

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 22 May 2025

MINUTES

GOVERNORS

		Present	
Headteacher	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓	
	Foundation	Mr Paul Clark (PCL)	✓
		Mr Sean Harford (SHA)	✓
	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	x	
	Mr Ian Stanlake (IST)	✓	
Local authority	Cllr Anna Wright (AWR)	✓	
Parent	Prof Jelke Boesten (JBO)	x	
	Mr Carlton Hood (CHO)	✓	
Staff	Mr Joshua Levitt (JLE)	x	

ATTENDING

Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) **Deputy head**
Ms Flora Wilson (FWI) **Acting deputy 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 5.06pm. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, MKA, JLE and SSK. JBO remains on extended leave of absence. 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. Unless otherwise indicated, all papers had been circulated in advance. SJE outlined the agenda. This FGB meeting had been due to receive a presentation from the school's Student Council: instead, SJE would meet council members on the following day (23 May 2025) and would report back to the next (10 July 2025) FGB.

2. Receive chair's report

2.1 Chair's action SJE reported that, following a meeting of the governors' Pay Committee on 6 November 2024, IJO had acted on the request of its members to encourage Ann Charalambos-Clarke (ACC), the school's special educational needs and disabilities co-ordinator (SENDCo), to develop evidence to support her pay progression in the course of the current year. At a meeting on 7 May 2025, IJO had presented this evidence and recommended progression, which SJE had approved. Governors **AGREED** her action to approve ACC's pay progression.

2.2 The Mill SJE reported that Fiona Millar, who chairs the Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust, was broadly in favour of moves to clarify organisational relations between the governors, the Trust, and the trust overseeing the activities of The Mill, the school's outdoor education centre in the Surrey Hills.

3. Receive report on student attendance

3.1 SJE thanked Lisa Smith (LSM – the assistant director who has recently assumed responsibility for student attendance) for her report and, in her absence, asked IJO to introduce it, which she did as follows.

3.2 Between them, LSM and BLA could call on a fund of expertise and experience on this issue. A fresh review had suggested that the school should focus on ensuring attendance was recorded efficiently and interventions were actively pursued.

3.3 IJO and LSM had recently met with Camden inclusion leads to identify areas where Camden could usefully support the school further.

3.4 IJO noted that SHA had previously queried a discrepancy in attendance data. This had arisen because the school compared its attendance with national data provided by the charitable Fisher Family Trust (FFT). However, the FFT's data only covered the 50 per cent of schools nationally which subscribed to its services.

3.5 BLA added that he and LSM had identified accuracy, efficiency and impact as the priorities for the school's attendance team. Systems had to improve student attendance or they were worthless. Staff were working hard but could work smarter.

3.6 SJE thanked IJO and BLA for their comments and called for questions, which IJO and BLA answered as follows.

3.7 Could William Ellis follow the lead of other Camden schools, where student peer-to-peer sessions had apparently resulted in improved student attendance [AWR]?

Fitzrovia Youth in Action had trained some William Ellis students in peer mentoring, which would cover issues of attendance. IJO would report back on impact.

ACTION *Item 3.7* *IJO to report back on impact of peer mentoring initiative on student attendance.*

3.8 Why, after a term, does student attendance diverge from that of FFT schools nationally [PCL]?

It tended to dip immediately before the Christmas and Easter breaks. The accuracy of attendance registers on the last day of term could also be poor. Fasting during Ramadan could lead to poorer attendance by Muslim students.

3.9 How is progress in ensuring that tutors make calls to poorly-attending students' homes [SHA]?

The role of tutors in making such calls was being clarified but they needed to have an impact, and that resulted from effective relations with families.

3.10 Could governors see data on sixth form attendance [SHA]? FWI to ensure sixth form data is included in future attendance reporting; however, she warned that poorly-aligned monitoring systems could mean that data was inaccurate. SHA stressed that governors needed accurate data on sixth form attendance.

3.11 How does William Ellis's sixth form attendance compare with that of the three other schools in the LaSWAP sixth form consortium [SJE]? The four schools had agreed that they would not share individual schools' attendance data. However, school representatives on the LaSWAP Governors' Forum had sight of it.

3.12 SJE thanked LSM again for her report, and IJO and BLA for answering questions.

4. Receive update on personal development

IJO updated governors on initiatives in students' personal development. A recent Camden review of the school's PSHE (personal, social, health and economic) provision had been very positive, but had raised the question of whether, as a boys-only school, aspects such as challenging misogyny should be emphasised further. The school was advertising for a PSHE lead. IJO was hopeful that William Ellis would receive the Rights Respecting Schools Bronze Award by September 2025.

