Willingham County Primary School

Meeting of the Full Governing Body on

Thursday 6th November 2025 at 7pm (WPS)

MINUTES

Present: Chris Shaw (CS) (Chair), Mona Paalanen (MP) (Headteacher), Angela Walker (AW) (Deputy Head), Matt Unwin-Riches (MUR) (Vice Chair), Cherie Davies (CD), Lara Feather (LF), Louise Johnston (LS), Helen McCarthy (HM), and Annabel Targett (AT).

Also attending: Charlene Monk (CM), CamClerk.

Guest: Lucy Poskitt (LP) - Potential New Governor and Sean McCann (SM) - Potential New Governor

	Minutes	Actions
1.	**Welcome from the Chair** The Chair (CS) welcomed all to the meeting. **Apologies** Apologies were received and accepted from Sophie Cunningham (SC), Yvona Duncan (YD) and Emily Lloyd (EL). The meeting was quorate.	
2.	**Declarations of Interest. *** There were no declarations of interest concerning items on the agenda.	
3.	**Appointment of new governors** The Chair introduced new potential Co-opted governors Lucy Poskitt (LP) and Sean McCann (SM) to the Governing body. The Chair proposed, and the MUR seconded, LP and SM to be co-opted with immediate effect. Both candidates were recognised as having relevant experience and skills to contribute effectively to the Governing Body. Following a brief discussion, the Governing Body unanimously **agreed** the co-option of Lucy Poskitt (LP) and Sean McCann (SM). The Chair confirmed that one Staff Governor vacancy and two Co-opted Governor vacancies remain. **Action01:** Clerk to undertake paperwork for LP and SM Co-opted Governor roles. The Governing Body currently has a Staff Governor vacancy following the end of JA's term of office on 12th October 2025. The election process for the Staff Governor role is underway, with a deadline of 14th November. The Chair proposed that, should JA not be re-elected, the board consider nominating JA as an Associate Governor, recognising their valuable skills, experience, and ability to contribute to finance and budget discussions. The Chair also noted that the terms of office for one Parent Governor and one Co-opted Governor will conclude in early January 2026 and highlighted the potential need to recruit additional governors.	**Clerk**
4.	**Minutes***	

i. The minutes of the FGB meeting, held on 22nd September 2025, were submitted, and signed by the Chair as a true record of the meeting.

ii. Actions outstanding and Matters arising (not included elsewhere on the agenda)

No	Action	Owner	Deadline
Actions from meeting held on 10 July 2025:			
03	Chair to chase for a response regarding LA SEND ongoing discussions and challenges. **Post meeting action 25.09.25** Chair to chase again. **Action - closed**	Chair	FGB02
Actions from this meeting held on 22 September 2025:			
01	The Chair reminded all to review the RAP and highlight the key areas they wish to focus on, collectively and individually linked to Link roles visits and termly overviews/plans. **Action - closed**	All	FGB02
02	SMT to investigate EDI Training relevant to the school's demographics. **Action - closed**	SMT	FGB02
03	The Chair to contact the Headteacher at Cottenham Village College, secondary school, with the potential to recruit governors in supporting the Governing body. **Action - closed**	Chair	FGB02
04	Chair to send Governors DfE Prevent training link for all to complete. **Action - closed**	Chair	FGB02

5. Head Teacher's report *

The written Headteacher's report was circulated ahead of the meeting.

The Headteacher confirmed that no Governor questions, challenges, or comments had been submitted in writing ahead of the meeting.

The Headteacher, MP, provided a summary of the report during the meeting covering successes and challenges, current context, attendance, child protection and safeguarding updates, comparison of concerns, staffing, achievements and standards, parental engagement, school improvement, school development plan, teaching and learning curriculum, SEND, Premises and Health and Safety and Finance. Key topics were expanded upon as follows:-

(School Development Plan) SDP

The Headteacher drew the Governors' attention to the previous *100-Day SDP* (2 June 2024 – 24 October 2025, covering 75 days) and introduced the new *SDP dated 3 November 2025.*

It was noted that two objectives from the previous plan have been retained in the updated version, as they are still being embedded and require further review and impact monitoring:

1. **Revise and implement the English curriculum** to enhance the quality of pupil outcomes.
2. **Ensure retrieval practice is intentional and effective**, positively influencing pupil engagement and learning.

