



**Thaxted Primary School**  
**Minutes of Full Governing Body Meeting**  
**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 6.30pm**  
**Held remotely using Zoom**

Name	Ref	Type	Present	Role	Term
Peter Boorman	PB	Parent			05.11.24
Justine Brooks	JB	Associate	Present	Deputy Headteacher	
Vacancy		Local Authority			
Emma Dymond	ED	Staff	Present		26.09.25
Edd Gallier	EG	Co-opted	Present		24.09.23
Hazel Gotfraind	HG	Co-opted	Present		19.11.23
Jamie Henderson	JH	Parent	Present		26.09.25
Anne Hopkins	AH	Partnership	Present	Chair of Governors	14.09.22
Colin Howell	CH	Co-opted	Present	Vice Chair	30.06.24
Michelle Hughes	MH	Headteacher	Apologies	Headteacher	Ex officio
Debra Legge	DL	Partnership	Present		29.04.25
John Levett	JL	Parent	Present		23.03.22
Jenny Reilly	JR	Parent	Present		13.11.22
Charlotte Tillbrook	CT	Co-opted	Present	Vice Chair	27.06.25
Saroj Velamakanni	SV	Parent	Present		25.06.25
<b>Attendees</b>					
Jackie Sweeting	JS		Present	Clerk and SBM	

A number of staff members were either showing Covid symptoms or had family members at home who had tested positive. Due to this higher risk of infection a decision had been made to hold the meeting remotely using Teams. Once logged in there was a lot of interference on the line, making it impossible to proceed with the meeting, so the platform was switched to Zoom. PB had planned to join the meeting a little late and had not received the message about the meeting moving to zoom, hence he did not attend.

Item	Detail	Action
1.	<b><u>ATTENDANCE &amp; APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b> Received and accepted from MH.	
2.	<b><u>MEMBERSHIP</u></b> 2.1 JH and ED were welcomed on to the board following successful parent and staff elections. JH was assigned SV as his mentor, and ED was assigned JL. 2.2 TB had already confirmed her wish to step down following a promotion at work. The governors discussed their recruitment options, which included either contacting a previous applicant, or advertising again on Thaxted Online. The decision was made to opt for the latter in order to ensure that the board captured as broad a profile of governors as possible. <b>SV would place the advert on line.</b> DL was assigned a new mentor, JR. 2.3 See Part II Confidential Minutes	<b>SV, JL</b>          <b>SV, JR</b>

APPROVED

FGB Meeting 13.10.21

3.	<p><b><u>DECLARATION OF BUSINESS INTERESTS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST</u></b></p> <p>There we no new interests and conflicts relating to any items on the agenda. Forms were still be completed by PB.</p>	<b>PB</b>
4.	<p><b><u>AOB</u></b></p> <p>None</p>	
5.	<p><b><u>SUBJECT LEADERSHIP</u></b></p> <p>Sarah Quinn, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Leader, had been invited to the meeting to update the governors on the new framework and baseline assessment. She had provided a description of the changes with the meeting papers and had also circulated a further document shortly before the meeting.</p> <p>She explained that the EYFS Curriculum had been changed for two main reasons: to improve outcomes, particularly in areas of early language and literacy and to reduce workload on teachers. This had resulted in a new assessment procedure that reduced the amount of time that teachers were having to spend away from the children.</p> <p>The new framework had come into effect at the beginning of this term, but the school had agreed to become an early-adopter a year earlier. This had given the EY staff a year to familiarise themselves with the new content and had left them more confident at the start of the term. Much of the curriculum had stayed the same; there continued to be 7 areas of learning, but they had been reworded, with more explanations and depth, including examples. There was more of a focus on early language and extending vocabulary because research was showing that this was a strong indicator of later attainment.</p> <p>At Thaxted planning had been adapted, factoring in the changes. The non-statutory curriculum guidance, Development Matters, had also changed. It continued to closely support the framework and was the main document recommended by the DfE, but it had been shortened and had become easier to navigate. As a result, schools had more freedom to develop their own curriculum and tailor it to the profile of their cohorts. Teachers were trusted to assess children without providing as much evidence of their judgements, which was greatly reducing the amount of time spent collecting it. There was an emphasis on giving the children a broad and varied learning environment.</p> <p>The “Good level of development” marker was still in place to track progress. At Thaxted the EY staff were planning to map the children’s progress across the three terms, checking them against a list of things that they should have achieved at the end of each term and assessing whether they were on track. This form of assessment was moving away from the number of steps of progress; it was expected to result in teachers focusing more on the children that weren’t where they should be and ensuring that they all had a solid base before moving onto Key Stage 1. It was resulting in the teachers spending far less time collecting evidence, which was much more rewarding and had reduced workload.</p> <p>Children could no longer be categorised as “exceeding” in any of the 7 areas of learning; the options were now only emerging or at expected age related. This was expected to reduce the pressure to push children to get to a higher level to improve the school’s data and to ensure that all children had a secure understanding of the goals by the end of their first year. This did not mean that the more able children were not challenged; they would</p>	

