



## Minutes from the Full Governing Body Meeting

### Held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at The Ace Centre Nursery School

Present	Catherine Hayward (CH) – LA Governor & Chair Rob Horsfall (RH) – Co-opted Governor & Vice-chair James Robinson (JR) – Co-opted Governor ( <i>via MS Teams</i> ) Sasha Gruhn (SG) – Parent Governor ( <i>via MS Teams</i> ) Lynn Jenkins (LJ) – Headteacher Zoe Wakefield (ZW) – Staff Governor Jaswinder Didially (JD) – OCC Assistant Director SS Sufficiency ( <i>via MS Teams, item 4 only</i> )
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Apologies:

Absent:

In attendance Hazel Sheridan (HS) – Governance Professional

The meeting started at time 6:05pm and was quorate.

#### 1. Apologies for absence

- 1.1. There were no apologies for absence as everyone was present.

#### 2. Notification of any urgent business

- 2.1. There were no items of urgent business raised.

#### 3. Declarations of pecuniary interests

- 3.1. There were no declarations of pecuniary interests.

#### 4. Consultation

- 4.1. This item is confidential and notes can be seen in Part 2 of the minutes.

#### 5. Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 and matters arising

- 5.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**ACTION: HS to send approved minutes of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 to CH for signature and then to LJ for school records.**

Previous actions were:

- 5.2. Item 4.1 HS to send approved minutes to CH for signature and then to LJ for the school records - completed.
- 5.3. Item 5.1 HS to send approved confidential minutes to CH for signature and then to LJ for school records – completed.
- 5.4. Item 6.3 HS to amend the Scheme of Delegation as agreed and publish on Governor Hub - completed.

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- 5.5. Item 6.4 HS to amend the Code of Conduct 2025-26 as agreed and publish on Governor Hub - completed.
- 5.6. Item 6.5 HS to amend Standing Orders, send to CH for signature and then to LJ for signature - completed.
- 5.7. Item 6.8 All Governors to complete their confirmations as above via their personal profile on Governor Hub (compliance tab) - completed.
- 5.8. Item 6.10 HS to research what essential Link Governors are required and inform FGB and circulate vacant roles via Noticeboard for Governors to consider – completed, no volunteers.
- 5.9. Item 6.10.1 CH to draft Governance Monitoring Plan 2025-26 – completed, please refer to item 10.
- 5.10. Item 11.1 RH to liaise with SBM to agree a mutually convenient date for a Health and Safety Link Governor visit – RH was unable to arrange a H&S monitoring visit as the SBM was off sick. A meeting has now been arranged for 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025.
- 5.11. Item 11.1 LJ to follow-up with OCC regarding the Health and Safety report and circulate it to Governors – LJ has been informed that the report will not be shared with the school, but has been shared upwards at OCC.
- 5.12. Item 13. HS to send all approved policies to CH for signature, update the policy register and upload approved, signed policies to the school's Google drive –completed.

## 6. Confidential minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

6.1. There were some suggested amendments to the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025.

**ACTION: SG to read suggested changes and then confirm agreement or further amendment to CH, RH and HS.**

**ACTION: HS to send minutes to CH for signature when they are approved.**

- 6.2. Item 15.3 SG to email CH and RH to clarify priorities - completed.
- 6.3. Item 15.12 CH / RH to draft communication that will be sent to parents - completed.

## 7. Finance

7.1. LJ informed Governors that when the budget was agreed in March 2025 it was forecast there would be £3K surplus by the end of the financial year. However, due to the drop in pupil numbers there is now a £53K budget deficit in-year and this is expected to grow to £70K or more. The Period 6 figures (from September 2025) do not take into account the anticipated drop in pupil numbers from January 2026. Non-discretionary costs have been limited as much as possible.

## 7.2. **Governors asked the following questions regarding the finances at the nursery school:**

**Q1. The documents show that Staff Related Insurance (E11) is under budget as it has not been renewed due to the costs involved. Is this a risk?**

**A1.** LJ explained that the insurance to cover costs if staff are off sick has now been renewed. After discussions with SBM, cover for the Headteacher, Lead Teacher and the staff member going on maternity leave has been removed and it will cover the remaining staff from January 2026 until the end of the financial year at a cost of £881. The email

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conversation between LJ and SBM will be shared with the Headteacher of St. Mary's School (CM) as evidence of the decision-making process regarding the insurance cover. Claims cannot be made for the first two weeks of any sickness absence. With the remaining weeks left of the autumn term there is only a slight risk to the school if LJ and the Lead Teacher were to be off sick at the same time and LJ is confident such an event could be covered. If a supply teacher were to be off sick they are not covered by this insurance as they would not be paid for sickness absence. **Governors noted** that should any new staff be employed after January 2026 they will need to be added to the insurance policy.

