

WILLIAM ELLIS SCHOOL



MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY held at the school on Thursday 5 February 2026

MINUTES

GOVERNORS

		Present	
Headteacher	Ms Izzy Jones (IJO)	✓	
	Foundation	Mr Charles Bridge (CBR)	✓
		Mr Paul Clark (PCL)	x
	Mr Sean Harford (SHA)	✓ ¹	
	Ms Baldeep Hothi (BHO)	✓	
	Mrs Sophie Jenkins (SJE) Chair	✓	
	Mr Daniel Needleman (DNE)	✓	
	Mrs Nicola Sinclair (NSI)	✓	
	Ms Selina Skipwith (SSK) Vice chair	✓	
	Mr Ian Stanlake (IST)	✓	
Local authority	Cllr Anna Wright (AWR)	✓	
	Parent	Mr Carlton Hood (CHO)	✓
Staff	VACANCY	N/A	
	Mr Joshua Levitt (JLE)	✓	

ATTENDING

Mr Bernard Lane (BLA) **Deputy head**
Ms Lisa Smith (LSM) **Assistant head**
Ms Flora Wilson (FWI) **Assistant head**
Mr Mike Hutchinson (MHU) **Clerk**

1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest

SJE welcomed all present to this first William Ellis School FGB meeting of 2026, which began at 5.04pm. Apologies were received from, and permission for absence granted to, PCL. 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 the agenda. With the exception of two spreadsheets and a table to inform FWI's report on curriculum planning in the confidential section of the meeting, all papers had been circulated in advance.

¹ By video conference.

2. Receive update from chair

SJE had nothing to report.

3. Receive headteacher's report

3.1 SJE thanked IJO for her report and invited her to introduce it. IJO noted that her report was in two parts: this part, which was not confidential, and a second part, which would follow in the confidential section of the meeting. This part consisted of an updated School Development Plan, and an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of various pastoral structures.

3.2 School Development Plan IJO explained that members of the School Improvement Committee would be familiar with this document, but it was also appropriate that all governors saw it. It consolidated much of the key information from other senior leaders' reports, including those on attendance, teaching and learning outcomes, and students' behaviour and attitudes.

3.2.1 SJE thanked IJO for her introduction and called for comments and questions, to which IJO responded as follows.

3.2.2 SHA asked for the plan to identify precisely which individual senior leader was responsible for achieving each of the plan's objectives, and deadlines for achieving each key performance indicator (KPI).

3.2.3 DNE asked for the less precise KPIs – such as “parents respond positively” and “student voice activities show” – to be measurable.

3.2.4 SHA urged IJO to be more precise about how the school proposed to “strengthen the triage process for resits” [in maths and English].

3.2.5 IJO pointed out that the only amendments to the plan for this meeting had been the addition of a fifth column, updating governors on progress. Ideally the plan should not change mid-year, but she accepted SHA and DNE's suggestions.

ACTION	Item 3.2.5	<i>IJO to amend School Development Plan in line with suggestions from SHA and DNE on more precise metrics.</i>
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3.3 Pastoral structures IJO reminded governors that they had asked her to explore various options for restructuring the school's pastoral provision. This SWOT analysis was the result. Having further considered the options and researched alternatives for pastoral provision in practice, she firmly believed that the school should move to a mixed-age model for Years 7-11 in September 2026, led by three heads of house.

3.3.1 SJE thanked her, and invited questions, which IJO answered as follows.

3.3.2 When presenting to stakeholders, should you emphasise the strengths and opportunities of the chosen model at the expense of threats and weaknesses [AWR]? Yes, this was an exercise in “devil's advocacy”, which is why it was so thorough.

3.3.3 How likely is any resistance from teaching unions which you identify, and how might you manage it [AWR]? It was certainly a risk. Some staff – not necessarily the most junior – feared change. But the school was not in a position not to change. As for managing it, it would be co-constructed with as many staff as possible through consultation. Conducting individual conversations with key staff would be important.

3.3.4 What did you like about the pastoral provision of the school you visited [CHO]?

IJO reminded governors that William Ellis was well regarded for its pastoral care; any change to provision should be presented as positive for September 2026's new Y7. She had visited St John Bosco, a co-educational Roman Catholic secondary school and sixth form in Battersea. It had moved to mixed-age tutoring ten years ago.

3.3.5 The highlight of her visit had been witnessing three Y11 boys delivering what was effectively a supervised personal, social and health education (PSHE) session on how to end a relationship, to a co-educational group of Years 8, 9 and 10 students.

3.3.6 It had been extraordinarily powerful. It was clear that tutor time led by older students – supervised by a tutor on the sidelines – was the norm. Additionally, close communications between the three houses was recommended. Advice was also not to overthink the move: provision would evolve as it improved through feedback.

3.3.7 One final thing to note was that, in her visit of less than four hours, the whole school had convened for prayer three times. As a non-faith school, William Ellis's situation was clearly different, but there was something to learn from this about a community cohering around common values, even if not through a prism of faith.

