



Minutes from the Full Governing Body Meeting

Held on Tuesday 13th May 2025 at The ACE Centre Nursery School

Present Catherine Hayward (CHa) – LA Governor & Chair
Rob Horsfall (RH) – Co-opted Governor & Vice-chair
Cheryl Huntbach (Chu) – Co-opted Governor
Sasha Gruhn (SG) – Parent Governor
Phoebe O'Donnell (POD) – Parent Governor
Lynn Jenkins (LJ) – Headteacher
Zoe Wakefield (ZW) – Staff Governor

Apologies:

Absent:

In attendance Hazel Sheridan (HS) – Governance Professional

The meeting started at time 6:01pm and was quorate.

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Notification of any urgent business

There were no items of urgent business raised.

3. Appointment of Co-opted Governor

- 3.1. CHu's pen portrait was circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and CHu temporarily left the meeting while Governors discussed her application. **Governors agreed** that her experience of working with children, families and SEND are valuable to the Governing Body and meet the skills required.

Decision: CHu to be appointed as a Co-opted Governor.

ACTION: HS to add CHu to Governor Hub and send emails with links to useful documents and mandatory training. HS to ask SBM to initiate DBS and Section 128 checks, add details to GIAS and set up school email address.

ACTION: CHa to arrange induction meeting with CHu.

- 3.2. Another pen portrait for a Co-opted Governor application was discussed and is noted as confidential in Part 2 of the minutes.
- 3.3. Governors were informed that SOL had resigned from the Governing Board as she felt she was unable to continue. This followed a period of change from having the strategic role as a Governor, to an operational role as Interim Headteacher during LJ's absence, and then back to being a Governor. Governors wished to note their thanks for her significant contribution to the nursery school.

4. Declarations of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations of interests for this meeting. LJ informed Governors that she was no longer a trustee of The ACE Centre Ltd.

Signed (by Chair): *Catherine Hayward* Date.....



5. Minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2025 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2025 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

ACTION: HS to send approved minutes of 25th March 2025 to CHa for signature, then to LJ for filing at the school.

Previous actions were:

- 5.1. Item 1.2 HS to remove SP and TO from Governor Hub and send emails regarding maintaining confidentiality and deleting any ACE Governance information from their electronic devices. LW to remove SP and TO from Getting Information About Schools (GIAS) – completed.
- 5.2. Item 2.2.1 HS to set up Strategic Plan Working Group on Governor Hub and folder for documents - completed.
- 5.3. Item 2.2.1 CHa to arrange a date for the Strategic Plan Group to meet during term 5 – a date could not be arranged in term 5 and CHa will arrange for term 6. Action carried forward.
- 5.4. Item 3.3 HS to update Governor Hub with RH as Vice-chair - completed. CHa to update website – completed.
- 5.5. Item 5.1 HS to send approved minutes to CHa for signature and then to LJ for school records – completed.
- 5.6. Item 5.3.1 HS to ask for a volunteer Link Governor for liaison with The ACE Centre Ltd. via Noticeboard on Governor Hub – completed and on agenda, item 11.1.
- 5.7. Item 7.7 CHa to complete deficit budget request form for submission with the budget to OCC for approval - completed.
- 5.8. Item 9.4 SOL to arrange a MS Teams/Zoom meeting between FGB members and a colleague who can inform them what to expect at an Ofsted inspection – LJ has contacted a Governor at Comper regarding an online meeting with Governors and is waiting to hear back from them. Action carried forward.
- 5.9. Item 10.1 SOL to arrange safeguarding visit with LJ for term 5 – CHa will check the SCR on Monday 19th May and CHu volunteered to undertake a safeguarding monitoring visit as soon as possible. Action carried forward.
- 5.10. Item 11.2 CHa to amend the risk register to include a specific item on the supply of places exceeding demand in the county – on agenda, item 10.
- 5.11. Item 11.2 All Governors to inform CHa of any risks they believe are not yet included or of any scores that need to be changed – on agenda, item 10.
- 5.12. Item 12.2.1 CH to meet with LJ and ZW to discuss combining monitoring visits - completed.
- 5.13. Item 12.2.2 All Governors to send monitoring visit proforma with focus and questions to be answered with the email to LJ to arrange a monitoring visit – completed.
- 5.14. Item 13.1 CHa to look at dates for a Governance Action Plan meeting – action carried forward.
- 5.15. Item 13.2 HS to update Governor Training Record - completed.

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- 5.16. Item 14.2 LJ to note the additional words to a policy title to indicate any changes – noted, action closed.
- 5.17. Item 14.2 LJ to add policies that staff must read to Smart Log and monitor going forward – LJ informed Governors that all risk assessments are now on Smart Log. All policies are on Google Drive, which staff have access to, and they sign and date a signing sheet (also on Google Drive) when they have read the policies. Action closed.
- 5.18. Item 15.1 All Governors to send their mobile number to HS. HS to amend membership of the WhatsApp group accordingly – completed.

