

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 20 March 2025

MINUTES

GOVERNORS

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

ATTENDING

Cllr Anna Wright (AWR) **Observer**
Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) **Deputy head**
Ms Flora Wilson (FWI)² **Acting deputy head**
Mr Karl Altmann (KAL) **Assistant head**
Ms Samantha Nunnery (SNU)³ **Assistant head**
Ms Lisa Smith (LSM) **Assistant head**
Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) **Clerk**

¹ By video link.

² By video link.

³ By video link.

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies and declarations of interest

SJE welcomed all present to this William Ellis School FGB meeting, which began at 5.03pm. She particularly welcomed PCL, as a newly-appointed Foundation governor, and AWR, who had been nominated as LA governor to succeed MHO. SJE gave AWR permission to speak. All present introduced themselves. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, MKA. There were no apologies from HMO. JBO remains on sabbatical. SNU and SSK had apologised for late arrivals. 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. Receive chair's report

SJE reported that SNU had amended the Pupil Premium report reviewed at the previous (6 February 2025) meeting in line with SHA's suggestions. SJE had then approved the amended policy as chair's action. Governors **AGREED** her action.

3. Appoint Anna Wright as LA governor

SJE welcomed AWR again to the meeting. Following her nomination by Camden, governors **AGREED** to appoint her as LA governor as of 25 March 2025, for four years. SJE pointed out that, with the recruitment of PCL and AWR, all 14 places on the school's Governing Body had now been filled. However, there remained the potential for governors to appoint one or more associate members to committees to offer specific skills and expertise in support of the work of the Governing Body.

ACTION	Item 3	<i>SHA and CHO to consider potential for recruiting one or more associate members to their committee to support governors' work with appropriate skills and expertise.</i>
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4. Receive report on personal development

4.1 Given the SNU had been due to introduce the next item but had apologised for a late arrival, SJE proposed bringing forward LSM's report on personal development. She thanked her for it and asked her to introduce it, which LSM did as follows.

4.2 William Ellis had signed up to become a Rights Respecting School, a programme led by Unicef UK that put children's rights at the heart of the school community, helping to create a safe, inspiring, and inclusive environment for every student.

4.3 By embedding the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into the school's ethos and curriculum, the aim was to promote respect, wellbeing, and active citizenship among William Ellis students.

4.4 This aspiration complemented the school's current "5Rs" attributes – emphasising students' commitment to responsibility, respect, resourcefulness, reflection and resilience – and the school's motto, "Rather use than fame".

[DNE joined the meeting with apologies at 5.15pm.]

4.5 SJE thanked LSM for her introduction and called for comments and questions.

4.6 Will former pupils of Kentish Town CofE Primary School [which achieved the gold level of the Rights Respecting Schools Award in July 2022] recognise William Ellis's programme [HMA]? CHO, whose son attended the primary school and now William Ellis, thought they would: it was the same programme, but with a different level of engagement.

[SSK and SNU joined the meeting at 5.19pm.]

4.7 Is there a risk that children will focus on their rights at the expense of their responsibilities [AWR]? LSM assured AWR that this was addressed in staff training.

4.8 Will rights not covered in the curriculum be addressed in personal, social and health education [PSHE] sessions [JLE]? That presupposed every student had to know every UNCRC principle. As long as the school as a whole was familiar with the principles, that was enough to win the Rights Respecting School Award.

4.9 CHO observed that he had been impressed when his sons had come home after a day at Kentish Town CofE Primary School knowing their and others' rights. But he worried that too many initiatives could be confusing. LSM assured him that the Rights Respecting School initiative would be part of a coherent, holistic programme.

4.10 How will the initiative help to address the school's key challenges of poor student attendance and a falling roll [SJE]? IJO thought it could not harm student recruitment. Following a "good" Ofsted, the challenge was to demonstrate how the school was continuing to progress: this achieved that, tangibly. It would help to further enhance the school's work on global citizenship, which was part of the three-year strategy and a unique selling point of the school. It also built links with primaries.

