



Thaxted Primary School
Minutes of Full Governing Body Meeting
Wednesday 9th March 2022, 5.45pm
Held at the school

Name	Ref	Type	Present	Role	Term
Peter Boorman	PB	Parent	Present		05.11.24
Justine Brooks	JB	Acting Headteacher	Present		
Vacancy		Local Authority			
Emma Dymond	ED	Staff	Present		26.09.25
Hazel Gotfraind	HG	Co-opted	Present		19.11.23
Maggi Griffiths	MG	Co-opted	Apologies		24.01.26
Jamie Henderson	JH	Parent	Present		26.09.25
Anne Hopkins	AH	Partnership	Apologies	Chair of Governors	14.09.22
Colin Howell	CH	Co-opted	Present	Vice Chair	30.06.24
Debra Legge	DL	Partnership	Present		29.04.25
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
Attendees					
Jackie Sweeting	JS		Present	Clerk and SBM	

NB: Lisa Cox joined the governors to cover the first part of Item 7 on the agenda, teaching and learning. This section of the meeting took place after item 1 so that Lisa could leave the meeting earlier at 6pm.

Item	Detail	Action
1.	<u>ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Received and accepted from MG and AH. The meeting was chaired by CH.	
2.	<u>DECLARATION OF BUSINESS INTERESTS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST</u> There were no new interests or conflicts relating to any items on the agenda.	
3.	<u>AOB</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding audit • Studio Refurbishment • iPad purchase 	
4.	<u>MEMBERSHIP</u> MG had been unable to attend the meeting because she was abroad, but she was officially welcomed to the Governing Board by CH. There was a further vacancy for an LA Governor. It was expected that the role would be filled by a current parent at the school, Jon Spencer, who was a member of the Parish Council. His application was currently in process at Essex County Council. JL's governor responsibilities were reassigned, with PB taking H&S and SV taking data protection.	

APPROVED

FGB Meeting 09.03.22

5.	<p><u>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</u></p> <p>It was noted that JR had been shown as sending apologies, but was present at the meeting. Taking this error into account it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting on the 19/01/22 were a true record and would be signed by the chair.</p>	
6.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA</u></p> <p>A majority of actions had been completed, as noted on the agenda. The following items were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 6: PB to provide a profile for the website – to be done shortly. • Item 6: Staff well-being training. A governor suggested that the school would need to consider doing more in this area in the future, including more frequent training. JB agreed that this would be considered in conjunction with future staff surveys. The next survey was to be sent out to staff before the end of term. • Item 6: SQ and JS to seek quotations for an all-weather surface for the school field This was ongoing but it was feared that the cost would be way beyond what the school could afford, taking existing capital money, possible grant funding and PTA fundraising into account. • Item 10: JB to seek feedback from parents on the school’s expectations for their children at the next parent coffee morning <i>Coffee morning scheduled for the 11/03/22</i> • Item 12: JH and PB to write a report of their SIP monitoring visit The report had been written and was about to be published. • Item 14.2: JR to circulate consultation document for Keeping children safe in education to all governors. JR reported that she had uploaded a link to the consultation in the safeguarding folder in the Governor Zone (Important Documents). She reiterated that the main duty of the governors concerning safeguarding was to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of the subject. She said there were a lot of resources available for governors to achieve this, including some that she had already put on the website, but also ECC briefings for governors and the NGA learning link courses. She stressed that all governors should have the ability to respond to the school’s safeguarding procedures. 	<p>PB</p> <p>PB</p> <p>JB/JS</p> <p>JH/PB</p>
7.	<p><u>TEACHING AND LEARNING</u></p> <p>7.1 History Deep Dive</p> <p>The school’s Effectiveness Partner from Essex County Council, PJ Prince (PJP), had recently visited the school to carry out a mock Deep Dive into history. Lisa Cox attended this section of the meeting to report back to governors on how it had gone. She was enthusiastic about the visit, reporting that it had been extremely useful in helping all of the Subject Leaders</p>	