As part of the new School Development Plan (SDP), Objective 2 focuses on developing the oracy curriculum. The Headteacher informed Governors that the Department for Education (DfE) published the Curriculum and Assessment review earlier that week. While the revised national curriculum is scheduled for implementation in 2028, the proposed changes for KS1 and KS2 seem minimal. However, the review places a clear emphasis on the importance of oracy as a teaching priority, aligning well with the school's current focus.

<u>(Local Authority) LA SEND Services – Update and Challenges</u>

The Chair and Headteacher provided an update on ongoing discussions with the Local Authority regarding SEND provision.

- A meeting was held with the Chair, the LA Assistant Director of Inclusion, and the School's Inclusion Lead, during which the current EHCNAs challenges were discussed openly and transparently.
- The school is currently waiting on 15 EHCNAs with the School's Inclusion Lead currently working on 3 EHCNAs to be submitted.
- During the meeting the School Inclusion Lead, shared a case study illustrating the positive impact of targeted support on a pupil, reinforcing the importance of timely and appropriate intervention.
- The Chair reported positively on the Assistant Director's engagement, describing them as receptive and supportive, having only recently taken up the role in Cambridgeshire (July 2025).
- The scale of the challenge was highlighted, with a backlog of 17,000 Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessments (EHCNAs) and 8,000 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) requiring annual review across the county.
  The Governing Body noted that the Local Authority continues to face significant resource limitations, particularly a shortage of specialist professionals required to assess and support pupils with SEND.
- The school is currently awaiting confirmation from the LA Assistant Director, due for follow up the week after half term, regarding potential additional funding and access to Educational Psychologist support.
- The Headteacher reiterated the urgent need for specialist input to meet pupils' needs effectively and confirmed a follow-up meeting is scheduled with the Service Director of Education on 18th December 2025.

<u>Attendance – Use of the "T" Code</u>

The Deputy Headteacher (AW) informed Governors that the school continues to use the 'T' attendance code (parent travelling for occupational purposes) for pupils from the GRT (Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller) community. Although Department for Education (DfE) guidance specifies that this code should only apply

	to families who are 'mobile' (i.e., without a fixed address), the school applies it to settled GRT families in recognition of community expectations and practices. This approach aligns with neighbouring schools and reflects advice from GRT educational support services, which advocate for authorising travel for work purposes. The school acknowledges the tension between strict adherence to DfE guidance and maintaining positive relationships with the GRT community. While most GRT families do not travel for work, a few do and aim to minimise disruption by aligning travel with school holidays. One family, in particular, travels frequently and has low overall attendance. The school continues to work closely with this family through attendance support meetings and contracts, reinforcing the message that authorised absence will be maintained only where pupil attendance remains good. MP commented the School Adviser's visit and highlighted significant progress in reducing persistent absence, which improved from 9.5% in 2023/24 to 7.6% in the last academic year. The Chair formally thanked the DHT (AW) and Attendance Lead (GW) for their continued efforts in monitoring and improving attendance. <u>Safeguarding</u> The Designated Safeguarding Lead team (DSL) continues to conduct half-termly audits. Key findings and lessons learned are documented within the My Concern system and shared with the wider DSL team to support ongoing safeguarding practice and reflection. <u>Parental Engagement</u> The first round of parent consultations took place with a fair level of attendance. Governors discussed the low turnout at recent open classroom events and explored strategies to improve engagement. Options considered included changing the format to offer virtual alternatives such as recorded videos or live sessions via Teams, in addition to traditional face-to-face meetings. <u>Spelling</u> The Senior Management Team (SMT) identified spelling as a key area of weakness in Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 6 standards. In response, the school has aligned its approach with the DfE writing framework and decided to build on the existing phonics scheme to strengthen spelling provision. The Sounds-Write programme is currently used; however, it does not offer structured planning support. To address this, the KS1 Phase Lead has drafted additional lesson plans, and teachers will deliver Sounds-Write-based spelling lessons based on their planning to improve consistency and outcomes in writing/ **<u>Governor questions/challenges/support followed:</u>** **Challenge:** Are the schools current outstanding EHCNA being processed?	