4.11 AWR agreed that the culture of the school was what could prove attractive to parents and pupils in a competitive market. IST urged governors to consider how that attractive culture could be promoted to all corners of the community.

4.12 Does the accreditation action plan involve students early enough, and could older William Ellis students or Y7 pupils newly arrived from accredited primary schools help to explain the programme to their peers [SHA]? LSM said that that was the next step. She had explained the school's ambitions to senior leaders, staff and governors: next she would be presenting to students. The programme could not move forward without getting the young people on board.

4.13 SJE thanked LSM again for her report. Governors **AGREED** to endorse the school's initiative in seeking to achieve the Rights Respecting School Award.

5. Receive discussion paper on safeguarding and behaviour

5.1 In order to allow KAL to leave before the end of the meeting, SJE brought forward consideration of his discussion paper on safeguarding and behaviour. She thanked him for it and asked him to introduce it, which he did in two parts.

5.2 Security wand The school already owned a security wand (a handheld metal detector), which was used to check that students were not taking prohibited items into exams after a toilet or movement break.

5.2.1 The wand reacted to metal in items including vapes, mobile phones and bladed items. Use of a wand improved on the practice of "patting down" in that it could detect hidden items more efficiently, without physical interaction.

5.2.2 The proposal was to wand more routinely when searching students.

5.2.3 SJE thanked KAL and called for questions, which KAL and IJO answered.

5.2.4 Is the proposal part of responses by some Camden secondary schools to the recent incident at UCL Academy in Swiss Cottage [SSK]? The school would be remiss not to take into account this incident, in which a 12-year-old student had been injured in a knife incident during the school day. KAL had recently visited a Brent secondary school where randomised wandering was in use (in this case to enforce the mobile phone policy), although William Ellis was not considering a similar policy yet.

5.2.5 If vaping is a growing problem, what is being done to educate students about the risks [DNE]? There had been assemblies this week focusing on the risks of vaping and smoking, and the subject had been addressed in older students' registration sessions. Young people were drawn to tactile, colourful and sweet-smelling vapes.

5.2.6 Do all vapes have detectable metal parts [DNE]? Most of each device was plastic but in both reusable and disposable vapes there was always some metal.

5.2.7 How often do students bring bladed items onto school premises [DNE]? It was thankfully not an issue at William Ellis. The only recent related event had been that of a student who had brought a practice "butterfly knife" – i.e. without a blade – into school. He had been excluded, but not permanently.

5.2.8 How often is the school's wand used, and how do children and parents react to its use [NSI]? It was only used on a student's return to an exam room after a break. Exams were already a controlled space and a cultural acceptance of the practice prevailed. Parents could contest its use in less controlled circumstances.

5.2.9 SJE pointed out that normalising use of wandering would make it less contentious when it was necessary. LSM agreed: Haverstock School in Chalk Farm introduction of its two wands had been delicate but their use was now seen as routine. SSK thought that, following the UCL Academy incident, most parents would put safety first.

5.2.10 Would use be extended to LaSWAP [the sixth form consortium of which William Ellis is a member] students [SJE]? Students who visited any LaSWAP school were subject to that school's Behaviour Policy. FWI, as a director of LaSWAP, did not foresee that LaSWAP students would find wandering in any way controversial.

5.2.11 To be clear, the school is not proposing to introduce randomised searching at this time [CHO]? No.

5.2.12 SHA urged senior leaders to ensure that searches using the wand were rigorously logged in order to demonstrate that its use was impartial. IJO assured him that this would be the case: only senior leaders would search at this level.

5.2.13 Governors encouraged senior leaders to continue with this initiative.

5.3 Mobile phone policy KAL explained that the intention here was to gauge governors' attitudes to potential changes to the school's policy on mobile phones.

5.3.1 The background was that confiscations of students' mobile phones had risen to 183 so far this year, compared with 157 over the same period last year.

5.3.2 Mobile phones were also used by a minority of students when they were unsupervised, for instance in the toilets.

5.3.3 Currently, phones were retained until the end of the school day following the first confiscation, until the end of the following day following a second confiscation, and for five days following a third offence.