ACTION: HS to note actions 5.3, 5.9, 5.10 and 5.14 carried forward for next FGB meeting agenda.

6. Finance

- 6.1. Review 2025-26 budget forecast: Governors were informed that deficit budget notification form had been completed and submitted to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as stated at the last FGB meeting. Andy Flowers (AF)(OCC) has informed CHa that he will review the nursery school's budget plans and make recommendations to the OCC school finance team. The OCC school finance team will then need to review all deficit budgets submitted by schools, a process which could take one to two months. The ACE Centre nursery school must submit monthly budget plans and if there is any overspend in one area, this must be mitigated by savings elsewhere. LJ added that the school aims to have a balanced in-year budget with small amounts paid off the long-standing deficit when possible.
- 6.2. **Governors queried** if the school received a donation would this have to go towards the deficit or could it pay for something the school needed. LJ replied that any surplus funds would have to be paid towards the deficit.
- 6.3. **Governors questioned** that the amount of Pupil Premium shown on the three-year budget forecast was zero. The nursery school receives Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) but this could not be seen in the three-year budget figures.
- ACTION: LJ to check with SBM where EYPP is shown in the budget.**
- 6.4. **Governors noted** that the three-year forecast shows the nursery school going into deficit in 2027-28. LJ answered that it is very difficult to project what may happen in three years' time and that AF was involved in discussing the budget and so is aware of this. **Governors added** that options need to be explored to avoid the school going into an in-year deficit and therefore increasing the overall deficit.
- 6.5. **Governors acknowledged** that the budget figures are forecast according to the school's current situation, but other possible income streams need to be looked at. The surplus of places available for nursery-aged children in Oxfordshire is also affecting the school and this is recognised on the risk register (please refer to item 10 below). **Governors added** that a good Ofsted inspection grade was crucial to attract more pupils to the nursery school.
- 6.6. **Governors stated** that they are now confident the figures used in constructing the budget are accurate, are evidenced and there is an audit trail. It is therefore an informed budget.

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7. Headteacher's report

- 7.1. LJ gave a verbal update to Governors and these documents were circulated to Governors prior to the meeting: School Development Plan, Attendance Support Programme 2024-25 and Verbal Ofsted feedback 18th October 2023. An INSET day was recently held to re-establish the culture following LJ's return to work. Staff were very engaged with the day and are taking more responsibility for their work and specified areas. The progress made by boys was also looked at. Staff have fed back that the day was powerful and impactful. It is too soon to see if this has had an impact on staff sickness and absence.
- 7.2. The Forest School project is going well and there are many areas of compliance that have to be taken into account. **Governors asked** if it is closer to becoming a source of income for the school. LJ replied that work is due to be completed in January 2026 with a phased roll out of opening it up to other schools soon after. It is therefore likely to have a positive impact on the financial situation for the 2026-27 financial year.
- 7.3. There will be 10 new children starting in September 2025 and 19 children returning; this is below expectations. **Governors asked** how many children would normally be expected and LJ replied 30-32. The ACE nursery school is being affected by the nursery provision being opened by St Mary's Primary School from September 2025 and by local private nursery schools. St. Mary's Primary School is offering more flexible session times and many local private nurseries have better parking facilities. LJ has met with Karen Locke (OCC Foundation Years Lead Advisory Teacher) about what the ACE nursery school can offer. **Governors commented** that they are aware that some people do not know about the ACE nursery school or the provision it offers; more advertising is therefore needed. It was **agreed** that Governors could promote the ACE nursery school as much as possible and it was suggested that posters and flyers, using a consistent message, could be circulated among local groups and on noticeboards. ZW had previously put together information to advertise the ACE and this could be used again.

ACTION: ZW to share previous advertisement with Governors and SG to use for advertising flyer.

- 7.3.1. **Governors queried** if the number of pupils expected in September 2025 was used for the scenarios that the SBM used for the budget. LJ answered that these numbers were used and they have not changed since they were last reported to FGB.
- 7.4. Pupil attendance is at 90.5%, up from 88% previously reported. LJ is looking at the barriers that prevent pupils from attending and making the relevant parents aware of the impact this has on their child's education. An attendance support programme is in place and an anonymised version was made available to Governors prior to the meeting. LJ is working with individual families where necessary. **Governors requested** that any specific characteristics of the child (eg SEND, gender, English as an Additional Language etc) is added to the attendance support programme so that governors can monitor the attendance of specific groups more effectively.

ACTION: LJ to add child's characteristics to the Attendance Support Programme.

