



West Hill Primary School
(a partner in the SMILE Learning Trust)
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Headteacher: Cheryl Boulton



Minutes – Full Governing Board

8th November 2023

Attending				Declaration of pecuniary interest	Office Terminates
CB	Cheryl Boulton	Headteacher	Y	Nothing to declare	
EF	Elaine Fanson (Via TEAMS)	Staff	Y	Nothing to declare	02.09.2027
MC	Matt Carpenter	Parent	N		17.04.2027
SM	Steve Meredith	Parent	Y	Nothing to declare	07.09.2025
LH	Lisa Heard	LA	N		07.12.2025
LJ	Lee Jordan	Foundation	N		27.09.2026
BM	Bob Maskell	Foundation	Y	Nothing to declare	01.02.2026
GH	Graham Harry	Co-opted	N		02.02.2025
LS	Lucy Samson	Co-opted	N		07.01.2024
SL	Sara Lees	Co-opted	Y	Nothing to declare	08.11.2026
	VACANCY	Co-opted			
Others					
BD	Bec Davey	Clerk	Y	Nothing to declare	
CW	Charles Woodland	DCC Finance	Y		

All governors have agreed to abide by the Code of Practice as approved by the FGB and understand the level of confidentiality required for the meeting.

Question Action/Decision

ITEM	
2223.139	Apologies: LH, GH, MC, LS, LJ. Approved. SM chaired in the absence of GH & LJ.
2223.140	Declaration of Interests: None declared.
2223.141	Confirmation of Minutes of 27.09.2023 (Part I): With the correction of a couple of typos, the minutes were agreed as a true record and will be signed electronically by the chair.
2223.142	Matters arising from minutes: No matters arising – all complete.
2223.143	Financial Monitoring: <i>This section of the meeting was recorded to allow those governors who were unable to attend to listen. Once the minutes are agreed, the recording will be deleted.</i> a Finance/Budget update from DCC: Charles Woodland came to the school to review the budget with LD and consider future trends. Governors can see a healthy trend and a reasonable carry forward but when looking at the extra staffing and the impact this has on the budget, the carry forward is quickly spent. Everything CW is aware of has been added, both income & expenditure. The amount of funding received from DCC by central Government has reduced by £5m due to a spreadsheet error made by DfE. LD has included priorities governors wanted to address in this year's budget. The teachers' pay award is 6.5% not the 3% budgeted for but even with the grant the Government give towards this pay award, the school will spend the carry forward quickly. If this carries on, the school will not be able to afford the high-quality teaching staff it currently has

