

# WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



## MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 8 February 2024

### MINUTES

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#### GOVERNORS

		Present	
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓	
	<b>Foundation</b>	Mr Sean Harford (SHA)	✓ <sup>1</sup>
		Mrs Sophie Jenkins (SJE) <b>Vice chair</b>	✓
		Ms Mona Kadhum (MKA)	✓ <sup>2</sup>
		Mr Hugh Matheson (HMA)	✓
		Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)	✓ <sup>3</sup>
		Mrs Nicola Sinclair (NSI)	✓
		Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK) <b>Chair</b>	✓
		VACANCY	N/A
		VACANCY	N/A
<b>Local authority</b>		Mr Hanad Mohamed (HMO)	✓
<b>Parent</b>	Prof Jelke Boesten (JBO)	✗	
	Mr Carlton Hood (CHO)	✓	
<b>Staff</b>	VACANCY	N/A	

#### ATTENDING

Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) **Deputy head**  
Ms Flora Wilson (FWI) **Acting deputy head**  
Mr Matthew Scott (MSC) **Senior assistant 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 everyone to this William Ellis School FGB meeting, which began at 5.03pm. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, JBO. No other apologies were needed, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> By video conference.

<sup>2</sup> By video conference.

<sup>3</sup> By video conference.

## **2. Receive report on curriculum planning and staffing 2024-25**

**2.1** SSK thanked FWI for her report on curriculum planning and staffing 2024-25.

**2.2** Governors recognised that the questions posed in FWI's report were important, but thought it was unclear which had short-term and which had long-term impacts, and so which were for immediate decision and which were for strategic discussion.

**2.3** Several governors felt they were without an adequate framework to consider the questions, given that many involved financial, marketing and staffing implications.

### **[HMO joined the meeting with apologies at 5.10pm.]**

**2.4** SHA thought that part of the problem was that this paper had initially been scheduled for discussion at the previous (1 February 2024) School Improvement Committee, but given pressure of time had been rescheduled to this meeting.

**2.5** He pointed out that some decisions, such as whether individual students should take seven, eight or nine GCSEs, were clearly operational. Whether the school generally offered eight or nine GCSEs was a question for governors, as it involved staffing and resources implications.

**2.6** FWI explained the context of the number of GCSE courses offered by the school.

**2.7** The "ninth" GCSE was in modern foreign languages (MFL). The school knew that this was not for some students, who instead took part in a Prince's Trust programme.

**2.8** This year the timetable had been restructured to offer a different GCSE to MFL, though most students would still take a language. Other schools set options in blocks in advance, and asked students to choose potential combinations. William Ellis asked students to express their preferences and then generated timetable blocks.

**2.9** CHO pointed out that while the paper strongly recommended reducing the number of GCSEs offered, IJO had relayed Camden's strong advice that the school should continue to offer nine GCSE courses to the majority of students.

**2.10** SHA pointed out that the number of foreign language students achieving a pass grade and the overall pass rate in the school meant that the topic merited further discussion.

### **[MSC joined the meeting with apologies at 5.18pm.]**

**2.11** FWI clarified that, to her mind, the key question in her paper concerned whether to continue to aim high academically, including widely encouraging English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects and language options, bearing in mind changing demographics and potential shifts in government educational policy:

*Is there any reason not to continue with our current stance of high academic ambition for all, including an assumption of EBacc for most and MFL for almost all?*

**2.12** Among current shifts in educational policy was one to T levels in post-16 provision, with their significant implications with regard to resourcing and staffing. "High academic provision" could raise questions at KS5 about vocational options.

**2.13** IJO pointed out that if the school were to introduce a T level course in September 2025, it would need to start planning within this academic year.

**2.14** NSI recalled that William Ellis had initially decided to allow other Camden schools to blaze a trail in introducing T levels, in order to learn from their examples.

**2.15** Given that, as FWI pointed out, Acland Burghley had had the plug pulled on an intended T level for September 2024, its experience could not inform a 2025 launch.

**2.16** FWI agreed: two members of staff had received extensive training in initiating T level courses, but no other school had yet launched similar T levels to those which William Ellis wanted to offer. There was an argument for delaying their introduction.

**2.17** SHA repeated that governors needed the right information for discussion. For instance, William Ellis was an outlier in promoting EBacc in Camden, and nationally. Why other schools' reluctance? Aiming high academically was commendable but governors needed to know the consequences for the boys in their care.

**2.18** IJO stressed that EBacc subjects were not compulsory for William Ellis boys; rather, the school offered courses which ticked EBacc boxes. FWI added that some universities – like Bristol, Warwick and York – considered an EBacc qualification essential. That meant decisions at 14 years of age could limit choices at 18.

