



**Minutes of the Full Governing Board Meeting for Pulford Lower School, held on 21st May 2025
6pm, school hall**

1.	Registration, Apologies and Prayer	Action
	<p>Present: Rev D Heather (DH), Mr E Price (EP - Chair), Mr A Perrott (AP), Mrs B Morley (BM), Mrs T Rees (TR), Ms J Bradley (JB), Mr B Webb (BW), Mrs S Haines (SH), Mrs R Horsfield (RH) Mrs J Gudgeon (Clerk)</p> <p>Apologies: Ms A Parish, Mr G Huskisson, Mr S King, Preb. David MacGeoch</p> <p>DM opened the meeting in prayer.</p>	
2.	Declaration of Pecuniary Interests	
	No new pecuniary interests were declared.	
3.	Matters arising from the last meeting's minutes	
	<p>BM noted that she hasn't circulated headlines from the Wellbeing training she attended. EP highlighted the folder on the governors drive for training slides and suggested they be added there, together with any other slides governors feel would be useful to share after training courses.</p> <p>JB queried whether the noticeboard by the reception entrance is still going ahead. DH has queried with the builders who were struggling to find the right board. He will follow this up.</p> <p>JB also queried whether SK has reached out to other SEN governors, but as he was absent, he was unable to advise.</p> <p>EP ran through some action points from last meeting:</p> <p>The note to parents from the governors in appreciation of improved communications hasn't been sent, EP will send one out in the coming half term. DH confirmed that the general standard of communication received from parents is still much better than it was, so the letter would be a good reminder.</p> <p>EP has looked into associate governors and will address this more later in the meeting.</p> <p>Wellbeing is an ongoing consideration. The fundraising concert for musical instruments was successful, raising over £1,000. New musical instruments to support the new musica scheme have been bought and are being well used. EP noted his huge appreciation to the PTA for supporting the event, both in terms of fundraising and creating a hugely enjoyable and supportive atmosphere. The staff wellbeing day has happened and will be covered in more details within the SIP review.</p> <p>The headteacher mid-year review has taken place, and it was reassuring to note that the wellbeing discussions were a driving force for the new expansion plan. It is encouraging to see positive action arising from the SIP.</p> <p>The safeguarding audit team revisited the school at the beginning of April. The majority of the action plan from the original meeting has been completed, some items are ongoing. No formal feedback has been received but the auditors seemed happy with the progress made.</p> <p>The change to the method for reviewing policies is going to be embedded in the new school year.</p> <p>EP has sent a letter to the local MP, and in response received specific questions which he has answered. He has delayed approaching other headteachers for support until the conversation has progressed and there is a specific goal or action plan to ask for their support with.</p>	<p align="center">DH</p> <p align="center">EP</p>

	No offers for help with the school website have been received and EP asked parent governors to ask in Whatsapp groups if they haven't already. If anyone is able to help there is potential for them to become an Associate governor.	
4.	Agree and sign last meeting's minutes	
	The board agreed that the minutes were a true reflection of the previous meeting. EP signed the hard copy of the minutes and DH will file accordingly.	DH
5.	Chairs Report	
	<p>EP confirmed no emergency action has been undertaken since the last meeting.</p> <p>He asked governors to try and fit in a subject link visit in the last half term of this school year if they are due one. He appreciated those that have been done.</p> <p>EP also returned thanks for the uptake on governor training in the past year and BW confirmed that the budget for 2025/26 has included the same package so governors can continue to take as many training opportunities as they wish. EP will share the training schedule when it is published by Central Beds.</p>	
6.	Headteachers Report	
	<p>The required data has been circulated to governors prior to the meeting, but a key point to note is that the pupil attendance is now extremely high in comparison to the national average. Pulford attendance is the second highest in Central Beds.</p> <p>DH acknowledged the stable and extremely professional staff team at the school, who are a pleasure to work with and a credit to the school.</p> <p>No exclusions have been made; none have been required in 17 years. DH noted the issues commonly faced by other schools, in which exclusions are often tied up with complex needs. In such circumstances it is often the only way to get these children the help or support they need. It has a significant impact on the child, who are often already vulnerable, and is the peak of a broken system that is in desperate need of overhaul nationally. Children in need of 1:1 support also have a financial implication on schools already struggling with low budget, and in many cases these children are in mainstream schools but would be better off in a different setting. The problem lies with accessing these settings and getting an appropriate place for the child.</p> <p>Mrs Marchant is retiring after many years working as a TA in foundation stage. Due to a number of higher needs children leaving with the year 4 cohort there are sufficient TAs to fill the position without external recruitment.</p> <p>With BW's retirement in summer and DH subsequently taking on his workload, Miss Lunt is going to be taking on DH's teaching commitments.</p> <p>Concern was raised with how DH assuming BW's role will work strategically – some of the financial tasks are currently prepared by BW and reviewed by DH in line with the finance manual. It will be necessary to ensure this is updated and an appropriate system is in place.</p>	
7.	School Improvement Plan	
	<p>1. Staff Wellbeing and Mental Health. Following the training undertaken by DH and Alison Quick the staff wellbeing day was delivered in April. Almost all of the staff team attended and feedback was positive, but it remains a difficult landscape with all the pressures on staff. EP also received positive feedback but DH is ever conscious that, while such days are a positive step, there are underlying battles beyond the school's control which they need to keep in mind. DH and EP noted that staff mental health was one of the catalysts for the expansion plan – trying to find a way to improve staff workload.</p> <p>Alison has also joined a mental health steering group in the town run by Lighthouse.</p> <p>2. The new writing scheme has been in place since January for key stage 1 and 2. It is a bought scheme which helps with staff workload and from September will be introducing mixed age planning which will be even more helpful for staff. They are also introducing planning for early years, which will help provide consistency and clear progression through the school.</p>	