at West Hill. Each year, the school is spending more than is coming in. Pupil numbers have remained fairly static, but they are seven down from last year (Class 1) so we have been partially shielded by the demographic changes with the funding, but the DfE and ONS etc are expecting the primary population to decline until at least 2032. A discussion has been had with the Local Learning Community regarding numbers who can see projected numbers and how they are going down – full cohorts are not being expected as the birth rate is reducing and the 30 currently expected are not going to keep happening. Some schools are going over PAN (Published Admission Number) on KS2 to bring back some of the funding. Every pupil is £3.5k per child (£4.4k inc. extras) so having seven less children means the school receives £30k less which will continue for seven years as they go through the school. When considering inflation, pay rises etc, whilst these are factored in to budget predictions, each TA now costs around £20k which, even when you allow for EHCP funding, means the school needs to find a minimum of £10k - £12k out of their budget. Suppliers are increasing their costs as are services and insurance which the school does not have control over. The in-year overspend is going to use up the reserves very quickly and within 18 months the school could be looking at the difficult position of losing valued members of the team. CB commented that the situation is clear on the budget dashboard. The top line expenditure is going up but the income line is not increasing in line with it so the gap is increasing. CW agrees. Colleagues who put the budgets together based on the DfE announcement expected a 6.2% rise for 2024/25 but this has turned out to be 1.97% due to the DfE error. The DfE strategy advises schools to look at a 2.5% rise in 2025/26 and 2026/27. The Government states they are putting in record amounts of funding into education, which they are at the top-level funding but when this translates to Devon levels, following the national funding formula, Devon schools do not get the funding needed for the expected expenditure and unless the Government puts more in, the Devon schools do not even meet the national funding formula amounts. We have already looked at where savings can potentially be made but the building is getting to the point where investment is needed to keep the learning environment at the standard the school wants. SM (Premises lead governor) agrees. These costs will have to be funded out of the revenue budget which will not see great increases in income. CB asked CW to confirm if the 6.5% teacher pay award was fully funded by the government. CW advised only part of it is covered by a government grant because the government said that schools should have allowed for a certain % increase anyway. DCC had allowed broadly the correct amount for M1 – M4 and allowed 3% for above M4. Schools are getting a grant of £8490 using a formula and the school are expected to put 3%. When DfE do a national level calculation, this is skewed. WHPS wants to deliver high quality teaching. DfE considers WHPS a small school. The funding the school will receive will not go up enough, the school will have to make hard decisions on what to spend the resources in. The in-year deficit is £100k. SM wondered if there was a process where exceptions could be made for schools who can demonstrate that fiscal controls have been in place for many years and where the increase in costs is out of the school's control. CW confirmed there is not. The Scheme of delegation states the governors are responsible for the money coming in and how it is spent in line with recommendations from the leadership within the school. Any wriggle room DCC had to tweak the formula has long gone. The government now has a national funding formula which removed DCC's ability to move any funding around. Now it is a dedicated school's grant which has to be spent in line with an agreed formula. The difficulty DCC has is that there's not enough funds being received to agree with the national funding formula figures. Within the DfE requirements, DCC have to mirror the national funding formula within 2.5% so they cannot target funds at different schools. The first test they do is look at in-year surplus/deficit and with WHPS spending £100K more than they receive each year means the school have too much on staff. DCC would then suggest the school completes an Integrated Curriculum Financial Plan based on DfE metrics which would show that the school has the right number of teachers for the size of the school, so the school needs to consider how the remaining funds are being spent, which is currently being spent on TAs. The school is currently using reserves to fund these activities but by continuing to do so, it will use them quickly and by 2025/26, the school will be £127k overspent and will have no reserves left. CW stated that the governors are correct to challenge the surplus but additional funding is rarely given now and the additional expenditure cannot continue. By 15.12.23, DCC needs to submit a request for safety

valve money from DfE as the high needs funding block is predicted to be £162m deficit accumulatively by the end of 2023/24. DCC need to consider how changes can be made to the high needs block spending when the needs are still there. The DfE does not believe that if the deficit is written off that DCC will not be back in the same position in around two years' time. CB commented that the school has noticed over the last few years, the increase in SEND children and the teachers and parents are demanding/expecting 1:1 TA support. This has a knock-on effect for the seven years the child attends the school. Schools cannot keep adding extra bodies, they simply cannot afford it. It is very challenging – what can be cut to afford an extra person. **Governors questioned if some schools are cutting out the 'niceties' like forest school.** CW explained that forest schools are often an essential part of the school for the curriculum. Schools are trying to use funds in inventive ways. **Governors wondered if there are any ideas/suggestions that schools could share with each other.** CW mentioned how one school is training their MTAs to hold lunchtime sporting groups to use the sports grant. The trouble is, it is not 'one size fits all', each school is unique. WHPS do not get the extra funding with PP etc but it does have a static set of pupil numbers so it cannot reduce the number of classes. It needs seven classes which means seven teachers and 0.7 PPA etc. A lot of schools the size of WHPS look at the leadership of the school as funding does not allow for them to deliver the leadership that they want. How can targets be set when not allowing time to complete the work. LD has looked at the non-staffing budget to see what can be reduced. LD has been chipping away and there is not much left to remove. **CB asked how soon do the figures need to be considered.** CW advised that governors need to look at what the priorities should be going forward from the next academic year onwards. If there is staff turnover this can be considered. WHPS does have time, but it needs to be mindful and strategic. Priorities and curriculum have already been set for the rest of this school year but the sooner changes are made, the better. If WHPS waits until the third year, there will no longer be TAs. Perhaps consider a pool of staff supporting different classrooms rather than having one per child. Need to try to protect the staffing group, need to use this time to draw up a list of the key priorities – what could be done differently. It needs to be done in incremental steps. Other schools are allowing more children in the higher KS2 groups. CB explained that this was done previously at WHPS but the PAN was reduced again because with Fair Access becoming a possibility, there was simply not the room in the classrooms. **Governors questioned what are the rules on using PTFA funds.** CB explained that PTFA funds cannot be included in the budget as it is not official funding and the amount is never known. CW added that the school does not want the PTFA to fund operational costs. They are there to support the school on items that the school cannot afford. **Governors wondered if they used PTFA funds to buy curriculum resources, would this not free up some funds for staffing costs.** CW advised that the school cannot expect the PTFA to keep funding this year on year. It also would take away the choice of funding extras. The school cannot be reliant upon it. CW is back at the school on 07.12.23 am. CW left 7:22pm. *The recording ended at this point.* **Clerk to send recording to those governors not present. Any questions to email LH so can ask CW on 7.12.23.** **Governors believe the error by DfE is inexcusable.** Need to start to make contingency plans now. **Governors wondered if there were other avenues of funding available.** CB explained that other grants have been applied for in the past but the school does not fit the requirements due to low FSM, PP etc pupils. **Governors questioned how much extra funding is needed.** CB advised that it is not a set annual amount, the year-on-year deficit is £127k for next year and will continue to have an accumulative impact. The budget is from April so it has already started at the start of the school year in April. It is harder to change a contract mid-year, although looking at options is possible. A finance crisis meeting is needed. **Governors wondered if, when a TA leaves, could the school have a student teacher instead.** CB agreed it meant another adult in the room but the school only receives £600 but you cannot guarantee how effective they will be. **It was agreed that the finance committee will meet to discuss different scenarios, preferably before CW attends the school – include LD & CB.**