**2.19** CHO reiterated that governors would appreciate hearing the arguments for and against questions, preferably with recommendations, before considering.

**2.20** SSK agreed: the questions in FWI's report were pertinent and timely, but governors needed time to consider them. Their July 2023 awayday had recognised the breadth of the community served by the school and had questioned whether its curriculum offer served everyone. That key question needed separate discussion.

**2.21** SSK suggested that she, SJE, CHO, SHA and IJO discuss how to approach the questions constructively, including what background research was necessary.

**ACTION Item 2.21 SSK, SJE, CHO, SHA and IJO to discuss how to approach curriculum questions constructively.**

**2.22** CHO made a general point about preparations governors' meetings. A number of the papers submitted, including the curriculum and the strategy papers, had no clear purpose and context. Recommendations from the leadership team were not clear, and the evidence for a course of action absent. He suggested that in future all papers should carry a simple cover sheet stating the purpose, author, and who had reviewed the paper previously.

**ACTION Item 2.22 CHO to provide a template cover sheet for future papers.**

**2.23** SSK thanked FWI again for her report, and all concerned for their contributions to the discussion.

### **3. Receive report on student attendance**

SNU explained that, following Camden endorsement, she had been implementing a new student attendance strategy, including holding attendance surgeries, initially for Y9 parents. Y9 persistent absentees had been her initial focus. Generally, parents were positive and welcomed intervention. The current part-time appointments officer would become full-time shortly. SNU assured SHA that an expansion of parent surgeries would take in Y7 boys, to nip in the bud poor attendance, often a legacy from primary schools. At NSI's suggestion, she would present data in visual form without particularly poor attendees, and for boys with safeguarding concerns.

**ACTION Item 3 SNU to present attendance data visually without outliers, and highlighting boys with safeguarding concerns.**

**[SNU left the meeting at 5.48pm.]**

## 4. Receive report on student behaviour

4.1 SSK thanked KAL for his reports on student behaviour, particularly that on protected characteristics, and asked him to introduce it.

4.2 KAL summarised each of the linked reports. Initiatives suggested by an external consultant, Sara Billins, were being implemented, such as the RAG-rating (red, amber, green) of teachers' implementation of the school's behaviour policy.

4.3 SSK thanked KAL and sought questions and comments; he and IJO responded.

4.4 CHO asked KAL how he viewed the report: KAL thought it good. CHO pointed out that Sara Billins' observations on in-class behaviour read particularly poorly – late arrivals, inconsistent application of the behaviour policy, students' off-task behaviours – and if Ofsted saw the same, the school might fail.

4.5 IJO highlighted how Sara Billins had identified ways for the school to improve student behaviour. KAL agreed: her analysis was a basis on which to identify potential improvements which would help to make the school Ofsted-ready.

4.6 IJO recalled that, in verbal feedback, Sara Billins had stressed that she had seen nothing to cause real concern. Other schools had been more worrying. The corridors had not felt unsafe or unruly. The school was working hard to manage behaviour.

4.7 SHA was confused. The consultant had identified a lack of consistency in implementing the school's behaviour policy. If her observations were reflective of student behaviour in the school, that was worrying.

4.8 IJO thought that the report was not inaccurate, but incomplete. Sara Billins' positive verbal feedback had not been recorded in her report. That was fine: the school had her recommendations, and was working on them.

4.9 KAL reported that the consultant would return once a fortnight. NSI suggested that her reports could clarify that they focused on the negatives, with recommendations, despite there being many positives.

4.10 **Is your aim now to address the identified "quick wins" [NSI]?** KAL confirmed that it was, beginning with uniform signage on the behaviour policy, and its positioning in each classroom. Someone had been tasked on this. IJO pointed out that there were only three school days between Sara Billins' report and her next visit.

4.11 KAL listed three other "quick wins": that on-call staff escort students who requested a toilet break; the implementation of a uniform way of silencing a class; and ensuring that all teaching staff were visible on corridor in transitions. These were all achievable before Sara Billins' next review.

4.12 He added that Sara Billins and the school's Camden professional partner, Anne Hudson, had had differing views on the same teacher. SHA pointed out that the key thing was whether that teacher had been applying the school's behaviour management systems on both occasions. KAL confirmed that that had been the case: use had been consistent but the outcomes had differed.

4.13 SJE noted that she had visited the school that day – a non-uniform day before the half term break – and observed impressive student behaviour, but also a supply teacher using their own behaviour management system. KAL to investigate.

**ACTION** *Item 4.13* **KAL to investigate agency use of individualised student behaviour management system.**

4.14 SSK thanked KAL again; she stressed that governors appreciated his hard work to improve student behaviour.

## 5. Receive report on student safeguarding

**5.1** SSK invited IJO and KAL, as the school's designated safeguarding lead, to introduce this report on student safeguarding by external consultant Chris Roberts.