3.4 SJE thanked IJO again for her report, and all concerned for their contributions.

4. Receive report on attendance

4.1 SJE thanked LSM for her report on student attendance and invited her to introduce it, which she did as follows.

4.2 First, although student attendance usually fell from December to February, it had remained at 91 per cent. A key focus during this period had been on resilience: students were gently encouraged to attend even if they felt poorly.

[BLA joined the meeting with apologies at 5.25pm.]

4.3 Second, persistent absence – attendance of 90 per cent or less – had risen but severe absence (attendance of 50 per cent or less) had fallen, partly because some severely absent students had now left the school.

4.4 Third, the highest proportion of authorised absence remained due to sickness. The school questioned parents, but the Department for Education (DfE) was clear that a parent who maintained that their child was sick could not be challenged.

4.5 However, the school could identify patterns, such as consistent weekdays of absence. Camden was starting to address borough-wide sick rates. LSM would be exploring how William Ellis's new school nurse could help consistently unwell students.

4.6 Fourth was a drive to developing a whole-school approach to encouraging attendance – rather than penalising absence – through building students' sense of belonging. All staff were encouraged to have attendance – not absence – at the front of their minds. That meant championing resilient attenders and exploring why students enjoyed school and did attend, rather than why they didn't. The Birkbeck and William Ellis Schools Trust was funding research into this, with a questionnaire.

4.7 SJE thanked LSM and noted a comment from PCL, in his absence, that with fewer than 100 students in a year group, a single student disproportionately affected percentage attendance. The effect could be positive, as well as negative. She called for comments and questions, to which LSM responded as follows.

4.8 Could students citing illness be responsible for ill younger siblings, rather than ill themselves [IST]? There was not enough information here. Officially, no student carers attended William Ellis, but a small cohort did appear to be carers, usually for parents. SJE found it implausible that Camden had the sickest children in London.

4.9 AWR pointed out that some children didn't identify themselves as carers. Camden was prioritising proactively identifying student carers, in order to support them: this often raised their attendance rates. Regular absence could mean that a student was attending appointments, perhaps as an interpreter.

4.10 Is the Y9 experiment in "active registrations" – combining morning registration with PE and sports sessions – bearing fruit [SJE]? JLE, as head of PE, replied that, since the initiative had been introduced, students had queued up to register. Y9 attendance had risen by 2 per cent. LSM added that activities could include board games or Lego. SHA thought that mixed-age pastoral provision would help here.

4.11 If the school cannot question a parent's decision that their child is too ill to attend school, could it at least provide work to do, to ensure that the child doesn't slip behind and become less and less likely to attend as a result [SHA]? LSM replied that work posted online was homework or independent work, not classwork. Post-Covid, if classwork was offered for completion at home, students might ask whether they really needed to attend school. It was problematic.

4.12 IJO added that a head of year could broker coursework at home for a student off school with – for instance – a broken leg. At KS4, in any case, many resources were online. But generally, provision could be a perverse incentive. In many cases, if she turned down a request for extended absence, parents would ask if coursework could be completed online. The potential for online provision prompted the request.

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

5. Receive report on safeguarding

5.1 SJE thanked LSM for her report on student safeguarding and invited her to introduce it, which she did as follows.

5.2 First, the school's safeguarding profile was increasing, with 76 students on the safeguarding list in September 2025, and 98 in December 2025: there were 110 now.

5.3 Of particular concern was the increase in referrals to the local multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), where professionals from agencies like police, health, education, and social care worked together to identify risks to children.

5.4 These had increased from seven in the whole of the last school year, to eight within just five months of the current school year. William Ellis could demonstrate a good safeguarding culture but this piled pressure on the safeguarding team.

5.5 Second, concerns about potential child criminal exploitation were increasing. Since September 2025, the school had become aware of two cases of child criminal exploitation of William Ellis boys. Neither currently attended the school. One of these cases had involved LSM in three days of supportive work.

5.6 SJE thanked LSM for her introduction and called for questions, which LSM and IJO answered as follows.

5.7 Why is criminal grooming increasing [DNE]? Recognised gangs in Camden had increased from nine to 12, with increased gang activity. Like a business, as gangs grew they needed to recruit. Activity had traditionally been centred on the south of Camden. It had now spread north. Complex in-year admissions could increase the probability of boys, who may have links to gangs or gang culture, joining a school.

5.8 Can William Ellis insist on a briefing from a student's previous school before accepting an in-year admission [SSK]? If the other school subscribed to the online safeguarding reporting system CPOMS, a student's file transferred automatically when they were accepted on roll. If not, William Ellis relied on what the school had recorded on paper. IJO could ask another school why a student was moving, but could not refuse or delay transfer. A phone call was often productive. As long as William Ellis continued to be undersubscribed, it had to accept in-year admissions.

5.9 Could mixed-age tutoring be a risk here [NSI]? It would be naïve to think that this was not a potential problem but mixing of ages was an issue already. Students of every year already mingled. They could not be kept separate in breaks, or in the corridors. Crafting mixed groups in a supervised environment could reduce risk. Staff were trained to spot issues. Students could also be moved across the 21 tutor groups.

