

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 7 December 2024

MINUTES

GOVERNORS

		Present	
Headteacher	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓	
	Foundation	Mr Sean Harford (SHA)	✓ ¹
		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 Karl Altmann (KAL) **Assistant head**
Ms Sam Nunnery (SNU) **Assistant head**
Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) **Clerk**

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

SSK welcomed all to this William Ellis School FGB meeting, which began at 5.03pm. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, HMO. DNE apologised for an early departure. SJE and NSI had apologised for late arrivals. No other apologies were necessary, as all other governors were, or would be, 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.

¹ By video conference.

2. Approve FGB standing orders

SSK explained that she had amended the FGB standing orders to delete references to co-opted governors, as these had been removed when the Instrument of Government had been revised on 19 October 2023, following a review by the National Governance Association. Foundation governors were already appointed on a skills basis. Governors **AGREED** the FGB standing orders as circulated.

[MKA joined the meeting with apologies at 5.05pm.]

3. Receive chair's report

3.1 Year-end carry-forward Governors **AGREED** the year-end budget figures, including the carry-forward from the financial year 2022-23, and the proposed use of the carry-forward in 2023-24. SSK reminded governors that all aspects of the year-end figures, including the carry-forward, had been thoroughly scrutinised at the previous (6 October 2023) meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee.

3.2 Vision and strategy SSK thanked CHO for a first draft of a governors' vision and strategy, with input from IJO, which they, she, SHA and SJE would review before bringing it to the next (8 February 2023) FGB meeting. MHU to schedule.

ACTION *Item 3.2* **MHU** to schedule review of governors' draft vision and strategy on agenda of next (8 February 2024) FGB.

3.3 Skills audit SSK asked any governor who had not yet completed the skills audit form to do so and forward to DNE, who would be analysing them, as soon as possible. MHU to schedule review of analysis at next (26 January 2024) meeting of the Personnel and Resources (PRC) Committee.

ACTION *Item 3.3* **MHU** to schedule review of analysis of governor skills audits on agenda of next (26 January 2024) PRC committee.

3.4 Ofsted Training Camden professional partner Anne Hudson had agreed to lead a 90-minute Ofsted training session for all governors. Her preference was to meet in person, but if necessary online. MHU to canvas dates and preferred format.

ACTION *Item 3.4* **MHU** to canvas dates and preferred format for Ofsted training with Camden professional partner Anne Hudson.

3.5 Playground SSK reported that she had attended several meetings with Camden on upgrading and better using the school's playground and other spaces. Also involved was a former parent who is an architect, who is giving *pro bono* guidance.

3.6 LaSWAP Standards meeting SSK had attended this meeting in her role as current chair of the Governors' Forum of LaSWAP, the sixth form consortium of which William Ellis is a member. The strengths of the consortium were highlighted: in particular collaboration at all levels; a broad and balanced curriculum; and self-evaluation which had translated into a clear action plan. Attendance, the most significant behaviour issue facing LaSWAP and its constituent schools, would be addressed at the next meeting, in March 2024, at which IJO would be LaSWAP's lead head.

3.7 Date for governors' diaries Staff, governor and trustee drinks would be held on Friday 26 January 2024 at 3.45pm.

3.8 Thanks Finally, SSK thanked all governors for the time, thought and consideration they gave to their roles as governors of William Ellis School.

4. Receive report on student attendance

4.1 SSK thanked KAL and SNU for their report and asked them to introduce it, which they and IJO did as follows, answering questions as they did so.

4.2 The news was mixed. Y11 attendance data was good. Persistent absence across Years 7-11 was the most concerning aspect of attendance. Some cases were particularly challenging, with safeguarding aspects, particularly in Years 9 and 10. BLA stressed that persistent absence was a safeguarding concern in itself.

[NSI joined the meeting at 5.18pm.]

4.3 Do persistent absentees consistently attend poorly or does attendance fall suddenly, perhaps linked to events at home [HMA]? Both. Heads of year were not alert enough to quickly address the latter. Staff were being urged to act faster here. Poor attendance due to illness could show up as persistent absence, but was addressed differently. Camden was the second worst London borough for attendance and persistent absence, after Croydon: it was the worst in inner London. All Camden schools were struggling with poor student attendance.

4.4 What is Camden doing to support its schools [SSK]? Schools had asked for more assistance because they were struggling to find answers. William Ellis's current attendance and behaviour officer, Alison Ellis, was joining a Camden initiative to support families, particularly those below the threshold for social services support whose children had behaviour issues. This was a positive move. William Ellis often retained severe persistent absentees on roll to support their needs.