- 7.5. LJ stated that she had renamed the Sustainability Project the Expansion Project as expansion would have a big impact on the future sustainability of the nursery school. LJ has had discussions with OCC about how a project to expand the age range of children who could attend the ACE nursery school could be managed. **Governors commented** that sustainability and expansion were two topics and as yet there is no working party

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established for the sustainability of the nursery school. There was a discussion about The ACE Centre Ltd and its provision and this is noted as confidential in Part 2 of the minutes.

7.6. LW (SBM) is currently commissioned by the nursery school on a consultancy basis for two days per week and had intended to reduce her hours in the future. LJ has considered other plans for the SBM role including an SBM employed by the school or someone to deal just with financial matters but not health and safety. LW has now agreed to continue as SBM until the expansion project comes to an end. **Governors asked** if there needs to be any change in the number of days LW is commissioned. LJ answered that the SBM role is accounted for in the budget at Grade 10 for two days per week, however LW's costs are more expensive and LW's services are only budgeted for until July 2025. LW will be asked to reduce the number of days to 1.5 per week or three days per fortnight after July.

7.6.1. **Governors asked** whether the existing SBM job description needs to evolve and **questioned** how the role is being managed. LJ replied that as LW manages finance and Health & Safety but, as she is not employed by the school, she does not have any line-management responsibilities; LJ is currently line-managing the caretaker and admin staff. **Governors stated** when LW is no longer working for the school, the SBM role description will need to be robust, secure and detail everything that they will be expected to do. LJ added that LW is having input into the job description for future use. **Governors also said** that the school needs stability and LW provides this in the medium term.

7.7. Other matters mentioned were:

- Strategic priorities were shared with Governors at the beginning of the term.
- Assessments will be carried out in June (for Assessment Point 3 of the year).
- A nursery school Headteacher, who is also a speech expert, will be visiting the school to provide advice and share her expertise where necessary.
- The monitoring programme for the quality of education is progressing well and learning walks are taking place. Class observations are also being carried out.
- There are currently 53 children on the school roll (24 children for 15 hours and 29 for 30 hours); this number is below what is expected for the summer term.
- There are 26 children on the SEND register. Two training sessions have been held with a focus on SEND and ZW is progressing well with her SENCo training.
- Nine pupils are eligible for EYPP funding and one case is currently pending. EYPP funds are mainly spent on staffing for lunch clubs and extended provision. Some has also been used to help towards items of uniform, with some support also received from Thrive.
- Another member of staff has joined the team for the summer term only. This was necessary to maintain the required staff to pupil ratio and was agreed with Governors.

8. Health and Safety (H&S)

8.1. Governors were informed that the nursery school is now in a much better position with regards to health and safety. There were issues with the building, the environment, H&S processes and documentation. The H&S inspection in 2024 noted that significant progress had been made however the necessary actions to rectify the issues raised fell behind. OCC recently carried out another inspection, reported that they were very pleased with the significant progress made and only a few minor actions are now outstanding. RH confirmed, that as H&S Link Governor, he had witnessed the progress

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made at the nursery school. Improvements have been made to the physical building, the H&S processes and the necessary documentation. The processes are practised and evidenced.

- 8.2. One of the issues raised concerned staff wellbeing and the high workload of the Headteacher and Lead Teacher. They are working more hours than is reasonable and, although this is not impacting on the quality of education, it is having an impact on other things like H&S actions. Conversations need to be held about action plans and timescales, and decisions made about what is to take priority. **Governors asked** if action plans will have compliance and safety matters as priority first. It was answered that compliance matters are now in a much better place than previously and there are more items in the 'should do' category rather than 'must do'. It was suggested that all actions be put into a plan for Governors to decide on their priority. LJ informed Governors that she has drafted a review with options that Governors can discuss at the next FGB meeting. A staff wellbeing survey has been sent out and the results will hopefully give a clearer picture of what is causing any staff wellbeing issues. **Governors queried** if FGB should discuss this or a smaller working party. It was agreed that all Governors need to discuss this and a working party could be set up for further support if necessary.

ACTION: HS to note review plan as agenda item for the next FGB meeting.

9. Safeguarding update

- 9.1. Governors were informed that 38 safeguarding referrals have been made so far this academic year. One child, who had a protection plan, has now left the nursery school. Staff have received training regarding allegations made against staff. Since the training took place there has been one allegation made, which staff handled very well and according to the training they had received. The allegation was unfounded and all details were recorded on CPOMS and shared with the relevant parents. On reflection the only point to note was that the situation should have been mentioned to the DSL rather than another member of staff. **Governors asked** if when a physical intervention has been necessary the required form is completed and signed by parents, and this was confirmed.

10. Risk Register

- 10.1. The risk register is filed on Governor Hub and was available to Governors prior to the meeting. Only one risk has been added regarding the surplus of places available for 3 to 5-year-olds in Oxfordshire and this was agreed by Governors at the last meeting. The possible expansion of provision at the nursery school will now mean that this risk should be rated as 'red' and the mitigation comments need to be checked.