b Health & Safety/Premises update: No update.

c Spending/Project Approvals & update: No projects for approval.

2223.144	a Policies, Statements & Provisions for review: SEND Policy: This policy is still being reviewed by the SENDCo. This will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Lead before coming to the FGB. Finance Policy: This is a DCC model policy which requires the school to personalise the appendices. Governors agreed to add a caveat relating to the number of quotes required. Policy approved. Teachers Pay Policy: Policy approved. Clerk to send to P&P committee. b Policies that have been approved by Lead Governors/Headteacher (For information only): Exit Interview Policy: This has been reviewed by the Personnel Lead Governor (MC). There have been no changes since 2006. Policy approved. Prior to the meeting MC commented that the policy states that "The information gathered will be analysed by the Headteacher to identify areas or determine trends and report results to the Governing Body." and questioned if this is happening and if there are any trends picked up in the most recent departures. CB advised that no staff member has left in the last twelve months but those who have previously left have done so for different reasons, there is no trend. Exit interviews are available for governors to view should they wish. Clerk to send LD copies of the approved policies.
2223.145	a Admissions requests update: SM advised there had been five requests, all of which were denied as they were for classes which are full. The recent appeal was approved by the appeal panel. CB tried to appeal this but Andrew Brent (DCC) has advised that there is nothing that can be appealed; the only part that can be appealed is the process and as this was followed correctly, this is not possible. CB also contacted the Health & Safety officer who advised that due to the number of fire exits (there are two), the width of the fire doors, how many people are in the class and the total sq m footage, the room is acceptable. 1 sq m per person, the classroom is 48sq m so 34 people is ok. Governors want assurance that if anything occurs, it is acknowledged that they have tried everything they can. All classrooms have two fire exits. Clerk to check whether GH has written the letter. b Verbal HT report including Health & Wellbeing of staff and pupils: CB confirmed that the teachers' appraisals have been completed and those who were eligible and wanted to apply for UPS have done so. The support staff pay award has been agreed. The parents evening has taken place; no-one requested to speak with governors. The school has had their Harvest Festival. CB has begun EYFS tours ready for children starting school in September 2024. CB is doing five tours. Ten families attended the first one, fifteen the second. There are three more tours to go. Applications for starting primary school in September 2024 open on 15 November 2023 and close on 15 January 2024. Governors asked if CB believes the school will be oversubscribed. CB thinks it may be. c Governor Strategic Plan (GSP): This item was deferred as there was not enough governors at the meeting to discuss it. It is a basic document and it needs to be expanded. It was agreed that it be looked at one section at a time. Clerk to highlight this to governors. d School Development Plan (SDP) 2023/24: CB & RP have met with JS (DES) to discuss data and relevant targets including Phonics, Wellbeing, Attitudes. Governors commented that the plan is for 23/24 and asked why is there a section on impacts for 22/23. CB advised that this has been added as the new targets are similar to last year's targets and they wanted to highlighted what had been done. They will carry on with the progress. Governors agreed that the GSP helps keep an eye on SDP. e Parental Questionnaire and Feedback: The link to the MS Form had been shared to the governors prior to the meeting. It was recommended that this be sent to parents towards the end of January. BM will prepare the section at the start of the questionnaire/email to go out. Add to next agenda f SOAP (School On A Page): This was circulated to all governors prior to the meeting. It now only has Devon data not national. Small cohorts can affect the results. KS1 Phonics has dropped to Q4 which is not a good result. KS1 & KS2 are Q1 for all of the main sections which means they are in the top 20% in Devon in all SATS data. Governors questioned if there was any extra funding given for any areas where the pupils are in Q5. CB advised there was not. Governors asked how often the SOAP was collated. CB confirmed it was once per year.

