

GREAT TORRINGTON SCHOOL
Academy Trust
 Company Number 769819.
 A Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England
Full Governing Board Committee Meeting
Thursday 17th July 2025 at 3.30pm in E4



Attendees	Initials	Position	Comments
Balman, Sharon	SB	Parent Governor	Apologies
Beer, Emma	EB	Member Appointed	Present
Bloodworth, Andy	ABL	Headteacher	Present
Chipperfield, Caroline	CC	Parent Governor	Present
Couch, Lara	LJC	Staff Governor	Not present
Cox, Elizabeth	ELC	Staff Governor	Apologies
Machin, Michael	MM	Co-opted Governor	Apologies
Newberry, Ian	IN	Member Appointed	Present
Wall, Lesley	LW	Co-opted Governor	Apologies
Whewell, Barry	BW	Member Appointed	Present
Wynne, Colin	CW	Co-opted Governor	Apologies
Pateman, Jo	JMP	Clerk to the Governing body	Present

MINUTES

Minute Reference	Minute Item	Information	Action/ Decision
2024/25/ FGB/70	Training Session	Safer Recruitment with LW – moved to September meeting as LW had sent her apologies.	I, D
2024/25/ FGB/ 71	Apologies	Apologies had been received from CW, LW, SB, ELC and MM, these were sanctioned.	I, D
2024/25/ FGB/ 72	Conflicts of Interest	None declared.	I

2024/25/ FGB/ 74	Minutes and Matters Arising	Minutes of the meeting held on 24th April 2025 to be considered, agreed and signed - done <u>Matters arising and action points from the last meeting</u> • Clerk to add staff wellbeing survey to autumn agenda to enable governors to review questions before being circulated to staff in February 2026 – done. • Clerk to invite SB and CW to attend the year 6 parent evening – done – only SB attended only . 4 parents interested • Next year – reminder - cards or flyers for the governors to hand out with contact info. • Skills audit – added to this agenda. • Clerk to update governor visit form to include questions to ask pupils – ABL to update. • LW to provide safer recruitment training session – moved to FGB in September.	D
2024/25/ FGB/ 73		KLR joined at 3.36pm Annual discussion re: ongoing concern. We are confident we have sufficient reserves to deal with any overspend and reserves within our policy limit to deal with any emergencies. The board are mindful of the budget that we have fixed for the next two to three years to address any issues raised. Having reviewed exam results these remain on a reasonably good level, Ofsted still rate the school as 'good', we do not feel Ofsted will inspect next year but will probably do so the year after. There is currently no pressure to join a MAT. The school is starting to run budget forecasts for the term, and the auditors have picked up on the fact that in 27/28 the school reserves are forecast to fall below the £400k, how will the school mitigate this? KLR and ABL have spoken about this and the only area where we have leeway is staffing costs. The school will look, as we already do, but will look in more detail from September to identify whether there are any areas where people can be moved around to reduce our costs. Q – why does it suddenly dip below in that year, anything different or just a forecast of inflation? We are forecasting a deficit every year for the next 3 years and that is building up and eating into our reserves. When we put the budgets together we are fairly conservative and often forecast the worst case scenario e.g., funding will not be increased, staffing costs will increase, it is difficult as we do not know what funding we will receive, how many pupils will join and leave, some of this is guess work but we always air on the side of caution. The board discussed and agreed to a staffing review to identify any areas where costs could be cut and how to best utilise the staff within the school.	I I I Q I

		The school has been here before; we currently have a shortfall because we have dedicated a portion of our reserves to the CIF bid for the roofs. Our reserves have therefore shrunk which has raised concerns with the auditors as it is going against our reserve policy. The other option is to amend our reserves policy however, that is currently set at 3 months expenditure. ABL – we do this every year when staff leave, we carefully consider whether we need to replace them or whether we can amend structures within the school. We are at a stage where we need a 3-year plan to reduce staffing costs. Our approach is fine and has saved money but in 3 years’ time we need to have done more to address that, it’s a little close on the horizon now. The worry for me is more unfunded pay rises. I met with unions yesterday and they didn’t understand it is not funded fully. Q – how many areas are there for manoeuvre? There is not much to play with, staffing costs are the main costs. Q – can we look at sustainability? Can we produce more of our own energy and sell some back? We do already, it is a small amount of revenue. We would have to purchase additional solar panels to be able to produce more energy. Q – there are other options for looking at costs or income generation in other areas. IN agrees but suggests they won’t make that much of a difference. Electric vehicles also in discussion at the moment, potentially 43 electric charging points, could potentially get money back from that for the public use. The school is investigating but we do have concerns around maintaining the car park for staff, but we do need to be open to this and investigate further. Governors agreed that the school remains a going concern. KLR left at 3.50pm.	I I Q Q Q I D, I
2024/25/ FGB/ 75	Committee Matters	T&L – significant discussion around homework and whether it is effective. The committee focused on behaviour and attendance and analysed on call figures which highlighted how much time SLT are dedicating to this. The careers policy has been updated and there is now a move to a 2-week work experience, 1 as the current work placement and a second week made up of visits to employers and different industries. This could be problematic in rural north Devon. Resources – we discussed the catering tender and the new appointment, the risk register has been updated and approved, we discussed the CIF bid and the work to the roofs over the summer. Unfortunately this won’t be fully finished by September, but the school will mitigate any risks.	I I

