

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 6 February 2025

MINUTES

GOVERNORS

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

ATTENDING

Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) **Deputy head**
Ms Flora Wilson (FWI) **Acting deputy head**
Ms Samantha Nunnery (SNU)² **Assistant head**
Ms Lisa Smith (LSM) **Assistant head**
Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) **Clerk**

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

SJE welcomed all present to this William Ellis School FGB meeting, which began at 5.07pm, following some technical difficulties. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, JBO, HMO and SSK. 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. SJE summarised the agenda.

¹ By video link.

² By video link.

2. Receive chair's report

SJE reported that, as requested by governors at the previous (5 December 2024) meeting, IJO and CHO had reviewed the school's Relationships and Sex Education Policy and amended it to address various CHO concerns. SJE had subsequently approved the amended policy as chair's action. Governors **AGREED** her action.

3. Receive update on safeguarding

3.1 SJE invited LSM to update governors on safeguarding, which she did as follows.

3.2 LaSWAP incident LSM and members of the public had called the police following the arrival of a number of men armed with bladed articles at the gates of the LaSWAP sixth form centre. Their intended victim had apparently been a sixth form boy on roll at Parliament Hill. No William Ellis boys were involved: an initial police report to the contrary had been challenged and amended. Repeated requests had resulted in the police maintaining a presence at the LaSWAP gate for several days. An anonymous video subsequently forwarded to Parliament Hill was in police hands.

3.3 Inappropriate use of social media Two boys had been suspended for five days each after filming boys around the toilets: it had been explained to them that this was not "a wind-up" but intimidation. Separately, two boys had filmed members of staff going about their business in their private lives: they had each been issued with a day's suspension and it had been made clear to them by William Ellis's safer schools police office that this behaviour was inappropriate.

3.4 Potential criminal exploitation The school had been working with two Y8 boys to enable them to understand their vulnerability if inappropriately befriended by older men beyond the school gates. They were receiving one-to-one mentoring on developing safe relationships in order to avoid potential criminal exploitation.

3.5 SJE thanked LSM for her update and asked two questions.

3.6 How confident are you of the security of the LaSWAP site [SJE]? FWI replied that in the incident in question none of the individuals with bladed articles had been able to enter the site. However, the gate was not always staffed so intrusion was always a risk: the last intrusion, in September 2023, had been dealt with quickly and efficiently. IJO noted that, for various reasons, William Ellis's site was more secure.

3.7 Are we to take it that you are not confident that the LaSWAP site is secure [SJE]? IJO explained that the LaSWAP site, within the Parliament Hill campus, was not as secure as that of William Ellis, but that did not mean it was not secure enough.

3.8 SJE suggested that Parliament Hill should be asked if the security of the school's site had recently been reviewed.

ACTION	Item 3.8	<i>IJO to ensure Parliament Hill is asked whether the security of the school's site has been reviewed recently.</i>
---------------	-----------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3.9 FWI pointed out that one of the girls on William Ellis's sixth form roll had played a fundamental role in helping to identify the perpetrators. This was to be applauded.

3.10 SJE thanked members of staff for their dedication in ensuring the safety and security of William Ellis and other students at the school's and LaSWAP's gates.

4. Receive report on personal development

4.1 SJE thanked LSM for her report on personal development, which LSM introduced, focusing in particular on a table of four models for improved provision.

4.2 SJE called for questions, which LSM answered as follows.

4.3 Why not use resources already freely available, for instance from Oak National Academy [SHA]? LSM to investigate. IJO pointed out that the school was already using resources from the PSHE³ Organisation and the similar Life Lessons organisation.

ACTION *Item 4.3* **LSM** to research Oak National Academy's PSHE resources.

4.4 Isn't the issue of differentiating for different students and student groups the responsibility of the teacher not, as suggested here, the resources [SHA]? Resources could differ, depending on the student groups, particularly in literacy.

4.5 You say budget is secure but are the right staff in place – equally if not more important [NSI]? With the third – preferred – model, the school hoped to recruit potentially less experienced staff who would see this as an opportunity to develop their career.

4.6 You identify issues of buy-in – what are these [CHO]? Essentially, ownership. PSHE provision had previously been handed “ready-made” to tutors, rather than developed by them as a team. Training in co-planning delivery had helped staff.

4.7 FWI added that lack of ownership was not problem peculiar to William Ellis. To many teachers who knew their subject, PSHE felt “bolted on”.