4.5 Given that persistently-absent William Ellis boys may have persistently-absent siblings in other LaSWAP schools – Acland Burghley, La Sainte Union and Parliament Hill – do the schools' attendance teams collaborate [SSK]? Camden worked to ensure comprehensive coverage of need. However, fines and legal action carried the risk of parents removing their child(ren) from school. Children who were persistently absent from primary school tended to continue to stay away in Y7.

4.6 New rewards strategies for excellent attendance had had some success.

[SJE joined the meeting at 5.28pm.]

4.7 SHA urged a focus on those boys on the cusp of persistent absence.

4.8 Why is absence in certain years particularly poor [CHO]? Y9 were the children of Covid lockdowns; one had never attended school. His absence skewed the figures.

4.9 Are improvements in Y11 attendance due to persistent absentees turning 16 opting to leave school altogether [HMA]? No; they were tangible improvements.

4.10 SSK urged senior leaders to request more resources from governors and to approach Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust for grant aid. Cracking this huge problem would make a huge difference to the lives of many of the boys. She thanked all concerned for answering questions.

[SNU left the meeting at 5.35pm.]

5. Receive headteacher's report

5.1 SSK thanked IJO for her report: she introduced it, taking questions as she did so.

5.2 Comparison of Project Board and School Development Plan priorities Camden's Project Board tended to focus on the improvement points raised in the recent (May 2022) Ofsted report; the school recognised the need for more comprehensive improvement. Similar targets were often expressed in different words. One absence from Project Board priorities was student attendance: she would raise this at the next (date TBC) board meeting. Governors thanked IJO for this useful comparison.

ACTION Item 5.2 *IJO to suggest adding student attendance to Project Board priorities at next (date TBC) meeting.*

5.3 Attendance 2022-23 update IJO reminded governors that at their previous (19 October 2023) FGB meeting, they had asked for clarification of these figures.

5.4 Staffing changes for January 2024 The school had recruited a RE teacher who unfortunately had changed her mind about accepting the role at the last minute. The school was recruiting a new kitchen manager to replace the current, retiring, incumbent. The current SENDCo (special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator) would be giving way to a preferred candidate in January 2024.

5.4.1 Why did the RE teacher change her mind [NSI]? She wanted to teach only RE, which was unrealistic for a school the size of William Ellis.

5.4.2 Why is the role leading personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education not on your list [SJE]? Because for various reasons the role currently had to be filled internally. A proposal to advertise externally would be coming to the next (26 January 2024) Personnel and Resources Committee.

5.4.3 Do you struggle generally with recruitment [DNE]? Every school did. Teach First graduate appointments, early career teachers (ECTs) and increasing part-time posts were options. The school's staff turnover remained low compared with some other schools. Opportunities to develop roles often depended on the market. At one point, IJO had competed with 1,000 other schools for a geography teacher.

5.4.4 Is it wise to recruit a new kitchen manager while still considering contracting out [SJE]? Camden's current Caterlink contract was due to go to tender in 2025. Contracting out appeared to be not quite as cost-efficient as previously thought.

5.5 Equalities objectives These needed renewing for another three years: the four proposed for 2023-26 were similar to those for 2020-23, if anything more ambitious.

5.5.1 SHA pointed out that closing the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students was not technically a protected characteristic in law: improving outcomes for disadvantaged students would be more appropriate.

5.5.2 DNE regretted the lack of clear targets. IJO observed that she had included outline objectives but didn't want to give more specific targets which might cut across those in the School Development Plan. CHO and SJE pointed out that, if the document was to be published on the school website for a lay audience, terms such as "Gatsby benchmarks" and "CEIAG" would need explaining.

5.5.3 Governors **AGREED** the equalities objectives.

ACTION Item 5.5.3 *IJO to amend equalities objectives in line with suggestions.*

6. Receive report on behaviour and safeguarding

6.1 SSK thanked KAL for his report on behaviour and safeguarding and asked him to introduce it, which he did as follows.

6.2 Behaviour If William Ellis could not yet expect an Ofsted judgement of "good" for student behaviour, it was at least on the cusp of that achievement, and moving swiftly towards it. Staff perceptions of improved student behaviour were particularly positive, though those of the 359 pupils who had volunteered an opinion were less conclusive. However, improved behaviour was being observed in practice.

6.2.1 Senior leaders' patrols, on-calls and lesson drop-ins had all suggested a steady improvement in playground, corridor and classroom behaviour.

6.2.2 Behaviour was also being tracked department by department, though fewer concerns logged did not necessarily reflect better behaviour. Increases in concerns could be because staff had been asked to approach behaviour in a new way, for instance to limit disruptive behaviour in classrooms.

6.2.3 SSK thanked KAL and clarified that Y8 students as a whole were responsible for 50 per cent of poor corridor behaviour, not eight Y8 students. She called for questions, each of which was prefaced by appreciation of KAL's hard work on behaviour, and comments. KAL responded as follows.