5. Receive update on safeguarding

5.1 SJE asked IJO to update governors on safeguarding at the school, which she did as follows.

5.2 There had been an increase in network checks –enquiries from external agencies such as health authorities, the police and social services – since the Easter break.

5.3 More students had also been designated as CIN – children in need – largely due to neglect and backgrounds of domestic abuse.

5.4 No new students had been given child protection orders. However, some had been taken off such plans. This had not been because concerns had lessened, but because their families had not been engaging with the process. That of itself was of concern. The school had challenged each withdrawal but the decision was that of Camden social services. Camden headteachers had made their concerns known.

5.5 SJE thanked IJO and called for questions, of which she asked both, and which IJO answered as follows.

5.6 Have there been more network checks because there have been more problems or is it that social services are working better [SJE]? Problems tended to increase around holidays and in warm weather. If social services closed a case then one way to monitor it but not reopen it was to repeatedly raise network checks.

5.7 Is withdrawal of child protection orders common across Camden schools and have their concerns been heard [SJE]? Withdrawals were common, and concerns had been heard, but social services faced severe challenges, including in recruiting and retaining social workers. Schools could not change wider factors that lead to concerns. Perhaps understandably, if a case was stalled for any length of time, social services would transfer resources to cases where success was anticipated.

*A sensitive issue was discussed at this point
which is confidentially minuted as item 16*

6. Receive headteacher's report

6.1 IJO thanked Parliament Hill headteacher Sarah Creasey and her team for supporting William Ellis's senior leadership in the next stage of developing a three-year strategic plan.

6.2 She reminded governors that the current draft three-year strategy had three goals: to build strong relationships, to nurture successful students, and to enable the development of good citizens.

6.3 Three teams of governors considered five questions on each of the three goals:

1. Is the goal fit for purpose?
2. What would success look like?
3. What evidence would demonstrate that success?
4. What would the next steps be?
5. What needs to happen now?

[Governors broke into groups at 5.37pm and resumed at 6pm.]

6.4 IJO noted that no group had finished their discussion. However, their deliberations would be fed into the School Development Plan and next stage of the draft three-year plan. She invited governors to send in any further comments.

ACTION *Item 6.4* **All governors** to consider sending in any further comments on latest iteration of three-year strategy.

7. Receive report on digital strategy

7.1 SJE thanked DNE for his overview of a potential digital strategy and asked him to introduce it, which he did as follows.

7.2 The key question was whether – in light of technological advances in education practice under Covid and the development of artificial intelligence (AI) – the school should aim to be a “digital-first” school. If yes, how should it go about it?

7.3 If agreed, DNE would present a further report to the next (10 July 2025) FGB.

7.4 SJE thanked DNE for his remarks and called for questions and comments, to which DNE responded as follows.

7.5 Could external partnerships ease the path to becoming a digital-first school [IST]?

Yes, in two areas: links with pioneering schools and, for funding and practicalities, with organisations such as Google, Microsoft, etc. FWI pointed out that Livery Schools Link, which introduced London schools with high levels of deprivation to City of London livery companies, had been very helpful during the Covid pandemic.

7.6 Will concerns about 15-year-olds potentially spending their entire lives on screens, with detrimental effects on mental health and development, be reflected in any digital-first strategy [HMA]? They would, but governors should be clear that social media was a subset of the digital world. To a certain extent, access to social media could be managed within school; less so, if at all, beyond it. SJE urged DNE to ensure that student wellbeing was part of any forthcoming digital strategy.

7.7 SHA thought that the advent of AI should encourage teachers to think very carefully about learning objectives which encouraged independent thought. In one case, students set homework to “compare and contrast” two historical figures had successfully used AI, when they couldn't even explain what “compare and contrast” meant. IJO agreed that it was crucial to use AI to encourage critical thinking.

7.8 What alternatives are there to being a “digital-first” school [PCL]? DNE assured PCL that he would address this in any forthcoming paper.

7.9 IJO remarked that the advent of AI had apparently derailed national plans to introduce all-digital exams by 2030.

7.10 DNE highlighted the section of his report that summarised a series of successful aspects of a digital-first school.

7.11 CHO drew attention to the last of these: a digital-first school would be “sustainable – financially, operationally, and educationally”. Any development initiatives would have to be achievable within current constrained finances.