	<p>As part of this new scheme, children in KS2 have been given greater ownership of their writing – allowing them more open choice in what to write to encourage enthusiasm. The official data still reports a weakness in writing but the progress is shown in their books and is building a solid foundation which should be reflected in improved grades in due course. It is a long-term project.</p> <p>3. Good progress has been made with reading. An increased amount of time is being spent with children doing guided reading. ‘Unlocking letters and sounds’ has been signposted to staff and training has been undertaken. From September guided reading will be timetabled to ensure sufficient time is dedicated to this. Other suggestions are being worked into lessons, for example writing comprehension questions on the board for children to read themselves rather than reading them out to the class.</p> <p>The cost of these schemes includes an annual fee which has been worked into the budget. In the first year there have been some free training courses offered but it is likely that any additional training will need to be paid for going forward.</p> <p>4. The new music scheme is now embedded and provides a much more detailed and enriching experience. It includes the use of a lot more technical terms, which was a point highlighted by OFSTED at their last visit. The lesson content provided by the scheme is ambitious, and Alison Quick has been helping. The new scheme has brought music lessons more in line with the school’s culture of putting emphasis on music and singing.</p> <p>Overall, all 4 items on the SIP have had a positive impact this year. The way the SIP is generated has evolved, and is now the product of multiple discussions to establish shared priorities. The result is a more impactful and relevant plan.</p>	
8.	Safeguarding Report	
	DM was absent so unable to provide a safeguarding update at the meeting. The recent audit has already been discussed so EP will follow up with DM.	
9.	Committee & Subject Link Updates	
	<p><u>Resources Committee</u></p> <p>APe reported that the 2024/25 end of year position of a small surplus was pleasing but that the budget for 2025/26 continues to be tight and difficult to manage. As always, some items are estimated based on current known information and it is subject to change as the year passes, but the current forecast is a small deficit. The budget was recommended to the board and approved.</p> <p><u>Curriculums & Standards Committee</u></p> <p>BM reported on the key headlines from the C&S meeting: years 1 & 2 are nearing their achievement targets. Year 3 are struggling with numeracy; this seems to be a cohort-based difficulty but it is being focussed on and staff are working hard with pupils to improve this. A success to note is the year 4s, who historically have struggled to meet their targets but have closed the gap this year – credit to staff for all the hard work.</p> <p>Middle leaders had no headlines to add following their most recent review meeting. There are lots of borderline children so it is hard to predict how the year will end, but staff are optimistic and there is a lot of positivity.</p> <p>There will be a data presentation workshop on 2nd September to review how data is assessed and presented. A key aim is to find a way to show progression more effectively.</p> <p>TR confirmed following the query at the C&S meeting that the preschool home school communications books have been phased out.</p> <p>JB noted that the Brooklands art exhibition falls on the same evening as the SEN parents evening. Governors were encouraged to attend and support the event.</p>	
10.	School Expansion Plan	
	DH met with trustees of the Pulford Trust to make the proposal for the school expansion plan. The key costs are building two new classrooms and extending the Oak classroom into what is currently the staffroom. The initial estimate of £750,000 has been closely reviewed following	