	Not at present. However, the school might receive interim funding to help bridge the gap while awaiting progress. The backlog remains significant, and discretionary funding has been requested. A redesigned funding model is expected to be introduced next year. While this represents a step forward, it does not yet include access to the specialist professionals required to fully support pupils' needs. **Challenge:** Is the school compliant in its use of the 'T' attendance code? Yes. The use of the 'T' code falls under the Headteacher's discretion. **Challenge:** How have teacher appraisals been managed this year, particularly in light of recent changes? The appraisal process has been streamlined this year, with a particular focus on Teaching Assistant (TA) deployment. Initial meetings have been well received by teachers, with feedback indicating they were beneficial. The process has incorporated a wellbeing focus, drawing on input from the KS Phase Leaders. Staff survey responses highlighted Steplab as a valuable tool, which will continue to be used. The school vision now encourages all teachers to take greater ownership and responsibility, which has been reflected in the appraisal process. Teachers being paid in Upper Pay Scale are undertaking small-scale research projects, and where impact is evident, they are expected to share outcomes with colleagues to promote collaborative practice. **Challenge:** With reference to the SDP Objective 1 – promoting pupil independence and resilience in learning – how will success be measured? The Senior Management Team (SMT) acknowledged that measuring progress in this area is challenging due to the lack of specific guidance from the DfE. Success will be monitored through collaborative efforts between teachers and Teaching Assistants, using evidence-based observations and ongoing monitoring. It was noted that pupils may have previously been disadvantaged by receiving too much support, and the current approach aims to encourage greater independence. Pupil voice surveys will be used to gather feedback and help evaluate impact over time. **Challenge:** Has there been a fundamental change in how pupil independence and resilience are being promoted? Pupil voice surveys are being used both now and at the end of the year to gather feedback and provide evidence of impact. The Headteacher and SMT are currently exploring the most effective ways to measure and support this shift in practice. There were no further questions.	
6.	**Honeypots Report** The headteacher provided a brief verbal update noting the following points: • LA adviser visited the setting last week; a formal report is expected to follow. • A small number of pupils with high needs are currently being supported, and efforts are ongoing to secure appropriate funding.	

	• All Staff have completed NELI training (NELI is a 20-week oral language programme for 3 – 4-year-old children, centred around shared storybook reading and guided play, which is designed to improve the oral language skills of children in nursery). • Forecasted admission numbers are being reviewed. Two new staff members have recently been recruited, but maintaining financial viability will depend on sufficient pupil numbers. • A budget deficit is projected for the next financial year, highlighting the need to closely monitor preschool admissions. **Challenge:** Are Subject Leads visiting/consulting with preschool? Yes. Subject Leads all visited the Pre-school last academic year to increase their understanding of the starting points of the curriculums they lead. **Challenge:** Is Honeypots run by the school? Yes. Honeypots is a preschool attached to the school and operates under Section 27 of the Education Act 2002, which allows a school's governing body to run nursery or early years provision as part of its extended services.	
7.	**Brief Finance Budget Update** The Chair of Finance and Premises (LJ) provided a brief update noting that the school is currently forecasting an end of year surplus of £80,000 by 31st March 2026, with indications that this may increase to approximately £100,000. **Challenge:** Are staff provided with a flu vaccination? Yes. Flu vaccinations are offered to staff, with a strong uptake reported.	
8.	**Planning** The Chair reminded all Governors to review the School Development Plan (SDP) and identify the key areas they wish to focus on, both collectively and individually, in alignment with their Link Governor roles and termly monitoring plans.	
9.	**Safeguarding*** No specific themes. Covered as part of the Headteacher's report agenda item 5.	
10.	**Committee Updates *** Committees were reminded to review Terms of Reference (ToR) for approval at FGB02. <u>I. Personnel</u> • The Chair of Personnel, (HM), summarised key points from the meeting that took place 3rd November 2025. • Staff wellbeing was reported as generally positive, although some staff expressed feeling unsettled and were encouraged to take greater ownership through the appraisal process and mini research projects. • TA deployment was reviewed and found to be working effectively.	