(SLs) to formulate further plans for their subjects and prepare for an Ofsted Deep Dive. PJP had covered the expectations on SLs, including regarding disadvantaged children and those with SEND and he had gone through the questions that they were likely to be asked and possible answers. He had advised them on the best ways to prepare for the inspection and also gone through the best ways of tracking children's progress. The latter was considered to be robust at Thaxted, but it had been useful to hear about how it was done in other schools. Lisa said it had given her the opportunity to focus on an action list of the things that she still needed to do. She had then shared her experiences with all staff at a staff meeting, enabling other SLs to adopt the same strategies and action lists. She felt that everyone would be in a stronger position to evidence their understanding of a subject from beginning to end, including how the curriculum was designed, how it was planned and how it was taught, including evidence in books.

JB reiterated that the meeting had been extremely valuable. This, together with the additional DEEP training provided by Maria Curry, together with the peer review, had helped all SLs to feel more equipped moving forward.

The governors asked whether there were plans for any other subjects to be covered in the future. JB said that there would be future peer reviews and additional staff meetings. The SLs were getting more release time out of class, which was organised in smaller, more regular blocks. LC confirmed that the new system was working better; the shorter sessions enabled them to look at one aspect of the subject at a time, including speaking to children and reviewing their books. She felt they had embarked on a steep learning curve, but all staff were moving in the right direction and improving all the time.

The governors thanked Lisa for attending the meeting. They were pleased to hear her enthusiasm and growing confidence and could tell she was better prepared for an inspection.

7.2 Headteacher's Report

Several governors had sent questions relating to the report in advance of the meeting. A document containing the answers had been included with the meeting papers.

The governors were all in agreement that JB's newly adopted format was good. They felt it gave a better overview of what was happening in the school. A governor suggested a small tweak, moving the section covering maths and English into Leadership and Management.

JB said that she had omitted to report a H&S incident in the report; an LSA had slipped on a wet section of floor while mopping it, shortly before Christmas and had been off work with a torn ligament since then. The accident had been reported to Riddor, but no remedial actions had been put in place as the staff member had known not to stand on the floor and had stepped on the very edge of the wet area by mistake. It was hoped she would return to work after Easter.

The governors asked for an update on the replacement of the teachers in Morpurgo who had resigned at short notice. JB reported that the school had advertised a fixed term position for the summer term, but had received no applicants. As evidenced on the Essex Schools website, there was a huge turnover of staff in schools at the current time, so it was feared that the fixed term role was going to be difficult to fill. As things stood it was expected that the school would need to enlist a supply teacher; its regular supply provider