2024/25/ FGB/ 76	ToR	Approve terms of reference for the sustainability governor – this will be moved to a September meeting.	I
		The Sustainability policy is in draft; it needs to be in place by December 2025.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 77	Policies	14 – SEN policy – in mark up to show changes – HVW joined at 3.56pm – main changes are in terminology, where in the previous policy it relates to qualify first teaching, that is now OAIP, reflected throughout the policy. HVW will deliver training on the INSET day in September because this is a whole school thing, not just SEN. The policy was adopted by the board. HVW left at 4.02pm	I
		55 – Support Staff Leave, Overtime and TOIL policy – this is not due but has been amended to address concerns with the budget and also as over the last few months we have noticed a slight increase in overtime being claimed where we would not have anticipated it and are therefore tightening up the policy. The only change is that overtime hours must be agreed <u>in advance</u> with the headteacher. The board adopted the policy.	D I
		56 - Conflict of Interest and Declaration of Business Interest policy, this is a new policy as requested by the auditors. The committee approved the policy.	I
			D
2024/25/ FGB/ 78	Safeguarding	ABL reported that the splitting of safeguarding meetings into operational and strategic continues to work well with the safeguarding governor attending the strategic meeting. Safeguarding training has been organised for the next academic year through a mixture of INSET, online courses and staff meetings.	I
		NMM presented the safeguarding report to the board and ran through the key highlights from the report including a slight increase in MASH enquiries and children on CP. The number of children on part time timetables is high. ABL raised that he fears there is a lack of evidence to prove that this results in children returning to school full time. Parents are beginning to use the term ‘flexi schooling’ and this will be an area that will need to be further explored next year, there is a worry that flexi schooling is even more flexible than annex Rs.	I
		Q – the school has a duty of care, if a pupil is part time at school and then studying from home, how do you manage that duty of care? With flexi school we are not sure, we assume it will be along the same lines as current part time timetables i.e., the school meet with parents and agree the plan and ensure parents are aware they should be present and supervising pupils when they are studying at home.	Q
		Q – does the school have the resources to do on the spot checks? No. We also worry that some schools will abuse flexi schooling and use it with pupils who have behavioural issues.	Q

		Q – is this simply a rebadge of part time timetables as flexi time? We simply do not know yet, we need to explore this further. Q – is PREVENT achieving anything? The process is good, but identification and understanding can be difficult. If a child makes a racist comment that does not necessarily indicate an extremism view. A lot of racial language is born of ignorance, and it is not fully understood. Prevent will be a focus of training for staff next year. Once identified correctly the process pupils and adults follow with Prevent is good. Q – do you think staff have enough knowledge to identify when a Prevent referral is needed? That is one of the reasons we will revisit this training in September, it is understanding the local agendas and the shifting national agendas far wider than just immigration.	Q Q Q
2024/25/ FGB/79	Skills Audit	Following completion of a skills audit by the board, a discussion was held to address any gaps identified. IN suggested inviting KLR to the governor planning day in the new term to provide a session on understanding the budget and monitoring reports, as finance had scored low on the skills audit. IN reminded the board that there lots of courses listed in the clerking weekly briefing which is circulated by the clerk. Finance training sessions are included; these are often low cost or even free and IN encouraged the board to consider signing up for these courses. The board felt that areas highlighted as low in the audit were typical for a board of governors however there was a fair range of skills which were complimentary and balanced. Finance is the clear gap, and we must work to address this in the coming year. The board were hopeful that a planning day date could be confirmed in early Autumn, ABL will be invited too, and the board will focus on strategy planning. ABL expressed concern that safeguarding had been listed by at least one governor as an area to be prioritised to develop knowledge and skills. Please could the governor/s who had recorded this make themselves known to the clerk so that focused training could be provided. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all, and it is vital that all governors are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Action – EB to investigate which governor highlighted safeguarding as an area to develop.	I I I I I I A