5.10 Could there be gang rivalry within school [JLE]? With just two or three boys in contact with gangs peripherally, no. Children tended to go to school locally, so containing potential clashes. However, two boys had cried off a recent Y11 trip to Kings Cross. Gang-related fears could also be a barrier to work experience.

5.11 How strong are the school's relations with the local police [SJE]? They were very weak. The police tended to focus on schools where there was potential trouble. William Ellis's contact with the police was negligible, until there was a crisis.

5.12 Does suspending a student constitute a safeguarding risk [AWR]? Students were rarely suspended during the day, as the school knew that parents would not have planned for it; they were always informed in advance. Students were sometimes suspended within school if there were safeguarding issues, or a known lack of supervision, at home. Those most at risk received a daily mentoring check.

5.13 Could Camden schools collaborate on suspensions [AWR]? No, because staff needed to know the students concerned.

5.14 IST reminded governors to update their safeguarding training, if they had not done so already, by the start of next half term, 23 February 2026 (see item 10).

5.15 LSM, who is also senior leader for personal development, added that she would send a list of personal development initiatives to MHU for forwarding to governors.

ACTION *Item 5.15* **LSM** to send list of personal development initiatives to MHU; **MHU** to forward to governors.

[LSM left the meeting at 6.08pm.]

6. Receive reports from committees

6.1 School Improvement Committee SHA, who chairs this committee, reported that it had met on 29 January 2026. [Draft minutes are on GovernorHub](#). The committee had received training on interrogating school performance data from the school's new Camden professional partner, Beth Kobel, as well as reports on Y13 provision, Y11 mock exams, and student behaviour and attitudes.

6.2 Personnel and Resources Committee IST, who chairs this committee, reported that it had also met on 29 January 2026. [Draft minutes are on GovernorHub](#). The school's finances were broadly in line with the previously-approved budget. Camden would shortly conduct an internal audit for the first time in ten years. Much maintenance work had been undertaken. The committee had also received an update on current infrastructure initiatives, and approved a number of policies.

7. Approve Schools Financial Value Standard

SJE reminded governors that the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) was a means, completed annually, by which they could assure themselves of the school's financial probity and practice, and that they themselves were effectively scrutinising these. It had been reviewed at the previous (29 January 2026) meeting of the Personnel and Resources Committee. Governors **AGREED** the SFVS as circulated.

8. Receive updates on governor training and visits to school

SSK, who represents the governors on the William Ellis Trust, reported that trustees had held a three-hour strategy meeting, including interviews with Y9 and Y10 students, who were generally positive about the school and their community connections. CBR had visited the school as governor with responsibility for literacy. SJE and SSK had attended a meeting of the Admissions Committee. SJE had also met with Will Durham, director of the William Ellis Trust, and attended Camden Learning's termly update for governors as well as its AGM, at which IJO had been announced as a new director of the organisation. She encouraged governors who visited the school to complete a report on their findings, and added that she would invite all governors to be involved in two forthcoming events to support students in their post-KS4 futures.

ACTION	Item 8	All governors who have visited the school to complete reports on their findings; SJE to invite all governors to be involved in forthcoming Y10 mock job interviews and Y11 careers carousel event.
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9. Review CEIAG² Provider Access Policy

This policy to be reviewed at next (12 March 2026) School Improvement Committee.

ACTION	Item 9	MHU to schedule review of CEIAG Provider Access Policy on agenda of next (12 March 2026) School Improvement Committee meeting.
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10. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes of the meeting of 4 December 2025 were **AGREED** as a full and accurate record; SJE to sign after the meeting. One matter arose: MHU to forward link to safeguarding training on GovernorHub, the governors' online advice and document library. PCL, SHA, CHO, JLE, DNE, SSK and AWR to undertake by the start of next half term, 23 February 2026. (CBR and BHO are to attend a Camden Learning safeguarding course for new governors.) All other actions had been fulfilled.

ACTION	Item 10	MHU to forward link to GovernorHub safeguarding training; PCL, SHA, CHO, JLE, DNE, SSK and AWR to undertake this training by 23 February 2026.
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² Careers education, information, advice and guidance.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

Next scheduled meeting: Thursday 19 March 2026 at 5pm

There being no further business in this part of the meeting, SJE thanked all present for attending and closed this part of the meeting at 6.19pm. All present remained. Confidential items followed.

Signed.....

19 March 2026

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

ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES

ACTION *Item 3.2.5* *IJO to amend School Development Plan in line with suggestions from SHA and DNE on more precise metrics.*

ACTION *Item 8* *All governors who have visited the school to complete reports on their findings; SJE to invite all governors to be involved in forthcoming Y10 mock job interviews and Y11 careers carousel event.*

ACTION *Item 9* *MHU to schedule review of CEIAG Provider Access Policy on agenda of next (12 March 2026) School Improvement Committee meeting.*

ACTION *Item 10* *MHU to forward link to GovernorHub safeguarding training; PCL, SHA, CHO, JLE, DNE, SSK and AWR to undertake this training by 23 February 2026.*