	<p>was struggling to find an appropriate person. JB and JS had agreed that they would give the them until the 18th March and then start approaching other supply companies. The governors asked whether there was any internal capacity with part-time teachers. There was capacity for 2 days if it were really required.</p> <p>7.3 Educational Advisor’s report (Carol Evans) The report from the 08/02/22 had been included with the meeting papers. AH had asked CH to highlight to all governors the importance of supporting the school in its focus on improving attendance. She had written a piece for the newsletter to stress to parents the importance of sending their children to school. The governors asked whether attendance was poor across the board and not just at Thaxted. JB said it was noticeably below national averages at Thaxted and had to improve. Genuine illnesses were acceptable but there were some children who were classed as persistently absent (below 90%) that the school needed to address. Over the recent weeks a large number of families had been applying for long periods of absence for holidays that had been postponed several times during Covid. She had been focusing on this since taking over as Acting Headteacher; she was reviewing the attendance of the persistent absentees regularly with Nicola Black, had written to the relevant parents and was arranging meetings with them if attendance was not improving. Overall this new approach was beginning to reap benefits. DL offered to meet with JB to pass on her experiences of dealing with poor attendance at her previous school where she had been headteacher. She said it was important to put together case studies, highlighting how the school was tackling individual cases and confirmed that individual tracking was highly recommended.</p> <p>AH had also wanted to pass on CE’s comment relating to the need to look for evidence of the completion of actions in SIP monitoring rather than just checking that actions had been completed.</p>	DL/JB
<p>8.</p>	<p>FINANCE</p> <p>A number of finance reports had been circulated, as stated on the agenda. Some governor questions had been raised in advance of the meeting; these had been answered by JS and circulated.</p> <p>A number of additional questions had been asked earlier on the day of the meeting. These were answered as follows:</p> <p>School meals, why is Thaxted so cheap compared to other schools? JS explained that this was historical; catering was not expected to make a profit for the school and in the past, it had managed to break even or produce a small surplus, so there had been no justification to increase the price of a meal. There was a possibility that this would need to change in the future, but any price increase would definitely result in a decrease in meal take-up.</p> <p>What do other schools offer and what is there take up? (do we have this info or can we get it?). The menus at the surrounding schools were very similar, and take-up was also similar. The kitchen staff were frustrated that they could not provide more wholesome family favourites such as shepherd’s pie, lasagne, and other pies, but whenever they did so take-up plummeted. JS gave an example of the chicken pie that was on the menu that week versus chicken nuggets, with numbers as high as 200 for nuggets versus 60 for the children pie. A governor asked why the school was even serving chicken pie if it attracted so few takers. JS said it would be taken off the menu, but said that it was becoming increasingly difficult to</p>	

	<p>ensure enough nutrition in alternatives, recognising that the school needed to adhere to the School Food Standards. To some extent the school had an obligation to encourage children to try new things, which was why less popular items were left on the menu, with a more popular second option, such as jacket potatoes or baguettes. JB told the governors that Louise Elvin, the Catering Manager had been trying to offer tasters of items that children were not ordering, plus she had recently attended a School Parliament meeting to ask about new dishes for next term’s menu. ED had been present at the meeting; the children had made one or two suggestions, but had not been too inspiring.</p> <p>The governors wondered whether there was a possibility of introducing a new initiative such as inviting a chef, such as Jamie Oliver, into school to talk about healthy cooking or possibly doing a demonstration. JB said that this would be considered. ED said that it would be an ongoing agenda item for the School Parliament. A suggestion was made that the menu might be linked to sustainability and the environment. ED thought this was a good idea.</p> <p>A governor had asked for a breakdown of Professional fees. JS said she would prepare a list which she would circulate with the proposed 23/24 budget, but in the main the fees were made up of annual subscriptions to support services for finance, hr and the curriculum, together with the fees for the school’s Educational Advisor.</p> <p>Another governor mentioned that she had met with CH to go over the finance reports, to get a better understanding of how best to interpret them. She had found this extremely useful and wondered whether it would be possible to get a short overview of the reports at each meeting, by looking at them on a screen. This might enable all governors to get a simple overview of the school’s finances in the form of something like a RAG rating.</p> <p>JS was asked what the impact of the energy price increases would be for the school. She said that the school had secured a 2-year contract last October, which meant that prices would be stable for the 23/24 financial year, but that things would be more concerning beyond that if prices did not stabilise. The 2021 – 2023 contract had increased the school’s expenditure substantially, but it was at least not going to increase further for the time being. A governor asked whether the school could consider energy saving initiatives such as replacing bulbs with LED equivalents when they failed. JS had looked at this in some detail a year ago, and had obtained quotes to replace all of the school’s lighting with LED fittings, but the cost was beyond anything that it could afford. Most of the lighting was made up of tubes, for which there were no LED alternatives, but the school did ensure that all new light fittings were suitable for LED bulbs. Energy consumption was difficult to control at the current time due to the need for ventilation. JB said it was counter-intuitive to have the heating on while all of the doors and windows were open, which undoubtedly increased gas consumption, but, with cases high in the school, there was little that could be done about this at the current time.</p> <p>JH and CH had visited the school to complete the Schools Financial Value Standard document as seen in CH’s monitoring report. The governors agreed the content and were happy to approve it for forwarding on to ECC.</p>	
9.	<p><u>PREMISES MATTERS</u></p> <p>CT had reviewed the 3 Year Premises Plan. Overall, she was happy with the plan; she had pointed out that it needed to include new signage for the school once a new headteacher had been appointed. This had since been added.</p>	