	• The Wellbeing Working Group met recently, and a staff questionnaire has been circulated. • All staff have completed their safeguarding training. • One TA has resigned; the vacancy has been advertised, and seven applications have been received to date. • Two new staff members have been appointed to the afterschool club. • An existing flexible working request has been extended from December 2025 to Easter 2026. • Seven policies were reviewed and ratified by the committee. The Co-Chair (AT) of Curriculum, summarised key points from the meeting that took place 15th October 2025. • AT and LF were elected as Co-Chair's with EL appointed as Vice-Chair. • The Terms of Reference were amended, reducing the number of meetings from six to four annually, with attendance now reported through Full Governing Body (FGB) meetings. • The committee discussed the new Ofsted Framework and agreed to align the school's evaluation form with its language and expectations, particularly the shift from "catching up" to "keeping up." • Subject Leads will be expected to produce a one-page summary for future meetings to support curriculum monitoring. • Three policies were reviewed and ratified. It was agreed that anti-bullying incidents should be logged within the safeguarding system. A separate anti-bullying policy will be drafted and shared with parents for feedback. <u>iii. Finance & Premises</u> The Chair (LJ) of Finance & Premises summarised key points from the meeting that took place on 3rd October 2025. • The School Site Manager raised ongoing frustrations regarding premises issues, including lack of progress on SUDS (Sustainable Drainage Systems) • Afterschool clubs are running well, with only a small number of late payments. • New compliance system has been chosen to support training and will be implemented. • Catering remains a concern. The recent parent survey received limited responses. Governor's plan to meet with the catering company to discuss minor adjustments to the school menu. Frustrations were noted regarding the company's growth and its ability to manage operations effectively. The current contract has not yet been signed, and no follow-up has been received. • A recent police incident was discussed in relation to the Safer Streets – Safer School Scheme. Governors explored ways to enhance safety around the school, noting a decline in volunteer support for monitoring.	**SMT/**

	Action02: SMT, with Pupil voice and the School Council will be involved in raising awareness of safer streets, with a pupil voice article to be submitted for publication in *Willingham News*.	**School Council**
11.	**Governor Business** i. Governor training and Board Development **a)Termly Training record** for the Governing Body to be submitted to the LA School Governance Team by Monday 15th December 2025 **Action03:** Chair reminded all Governors to update their training completed/records into their profile in GovernorHub by 15th December 2025. **b)Annual skills audit** for the Governing Body to be submitted to the LA School Governance Team by Monday 15th December 2025 **Action04:** Chair to send the Annual Skills audit form to all Governors for completion by 15th December 2025. ii. School Visits – key dates and planning The Chair expressed thanks to all Governors who have already undertaken monitoring visits and encouraged continued engagement by booking further visits with school staff. **Action05:** Safeguarding Link Governor CS to conduct safeguarding visit this term – autumn 2. iii. Recruitment Needs As discussed under agenda item 3 (Appointment of New Governors), the staff governor election process is currently underway within the school. Two governor terms are due to conclude in January 2026. The Governing Body will assess future recruitment needs accordingly. iv. Policy review- Policies discussed in Personnel Committee - FGB to ratify: a) All Governors to review and confirm acceptance of Code of conduct for all **- approved.** b) All Governors to review and confirm acceptance of Flexible working policy and procedure**- approved.** c) All Governors to review and confirm acceptance of Appraisal and Capability Policy**- approved.** d) All Governors to review and confirm acceptance of Grievance procedure**- approved.** e) All Governors to review and confirm acceptance of Whistle-blowing policy and procedure **- approved.**	**Chair/All** **Chair/All**
12.	**Summary of Actions*** See table at end of minutes. **AOB**	

	KS2 Phase Lead The Chair proposed inviting the KS2 Phase Lead, Naomi McKie, to present at the next FGB meeting for her to present a follow-up presentation after 18 months in post in order to provide valuable insight into the changes, observations, and implementations she has led. All Governors **agreed.** **Action06:** Chair to invite KS2 Phase Lead to FGB03 meeting.	
13.	**Date of Next Meeting*** *FGB03 Thursday 15th January 2026, 7pm at the school* *Finance & Premises 21st November 2025* *Curriculum 7th January 2026* *Personnel 12th January 2026*	
13.	**Review the Impact of this Meeting*** The Chair concluded that the meeting was both constructive and positive, marked by the formal welcome of two new Governors. Governors engaged in meaningful discussion, provided challenge, and exercised appropriate scrutiny of the Headteacher's report.	

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.25pm

Table of Outstanding Actions

No	Action	Owner	Deadline
Actions from meeting held on 6 November 2025:			
01	Clerk to undertake paperwork for LP and SM Co-opted Governor roles.	Clerk	FGB03
02	SMT, with Pupil voice and the School Council will be involved in raising awareness of safer streets, with a pupil voice article to be submitted for publication in *Willingham News*.	SMT/School Council	FGB03
03	Chair reminded all Governors to update their training completed/records into their profile in GovernorHub by 15th December 2025.	All	15/12/25
04	Chair to send the Annual Skills audit form to all Governors for completion by 15th December 2025.	All	15/12/25
05	Safeguarding Link Governor CS to conduct safeguarding visit this term – autumn 2.	Chair	By end of Autumn 2
06	Chair to invite KS2 Phase Lead to FGB03 meeting.	Chair	FGB03