	<p>continue to deepen their understanding through differentiated teaching but they would no longer move onto KS1 work while still in the Early Years classroom.</p> <p>The governors thanked SQ for a comprehensive overview of the changes. They queried how they would be able to monitor this new method of assessment, which relied primarily on professional judgement. They were not sure how the school would evidence that the children were being pushed. SQ explained that the children would work more in line with the children in KS1 and 2; they would be taught mastery and should achieve a greater depth of knowledge. There would be evidence in their books, plus the teachers were working alongside other schools in the DEEP cluster to carry out moderation. This form of collaboration was hugely beneficial in terms of sharing different teaching methods and experiences.</p> <p>It was noted that there was a focus on the local community. The governors agreed that this was important, but they wondered whether there was a possibility to look at wider communities as well. SQ confirmed that this would be the case.</p> <p>They noted that SQ had mentioned lots of positives relating to the changes, and wondered whether there were any negatives. She felt that it could potentially be more difficult to follow the new curriculum for inexperienced teachers. There was a lot of experience amongst the EY teachers at Thaxted, so this was not a concern, but she felt that some teachers in other schools might need help in making the necessary judgements if they hadn't had years in the profession.</p> <p>SQ left the meeting at 7pm</p>	
6.	<p><b><u>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS</u></b></p> <p>It was agreed that the minutes of the meetings on the 14/07/21 and 15/09/21 were a true record and would be signed by the chair at the next available opportunity.</p>	
7.	<p><b>Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda</b></p> <p>7.1 Meeting on the 14/07/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item 2: JS to arrange Staff and Parent elections in September <i>New members recruited</i></li> <li>• Item 6: Prevent Training <i>The government website had been causing problems, making it difficult to complete the training because it was crashing. HG and CT had completed it and DL was part way through. The link had been shared with JH.</i></li> <li>• Item 6: PB to provide a profile for the website – item outstanding <i>ED and JH were also asked to provide one.</i></li> <li>• Item 6: MH to incorporate new information into the school's Equality Plan <i>In MH's absence the status of this item was not clear.</i></li> <li>• Item 7: MH and JB to ensure that a development of the children's recognition of challenge is incorporated into the SIP</li> </ul>	PB, ED, JH