	<p>AH had visited the school on the 28/01/22 to carry out an inventory check. JS reported on her visit in her absence. She had spot-checked 8 items from the inventory list. All had been located with the exception of an old CD player that was no longer at the school and should have been removed from the list and a very old laptop that had once been used as a class laptop, but had been a spare for several years. It was over 10 years old and had no intrinsic value. A governor queried why it was actually on the inventory if it was worthless. JH, in his capacity as auditor, stipulated that all items should be on the inventory, regardless of their worth.</p>	
10.	<p><u>HEALTH AND SAFETY</u></p> <p>JS had completed the annual online H&S audit and the results had been included with the meeting papers. JR have reviewed the audit results and confirmed that there were no outstanding actions.</p> <p>JS informed the governors that a Fire Risk Assessor had visited the school. This was an old outstanding action from a previous audit, which had not been completed due to Covid. The assessor was pleased with the current risk assessment and reported no major concerns. A governor asked why the fire service had not been contacted to carry out the assessment free of charge. JS explained that this service was no longer offered by the fire service. She had contacted them and had been given a list of possible independent assessors.</p> <p>It was confirmed that PB would carry out the governor H&S inspection before the end of term.</p>	<p>JS/PB</p>
11.	<p><u>POLICIES</u></p> <p>The following policies were reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children Missing Education due to Healthcare needs – CT • First Aid Policy – JR Approved • Virtual Governance Policy – AH <p>All three policies were approved.</p>	
12.	<p><u>NON-PUPIL DAYS 22/23</u></p> <p>The proposed non-pupil days for 22/23 had been included with the agenda. They were approved.</p>	
13.	<p><u>TEACHERS’ PENSION INDEXATION AND 2021 PAY FREEZE</u></p> <p>The governors had been given a briefing document, which related to teachers’ pensions. Due to the pay freeze last year, teachers who were due to retire within the next 10 years were potentially in danger of losing a small amount of pension when it was calculated over a 3-year average. The briefing paper suggested a simple solution to the problem, but it required approval by the Governing Board. The governors were happy to approve the methodology as outlined in the paper.</p>	