**5.2** KAL thought it was a good report, with recommendations that the school could and would implement. Recommendations were for tweaks to the system, rather than a worrying overhaul.

**5.3 Safer recruitment/single central record** IJO said that the school's business manager Fiona Fraser (FFR) had been working hard to resolve legacy issues identified here. The report had found records missing: the school had been unable to access the relevant system in the absence of a key member of staff, who had sole access to it. Ofsted inspectors would fail the school in these circumstances.

**5.4 Managing safeguarding** KAL observed that the school's child protection management system CPOMS was comprehensive, but created a lot of "noise". To better condense safeguarding cases, the school had opened a live spreadsheet on its general management system, Bromcom. In order to best capture the response to safeguarding concerns, CPOMS would now log minutes of pastoral meetings.

**5.5 Pupils** KAL highlighted the "substantial minority" of students identified in the report who did not feel that they had someone in school they could talk to about behaviour and safety. Photos of relevant contacts were now in every classroom.

**5.6** SSK thanked IJO and KAL and called for questions, which IJO answered.

**5.7 Can you supply missing evidence of safeguarding checks on individuals to Ofsted within 36 hours, to avoid an inadequate judgement [SHA]?** The evidence had been sourced and the consultant would confirm this within that timescale.

**5.8 Where had the evidence come from [SHA]?** From the personal files of the members of staff responsible for safeguarding checks.

**5.9** SHA pointed out that the information should be appropriately distributed.

**5.10 Does only a single individual still have access [NSI]?** No, the school had prioritised reviewing every relevant file over the previous 20 years to ensure that everything was logged on paper and electronically, and securely distributed.

**5.11 Can we be sure that there are no staff working in the school who have not been appropriately screened, and that the single central record is up to date [SHA]?** IJO told SHA that he could rest assured on both counts.

**5.12 Why did Ofsted inspectors miss this lapse in their previous inspection [NSI]?** Because they had reviewed the single central record, not the files on which it was based.

**5.13** SSK thanked IJO and KAL for their comments, and IJO for answering questions.

## 6. Receive school self-evaluation

**6.1** IJO explained that this updated school self-evaluation was the first document that she would present to visiting Ofsted inspectors, expected next term at the earliest. The document referenced a number of areas of improvement since the previous (May 2022) inspection, including student progress and outcomes.

**6.3** She hoped it honestly reflected the strengths of the school, particularly around students' social development.

**6.4** SSK thanked her for her comments and noted that the December Camden Project Board meeting had highlighted concern that the school was not on track to achieve an Ofsted judgement of “good”. Additional support and interventions had already been put in place. The challenge was to ensure that all areas were consistently good in time for an Ofsted inspection. CHO queried whether all governors were aware of Camden Learning’s concerns: some were not.

**6.5** SSK called for comments and questions.

**6.6** CHO thought that Camden support was welcome, although there was such a thing as too many different interventions. He supported IJO in deciding how many to accept. IJO agreed: support had to result in actionable, formative, clear feedback.

**6.7** In answer to a question from SHA, IJO reported that a former William Ellis school leader had agreed to support the school’s senior leaders as a consultant for 12 days up to Easter – fewer than hoped, but still welcome. Members of the senior leadership team had been consulted on how he might best support them. She was grateful to the Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust for funding this initiative.

**6.8** BLA noted that the school had received 17 days of external support in the previous nine weeks, by seven or eight people. The challenge was synthesising and taking action on the outcomes.

**6.9** SSK thanked IJO and BLA and noted that she was collating information for the Ofsted section of GovernorHub.

**6.10** HMA suggested compiling a governance handbook specific to William Ellis. SSK had already begun to draft such a thing: she would share with HMA.

**ACTION** *Item 6.10* **SSK and HMA** to progress William Ellis governance handbook.

**6.11** In answer to a question from CHO, IJO explained that senior leaders’ formal written response to Camden Learning’s concerns had been provided to the School Improvement Committee but there had been no time to consider it.

**ACTION** *Item 6.11* **MHU** to circulate school’s formal response to Camden Learning’s concerns, as provided to recent (14 March 2024) School Improvement Committee, to all governors.

## **7. Review School Development Plan and governor strategy**

IJO noted that many of the priorities of the School Development Plan had been logged as progressed in the school’s self-evaluation. SSK and chairs of committees to prioritise further progress on committee agendas. MHU to schedule discussion of governor strategy on agenda of next (21 March 2024) FGB meeting.

**ACTION** *Item 7* **SSK, SHA and CHO** to discuss prioritising further progress on School Development Plan for committee agendas; **MHU** to schedule discussion of governor strategy on agenda of next (21 March 2024) FGB meeting.