	<p><i>AH felt that this was still not explicit in the current plan and proposed that it should be looked at again before the next meeting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item 7: MH to address ST’s safeguarding questions from the July HT report on her return to school <i>Action complete</i></li> <li>• Item 7: MH and JB to ensure that the 20/21 SIP and Transition plan were linked <i>Action complete</i></li> <li>• Item 10: JR to publish the safeguarding audit from 20/21 together with an action list <i>JR had downloaded the results of the audit, together with a number of safeguarding documents that the governors might find useful, onto the Governor zone. The outstanding actions would be addressed over the coming year. She wished to point out that there was a requirement for all school improvement plans to refer to safeguarding and suggested that the plan should be revised to ensure that this was the case. All governors needed to understand what safeguarding measures were in place and the level of compliance in their schools</i></li> <li>• Item 11: Financial Regulations to be approved at the September Planning meeting <i>Action complete</i></li> <li>• Item 13: JS to investigate a missing appendix for the Grievance Procedure <i>Action complete</i></li> <li>• Item 13: JS to introduce a standardised way of cross-referencing for all school policies <i>All new/updated policies will include a section on cross-references, together with a section on ownership (who approved the policy and when).</i></li> <li>• Item 15: SEND information tabled by JJ at the meeting to be added to the meeting papers <i>Action complete</i></li> </ul> <p>7.2 Meeting on the 15/09/21</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Item 2: EG and PB to complete Business Interest forms – item outstanding for PB</li> <li>• Item 5: JS to provide new monthly meeting dates <i>Action complete</i></li> <li>• Item 8: JS to save GDPR video by ST onto the Governor Zone <i>Action complete – saved under GDPR</i></li> <li>• Item 10: WHAT book to be saved onto Governor Zone <i>Action complete, to be found under Important Documents\Governor Induction Pack</i></li> <li>• Item 10: New Parent Governor to be asked to complete a website check <i>JH to receive information on this check from JS</i></li> <li>• Item 12: Updated Strategic Plan to be put onto the website</li> </ul>	<p><b>JB</b></p> <p><b>JB</b></p> <p><b>JS and JH</b></p>
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	<p><i>Action complete</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Item 14: Governor SIP priorities to be regularly RAG rated <b>AH to do this for the 20/21 academic year</b></li> <li>Item 15: JB to pass on the dates of the School Parliament meetings to governors <i>Action complete (15th October and 26 November)</i></li> </ul>	<b>AH</b>
8.	<p><b><u>HEADTEACHER'S REPORT</u></b></p> <p>8.1 Staffing arrangements from 01/11/21 JB reported that ED would be out of class for two days per week. The school was advertising for a teacher to cover her on a fixed term basis. Likewise, the school was advertising for cover in Blyton for 2 days per week, to work alongside Gemma Dawson. There had been a lot of interest, with several strong candidates visiting the school prior to applying, so it was hoped that there would be strong field for shortlisting.</p> <p>8.2 Updated School Improvement Plan (SIP) Carol Evans, the school's educational advisor, had recommended some significant changes to the 2021/22 SIP. These had been incorporated into a shorter document that had been circulated with the meeting papers.</p> <p>JB explained that the next step was for the SLT to get more acquainted with the new format and work together with the governors to add the additional bits on challenge and safeguarding. It would be an agenda item at the next meeting so that monitoring could be discussed and reviewed in more detail. Most monitoring would stay the same as detailed in the previous plan, which would be attached to the abbreviated version as an appendix. The exception to this would be priority 4, which now focused on the monitoring of the school's Early Years provision.</p> <p><b>One of the more recently recruited governors said that she would need more guidance on how the monitoring would be carried out.</b> JB referred her to the old plan, which listed monitoring tasks, but reiterated that it would be reviewed again at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>It was agreed that JH would join the monitoring group for Priority 2, reading and writing.</b></p> <p>8.3 Review of Carol Evans' report from the 22/09/21 The report had been included with the meeting papers. JB said that she had found the meeting extremely useful. Carol had spent time with her going over the format of the Ofsted 90-minute conversation that would take place on the afternoon prior to an inspection. In the meantime, she had attended some further training run by DEEP and felt more confident if an inspection were to take place in the short term.</p> <p><b>The governors agreed that it was a positive report. They asked whether CE would be providing any extra support for JB in her role as Acting Headteacher.</b> JB said that there was a further meeting scheduled later in the academic year, plus she had scheduled meetings with the school's ECC Advisor, Jacky Castle, and Kevin Watts, the Head at Great Dunmow Primary School, who had agreed to be her mentor within DEEP. Essex CC funding would be provided for this. <b>The governors were encouraged to hear that JB had access to plenty of support. They hoped this would be the case for ED as well.</b></p>	