<p>14.</p>	<p><u>GOVERNOR BUSINESS</u></p> <p>14.1 Chair’s Action AH had reported that she had been involved in a confidential staffing matter. It related to a request for a meeting from a member of staff, but she had viewed this as an operational matter and had redirected the staff member back to JB.</p> <p>AH also asked CH to pass on her request for the speedy completion of SIP monitoring reports.</p> <p>14.2 SIP Monitoring Progress was noted as follows:</p> <p>Priority 1: CT reported that a meeting was pencilled in for end of April to get the governor monitoring up to date.</p> <p>Priority 2: HG reported that she had had an excellent visit with ED and that the report would be circulated next week.</p> <p>Priority 3: Report from the visit at the end of last term now circulated.</p> <p>Priority 4: DL had visited SQ with MG. It had been a good visit and the report was now on the website. There was a plan to meet again in the summer term.</p> <p>14.3 Training/CPD The spreadsheet was reviewed. The governors discussed the possibility of sharing presentations from training attended, so that the knowledge could be shared amongst other members of the board. If governors then acknowledged that they had been through the presentation it could be added to the training record.</p> <p>14.4 Class Monitoring A governor asked whether the class visits were viewed as useful to the school staff. After receiving some feedback from the staff present, a discussion ensued on the benefits of class visits and, in view of everyone being short on time, whether it would be sensible for governors to concentrate more on SIP monitoring and less on visiting classes. It was considered important to involve AH in this discussion as she was a strong advocator of class links, so it was agreed that this would be added to the next meeting agenda.</p> <p>14.5 Ofsted Inspection framework The governors discussed value for money and the monitoring of the school’s expenditure of public funds. The question was raised whether the governors would be prepared for questions on the school’s finances, although there was some doubt about whether an inspector would dwell on this at the current time. JS said it was possible for governors to evidence that they had full scrutiny of the financial position, referring to the recent completion of the SFVS document, which covered value for money, and also discussions relating to the 3-year plan position, held at various points throughout the year. The school could also evidence that it was acting on some of the concerns that had been raised, such as the cost of classroom support, which when benchmarked, was shown to be higher versus other schools.</p>	<p>JS</p>
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	<p>This was because a significant number of children with Educational Healthcare Plans had left the school, but the staff who had been working with them had not. A governor asked whether classroom support staff were given fixed term contracts so that they could potentially be asked to leave when the children left the school. JS said that this was no longer viewed as good practice by HR professionals; firstly, the children that they worked with tended to be quite challenging, making it an unrealistic expectation for staff to work with them year on year without a break. In addition, once a fixed term contract had extended beyond 2 years, it was no longer possible to ask the staff member to leave without going down an official redundancy route. However, the SLT were mindful of the fact that the cost of classroom support staff needed to be reduced and any LSA who had left in the past 12 months had not been replaced. This would undoubtedly reduce the cost of LSAs in the 23/24 budget.</p>	
15.	<p><u>MEETING REVIEW</u></p> <p>13.1 Confidential sections to be agreed None</p> <p>13.2 Meeting Review CH was thanked for chairing the meeting and keeping to time.</p> <p>13.3 Responsibilities for review for the next meeting</p> <p>Curriculum/Teaching and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor RAG- rating on the SIP – all <p>Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022/23 budget CH, JH, JR, PB 	
16.	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <p>16.1 Safeguarding audit JR confirmed that she had met with JB to carry out the ECC audit. They followed the ECC framework, which was very close to the one adopted by governors last year. She reported that the school was 95% compliant, with just a small number of intrinsic changes needed to improve it further. Safeguarding was managed extremely competently and in a comprehensive manner by all members of the SLT. The few remaining actions would be covered at the FGB meeting on the 25th May and the report would be published next week.</p> <p>A governor asked whether the school was doing everything it needed to do regarding peer on peer abuse. JB confirmed that all children were made aware of this using age-appropriate resources.</p> <p>16.2 Studio Refurbishment JS updated the governors on the studio refurbishment process, and referred to a recent question by her ECC colleagues, for which they wanted governor approval. She had been asked whether the school felt it was possible to manage without toilets in light of the limited space in the building. JS had discussed this with JB and confirmed that the school would continue with children using the toilets in the main building as required, but ECC wanted the</p>	JR

	<p>matter to be discussed by the governors. The governors supported the original decision of managing without toilets.</p> <p>16.3 iPad Purchase JS was currently seeking quotations for a class-set of iPads. Under normal circumstances the governors would be required to approve the expenditure as it was going to be above £5000. However, money was being donated by the PTA to cover the full cost, so this was not required on this occasion. There was not much variability between costs; the biggest issue was going to be the lead-time as no one was in a position to deliver at the current time. The governors wished to thank the PTA for providing funding for this project. PB mentioned that he had attended the PTA committee meeting the evening before, and a discussion had been held on fundraising for a possible artificial surface on the field. CH said that in light of the time, the discussion would be deferred to a future meeting.</p>	
17.	<p><u>DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</u> Thursday 17th March 2022, 6.30pm (remote meeting by Zoom) Wednesday 20th April 2022, 5.45pm Wednesday 25th May 2022, 5.45pm Wednesday 13th July 2022, 5.45pm</p>	
	<p>The minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting</p> <p>_____ Date _____</p> <p>Chair</p>	