7.12 SJE thanked DNE again for his report and all concerned for their contributions. Governors looked forward to receiving his follow-up report.

8. Receive reports from committees

8.1 School Improvement Committee SHA, who chairs this committee, having given apologies for the meeting of 8 May 2025, SJE had taken the chair. Draft minutes are on GovernorHub. SJE reported that the committee had received reports on a positive Challenge Partners review of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision at the school; on curriculum planning and assessment; on behaviour and attitudes; and on KS5 progress. She herself had reported on a visit to The Bridge and Reset Room, both means to address student behaviour issues.

8.2 Personnel and Development Committee CHO, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 2 May 2025. Draft minutes are on GovernorHub. The committee had spent most of meeting reviewing the 2025-26 budget and three-year outlook. Other items under review had been playground development, fundraising, and a putative risk register. A key risk was difficulty in recruiting a science teacher. Governors **AGREED** to appoint PCL to the committee.

9. Approve governor meeting dates for 2025-26

Governors **AGREED** the schedule of meeting dates for 2025-26. However, MHU to canvas alternative dates for the Pay Committee, and amend timings of meetings of the Premises and Resources Committee (to 8am) and School Improvement Committee (to 4.30pm). Both committees to continue online. SJE reported that MHA had appreciated being consulted on meetings scheduled during Ramadan.

ACTION	Item 9	<i>MHU to canvas alternative dates for 2025 Pay Committee, and amend timings of meetings of the Premises and Resources Committee (to 8am) and School Improvement Committee (to 4.30pm).</i>
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10. Discuss planning for July FGB awayday

SJE proposed moving the final FGB of the school year from 3 July to 10 July 2025, and to hold it at The Mill, beginning at 11am. Governors **AGREED**. She pointed out that, unfortunately, poor digital coverage would mean governors would be unable to join the meeting by video conference. Part of the meeting would consider the strategic direction of the school: she invited governors to propose any ideas for discussion.

ACTION *Item 10* **All governors** to consider proposing any ideas for discussion on agenda of 10 July FGB meeting.

11. Approve policies and other documents

11.1 Privacy Note for Pupils SJE pointed out that this had been reviewed by the previous (2 May 2025) meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee, which had recommended approval to the FGB. Governors **AGREED** the Privacy Note for Pupils. SJE added that DNE had drafted a more pupil-friendly version to supplement the document. It was currently under consideration by Camden.

11.2 Privacy Notice for Staff SJE pointed out that this too had been reviewed by 2 May 2025 meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee, which had recommended approval to the FGB. Governors **AGREED** the Privacy Notice for Staff.

12. Receive updates on training and governor visits to school

SJE had attended Camden Learning training on the Ofsted inspection framework and Department for Education accountability consultation (25 March 2025). MHA had attended Camden Learning training on safeguarding for governors (11 March 2025). HMA said attended twice weekly to lead debating and indoor rowing clubs.

[AWR left meeting with apologies at 6.35pm.]

13. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 20 March 2025 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SJE to sign after the meeting. There no matters arising. All actions had been, or were in the process of being, fulfilled.

14. Any other business

14.1 Y10 work experience HMA noted that the school required Y10 students to undertake two weeks' work experience in the summer term; however, insurance was unavailable for 15-year-olds within a work setting. This was irrelevant for clerical and similar work but problematic in a work environment such as a building site.

14.2 Y11 exams BLA reported that this year's Y11 students were living up to the challenge of GCSE exams as never before. Results were due on 21 August 2025.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 10 July 2025 at 11am¹, at The Mill

(Note change of date, time and venue.)

There being no further business in this part of the meeting, SJE thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting at 6.40pm. BLA and FWI left the meeting at this point. A confidential item followed.

Signed.....

10 July 2025

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

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION **Item 3.7** *IJO to report back on impact of peer mentoring initiative on student attendance.*

ACTION **Item 6.4** *All governors to consider sending in any further comments on latest iteration of three-year strategy.*

ACTION **Item 9** *MHU to canvas alternative dates for 2025 Pay Committee, and amend timings of meetings of the Premises and Resources Committee (to 8am) and School Improvement Committee (to 4.30pm).*

ACTION **Item 10** *All governors to consider proposing any ideas for discussion on agenda of 10 July FGB meeting.*

¹ Subsequently amended to 1.50pm, following various other activities.