2223.146	Safeguarding and Child Protection: Safeguarding Update: CB advised governors that when the next data report is received, the CPOMS data will be high as all previous safeguarding data (paper copies) has now been added to the system.
2223.147	GDPR Update (Fol, SAR, Breaches): A GDPR SAR/FAR has been received. The DPO was consulted and it was confirmed it was not a GDPR concern. There is no new date for the Data Protection meeting.
2223.148	Lead Governor/Classroom visit Reports: Any questions? Computing BM, History BM, Geography BM, Premises SM CB advised that the staff have had a meeting about the old computer room, it needed clearing out before making recommendations. A list has been created detailing what is the next step and who will drive the project. Half will be used for a quiet space and the other half will be a meeting room/small class area. SM offered to help with the removal of the larger furnishings. EF advised that Emlyn has to remove the links from the server to ensure the port numbers are recorded as they are still within the service cupboard. LD know more details. The process has begun. SL has completed a PSHE/RSE visit which has been uploaded to the visit folder within GHub.
2223.149	Governor Training: Details of training for the term are on GHub. Governors to contact the Clerk should they wish to book on a course. Both BM and SL attended 'Governance – next step'. BM found it disappointing. SL thought it was good to be reminded to focus on impact. SL has also attended HTPM training which was helpful and the training on Safeguarding lead which was good to do. SL reminded governors that all visits are safeguarding visits. Aggressive parents and how they are managed was mentioned during SL's safeguarding training.
2223.150	Matters brought forward at the Chair's discretion: The clerk advised governors that LS has resigned. She has agreed to remain on the board until the P&P meeting to allow for this to be quorum. Governors thanked LS for her dedication to the school during her time as a governor.
2223.151	Part II: The governors went to part II for this section of the meeting
2223.152	Impact of meeting & Agree governor to write in newsletter: It was agreed that SL will write in the school newsletter next. Governors felt the meeting had been productive including; Receiving clear guidance on the finance from DCC and knowing that some action needs to be taken soon. Being pleased that someone from DCC gave up their time because the finances are important and they are concerned and want the governors to understand. Having more of a plan with how to deal with the GSP. The discussion on the admissions requests and appeals were informative but the letter of concern still needs to be written. Thanks to SM for chairing in the absence of GH & LJ. Pleased to see results on SOAP, with some negative responses, it was good to see such positive results.

Meeting closed: 9:00pm

ITEM	ACTION	WHO	DUE BY
2023.143	Send recording to those governors not present.	BD	20.11.23
2023.143	Email questions to LH so they can ask CW on 7.12.23	ALL	06.12.23
2023.143	Meet to discuss different scenarios, preferably before CW attends the school – include LD & CB	Finance Committee	06.12.23
2023.144	Send Pay Policy to P&P committee	BD	15.11.23
2023.144	Send LD copies of the approved policies	BD	15.11.23

2023.145a	Check whether GH has written the letter about concerns regarding additional pupils in year 5	BD	12.12.23
2023.145c	Let governors know the GSP will be considered one section at a time in the future FGB meetings	BD	07.12.23
2023.145e	Prepare the section at the start of the parental survey/email to go out	BM	07.12.23
2023.145e	Add Parental Survey to next agenda	BD	07.12.23

Signed: _____ (Chair)

Date: _____