4.8 SJE thanked LSM again for her report, and for answering questions.

5. Receive report on attendance

5.1 SJE thanked SNU for her report on attendance, which SNU introduced as follows.

5.2 Years 7 to 11 attendance of 89.2 per cent so far this school year was gradually closing on last year's national average of 91.3 per cent.

5.3 School leaders at Parliament Hill, who had been supporting William Ellis since the Ofsted inspection of October 2024, considered its attendance strategy to be robust.

5.4 Next steps included focusing on key cohorts such as students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those in receipt of the Pupil Premium, and those at risk of worsening persistent absence. Tutors had been asked to make calls to a target group of students with 90 to 94 per cent attendance.

5.5 Y10 boys, with an average attendance of 86 per cent, were of most concern. Attendance by Y8 and Y11 students was also of concern.

5.6 SJE thanked SNU for her introduction and called for comments and questions, which SNU answered as follows.

5.7 SHA pointed out that even if William Ellis matched that of disadvantaged students nationally, the overall attendance of all its pupils would still fall short of the national figure because 48 per cent of its pupils received free school meals.

³ Personal, social and health education.

- 5.8** He added that the school's own figures revealed that more than a third of all boys in Years 7 to 11 were chronically absent, missing school for at least one day in every fortnight. Nudging a few individuals to attend a little more would not help.
- 5.9** SJE pointed out that the school's attendance policies had been assessed as appropriate by Camden Learning and Parliament Hill, so what more could be done? SNU added that Ofsted had felt that the school was doing all it could to challenge poor attendance, which was a national crisis. There was no quick fix.
- 5.10** SHA asked why apparently approved and sensible initiatives to tackle poor attendance had had no impact. Persistent absence nationally was two-thirds that of William Ellis: in short, its persistent absence was 50 per cent higher than nationally.
- 5.11** LSM pointed out that Camden's student attendance was one of the lowest in the country: SHA's frustrations were borough-wide. Key was working with primary schools: if persistent absence was 35 per cent in Y6 it was likely to persist in Y7.
- 5.12** IJO noted that attendance had never recovered after the school lost an excellent attendance officer. Recruiting a successor could be an option. Parents were constantly bombarded with the attendance message from all quarters.
- 5.13** SJE thought making school fun could help. CHO agreed: perhaps the school could explore more "pull" strategies to supplement the "push" initiatives. There had certainly been a shift post-Covid to students considering school as more optional.
- 5.14** SHA asked for more (anonymised) data on the poorest attenders. IJO offered similar data on their attendance in Y6. These students were targeted early.

ACTION *Item 5.14* **SNU** to bring anonymised data on students with poorest attendance, with their Y6 attendance record, to next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.

5.15 SJE thanked SNU again for her report, and all concerned for their contributions.

6. Receive report on Pupil Premium

- 6.1** SJE thanked SNU for her report on Pupil Premium spending, which she explained had been updated with new funding figures and in line with governor comments at the previous (5 December 2024) FGB meeting. The strategy's focus remained improved literacy, attendance and independent learning for students in receipt of the Pupil Premium, and improved outcomes and destinations for them.
- 6.2** SHA noted two discrepancies in the plan: it was for 2024-27 yet the introduction explained that this was "the third year of a three-year plan". The Statement of Intent claimed that "more than half of our students are eligible for Pupil Premium funding", yet the figure was 48.4 per cent. It was also misleading to suggest that some Pupil Premium students only had access to computers in the school library.
- 6.3** In answer to a question from SHA, IJO explained that the progress measure cited was the school's own comparative attainment tests (CATs).

[MKA and SNU left the meeting at 6.03pm due to a technical fault.]

6.4 SJE thanked SNU again for her report.

ACTION *Item 6.4* **SHA** to forward his proposed amendments to Pupil Premium report to SNU; **SNU** to amend as suggested; **SJE** to approve Pupil Premium report under chair's action.

7. Receive report on curriculum planning and implementation

7.1 SJE thanked FWI for her report on curriculum, which IJO introduced.

7.2 Curriculum planning and implementation were co-dependant and could not be divorced. Implementation should ensure that the quality of curriculum delivery was as good as it could be.

[MKA and SNU returned to the meeting at 6.07pm.]

7.3 The report reflected some surpluses in lessons and some shortages: for instance, a business and economics teacher had simply not turned up on their first day.

7.4 Governor insight was requested in particular with regard to the “five questions for future consideration” which concluded the report. For instance, if all boys in Years 7 to 11 were offered PE and PSHE every day, would behaviour and attendance improve? That said, there would be resource implications to this and other initiatives.