**Q2. What insurance cover is there if CM were to be off sick during her time as Executive Headteacher?**

**A2.** This will be covered by the staff insurance at St. Mary's and it is mentioned in the MOU.

**Q3. How many handover days have been identified for the Headteacher moving to Great Tew Primary School? Do we need a supply teacher for these days if ZW's on-site?**

**A3.** MJ was asked to step-up as Lead Teacher when ZW is doing SEND work at St. Mary's Primary School. The money received from St. Mary's for ZW's hours there will more than cover the additional money paid to MJ as Lead Teacher.

**Q4. In light of the falling pupil numbers, the spring term budget is now unrealistic. At what point do we make adjustments and when do we trigger a reduction in staff?**

**A4.** The pupil numbers for January are speculative at the moment as not all parents have informed the nursery school of their intentions for places in January 2026. St. Mary's Primary School has kindly informed us of the children they have on their list who currently attend the Ace Nursery School. The budget assumes 23 children, however at the moment the possible number will drop to 13. LJ suggested that the SBM could be asked to provide budget scenarios for pupil numbers. The modelling could show how big the deficit might become in different scenarios and this could also be shown to OCC.

**ACTION: LJ to ask SBM to provide Governors with different scenarios showing pupil numbers and staff required.**

**Q5. If there are 13 children attending the nursery school in January, what is the minimum number of staff required and are we already at that level?**

**A5.** With LJ, ZW and MJ leaving the nursery school in December 2025, a full-time Lead Teacher will need to be appointed.

7.3. **Governors stated** that if the school is already at the baseline level of staff then the number of pupils attending will become irrelevant and it will just affect the budget deficit. **Governors added** that the consultation process will be destabilising for the school and therefore may impact on its finances.

7.4. LJ commented that if the Lead Teacher role is fulfilled by a supply teacher, Governors need to be mindful of the risks to the quality of educational provision, the continuing safety of the children and the situation the staff are being put in. **Governors added** that it was very important to remain compliant.

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7.5. The supply teacher market is very limited and the one candidate so far is an Early Career Teacher (ECT) who could not be asked to take on a Lead Teacher role and deputise for the Headteacher this early in their career. (Please also refer to item 8.1 below.)

**8. Headteacher's report**

8.1. **Governors noted** the Headteacher's report and asked the following questions that were answered to their satisfaction.

**Q6. What is Plan B in the Leadership Planning section?**

**A6.** LJ has looked at different leadership scenarios and discussed them with CM. There are no teaching staff available at St. Mary's to cover a Lead Teacher role. It was agreed that MJ would become the Lead Teacher. However, MJ is now going to be leaving the Ace Nursery School and joining St. Mary's, so the only option is for a supply teacher and they would be the only qualified teacher onsite for four days of the week. The ECT could do all five days of the week or the role could be split with two part-time teachers, however this could cause issues with continuity and they would need to be able to work well together. **Governors requested** that LJ explore other supply teacher agencies for a suitable candidate.

**ACTION: LJ to contact more supply teacher agencies to find a suitable Lead Teacher candidate.**

**Q7. An option for a fixed-term contract for a Lead Teacher was previously discussed; is this not an option now?**

**A7.** A fixed-term contract role would take longer to recruit to and it is unclear how long the contract would be needed for. As previously stated, the recruitment pool at this time of year is limited as teaching staff this term would not be in a position to leave their school next term with the notice period required. With staff leaving the nursery school, the timescale to fulfil the Lead Teacher role and remain compliant is six weeks. The supply teacher route is the only option at present and CM will need to be involved in this decision. LJ added that there is real risk of there being no or very few nursery staff by January.

**Q8. Do we let OCC know that with low pupil numbers and few staff, the nursery school may become unviable and they may need to find alternative provision quickly?**

**A8.** CH responded that the school would have to stay open with a teacher and practitioner for any children at the nursery school to remain compliant and retain the quality of provision. If a teacher needs to be employed at whatever cost Governors would need to do this. It would be the responsibility of CM to ensure the quality of education provided.

8.2. **Governors thanked** LJ for such a thorough report and to pass on their thanks and appreciation to the staff for their continuing work in this uncertain time. There has been no negative impact on the quality of provision and the children's happiness and welfare.