5.3.4 A simplified policy would retain the current sanction for a first offence but a second offence – and any subsequent offence – would see the phone confiscated for five days, which may include a weekend.

5.3.5 Other options included measures to implement a "phone free school" policy.

5.3.6 Any changes could result in confrontation, resulting in more suspensions.

5.3.7 SJE thanked KAL for his introduction, stressed that this item was for discussion not decision, and called for comments and questions, of which she asked the first, and which KAL and IJO answered.

5.3.8 Could we follow other schools and insist that parents who wish to send their sons to William Ellis do not buy them a phone [SJE]? Parents of Y6 boys who wished to send their sons to William Ellis were left in no doubt that they should not give them a smartphone. "Bricks" – without social media access – were acceptable.

5.3.9 HMA thought that most parents – particularly those within WESPA, William Ellis's parents' association – wanted the school to firm up its mobile phone policy. What had begun as a tool to ensure their sons' safety had become something of a curse. However, most boys saw any policy as a manual on how to avoid confiscation.

5.3.10 AWR thought that if phones were not visible, they did not affect learning. Access to damaging social media was another issue. However, initiatives could lead to unintended consequences, such as poorer attendance and more challenges to authority. Suspensions left students free to use their mobile phone at home. KAL responded that even using phones out of class disrupted students' concentration.

5.3.11 The number of second confiscations drops dramatically – just 37 compared with 183 initial confiscations so far this year – so why confiscate phones for longer for a second offence [NSI]? Most students got the message when their phones were confiscated the first time; a significant minority did not. They tended to use their phones in, for instance, the toilets, significantly impacting their day's learning.

5.3.12 How much support do you anticipate from parents for a firmer line on phones [SJE]? The issue divided the parental community. Parents had previously turned up at reception demanding the return of their son's phone in no uncertain terms.

5.3.13 Governors suggested a number of technology-led initiatives, though they conceded that none appeared to provide the perfect solution.

5.3.14 SJE thanked KAL again for his report, and all concerned for their contributions. She reminded governors that the school had a responsibility to encourage students to use technology wisely. In whichever way the policy on mobile phones was finally amended, the school should implement it consistently and well.

[KAL left the meeting at 6.19pm.]

6. Receive report on literacy

6.1 SJE thanked SNU for her report on literacy, which she introduced as follows.

6.2 The current strategy was to foster a culture of reading for pleasure. Senior leaders' recent audit of teaching and learning had revealed that staff and students were engaging well with literacy and oracy. World Book Day had been a success.

6.3 An audit of students had revealed that the majority of students enjoyed reading. A school librarian was now in place three days a week. Departments had drawn up dedicated reading lists. Other initiatives included Sparx Reader and Eplatform.

6.4 SJE thanked SNU for her introduction and called for comments. AWR noted a paucity of metrics and timescales by which governors could gauge progress. SHA observed that just nine out of 22 tutors had audited students' reading on World Book Day, as requested, and Y7 pupils were only now benefiting from Sparx Reader.

7. Receive report on attendance

7.1 SJE thanked SNU for her report on attendance, and moved straight to questions, which SNU and IJO answered as follows.

7.2 Could future reports compare William Ellis figures with those for Camden, national, and national boys' attendance [SHA]? LSM, who is to take over from SNU as attendance lead from Easter, to include comparative figures in future reports.

ACTION *Item 7.2* *LSM to ensure that future reports on attendance include Camden, national and national boys' comparisons.*

7.3 How do we know that tutors are diligently making well-being calls targeting students at risk of persistent absence [SHA]? This was rigorously monitored.

7.4 How is compliance [SJE]? Initially it was poor until expectations were clarified: calls are now more consistent, and tracked and followed up where necessary.

7.5 Can governors see the proportion of tutors making calls [SHA]? Yes.

ACTION *Item 7.5* *LSM to ensure that future reports on attendance include proportion of tutors making calls targeting at-risk students.*

7.6 Do we know students' individual reasons for poor attendance [PCL]? They were explored in detail in discussions with the student and family at their home.