7.5 SJE thanked IJO and called for comments and questions, which IJO addressed.

7.6 Do all your questions for future consideration involve changes to staffing [CHO]? Certainly if PE were to be offered every day that would have a staffing implication.

7.7 When is the deadline for a decision on curriculum [SJE]? Now: but some decisions could take time to come to fruition, for instance if they depended on staff moves. Creating the facilities to introduce food technology had taken three years.

7.8 Why is the difficulty in hiring science teachers not reflected here [SJE]? The plan assumed that every post necessary to deliver the curriculum had been filled.

7.9 So is this an aspirational curriculum that you can't deliver [CHO]? No: gaps were of one lesson here or there. And the school had to offer the KS3 national curriculum.

7.10 Wouldn't it be better to offer options with advantages and limitations [CHO]?

That was the idea of the questions. For instance, if PE was to be offered every day, how to operationalise this would be explored, perhaps by cutting staff elsewhere.

7.11 SHA noted that the second question – on “guiding students to the subjects at GCSE and post-16 where they have most success” – linked with the KS5 paper to be considered later in the meeting (at item 9.1.1). IST asked what the school's curriculum could offer to make it more attractive to parents and the boys. SHA thought the issue was what a “boys' curriculum” looked like.

7.12 If provision is not uniformly excellent, is it necessary or desirable to offer three separate sciences [SJE]? Sciences and languages were part of the school's USP. SHA pointed out that high-quality teaching attracted high-quality teachers.

7.13 When and why was the Years 7 and 8 English and maths group for SEND students with speech, language and communication needs disbanded [CHO]? In October 2024, because many fewer SEND students now had speech, language and communication needs. Most now needed social, emotional and mental health support. The initiative may be revived if the needs profile changed.

7.14 Governors **AGREED** the curriculum plan as presented.

7.15 SJE urged governors to keep a watching brief on curriculum, particularly with a view to taking advantage of staff movements if these provided opportunities.

ACTION	Item 7.15	<i>SJE to ensure governors retain watching brief on curriculum, particularly at moments of staff change.</i>
---------------	------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

8. Receive headteacher's report

8.1 SJE thanked IJO for her report and invited her to introduce it, which she did.

8.2 Update on 2025-28 strategy IJO reported that all staff had recently convened to review the results of governors' strategic planning discussions at their FGB meeting on 5 December 2024.

8.2.1 Under the sub-sets of each heading – building strong relationships, nurturing successful students and enabling good citizens – staff had been asked the question “when this has been successful, what will you see happening or in place?”

8.2.2 IJO asked governors to consider the level of ambition in staff observations, themes which had emerged from them, and any discrepancies between the responses of staff and what governors might expect.

8.2.3 HMA praised the emphasis on extra-curricular and club activities, which had previously been low key: parents were attracted by a good curriculum but also the creative atmosphere of a school. William Ellis was getting there.

8.2.4 SHA feared that an “engaging, modern enquiry-based curriculum” would compromise excellent academic outcomes. BLA reassured him that it would not.

8.2.5 IJO reported that the school's senior leaders were due to convene on 5 March 2025 to consider how to operationalise the strategy, and in particular with what staffing. She would report back to the next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.

ACTION *Item 8.2.5* *IJO to report senior leaders' views on how to operationalise 2025-28 strategy to next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.*

8.3 Partnership Governors **AGREED** to continue partnership with Camden Learning, which includes support from Parliament Hill School and current Camden professional partner Anne Hudson (due to change in September 2025).

8.4 Review of teacher performance This part of IJO's report was noted with thanks.

9. Receive reports from committees

9.1 School Improvement Committee SHA, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 30 January 2025. [Draft minutes are on GovernorHub.](#)

9.1.1 Given the late receipt of a report on Y13 progress, members of the committee had agreed to submit questions on the subject in advance of this meeting for a brief discussion. FWI and IJO answered the questions submitted.

9.1.2 How can grades be predicted more accurately [JLE]? Predictions were not collected at KS5; the issue was more a question of familiarity with exam boards' marking schemes. BLA added that predictions at KS4 were being addressed.

9.1.3 What funding have you secured for the proposed economics revision conference [SHA]? It was more a question of redirecting funds from elsewhere.

9.1.4 What needs to be done to address underachievement revealed by mock results in six subject areas, including maths and physics, particularly the disappointing results of LaSWAP students taught at William Ellis compared with elsewhere [SHA]? Fundamentally, good teaching drove progress and attainment. Provision was being addressed. Key students, and their parents, were offered pastoral invention. Staff were being trained in how to analyse progress.