6.2.4 Is progress being made on teachers' consistent application of the behaviour policy [DNE]? There was still a way to go but there had been massive improvements in consistency. Staff were more confident in applying the policy. They also monitored their colleagues' compliance. Drop-ins to class by senior staff encouraged consistency. It was important to constantly follow up poor behaviour.

6.2.5 BLA added that individual teachers were identifying where they needed support to enhance their consistency of compliance. KAL agreed: support was being targeted to improve behaviour management in the classroom.

6.2.6 Data on ethnicity and protected characteristics would be included in the next report on student behaviour.

ACTION *Item 6.2.6 KAL to include data on ethnicity and protected characteristics in next report on student behaviour.*

6.2.7 SHA pointed out that KAL could save time and effort by copying parts of this and future reports on student behaviour straight into the school's self-evaluation. KAL thanked him for this suggestion.

6.3 Safeguarding KAL acknowledged that the school's safeguarding software CPOMS was invaluable, but the information required sifting. The core safeguarding team needed more condensed, streamlined information, perhaps through more effective use of the school's management information system, Bromcom.

6.3.1 Generally, safeguarding at the school was excellent. However, of the many cases referred to Camden, some were rejected.

6.3.2 Why [SJE]? The reasons were often opaque. Officers said they did not reach the threshold for intervention at each stage of support. IJO added that sometimes cases were closed because families had not engaged. Cases involving students from other authorities were particularly complex, as systems often differed.

6.4 SSK thanked KAL again for his report, and for answering questions.

7. Review Pupil Premium statement

7.1 SSK thanked BLA for this statement on the school's use of the Pupil Premium and asked him to introduce it, which he did as follows.

7.2 The statement would be published on the school's website, fulfilling a statutory obligation. It detailed the school's use of Pupil Premium for the 2023-24 school year, the last of a three-year strategy to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.

7.3 The strategy focused on teaching in the classroom, and individual intervention and support.

7.4 SSK thanked BLA for his remarks and proposed discussing a successor strategy at the first summer term meeting of the School Improvement Committee (25 April 2024).

ACTION Item 7.4 *MHU to schedule report on proposed new three-year Pupil Premium strategy on agenda of 25 April 2024 School Improvement Committee meeting.*

7.5 SHA suggested the new strategy should also inform the more general School Development Plan: IJO pointed out that this was more or less inevitable, as over half (51 per cent) of students at the school were in receipt of Pupil Premium.

7.6 SHA agreed that improving the attainment of students in receipt of Pupil Premium was a mainstream challenge for the school. Given that, it could usefully benchmark itself against similar schools which had had success using Pupil Premium funds to narrow the gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.

ACTION Item 7.6 *BLA to benchmark William Ellis's use of Pupil Premium against similar schools with high Pupil Premium funding.*

7.7 Is funding likely to rise or fall [HMA]? IJO answered this and the next question: funding for younger cohorts was not falling, although the award of free school meals was. Previously, that had been over 40 per cent: it was now down to 37.5 per cent. SSK added that Camden's policy of providing all primary school children with free school meals was likely to further depress the school's Pupil Premium funding.

7.8 Are there students who are eligible for, but don't apply for, free school meals [MKA]? The school did not have that information. Y7 parents, the parents of other students new to the school, and those experiencing changes in circumstances, were advised to apply. Changes in benefits could delay the award of free school meals.

7.9 SSK thanked BLA again for introducing the Pupil Premium statement, and for answering questions.

8. Review Uniform Code

IJO pointed out that the school's Uniform Code had been reviewed in light of parental concerns about cost, environmental impact and the suitability of the current uniform in hot weather. The review had been informed by surveys of parents and students. It did not address enforcement. Various aspects of dress had been formalised. In terms of cost, only the blazer and tie were specific to the school: all other items of the uniform were generic, which meant families could shop around. IJO clarified further aspects of the Uniform Code, which governors **AGREED**.

9. Receive reports from committees and agree terms of reference

9.1 Personnel and Resources Committee CHO, who chairs this committee, reported that it had not met since the previous (19 October 2023) FGB meeting. However, he had held a fruitful meeting with relevant school staff, including IJO, to draft a three-year financial plan, to be discussed at the next (26 January 2024) PRC meeting. Governors **AGREED** the terms of reference of the committee.

9.2 School Improvement Committee SHA, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 16 November 2023. Draft minutes were on GovernorHub. Governors **AGREED** the terms of reference of the committee.

9.3 Pay Committee HMA, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 3 November 2023 to review IJO's recommendations for performance-related teachers' pay increases, and their financial implications. Minutes were confidential.