7.7 Where was the data captured [PCL]? On visit logs; reasons varied widely. PCL observed that governor visibility of the reasons for students' poor attendance, and more detailed data generally, might help them to support the school in addressing the issue. Were there any patterns to absence, for example?

ACTION *Item 7.7* *LSM to ensure that future reports on attendance include more detail on students' reasons for poor attendance.*

7.8 LSM warned that improving student attendance was neither quick nor easy.

7.9 SJE noted that previous governor interviews with students with a poor attendance record had been of some value to the school. LSM to consider.

ACTION *Item 7.9* *LSM to consider value of governor interviews with poorly-attending students.*

7.10 SJE thanked SNU again for her report, and for answering questions.

8. Receive headteacher's report

8.1 SJE thanked IJO for her report and invited her to introduce it.

8.2 Student roll IJO highlighted a table of numbers of students in each year group, with figures for groups such as those eligible for Pupil Premium and those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Falls in student numbers were reflected in nearly all Camden secondary schools. Only three would be full in September 2025.

8.3 Marketing strategy William Ellis had signed up for marketing support from Camden Learning but in anticipation IJO had provided a draft strategy here. Its objectives were three-fold: to increase the number of parents who listed William Ellis as their first choice, to maximise applications from local families, and to maximise students from further afield. A “Good” Ofsted had been an excellent first step.

8.4 Staffing need and demand SNU’s post would not be replaced on her departure at Easter: her responsibilities would be re-allocated, resulting in some savings.

8.5 SJE thanked IJO for her introduction and called for comments.

8.6 SSK reported that the trustees of the charitable Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust had earlier in the week appointed the Trust’s first director, who would have responsibility for raising funds, ultimately to benefit the school.

8.7 IST reported that he had reviewed the websites of each of the boys’ schools listed by IJO in her report. Every website was more dynamic and user-friendly than that of William Ellis. An effective website was crucial to engage potential parents.

8.8 AWR, who is a Camden councillor, observed that Camden socio-economic and health equity analysis had suggested that current demographic changes would result in a situation where only the very rich or very poor would be living in Camden. This raised significant issues for the school, to which it would have to adapt.

8.9 CHO commended IJO’s marketing strategy as clear and distinctive in the way it reached out to the school’s community.

8.10 IJO confessed to frustration with Camden’s admissions procedures and collective marketing programme. On another topic, within her report, she had highlighted how senior leaders’ responsibilities were to be restructured from Easter.

8.11 She added that all members of the senior leadership team appreciated visits from link governors and hoped they would continue.

8.12 Echoed by governors, SJE thanked SNU for her contribution over her years at the school, and her reports to the Governing Body, and wished her well for the future.

8.13 William Ellis School strategy 2025-28: governance and leadership IJO noted that a single strategy which aligned the visions of the school’s senior leaders, governors and Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust would be demanding but helpful.

8.13.1 Following discussions with fellow senior leaders, she proposed replacing the strategy’s current three-line summary with a summary of four lines.

8.13.2 She reminded governors of the current three-line summary:

- a. Commit to the delivery of innovative and inspiring education for boys in London
- b. Celebrate being a small school which has high expectations, nurtures kindness, and knows students as individuals
- c. Prioritise high quality teaching and progress for all students regardless of their starting points, leading to success in our co-ed Sixth Form

8.13.3 She proposed replacing the above with the following:

- a. **Excellence in boy-centered education** Deliver innovative teaching that embraces boyhood, inclusion, and technology to inspire all students
- b. **Personalised growth and leadership** Foster student leadership in our small, nurturing environment where individual achievements and aspirations flourish

- c. **Community-centred success** Partner with families to ensure all students progress through high-quality teaching toward sixth-form readiness
- d. **Inclusive achievement** Uphold high expectations for all students through personalized attention and strong community connections

8.13.4 After a brief discussion, governors decided that they preferred the brevity of the original three-line summary to the proposed four-line alternative.