9.1.5 What should we conclude from Y13 taught-at data [DNE]? The table compared students' target grades, grades following a December 2024 mock exam, and holistic grades, as assessed by teachers. Lower holistic than exam grades were problematic.

9.1.6 Should we be concerned that nearly half the students would miss out on A*-C grades, which can lead to a good university place [SHA]? Two D grades at A level offered a better chance of a good university place than three E grades. This was being put to the students in question. Parents may need convincing.

9.1.7 Why so many discrepancies between holistic and mock grades in maths [SHA]? Senior leaders were working on a strategy to address this.

9.1.8 SJE thanked IJO and FWI for answering committee members' questions.

9.2 Personnel and Resources Committee CHO, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 24 January 2025. Draft minutes are on GovernorHub. The meeting had discussed a potential overspend of £80k against budget, reducing the anticipated carry-forward. Governors had been dismayed by delays in three major development initiatives: a SEND nurture centre; the canteen; and games spaces.

9.2.1 A survey had revealed staff morale to be generally good following the October Ofsted inspection.

9.2.2 The trustees of the Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust had successfully recruited the organisation's first director.

9.2.3 Governors **AGREED** to appoint IST to the committee.

10. Approve Schools Financial Value Standard

CHO reported that the 24 January 2025 meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee had thoroughly scrutinised this document, which enables governors to assess their school's financial probity and practice. He recommended approval; governors **AGREED** the SFVS. He added that the committee would review benchmarking of the school's performance – not yet published as part of the SFVS by the Department for Education (DfE) – at its next (2 May 2025) meeting.

11. Receive report on governance matters

11.1 Foundation governor SJE reported that the trustees of the Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust were expected, at their next (10 March 2025) meeting, to appoint a new Foundation governor, Paul Clark, who, if appointed, would be invited to attend the next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.

ACTION	Item 11.1	<i>MHU to invite Paul Clark, if appointed Foundation governor by Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust as expected, to attend next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.</i>
---------------	------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

11.2 Local authority governor SJE reminded governors that HMO would be standing down as LA governor at the end of the following month, when his current term of office came to an end. Camden was in the process of nominating his successor, expected to be Anna Wright, a Camden councillor for Highgate Ward, Camden cabinet member for health, wellbeing and adult social care, mother of former William Ellis students and a former chair of William Ellis Parents' Association.

11.3 Jelke Boesten SJE advised governors that JBO felt the need, for personal reasons, to extend her leave of absence until at least Easter.

11.4 Receive updates on training and governor visits to school SJE reported that she had continued with National Governance Association chairs' training, and attended a Camden Governors' Briefing (22 January 2025). HMA had attended training in mental health awareness for schools (16 January 2025) and first aid (17 January 2025). IST had attended safeguarding training (10 January 2025) and the Camden Governors' Briefing (22 January 2025).

12. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2024 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SJE to sign after the meeting. There were no matters arising. All actions had been fulfilled.

13. Confidential minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Given that no discussion of the confidential minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2024 was anticipated or forthcoming, governors **AGREED** them as a full and accurate record; SJE to sign after the meeting. There were no matters arising.

14. Close of meeting

There being no further business, SJE thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 7.01pm.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 20 March 2025 at 5pm

Signed.....

20 March 2025

Mrs Sophie Jenkins
Chair of the Governing Body, William Ellis School

Actions arising listed on the following page...

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION	Item 3.8	<i>IJO to ensure Parliament Hill is asked whether the security of the school's site has been reviewed recently.</i>
ACTION	Item 4.3	<i>LSM to research Oak National Academy's PSHE resources.</i>
ACTION	Item 5.14	<i>SNU to bring anonymised data on students with poorest attendance, with their Y6 attendance record, to next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.</i>
ACTION	Item 6.4	<i>SHA to forward his proposed amendments to Pupil Premium report to SNU; SNU to amend as suggested; SJE to approve Pupil Premium report under chair's action.</i>
ACTION	Item 7.15	<i>SJE to ensure governors retain watching brief on curriculum, particularly at moments of staff change.</i>
ACTION	Item 8.2.5	<i>IJO to report senior leaders' views on how to operationalise 2025-28 strategy to next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.</i>
ACTION	Item 11.1	<i>MHU to invite Paul Clark, if appointed Foundation governor by Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust as expected, to attend next (20 March 2025) FGB meeting.</i>