Reference	Agenda Item	Action Required	By Whom/ When
2024/25/FGB/43	Minutes and matters arising	Clerk to source/investigate terms of reference for a sustainability governor.	Clerk 24/04/25
2024/25/FGB/43	Minutes and matters arising	A reminder to all to complete the governor skills audit. EB will collate responses to identify skill/knowledge gaps and discuss at the next FGB	All and EB 24/04/25
2024/25/FGB/44	Policies	Equality objectives to be presented at the next FGB as JSR absent.	JSR 24/04/25
2024/25/FGB/45	Wellbeing Survey	Clerk to check recommendation for the frequency of staff wellbeing survey and feedback to the board	Clerk ASAP