

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 19 October 2023

MINUTES

GOVERNORS

		Present	
Headteacher	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓	
	Foundation	Mr Sean Harford (SHA)	✓
		Mrs Sophie Jenkins (SJE) Vice chair	✓
	Ms Mona Kadhum (MKA)	✓	
	Mr Hugh Matheson (HMA)	✓	
	Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)	✓	
	Mrs Nicola Sinclair (NSI)	✓	
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK) Chair	✓	
	VACANCY	N/A	
	VACANCY	N/A	
Local authority	Mr Hanad Mohamed (HMO)	✗	
Parent	Prof Jelke Boesten (JBO)	✓	
	Mr Carlton Hood (CHO)	✓	
Staff	VACANCY	N/A	

ATTENDING

Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) **Deputy head**
Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) **Senior assistant head**
Ms Flora Wilson (FWI) **Senior assistant head**
Mr Karl Altmann (KAL) **Assistant head**
Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) **Clerk**

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

SSK welcomed all present to this William Ellis School FGB meeting, which began at 5.52pm following a tour of the new and refurbished computer room, toilets and science lab, and training on suspension and exclusion from Camden's education solicitor Rita Biddulph. SSK particularly welcomed new governor MKA to her first FGB. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, HMO. No other apologies were necessary, as all other governors were present, and thus a quorum. There were no declarations of interest, pecuniary or otherwise, in respect of any items on this agenda. All papers had been circulated in advance.

2. Elect FGB chair and vice chair for 2023-24

MHU took the chair and noted that CHO, seconded by SHA, had previously nominated SSK as FGB chair, and SJE as vice chair. He called for any other nominations: there were none. SSK and SJE, having indicated that they were prepared to stand, left the room. Governors **AGREED** to appoint SSK and SJE as FGB chair and vice chair. They returned to the meeting. Governors applauded.

3. Appoint members of committees

3.1 Mona Kadhum SSK reminded governors that MKA would be attending School Improvement and Personnel & Resources meetings before deciding which to join.

ACTION	Item 3.1	<i>MKA to attend School Improvement and Personnel & Resources meetings before deciding which to join.</i>
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3.2 Hanad Mohamed SSK reported that MHO had resigned from the Personnel and Resources Committee. He would be replaced following the new intake of governors.

3.3 Pay Committee Governors **AGREED** to appoint SJE as a third member of the Pay Committee, alongside HMA and DNE. The committee's next meeting was scheduled for 3 November 2023 at 8am, by video conference, to review IJO's proposals for staff performance-related pay increases.

4. Agree committee terms of reference

Governors asked MHU to consistently format the terms of reference of the School Improvement & Personnel and Resources committees and forward to SHA and CHO; SHA and CHO, as chairs of the respective committees, to further harmonise the texts of the documents. MHU to schedule final review of the terms of reference of both committees on agenda of next (7 December 2023) FGB meeting.

ACTION	Item 4	<i>MHU to consistently format terms of reference of the governors' two substantive committees; SHA and CHO to harmonise texts of the documents; MHU to schedule final review for next (7 December 2023) FGB meeting.</i>
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5. Agree link governor arrangements

The following link governors, with their school counterparts, were **AGREED**:

- **Careers and alumni** Carlton Hood / Horace Parry
- **Equalities and wellbeing** Carlton Hood / Jeremy Pratt
- **Estate management, inc health and safety, and The Mill**¹ Hugh Matheson / Fiona Fraser
- **Homework and literacy** Daniel Needleman / Sam Nunnery

¹ The school's outdoor education centre in the Surrey Hills.

- **Quality of education** Sean Harford / Crispin Germanos
- **LaSWAP** Selena Skipwith and Mona Kadhum / *no school counterpart(s)*
- **Pupil Premium** Jelke Boesten / Bernie Lane
- **Safeguarding, behaviour and attendance** Sophie Jenkins / Karl Altmann and Hayley Ward
- **SEND** Nicola Sinclair / Daniel Araujo

6. Declare business and other interests and safeguarding update for 2023-24

MHU reminded governors that they were annually obliged to declare any business and other relevant interests, and that they had read the Department of Education's (DfE's) *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE – September 2023 edition)* on the dedicated school governance platform GovernorHub. MHO had made neither declaration. HMA had not declared any business interests, and CHO had not declared that he had read KCSiE 2023. MHU urged them to remedy matters.

ACTION	Item 6	<i>On GovernorHub, MHO to declare any business interests and confirm reading of KCSiE 2023; HMA to declare any business interests; CHO to confirm reading of KCSiE 2023.</i>
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7. Agree to log individual training and development activities

SSK encouraged all governors to undertake appropriate training and development activities in 2023-24. MHU urged all governors to individually log on GovernorHub their pre-meeting training on suspension and exclusion, led by Rita Biddulph.