	<p>some downward pressure from the trust and with some adjustments the cost is now estimated at around £600,000. The next step is an initial visit from Central Beds to confirm feasibility. This is currently scheduled to take place on 16th June. Ideally their response would be fed back to the trustees as soon as possible but the trustees' next meeting is 17th June so it would be a very tight turnaround.</p> <p>DH reiterated that the whole initiative has been driven by discussions with staff and ever-increasing financial pressure. The current model is good and working well, but is not economically efficient and the change to single year classes would reduce staff workload.</p> <p>The board showed their support for the plan.</p> <p>The plan is for the additional intake in year R to start from September 2026, and DH would need to inform the LA of the increased Published Admissions Number in the Autumn.</p>	
11.	SEND Review	
	<p>No additional comments were made on the SEN Report circulated prior to the meeting. One SEN child previously thought to be continuing at Pulford under an ARP has now moved elsewhere. TR has met the SENCo at their new setting and they are settling in well.</p> <p>JB queried whether SK is having 1:1 meetings with parents but he was absent so unable to confirm.</p> <p>TR clarified that a 'monitored' child referred to in the SEN report is a child who is being observed to assess whether there is a SEN requirement.</p> <p>Bex Howe is going to be doing a SEN review, with an emphasis on the identification of SEN. The review will be undertaken through learning walks, observation and reviewing paperwork. It was queried whether SK will approach parents for additional feedback, particularly on an informal basis, as this can prove more informative. It was appreciated, however, that it is a difficult balance to maintain between having informal conversations and ensuring any complaints are made through official channels.</p> <p>Bex Howe will hold a 90 minute feedback session for the board and EP will create a poll to ascertain the best date for this. EP will ask if Bex is happy for it to be recorded for any that are unable to make it.</p>	EP
12.	Online Communications Update	
	<p>DH met with a fellow headteacher regarding the use of Class Dojo as a home school communications app. In practise it is used in different ways by different teachers, and his concern is that in order for it to be successful it needs to have a universal buy in and agreed way of operating.</p> <p>At present a number of different school systems are being moved online, including safeguarding, SEN systems and a new Management Information System. Some of these systems already offer parent communications as part of the package, so before introducing another app DH will implement these and look to see where gaps arise. He is keen to ensure staff aren't asked to use multiple different apps unless absolutely necessary.</p>	
13.	Board Self Evaluation	
	<p>BM queried when it is next appropriate to conduct a Chair 360 review. It is a year since the last time so it seems an appropriate time for this.</p> <p>EP ran through the board self-evaluation responses, which were circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture: received a good response • Leadership: the board didn't necessarily agree that there are multiple candidates at leadership elections, but the invitation is always open and other candidates are always welcomed. • Professional: the board will support the clerk with additional training • Skills audit: this will take place next term 	BM

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment: governor recruitment is limited by the foundation nature of the board. If gaps are identified in the skills audit, it may be a good opportunity to start looking further into the option of associate governors. • Collaboration: EP would like to make increased collaboration a strategic plan. He highlighted that this is a perk of taking part in training sessions – to meet and make a connection with other governors. • Board size: received a good response. • Delegation: this received a good response and EP thanked those on the committees for facilitating this. • Strategic: will be covered shortly • Employer responsibility: staff wellbeing is contained within the SIP and has been a focus point this year, but there is always more that can be done. • Accountability: link governor roles and ‘I’ve been and I’ve seen’ are key for this. There could be potential for more training to be undertaken to ensure full accountability in all areas. • Chairs Effectiveness: this will be included within the 360 review. • Impact: it is always good to aim for more, and have conversations about how this can be achieved. The budget focus, however, is beyond the control of the board. <p>EP queried how often it would be appropriate to revisit the self-evaluation and governors agreed that every other year would be an appropriate timeline.</p> <p>Bex Howe has agreed to provide training for the board, focussing on Vision, Risk and Strategic Priorities</p> <p>EP queried whether it would be possible to get everyone together for a full day, or whether three evenings spread over a term would be more feasible. There was interest in doing a full day but it would be difficult to achieve. It is likely to take place in the Autumn and would be tailored to the specific needs of the board.</p> <p>With the financial pressures the school is facing EP proposed that he wouldn’t ask the school to fund the training, and asked if governors would be willing to contribute. He is willing to cover the cost, if necessary, but the general response was that governors are willing to spread the cost/offer contributions as able.</p> <p>TR mentioned that in past experience she has found multiple shorter sessions beneficial, as it gives the opportunity to go away and discuss what has been said, sometimes complete ‘homework’ and come back with questions.</p> <p>The board agreed to the training in principle, and EP will look into possible dates in due course.</p>	
14.	Policy Reviews	
	<p><u>ECT</u></p> <p>There has been very little change to this policy but it will be used this year for the first time in several years. It is based on a Local authority policy.</p> <p>Point 4.1 regarding the Governing Board’s responsibility was flagged and queried whether the board are happy with this. EP will follow up.</p> <p>The policy was approved.</p> <p><u>School Visits</u></p> <p>The governor responsibility was again queried, and whether it would be sensible for the governing board to do spot checks, or whether this comes under the remit of the Health & Safety or safeguarding governors. NK agreed to do an end of year review.</p>	<p>EP</p> <p>NK</p>

	The policy was approved.	
15.	AOB	
	<p>EP announced that there will be an extraordinary board meeting on Tuesday 8th July at 6pm in the school hall to discuss strategic plans.</p> <p>EP acknowledged that this is BW's last governing board meeting. He thanked him for all the work he has done and his contribution to the board.</p>	
16.	<p>Meeting Dates for Next Academic Year</p> <p>Resources – 24/09/25, 14/01/26, 29/04/26</p> <p>Curriculum & Standards – 07/10/25, 20/01/26, 06/05/26</p> <p>FGB – 22/10/25, 11/02/26, 20/05/26</p> <p>All meetings start at 6.00pm.</p>	
17.	DH led the Grace to close the meeting	