**9. Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 2025-26**

9.1. This document was not available for this meeting. The deadline for publication of this document on the nursery school website is 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

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**ACTION: LJ to complete Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 2025-26 and circulate to Governors for approval before publication on the website.**

**10. Governor Monitoring Plan 2025-26**

- 10.1. The Governor Monitoring Plan for 2025-26 has been slimmed down to reflect the priorities in the School Development Plan (SDP) and to minimise the disruption to staff time.
- 10.2. CH has conducted a monitoring visit for leadership changes and found what was in place was effective. CH will do a Single Central Record (SCR) check on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November.

**ACTION: CH to do SCR check on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025.**

- 10.3. RH will conduct a health and safety monitoring visit on 8<sup>th</sup> December (please refer to item 5.10 above).
- 10.4. CH and ZW agreed to meet to discuss the curriculum for two-year-old children.

**ACTION: CH to conduct curriculum monitoring visit with ZW on mutually convenient date.**

- 10.5. **Governors asked** about attendance monitoring and whether a meeting with LJ was necessary. LJ responded that details about attendance are in the Headteacher's report (item 8 above). Attendance is monitored by the school and the school is working with Social Care regarding one child whose attendance is extremely poor. Five children are being supported via the attendance support programme. Extra sessions have been offered to the parents of these children to try to increase their attendance and fit in with parents' working patterns. LJ has attended an attendance training session. **Governors requested** an attendance update for the end of the autumn term.

**ACTION: LJ to prepare document detailing attendance levels and impact on the children with low attendance by the end of the autumn term and circulate to Governors.**

- 10.6. **Governors queried** if the one child with poor attendance was a concern. LJ answered that it is a concern and that the school is working with Social Care. CH will be talking to CM regarding attendance in the spring and summer terms.

**11. Health and Safety update**

- 11.1. Governors were informed that there is a three-year building maintenance plan and that investment may now be needed on the urgent items. Decisions will need to be made on what items to concentrate and spend money on at the Health and Safety monitoring visit on 8<sup>th</sup> December.
- 11.2. The garden shelter roof has deteriorated and is coming loose, which is a hazard in windy weather. The cost of replacing the roof is approximately £4K. **Governors asked** if a temporary fix was possible but LJ confirmed that it would be impossible to get a secure fixing on the brittle roofing material. **Governors agreed** that LJ should conduct a risk assessment and if the risk is significant then work on the roof should proceed using the best quote.

**ACTION: LJ to conduct risk assessment of garden shelter roof and arrange for work to be carried out if the safety risk to children and staff is significant.**

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## **12. Safeguarding update**

12.1. General update: CH will be looking at safeguarding whilst she is at the school on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November.

12.2. Section 175/157 report for submission to OCC: LJ explained to Governors that this document is a response to the safeguarding audit and is useful for schools in ensuring that all safeguarding requirements are met. OCC will moderate and check on approximately 10% of responses. **Governors approved** the Section 175/57 safeguarding audit report for submission to OCC.

**ACTION: LJ to submit Section 175/157 to OCC by the deadline of 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025.**

12.2.1. **Governors questioned** if links to support agencies were listed on the school website. CH and ZW will discuss this further outside of this meeting.

**ACTION: CH to check nursery school website and obtain links for support agencies from Oxfordshire Children's Safety Board if necessary.**

## **13. Risk Register**

13.1. A Risk Register is usually a long-term document to log the risks, assess their possible impact and record mitigating actions. The risks to the nursery school are now very different to when the Risk Register was last updated and Governor input is required. Some risks may need to be micro-managed in the short term.

13.2. Some items may be removed, e.g., quality of SEND as this has been identified by OCC as a strength. However, risks regarding provision with fewer staff, the viability of the school and mitigating actions need to be updated. There was a brief discussion about whether the risk register should concentrate on items for the current situation or 'horizon scanning' (i.e., longer term). It was **agreed** the risk register should concentrate on the long-term view. CH and LJ agreed to meet to discuss the risks and a revised Risk Register will be discussed at the next FGB meeting.

**ACTION: CH and LJ to meet on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> November to discuss the risk register.**

**ACTION: All Governors to contact CH if they would like any risks not yet included to be added.**

## **14. Document retention**

14.1. Documents on Governor Hub will need to be transferred over to the new governance platform before it goes live next year. It was suggested and **agreed** that documents currently on Governor Hub should be retained for six years (minutes indefinitely as per regulations) and therefore kept for transferring to the new platform. Documents older than six years can be deleted.