	<p>8.4 Review of the Quality of Teaching</p> <p>JB had provided a summary of the lesson observations that she had undertaken during the first few weeks of term. She said that it had been a real pleasure to visit the classes and see so many good teachers in action. Since the observations she had met with each teacher to give them individual feedback, plus ED had gone through expectations for planning at a staff meeting to ensure that there was consistency across the school.</p> <p>The governors thanked JB for the report. She was asked why it had not included any areas for development. JB said that each teacher had been given an individualised target linked to the SIP. She recognised that there was always room for improvement but reiterated that the lessons had been of an excellent standard, and thought this would be reflected in the assessment results at the end of term. In addition, the governors would be able to review standards when carrying out their monitoring.</p> <p>JB was asked whether there had been any common threads across the school that might have been put into the report. She said that the SLT had noted an inconsistency in the teaching of spelling and grammar across the school, but that this had been addressed at a recent staff meeting.</p> <p>A governor raised a concern regarding the lack of an overall HT report for the term, suggesting that this was a document that would be regarded as important by Ofsted. JS reminded the governors that there would still be a termly HT report, which would be available for the next meeting. The scheduling of the report could be found in the planner that had been available with the papers at the meeting on the 15/9/21.</p> <p>Finally, JB was asked about the overall wellbeing of the children and how she felt they were coping after 18 months of disruption and uncertainty. Were there any particular challenges that the governors needed to be aware of? JB said that there was nothing over and above what had already been identified; the governors would receive more information at the next meeting in the HT report. AH reminded the governors that she discussed wellbeing and safeguarding at each of her fortnightly meetings with the headteacher and that she would make governors aware if there were issues that they needed to know about as a matter of urgency.</p>	
9.	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL DATA</u></b></p> <p>A report showing the school’s financial position year to date, and an accompanying commentary by JS, were provided with the meeting papers. It had been agreed at the last meeting that these documents would be closely reviewed by JL and CH. Questions relating to the review had been answered and included with the meeting papers.</p> <p>AH reminded the governors that it was one of the board’s key tasks to monitor that the school’s public funds were being spent wisely and in line with its agreed budget. As a consequence of this it was important that they could evidence sufficient scrutiny.</p> <p>One of the nominated reviewers stated that the accompanying commentary put together by JS was always very comprehensive and negated the need for multiple questions.</p> <p>A governor asked why the board had not been furnished with a carry forward forecast for the 21/22 financial year. JS explained that this would be completed in month 6, and would be available for review at the next meeting. The governor questioned whether this should</p>	

	<p>be available sooner, during the summer term. JS suggested that this would be a waste of her time because it was too soon in the year to predict what was going to be spent. Furthermore, ECC did not require a forecast before month 6 for this reason.</p>	
10.	<p><b><u>GOVERNOR BUSINESS</u></b></p> <p>10.1 Succession Plan A draft succession plan had been included with the meeting papers, but AH suggested that it needed more work, so that it included more governors. A governor commented on the fact that the plan had been briefly discussed over the course of several meetings and that it should finally be brought to fruition. AH agreed and said it would be brought to the next meeting for approval after she had spoken to individual governors.</p> <p>10.2 Review of recent training The CPD spread sheet had been included with the meeting papers. HG had completed the Prevent training since the agenda had been circulated.</p> <p>It was noted that DL, JH and CT had started their induction training with Balance.</p> <p>10.3 Ofsted Inspection framework AH had provided an overview of the inspection process with the meeting papers.</p> <p>AH suggested that the governors brainstormed a number of overarching introductory questions to measure the board’s knowledge of the school. The answers were as follows:</p> <p>Strengths of the school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong teaching team, prepared to take risks, e.g. early adopter of Early Years changes</li> <li>• Whole-team approach</li> <li>• Links to the community, PTA, churches, DEEP, Thaxted Festival</li> <li>• Happy children who like to come to school (good attendance rates, even during Covid)</li> <li>• Enriched curriculum, children actively engaged with their learning when observed</li> <li>• Mix of teaching methods to appeal to different learning styles, not all classroom based, good use of limited outside space, good use of library space</li> <li>• Good leadership, e.g. the way the school ran during Covid, evidence of teamwork, resilience, everyone pitching in. Good feeling of reunion when staff got back together at the beginning of this term, as observed by the governors</li> <li>• Good standard of home learning using Class Dojo, but also going beyond the learning, and catering for all children and families during lockdown, checking everyone was safe, evidencing how important a role the school plays in the community.</li> <li>• Support of children with SEND</li> </ul> <p>Areas for development? Most answers were related to being a small school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited outside space</li> <li>• Funding for children with SEND – budgetary issues</li> <li>• Lack of economies of scale</li> <li>• Small number of teachers, so losing one can have a big impact</li> <li>• Does being small result in a more insular mindset?</li> </ul>	AH