## 8. Receive reports from committees

**8.1 School Improvement Committee** SHA, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 1 February 2024. Draft minutes were on GovernorHub. SHA had nothing to add to these minutes.

**8.2 Personnel and Resources Committee** CHO, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 26 January 2024. Draft minutes were on GovernorHub. CHO referenced four five-year scenarios provided to the committee for options to enable the school to move forward. He stressed that the school had a viable financial plan for each scenario. School leadership had suggested two plans. Plan A boosted the falling roll and maintained five forms. Plan B maintained four-form entry. The meeting discussed the merits of the smaller school and asked the committee to consider updates on how this would be achieved. Specific initiatives had been identified to improve the roll and boost fundraising.

## 9. Approve Schools Financial Value Standard

SSK thanked members of Personnel and Resources Committee for reviewing this document, by which governors can assure themselves of the school's financial probity and practice. Governors **AGREED** the Schools Financial Value Standard.

## 10. Receive governor skills report

SSK thanked DNE for his report following governors' completion of a skills audit. DNE noted that there were no areas of major concern. He recommended recruiting a governor with experience in school governance, and another to reflect the school's diversity. All governors to consider helping to fill the two vacant governor posts.

**ACTION** *Item 10* **All governors** to consider volunteering to lead process of recruiting to fill two vacant Foundation governor posts.

## 11. Review policies and other documents

**11.1** Governors reviewed three policies and a procedure, each of which had been thoroughly scrutinised at the previous (26 January 2024) meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee.

**11.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** In answer to a concern from SHA, FWI explained that this policy retained some mention of safeguarding early years because students in alternative provision such as Talacre Community Sports Centre in Kentish Town worked with early years children. SHA suggested making that clear. Governors **AGREED** the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

**ACTION** *Item 11.2* **IJO** to ensure the school's business manager Fiona Fraser amends Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to clarify mentions of early years children.

**11.3** Governors **AGREED** the following policies without further comment:

- a. Disciplinary Policy
- b. Grievance Procedure
- c. Health and Safety Policy for Schools

**12. Receive updates on training and governor visits to school**

**12.1 Training** SSK urged all governors who had not already done so to log recent (24 January 2024) Ofsted training on GovernorHub. MHU to circulate instructions again.

**ACTION Item 12.1** *MHU to remind governors again how to log training on GovernorHub.*

**12.2 Governor visits to school** SJE had been led on a behaviour learning walk by KAL.

**13. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes of the meeting of 7 December 2023 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SSK to sign after the meeting. There were no matters arising. All actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

**14. Any other business**

**Amended meeting dates** SSK reminded governors that the date of the next School Improvement Committee meeting had been pushed back from 29 February 2024 to 14 March 2024. Members of the committee to amend their diaries. The date of the May FGB meeting had also been pushed back, from 16 May 2024 to 23 May 2024. All governors to amend their diaries.

**ACTION Item 14** *Members of the School Improvement Committee to note date of next meeting is now on 14 March 2024; all governors to note May FGB is now on 23 May 2024.*

**Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 21 March 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 6.49pm. All present remained.

Signed.....

21 March 2024

**Mrs Sophie Jenkins**  
**Vice chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School**

*Actions listed on following page...*



## ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 2.21</b>	<b>SSK, SJE, CHO, SHA</b> and <b>IJO</b> to discuss how to approach curriculum questions constructively.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 2.22</b>	<b>CHO</b> to provide a template cover sheet for future papers.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 3</b>	<b>SNU</b> to present attendance data visually without outliers, and highlighting boys with safeguarding concerns.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 4.13</b>	<b>KAL</b> to investigate agency use of individualised student behaviour management system.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 6.10</b>	<b>SSK</b> and <b>HMA</b> to progress William Ellis governance handbook.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 6.11</b>	<b>MHU</b> to circulate school's formal response to Camden Learning's concerns, as provided to recent (14 March 2024) School Improvement Committee, to all governors.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 7</b>	<b>SSK, SHA</b> and <b>CHO</b> to discuss prioritising further progress on School Development Plan for committee agendas; <b>MHU</b> to schedule discussion of governor strategy on agenda of next (21 March 2024) FGB meeting.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 10</b>	<b>All governors</b> to consider volunteering to lead process of recruiting to fill two vacant Foundation governor posts.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 11.2</b>	<b>IJO</b> to ensure the school's business manager Fiona Fraser amends Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy to clarify mentions of early years children.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 12.1</b>	<b>MHU</b> to remind governors again how to log training on GovernorHub.
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Item 14</b>	<b>Members of the School Improvement Committee</b> to note date of next meeting is now on 14 March 2024; <b>all governors</b> to note May FGB is now on 23 May 2024.