10. Review Behaviour Policy

KAL noted that the few changes to this policy, including new notice that misogynistic behaviour would not be tolerated, were minor. Given its length, SHA worried how staff would implement it: IJO explained that a shorter leaflet summarised key aspects. The policy itself allowed for adjustments in operational use. At SHA's suggestion, BLA to consult Camden on replacing reference to "persistent bullying" with simply "bullying", give that bullying could consist of a single egregious incident. Governors **AGREED** the Behaviour Policy as circulated: SSK to approve any version amended on the issue of bullying by chair's action if necessary.

ACTION	Item 10	<i>BLA to consult Camden on amending "persistent bullying" to simply "bullying" in Behaviour Policy; SSK to approve amended policy by chair's action if necessary.</i>
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11. Review Pay Policy

Governors **AGREED** the Pay Policy.

12. Approve Admissions Criteria

Governors **AGREED** the Admissions Criteria as circulated, including preference given to siblings of the students of neighbouring La Sainte Union (LSU) Catholic School. IJO to liaise with Sophie Fegan, headteacher of LSU, on publishing consultation by statutory deadline of 13 December 2023.

ACTION	Item 12	<i>IJO to liaise with Sophie Fegan on consulting on proposed changes to each school's Admissions Criteria.</i>
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[DNE left the meeting at 6.44pm.]

13. Receive updates on training and governor visits to school

13.1 Training MKA had attended two sessions of Camden Learning induction training. SJE had attended Camden Learning training on student attendance for governors, and a meeting of the Camden Safeguarding Governors' Network. IJO had attended NSPCC advanced safeguarding training. SSK urged all governors who had not yet logged recent governor training on exclusions and suspensions on GovernorHub – JBO, SHA, CHO, SJE, IJO and DNE – to do so.

ACTION *Item 13.1* **JBO, SHA, CHO, SJE, IJO and DNE** to log recent governor training on exclusions and suspensions on GovernorHub.

13.2 Governor visits to school CHO, reported that, in his capacity as link governor for careers and alumni, he had visited the school twice.

14. Receive update on governor skills audit

Given that not all governors had yet returned their skills forms, this item was deferred to the next (8 February 2024) FGB meeting. Remaining governors to forward forms.

ACTION *Item 14* **All governors** who have not yet forwarded completed skills forms to DNE to do so.

15. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

15.1 The minutes of the meeting of 19 October 2023 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SSK to sign after the meeting. There were two matters arising.

15.2 Item 12.2.14 SJE apologised that she had not yet discussed rewards and incentives for improved student attendance with KAL but would do so.

ACTION *Item 15.2* **SJE** to discuss rewards and incentives for improved student attendance with KAL.

15.3 Item 12.4 KAL apologised that he had not yet led SJE and HMA on a behaviour learning walk but would do so.

ACTION *Item 15.3* **KAL** to lead SJE and HMA on a behaviour learning walk.

15.4 All other actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

16. Any other business

There was no other business in this part of the meeting.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 8 February 2024 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 6.47pm. Confidential items followed. All present remained.

Signed.....

8 February 2024

Ms Selina Skipwith
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

Actions listed on following page...

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION	Item 3.2	MHU to schedule review of governors' draft vision and strategy on agenda of next (8 February 2024) FGB.
ACTION	Item 3.3	MHU to schedule review of analysis of governor skills audits on agenda of next (26 January 2024) PRC committee.
ACTION	Item 3.4	MHU to canvas dates and preferred format for Ofsted training with Camden professional partner Anne Hudson.
ACTION	Item 5.2	IJO to suggest adding student attendance to Project Board priorities at next (date TBC) meeting.
ACTION	Item 5.5.3	IJO to amend equalities objectives in line with suggestions.
ACTION	Item 6.2.6	KAL to include data on ethnicity and protected characteristics in next report on student behaviour.
ACTION	Item 7.4	MHU to schedule report on proposed new three-year Pupil Premium strategy on agenda of 25 April 2024 School Improvement Committee meeting.
ACTION	Item 7.6	BLA to benchmark William Ellis's use of Pupil Premium against similar schools with high Pupil Premium funding.
ACTION	Item 10	BLA to consult Camden on amending "persistent bullying" to simply "bullying" in Behaviour Policy; SSK to approve amended policy by chair's action if necessary.
ACTION	Item 12	IJO to liaise with Sophie Fegan on consulting on proposed changes to each school's Admissions Criteria.
ACTION	Item 13.1	JBO, SHA, CHO, SJE, IJO and DNE to log recent governor training on exclusions and suspensions on GovernorHub.
ACTION	Item 14	All governors who have not yet forwarded completed skills forms to DNE to do so.
ACTION	Item 15.2	SJE to discuss rewards and incentives for improved student attendance with KAL .
ACTION	Item 15.3	KAL to lead SJE and HMA on a behaviour learning walk.