**ACTION: HS to start work on Governor Hub documents for retention or deletion.**

## **15. Policies for approval**

15.1. Child Collection and Uncollected Child Policy: **Governors approved** this policy.

15.2. Children We Care For Policy: **Governors approved** this policy.

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15.3. Complaints Policy and Procedure: **Governors approved** this policy with the following amendments:

- i) Replace LJ's name with the term 'Headteacher' (to save amending the policy again in January);
- ii) Include the Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints Procedure rather than this being a separate document; and
- iii) At Stage 2 the Clerk will convene a meeting within 15 days of the receipt of the Stage 2 request (not 10 days) to allow for time to meet the requirement to request copies of any further written material within 10 days.

15.4. Debtor Control and Recovery Policy: This policy was not available for this meeting.

**ACTION: LJ to review policy and circulate to Governors for approval.**

15.5. Governor Visit Policy: **Governors approved** this policy.

15.6. Grievance Policy and Procedure: **Governors approved** this policy.

15.7. Managing Conduct Policy (OCC): **Governors approved** this policy.

15.8. Missing Child Policy: **Governors approved** this policy.

15.9. Pay Policy for Support Staff: **Governors approved** this policy.

15.10. Pay Policy for Teachers (OCC): **Governors approved** this policy.

15.11. Whistleblowing Policy (OCC): **Governors approved** this policy.

15.12. Food and Nutrition Policy: **Governors approved** this policy.

**ACTION: HS to send approved policies to CH for signature, upload signed copies to the school's Google Drive and update the policy register.**

## 16. Collaboration

16.1. This item is confidential and notes can be seen in Part 2 of the minutes.

## 17. Any other business

17.1. No items were raised.

## 18. Next meeting date

18.1. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 6pm at the nursery school.

18.2. Future meeting dates are as follows:

24<sup>th</sup> March 2026 (budget to be submitted to OCC)

12<sup>th</sup> May 2026

23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026

The meeting closed at 8:13pm

Hazel Sheridan  
20<sup>th</sup> November 2025

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

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Sent to Chair of Governors on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025 and FGB on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

<b>Documents circulated to Governors prior to the meeting and filed on Governor Hub</b>	
No.	Title
5	Draft minutes of FGB meeting held on 23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2025
6	Draft confidential minutes of FGB meeting held on 23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2025
7	Budget profile ledger level Period 6
7	Budget monitoring Notes Period 6
7	Budget monitoring response from OCC Period 6
8	Headteacher's report
8	School Evaluation Form (SEF)
8	School Development Plan (SDP)
10	Governing Monitoring Plan 2025-26
11	Health and Safety Report 2024-25 - actions updated 15.9.25
12.2	Section 175/157 Audit Response
13	Risk Register
15.1	Child Collection and Uncollected Child Policy 2025-26
15.2	Children We Care For Policy 2025-26
15.3	Complaints Policy and Procedure 2025-26
15.5	Governor Visit Policy 2025-26
15.6	Grievance Policy and Procedure 2025-26
15.7	Managing Conduct Policy 2025-26 (OCC)
15.8	Missing Child Policy 2025-26
15.9	Pay Policy for Support Staff 2025-26 (OCC)
15.10	Pay Policy for Teachers 2025-26 (OCC)
15.11	Whistleblowing Policy 2025-26
15.12	Food and Nutrition Policy 2025-26

## APPENDIX 1

Questions raised before the meeting and responses.

### 8. Assessment data report:

**Q. Page 3 1st bullet point - we need to specify that this relates to the percentage of children from potentially vulnerable groups working at age-related expectations.**

**A.** This has been amended.

### 8. SEF

**Q. Do we need to add a comment about securing strong leadership from January to the Leadership and Management areas for development?**

**A.** The SEF has been amended accordingly.

### 15.6 Grievance Policy and Procedure 2025-26

**Q. The document "Grievance Policy and Procedure" looks fine and its title implies it is a model (OCC) procedure, but it is marked as having been changed. It's not clear what the changes are, since they are not highlighted in the document. For reference, is this just an update to an OCC model document, or have changes been made by the school specifically?**

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A. It is an OCC Model Policy so not one that school has made changes to but it will have been updated by OCC.

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*Cathene Hayman*  
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Final Audit Report

2026-02-10

Created:	2026-01-30
By:	Hazel Sheridan (lj338652@oxfordshire.gov.uk)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAPc_H-yC0I6wY4VW9HK-f3aqd2tAOclpP

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2026-01-30 - 1:17:45 PM GMT- IP address: 165.225.199.99
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