	<p>The governors discussed how some of these issues were being overcome. They felt the school did a lot to ensure that it communicated to outside groups, such as other schools in DEEP (either between SLT members, heads or governors). A large percentage of part-time staff could be disadvantageous, but it was also beneficial in terms of teachers bouncing ideas off of each other.</p> <p>The current changes to staffing were also noted as an area for development, with potential challenges in the short to medium term, but other governors pointed out that developing future leaders was not necessarily a weakness.</p> <p>One governor reminded the board of the school's need to challenge higher ability children (something that had been noted at the last Ofsted inspection) and wondered whether the school was doing enough to evidence this.</p> <p>AH then asked how the board was challenging and supporting the school. The governors said that their monitoring was an important part of this process. AH agreed, but pointed out that, from a Chair's point of view, not all governors did what they had been asked to do and required a lot of chasing.</p> <p>She then asked whether governors were in touch with the culture of the school and what contributed to it both explicitly and implicitly. The governors felt that the key features were community and values including kindness and being respectful to each other. They felt that the school always presented itself as a happy and positive place, somewhere where children, parents and staff wanted to be.</p> <p>AH asked what the board members shared in their vision for the school. Feedback focused on preparing the children for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, having them leave the school happy and healthy and as prepared for secondary school they could possibly be.</p> <p>10.4 Updated Business Continuity Plan These had been prepared and would be handed to the appropriate governors when they were next in school.</p>	
11.	<p><b>POLICIES</b></p> <p>A review of the policies listed below had been delegated to individual governors as shown.</p> <p>Accessibility Plan – CT Admissions Arrangements – AH Charging and Remissions – CH Data Protection – SV Lettings – JL Redundancy and Restructuring* – EG Sabbatical Policy* – EG Whistleblowing Policy* – HG</p> <p>AH noted that the Admissions Arrangements stated that ECC managed in-year admissions requests and queried whether that was the case. JS confirmed that ECC were currently consulting with schools to transfer responsibility for in-year admissions to schools, but that the outcome had not yet been determined. The policy would need to be changed if the proposal was accepted. AH also pointed out that many schools were moving towards</p>	



	<p>prioritising children of staff, something that might be considered for the future. <b>Another governor asked about the capacity of the school in light of substantial planned building in the area and wondered whether this would lead to changes in its catchment area.</b> JS said that ECC carried out regular forecasts of intake and would notify the school if they had any concerns.</p> <p>A number of the governors had raised questions regarding the policies, including related to grammar on the standard policies provided by Juniper, but they were all happy to approve them.</p>	
12.	<p><b><u>MEETING REVIEW</u></b></p> <p>12.1 Confidential sections to be agreed Item 2.3</p> <p>12.2 Meeting Review – summarised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the meeting too long in view of board meetings now taking place once a month?</li> <li>• Would the meeting have been shorter if it had been face to face and there hadn't been technical difficulties at the beginning?</li> <li>• The format of monthly meetings meant that governors were more informed.</li> <li>• Agendas would need to be carefully considered to enable enough time for discussion and governors would need to ensure that they have carried out their assigned prework so that admin items could be covered swiftly.</li> <li>• The new format was a work in progress, that should improve over time.</li> </ul> <p>12.3 Responsibilities for review for the next meeting</p> <p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catch-up Funding – CH</li> <li>• Pupil Premium Expenditure, including the Recovery Premium and School-led tutoring funding - CH</li> </ul> <p>Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year-end carry forward forecast – JH and DL</li> <li>• Forward plan – JH, DL</li> <li>• Capital expenditure – JH, DL</li> </ul> <p>Premises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Premises plan - JL</li> <li>• Asset management plan - JL</li> <li>• Inventory check - JL</li> </ul> <p>Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Careers Teacher policy -AH</li> <li>• Pay Policy – Pay Committee</li> </ul>	<p>CH</p> <p>CH</p> <p>JH and DL JH and DL JH and DL</p> <p>JL JL JL</p> <p>AH Pay Committee</p>
13.	<p><b><u>AOB</u></b></p> <p>AH wished to thank MH for everything that she had done for the school since taking over as Headteacher in January 2017 and, on behalf of the governing body, wished her well for the</p>	

	future. She planned to pass on the governors' gift when she visited on her last day, the 22/10/21.	
14.	<p><b><u>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</u></b></p> <p>Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021  Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021  Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2022  Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022  Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022  Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022  Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022  Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022</p>	
	<p>The minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting</p> <p>_____ Date_____</p> <p>Chair</p>	