ACTION: RH to check the mitigation recorded on the risk register for this risk and amend if necessary.

11. Link Governor reports

All Link Governor reports are filed on Governor Hub and were circulated to Governors before the meeting. Governors noted that the Governing Board of the ACE Nursery School is small (with four current vacancies) and that Link Governor responsibilities need to be shared more equally. It was **agreed** that Link Governor roles should be discussed as part of the induction process, including the time commitment needed.

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ACTION: HS to note Link Governor roles as discussion item for the next FGB meeting on 24th June 2025.

11.1. Health and Safety monitoring report: Governors noted the H&S monitoring report. The role of the SBM in H&S matters and the importance of it in the job description was discussed earlier in the meeting (please refer to item 7.6.1 above).

11.2. Premises monitoring report: Governors noted the Premises monitoring report and **asked** if more smoke detectors had now been installed to increase coverage. LJ believed this work had now been done.

ACTION: LJ to check that additional smoke detectors have been installed and report back to Governors.

11.3. Curriculum monitoring report: Governors noted the Curriculum monitoring report and **asked** how big the gap is in achieving Communication and Language skills, as it looks like some groups in nursery school are quite far behind age-related expectations (62% of boys at age-related expectations at AP2). LJ clarified that nationally 68% of children are expected to reach age-related expectations by the end of the Reception year (which is year above the highest age range at nursery school). A further assessment will be carried out later this academic year and improvement plans are in place for each child. Due to time constraints at the meeting, LJ will post replies to other questions on Governor Hub.

ACTION: LJ to post replies to further questions on Governor Hub Noticeboard.

12. Governance

12.1. Governor to liaise with Trustees of The ACE Ltd (charity): This item was no longer necessary bearing in mind the minute of 7.5 above and also in the confidential Part 2 of the minutes.

12.2. Governor training (attended and planned): A record of Governor training is kept on Governor Hub and is regularly updated by HS.

12.3. Questions for parent survey: The document filed on Governor Hub containing questions for a parent survey could not be accessed by all Governors at the time of the meeting. LJ clarified that the survey is to be sent from Governors (but sent via her) and contains questions regarding provision and the quality of education. RH undertook to look at the questions when the survey was made available and circulate any new questions to Governors.

ACTION: LJ to circulate questions for a parent survey to Governors in a different format.

ACTION: RH to look at survey questions and suggest any questions for inclusion to Governors for their approval.

13. Documents for approval to be published on website

13.1. SEND Information Report: This report was not available for this meeting and is therefore carried forward to the next FGB meeting.

13.2. Public Sector Equality Duty Statement: This report was not available for this meeting and is therefore carried forward to the next FGB meeting.

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13.3. Behaviour Principles Written Statement: This statement was **approved** by Governors for publication on the website.

13.4. Check on all required information on website: It was confirmed that all information on the website is up to date.

ACTION: HS to note SEND Information Report and Public Sector Equality Duty Statement for approval at the next FGB meeting.

ACTION: CH to publish Behaviour Principles Written Statement on the website.

14. Policies

14.1. Admission to Local Authority Nursery Schools: OCC had not released the admission policy effective from September 2025 at the time of this meeting.

ACTION: HS to note for FGB meeting on 24th June 2025.

14.2. Anti-bullying, Harassment and Discrimination: This policy was **approved** by Governors.

14.3. Behaviour Policy: This policy was **approved** by Governors.

14.4. Data Protection: This policy was **approved** by Governors.

14.5. Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme: This policy was **approved** by Governors.

14.6. Stress at Work: Governors noted that OCC had not yet reviewed this policy (review due March 2024) and **approved** the current version for use in the meantime.

ACTION: HS to send approved policies to CH for signature, then to LJ for school records and update the policy register.

15. Any other business

15.1. Review and approve 2025-26 strategy: The Strategic Plan Working Party is yet to meet and therefore the strategy was not available at this meeting.

ACTION: HS to note as agenda item for the next FGB meeting.

15.2. Governors' Allowances – costs in principle: Governors were informed that, as stated in the Governors' Allowances Policy, they can declare any claims for costs and expenses in principle before they submit a formal expense form for approval.

16. Next meeting date

16.1. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 24th June 2025 at 6pm at The ACE Centre Nursery School.

16.2. It was **suggested and agreed** that the usual FGB agenda items be suspended for the next meeting so time can be allocated to fully discuss those items noted as carried forward.

ACTION: HS to draft agenda for 24th June 2026 with items noted at this meeting and send to CHa for approval before circulating to Governors.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm

Hazel Sheridan
15th May 2025

Signed (by Chair): *Catherine Hayman* Date.....



Sent to Chair & Vice-chair on 15th May 2025 and FGB on 20th May 2025

APPROVED

Catherine Hayman

Signed (by Chair): Date.....