ACTION	Item 7	<i>All governors to undertake appropriate training and development activities in 2023-24 and individually log on GovernorHub their training on suspension and exclusion.</i>
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8. Review key governance documents

8.1 Instrument of Government SSK reminded all present that the new Instrument of Government which had come into effect that day, replacing the previous 2017 constitution, had reduced the number of governors to 14 by deleting two co-opted governor posts. Governors **AGREED** the new Instrument of Government.

8.2 FGB standing orders Governors **AGREED** to defer review of the FGB standing orders until the next meeting.

ACTION	Item 8.2	<i>MHU to schedule review of FGB standing orders on agenda of next (7 December 2023) FGB meeting.</i>
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8.3 Governors' Code of Conduct Governors **AGREED** collectively and individually to abide by the Code of Conduct as circulated. SSK to sign on governors' behalf.

8.4 Governing Body workplan 2023-24 With the annual addition of an item on vision and strategy on the agenda of the autumn 2 FGB, governors **AGREED** the Governing Body workplan for 2023-24 as circulated.

ACTION *Item 8.4* **MHU** to add annual item on vision and strategy to autumn 2 FGB agenda in Governing Body workplan.

9. Agree governor protocols

9.1 Naming governors in minutes Governors **AGREED** to be named in minutes as a matter of course, with the right for their name to be redacted on request.

9.2 Approving policies Governors **AGREED** that, on the principle of subsidiarity, all policies should be approved at committee if possible, or by an individual or the headteacher if guidance permitted and the committee wished.

10. Agree Admissions Criteria 2025-26

SHA proposed a simpler form of wording of Criteria 2, on sibling preference; he would forward to MHU. As a result, governors **AGREED** to defer consideration of the Admissions Criteria 2025-26 to the next (7 December 2023) FGB meeting.

ACTION *Item 10* **SHA** to forward simpler form of wording of Criteria 2 in Admissions Criteria 2025-26 to MHU; **MHU** to amend criteria and schedule for review on agenda of next (7 December 2023) FGB meeting.

Specific FGB items

11. Receive update from chair, including chair's actions

SSK reported that she and IJO had met with Stephen Hall, chief executive of Camden Learning, to discuss the school's progress, and with Anne Hudson, the school's Camden professional partner, to discuss standards. SSK had attended meetings of the trustees of The Mill and of the trustees of the Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust. With SHA and SJE she had attended the latest Camden project board. She had chaired a meeting of the LaSWAP Forum – of representative governors of the four schools making up the LaSWAP sixth form consortium – and joined a meeting with Camden officers on plans for the school's playground and other outdoor spaces. The next such meeting would involve an architect parent.

12. Receive headteacher's report

12.1 SSK thanked IJO for her report, and invited her to introduce it, which she did as follows.

12.2 Attendance, behaviour and exclusion/suspension data for 2022-23 Attendance had held up well until after the May 2023 half term break, when Y11 took exam leave. Despite officially remaining "in school", students registered as absent. Protocols had now been amended.

12.2.1 Weeks which had shown particularly low attendance had included those including the Muslim holiday Eid and bank holiday weekends, as well as the last week of term. Parents appeared to increasingly tolerate their sons' absence.

12.2.2 The attendance failures of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and students who were persistently absent were of particular concern. That said, MSC cited a 93.2 per cent absence rate, better than last year.

12.2.3 SSK thanked IJO for her introduction, and called for comments and questions, to which IJO, MSC and KAL responded as follows.

12.2.4 SHA thought that the fact that nearly a third of students were missing one in 10 days of school was worrying – indeed shocking. KAL noted that good news stories included a boy whose attendance had risen from 20 per cent to 74 per cent.

12.2.5 For how long have attendance officers been sending letters of concern home to parents and at what point will the school conclude that they don't work [DNE]?

Letters of concern were not the only option to address poor attendance. Other actions included governor panels, fining parents, and a policy of not authorising any requests for absence.

12.2.6 SJE added that the school's attendance and behaviour officer, Alison William Ellis (AEL), was skilled at talking to families about absent boys. IJO reported that AEL had not yet taken up a new role with Camden Learning but when she did, recruiting her replacement would be swiftly in hand. It was sad to lose her but the new Camden attendance team would take an innovative, fully integrated approach.

12.2.7 CHO reiterated that, effectively, half a class at the school failed to attend one day a week. IJO pointed out that these students were not all off one day a fortnight: they may take an unauthorised two-week holiday, or be sick for three or four weeks.

12.2.8 Does authorised absence count [SJE]? Unfortunately it did.

12.2.9 Have you ever linked students' attendance to their grades and if so, how do they respond [SHA]? Yes: some responded well, others not.