8.13.5 Success criteria IJO highlighted the four strategic objectives within the governance and leadership section of the 2025-28 strategy. Several of the objectives shared very similar success criteria, which she proposed rationalising.

8.14 Premises development initiatives IJO reported that, given delays in promised Camden support, the school had made progress in the current three development initiatives: creating an outdoor nurture centre for students with special educational needs and disabilities; extending the canteen; and renovating the existing games spaces and pitches, and creating new ones.

8.14.1 The school was close to the drafting of a masterplan for all three projects; work could potentially start in the financial year 2025-26, funded variously by Camden, the Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust and external fundraising.

8.14.2 IJO thanked IST, a chartered accountant, for helping to progress the initiatives, and PCL, a chartered surveyor, for his anticipated support.

8.14.3 However, she warned that managing risk would be a key aspect of the work going forward. Given this, governors **AGREED** to appoint an informal sub-committee of IJO, IST and PCL to scrutinise Camden involvement and responsibilities, particularly with regard to financial risk, reporting to the Personnel and Resources Committee.

8.14.4 IJO added that representatives of school sports facilities company Revive would be visiting the school during the following week. Revive's financial model was to renovate school playgrounds at its expense, on condition that it could subsequently rent out the renovated playgrounds to third parties after school hours to recoup its investment. This could be an option if funds were unforthcoming.

8.15 Quality of education Given that BLA's paper on assessing quality of education – in Y10 and at KS3 – had been submitted mere hours before the meeting, SJE suggested that it should be considered at the next (8 May 2025) School Improvement Committee meeting. SHA, who chairs this committee, agreed.

ACTION	Item 8.15	<i>MHU to schedule review of Y10 and KS3 quality of education report on agenda of next (8 May 2025) meeting of the School Improvement Committee.</i>
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8.16 SJE thanked IJO again for her report, and all concerned for their contributions.

9. Receive report from School Improvement Committee

SHA, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 13 March 2025. [Draft minutes are on GovernorHub](#). The committee had received an excellent presentation from Una Rodgers, head of modern foreign languages.

10. Appoint Josh Levitt to committee

Governors **AGREED** to appoint JLE to the Personnel and Resources Committee.

11. Receive updates on training and governor visits to school

SJE reported that she had now concluded National Governance Association chairs' training. PCL and IST had attended Camden Learning governor induction training (on 4 and 18 March 2025 respectively). IST had also completed online GovernorHub Knowledge training on improving student attendance (11 February 2025), cyber security (25 February 2025), suspensions and exclusions (8 March 2025) and the Pupil Premium (14 March 2025).

12. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 6 February 2025 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SJE to sign after the meeting. There were no matters arising. All actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

13. Any other business

13.1 Cricket SJE reported that Al Mobbs, who chairs WESPA, was attempting to link with Lord's, the home of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC). Any governor who wished to be involved should contact her or Al Mobbs.

ACTION *Item 13.1* **All governors** invited to contact SJE or Al Mobbs if interested in liaising with the MCC and Lord's.

13.2 Student death For those governors who had not already heard, IJO informed them of the sad death of a Y12 student as a result of a continuing health condition. FWI added that she was keeping in close contact with the student's family.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 22 May 2025 at 5pm

There being no further business, SJE thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 7.09pm.

Signed.....

22 May 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	SHA and CHO to consider potential for recruiting one or more associate members to their committee to support governors' work with appropriate skills and expertise.
ACTION	Item 7.2	LSM to ensure that future reports on attendance include Camden, national and national boys' comparisons.
ACTION	Item 7.5	LSM to ensure that future reports on attendance include proportion of tutors making calls targeting at-risk students.
ACTION	Item 7.7	LSM to ensure that future reports on attendance include more detail on students' reasons for poor attendance.
ACTION	Item 7.9	LSM to consider value of governor interviews with poorly-attending students.
ACTION	Item 8.15	MHU to schedule review of Y10 and KS3 quality of education report on agenda of next (8 May 2025) meeting of the School Improvement Committee.
ACTION	Item 13.1	All governors invited to contact SJE or Al Mobbs if interested in liaising with the MCC and Lord's.