		ABL would like the board to ensure they are confident with the decisions made by the school around the new curriculum. Governors should be able to articulate why the changes have been made as the school will come under scrutiny as other schools are moving in the opposite direction and reducing their curriculum. ABL can address this with the board as part of the planning day.	I
2024/25/ FGB/ 80	Positive Handling	Annual standing item – discussion on the use of positive handling and training Do the board want staff trained in manual handling? In special schools every member of staff would probably be trained, and many mainstream schools have one or two staff trained. To now, GTS have not trained any staff. Q – is there a need? ABL does not believe so, there is a perception that we are having more incidents where children are being physical with each other, and staff have to intervene. ABL's concern is that having trained staff would only work if they were in the exact place at the exact time to effectively intervene which is almost impossible and could result in staff standing back and waiting for the trained staff to arrive. In addition, there is a potentially a danger of ending up with a 'capped crusader' who is called upon and who could potentially inflame a situation. At present, staff do not have to intervene if they do not want to. If they feel able, and it is appropriate in that moment, it is a snap decision as to what you do and how you do it. It can put staff at risk but the incidents are so varied we could not guarantee having the right person in the right place at the right time. The school have not conducted a staff vote as we fear this could be emotive and staff would not necessarily understand the full implications and challenges around this. Q – as a parent governor, by not having trained staff, is it more likely to impact on my child not being safe? ABL does not believe so, incidents occur so infrequently and so randomly, having two members of staff, or one out of twenty trained, would never provide the coverage to make a tangible difference IN – I fear staff not trained could potentially stand back and say it is not their job meaning that they wait for the relevant person to arrive which could lead to a greater risk. The board can review our decision at any time i.e., should incidents significantly increase we can consider again whether training is warranted. Q – we could potentially train all staff? Agreed but not sure that is what we want for our school. The board held a vote and agreed not to train staff at this time. This will be reviewed again in 12 months.	I I Q I Q I Q D
2024/25/ FGB/81	Governance Review	The board discussed when to next hold a governance review and agreed that this should be completed every 3 years in the autumn term. The clerk will schedule a governance review in November 2026.	I, D

2024/25/ FGB/ 82	SIP	Update provided by ABL. The school continue tow ork against the outcomes defined within the SIP.	I
2024/25/ FGB/83	Election Procedure	<i>Annual cycle – agree election procedure and term of office for the chair and vice chair – will we have a governor day in early September, or hold elections at first committee meetings?</i> The board agreed to hold a strategic day before 18th September 2025 if possible. The clerk will circulate dates to all and confirm ASAP. The board agreed to the same term of office for the Chair and Vice Chair i.e., one year. Elections to be held during the planning day, if this is before 18/09/25 otherwise elections will be held at the start of each committee meeting.	D D
2024/25/ FGB/ 84	Training	Discussed under item 2024/25/FGB/79. The clerk to remind governors of the National College login so that they can complete safeguarding training.	I A
2024/25/ FGB/85	Meeting dates	The committee approved the committee meeting dates for the academic year 2025/26. A reminder to all that the Resources committee will meet at 3.15pm to read and review any personnel letters and requests prior to the meeting. The actual meeting can start at 3.15pm if everyone is present and has read any personnel requests, or can start at 3.30pm, this is at the Chair’s discretion. The board briefly discussed the timings of meetings. Later start times i.e., 5.30pm would be beneficial for one or two governors however they appreciated the difficulty in staff having to stay on to attend governor meetings. The board agreed to keep meetings on a Thursday with a 3.30pm start time for the academic year 2025/26.	D I D
2024/25/ FGB/ 86	Governor Visits	None.	I
2024/25/ FGB/87	Academy Trust Handbook	All governors to confirm that they have received and read the Academy Trust Handbook which comes into effect 1st September 2025, emailed to all by the clerk on 27th June 2025. The board confirmed that the Academy Trust Handbook had been received and read by all.	I D
2024/25/ FGB/ 88	Items Through the Chair	1265 – missed from the agenda but circulated to the board prior to the meeting. ABL ran through the 1265 notes and reminded the board that the 1265 relates to the number of directed hours for teaching staff. In recent years, the 1265 has been made more explicit so that staff are very clear on what they should be doing and when.	I I

	Break duties - historically staff directed time was for 5, even though in reality they were only asked to do 1 or 2 meaning there was hidden hours of directed time. Using this hidden time this year has created 38 hours of professional duties time. This is effectively an hour a week and creates time for staff to make calls home, something that they have previously said they did not have time to do. Q – teachers are 10 hours a year under directed? Yes, that is correct. Q – is that a present to teachers, or will that 10 hours suddenly be cashed back again? That is highly unlikely. Q – where does marking fit in? Every member of staff has the 10% of PPA, (planning, preparation and assessment) time. Additional hours are also an expectation, and we need to keep reminding staff because all too often a task is set or calendarised and their excuse will be they haven't had a PPA. Q – course work, loading, where would that fit in? It is up to staff how they structure their time, they have PPAs, some staff choose to do it before they go home or when they get home, some courses have more coursework than others. Subject leads make the decision on which courses they run. Q – where do open evenings come in? That is included in the 1265. The 1265 has gone to the union reps and has been approved. The board approved the 1265 for the academic year 2025/26. The challenge as a senior leadership team now is to be more structured and monitor staff, it may not be very 'GTS like' but we've been driven by responses and behaviours of staff. On behalf of the board, IN formally thanked LJC for her time on the board as a staff governor and for time as an excellent teacher at GTS and wished her well in hew new post. CC requested that the school thank the school staff on behalf of the board for another good year. IN provided the board with an additional update and the meeting moved to Part 2.	I Q Q Q Q Q I D I I I I
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2024/25/ FGB/ 89	Final Point	What is the impact of this meeting on outcomes for pupils in the school? The board have agreed that the school is an ongoing concern. We have reviewed safeguarding data and trends, updated the SEN policy and ensured the governing board are fully skilled.	I
2024/25/ FGB/90	Dates	T&L – 18th September 2025 Resources – 25th September 2025 FGB – 2nd October 2025	I

The meeting ended at 5.35pm