12.2.10 For how many years have you done that [SHA]? Since the new attendance strategy was launched, so for the past two to three years. The problem was national: it would take five years' work to return to pre-Covid attendance.

12.2.11 Has the closure of Kentish Town tube station affected attendance and punctuality [NSI]? No: few William Ellis students took the tube.

12.2.12 IJO pointed out that Camden Learning had previously RAG-rated William Ellis students' attendance as red: it was now amber. Attitudes to sickness had changed. Before Covid, the school had advised parents that unless a sick child was physically unable to rise from his bed, he should attend school. With Covid, the government's advice had been that sick students should stay at home. That had not helped.

12.2.13 Could students who tested positive for Covid work remotely [NSI]? No: they had to be on site.

12.2.14 Governors offered a series of suggestions on how to incentivise attendance.

ACTION *Item 12.2.14 SJE to discuss rewards and incentives for improved attendance with KAL.*

12.3 Safeguarding update and Safeguarding Policy Governors noted the safeguarding update and **AGREED** the Safeguarding Policy.

12.4 Behaviour data SHA called for an executive summary identifying what behaviour data was telling the school's senior leaders, with input from staff and students, and how the school was taking steps to improve behaviour. It should also include a summary of how senior leaders currently assessed students' "behaviour and attitudes" (possibly graded but crucially why and how they knew). Currently, the school's evaluation was made up of "inputs" (things being done) but not the results of those inputs: behaviour and learning were an outcome, not an input. KAL offered to lead SJE and HMA on a behaviour learning walk.

ACTION *Item 12.4* **KAL** to report to next (7 December 2023) FGB on behaviour in line with SHA's requests, and lead SJE and HMA on a behaviour learning walk.

12.5 Suspension data IJO noted a concerning increase in suspensions, particularly for physical assault, although the figures mirrored those of other Camden secondary schools, and nationally. The school's clear message was that violence was not tolerated. Fewer suspensions were preferable, but they were often necessary.

12.6 SEND IJO noted that a circulated report by Camden adviser Helen McNulty following a visit earlier in the month had praised the consistency of SEND provision.

13. Discuss joint working with LaSWAP

SSK reported that she had chaired a recent (16 October 2023) meeting of the LaSWAP Governors' Forum. The Staff Handbook would be useful for governors: MHU to upload it to GovernorHub. SSK added that, with LaSWAP director Ella Schlesinger and current lead headteacher Sophie Fegan, head of La Sainte Union, she would be attending a LaSWAP standards meeting at Camden the following month.

ACTION *Item 13* **MHU** to upload LaSWAP Staff Handbook to GovernorHub.

14. Discuss governor recruitment strategy

SSK reminded governors that, following reconstitution, there remained two vacancies for Foundation governors. DNE offered to lead a skills audit to inform recruitment; SSK to forward relevant forms. SSK added that she was inviting staff to stand for the remaining vacancy, for a staff governor.

ACTION *Item 14* **SSK** to forward skills audit forms to DNE; **DNE** to lead audit.

15. Agreed Safeguarding Policy

This had been covered earlier in the meeting.

16. Receive reports from committees

16.1 School Improvement Committee SHA, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 21 September 2023. Draft minutes were on GovernorHub. The meeting had monitored various Camden Learning reviews and the School Development Plan: reviewed Y11 and Y13 exam results; and agreed the Homework Policy.

16.2 Personnel and Resources Committee CHO, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 6 October 2023. Draft minutes were on GovernorHub. The meeting had received updates on the budget, staffing and premises; reviewed various policies; and addressed the four key strategic initiatives of a falling Camden roll, potential partnerships, fundraising and future capital expenditure.

17. Receive updates on training and governor visits to school

Governors requested Ofsted training; SSK to organise.

ACTION *Item 17* **SSK** to organise Ofsted training for all governors.

18. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 6 July 2023 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SSK to sign after the meeting. There were no matters arising. All actions had been fulfilled, were in the process of being fulfilled, or had lapsed.

19. Any other business

There was no other business.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 7 December 2023 at 5pm.

There being no further business in this part of the meeting, SSK thanked all present for attending and closed this part of the meeting at 7.09pm. Confidential items followed. All present remained.

Signed.....

7 December 2023

Selina Skipwith
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

Actions listed on following page...

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION	Item 3.1	MKA to attend School Improvement and Personnel & Resources meetings before deciding which to join.
ACTION	Item 4.2	MHU to add line to terms of reference of Personnel and Resources Committee on long-term planning and risk, and schedule review on agenda of next (8 February 2024) committee meeting.
ACTION	Item 4.3	MHU to consistently format terms of reference for governors' two substantive committees.
ACTION	Item 6	On GovernorHub, HMO to declare any business interests and confirm reading of KCSiE 2023; HMA to declare any business interests; CHO to confirm reading of KCSiE 2023.
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