



'Living life in all its fullness' John 10:10

Ditchling (St. Margaret's) C.E. Primary and Nursery School
Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Governing Board
held on Friday 16th January 2026 at 8.00am at Ditchling School

Present: Ms Jeannie Brooker (JB), Mrs Amy Clarke (Headteacher, AC), Mrs Liz Curry (LC), Mr Geoff Forman (GF, Chair), Miss Jade Miller (JM), Mr Nigel Porter (NP, Vice-Chair), Ms Sarah-Jane Savage (SJS), Mr Chris Webster (CW)

Apologies: Ms Heather Evans (HE), Mr Richard Linstead (RL), Ms Angela Page (AP)

In attendance: Mrs Verity Brown (VB, Clerk), Ms Nikki Elliott (NE, incoming Headteacher)

No	Key Points	Action
1	Welcome GF invited LC to open the meeting with a prayer. Governors welcomed incoming Headteacher, Nikki Elliott and new Parent Governor Sarah-Jane Savage (appointment to be ratified by HET).	
2	Apologies for absence Received and accepted as above. The meeting was declared quorate.	
3	Declaration of interests No governor declarations at this meeting (in addition to any annual declarations recorded at the first FGB meeting of the year).	
4	Subject Leader Presentation: PE, Well-Being and Sports Premium (Laura White) LW shared details of the PE, including intent, implementation and impact, with particular reference to: <i>How has the curriculum been developed?</i> The school uses Get Set which is an external provider of online guidance and resources. Get Set encourages participation in a range of traditional sports and other activities, eg fencing and orienteering. Following a trial last year Get Set is now being used across the whole school and teachers are positive about its use and impact. <i>How is PE monitored?</i> LW monitors PE provision across the whole school. Link Governor AP has also met with LW. Dr Justin Smith (HET advisor) was impressed with the school's provision. <i>How does PE link across other areas of the School Development Plan (SDP)?</i> PE supports the Well-Being priorities of the SDP, eg an external provider runs yoga classes for pupils, which staff are also encouraged to join. <i>Does the school offer extra-curricular clubs and are these accessible to all?</i> Yes, there are a number of before and after school clubs; LW consults pupil voice to ensure that there is appropriate provision for all year groups. Pupil	

	Premium (PP) pupils are funded either by the provider or by the school. The school also benefits from activities and competitions offered by Chailey secondary school. 5. <i>How are pupils encouraged to participate?</i> Each year around ten Year 5 pupils are trained as Play Leaders to run games for all year groups at playtimes. This structured play has also reduced the number of first aid incidents. 6. <i>How does the school ensure all pupils benefit from PE provision?</i> LW aims for all pupils to represent the school in some way. This may be through traditional team and individual competitions or other activities for less 'sporty' pupils. The school has invested in new PE equipment. 7. <i>Are pupil outcomes improving?</i> Yes, overall 70% of pupils are meeting Age Related Expectations (ARE) with 26% at Greater Depth (GD); 78% of SEND pupils are meeting ARE and 80% of PP pupils, with 20% at GD. 8. <i>What impact does Sports Premium funding have?</i> The school receives c£17Kpa and could not deliver nearly as much without SP (see full report, previously circulated). Governors thanked LW for her detailed report.	
5	Chair of Governors Report (previously circulated) Governors were invited to raise queries on the report. GF reported with particular reference to: 1. The GB will support the school to ensure a smooth handover to incoming Headteacher Nikki Elliott from Easter. 2. The school will continue to monitor behaviour to ensure the current high standards are maintained. It was notable that the school was functioning extremely well given that pupil numbers have grown by 40, without any additional space so far. 3. There are no new safeguarding concerns.	
6	Matters affecting GB 1. Review terms of office Nothing to report 2. Review GB structure & nominated governors for lead roles a. SJS will take on the roles vacated by Mr Batty (Technology & Computing; Data; Website compliance) b. LC will take on the role of Safeguarding Link Governor.	
7	Approval of minutes of previous meeting (previously circulated) 1. Minutes of the FGB meeting held on 21st November 2025 were approved as a true record, and signed by the Chair.	
8	Head Teacher's report (previously circulated) Inc School Development Plan (SDP) updates; Self Evaluation (SEF); SIAMS evaluation schedule SDP priorities for 2025-26 'Big 6' • Safeguarding: Support Mental Health of both adults and children; foster a culture of vigilance and care • Write Start: Focus on foundation skills in Writing across the school; high expectations for clear foundation skills in all Writing	

	• Early Language: Create a language-rich environment that nurtures listening, understanding and confident communication from the earliest stages • Green Minds: Traditional skills in a modern world through our Farm Twinning Project with Plumpton • Global Awareness: Achieve our Artsmark and Geography Quality Mark • Talk Maths: Introduce structured peer discussion during problem-solving and embed oracy in Maths lessons The 'Big 6' are underpinned by detailed actions from the OFSTED framework headings. AC presented an updated SDP and SEF for this meeting; priorities are largely on track. <i>Governors were invited to raise any queries on the Headteacher's report.</i> AC reported with particular reference to: 1. Leadership & Management a. <i>Are pupil numbers stable?</i> Yes, overall, with three new pupils joining in Years 4, 5 and 6. The recent Open Mornings have been busier than ever, and the school expects Reception to be full in September. b. <i>Is attendance good?</i> Yes, current attendance figure: 95.3%. There was a drop due to sickness before Christmas, with 95% being the lowest. National average is 92%. c. <i>What is being done to address Persistent Absence (PA)?</i> This is currently 8.2%, largely due to one child who is being not attending school while awaiting the outcome of an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) application. d. <i>Is the school fully staffed?</i> One member of staff is on sick leave and two are due to go on maternity leave at Easter (one teacher and one TA). AC and MH have restructured staffing to ensure cover is being provided smoothly and within budget. The school is benefitting from a number of trainee teachers, both in terms of income, staffing and giving teachers experience of mentoring. e. <i>When will the staff survey be conducted?</i> This will be done next term. 2. Safeguarding a. <i>Are there any serious concerns?</i> No, the school continues to manage Safeguarding issues in line with school, HET and ESCC policies. First aid and behaviour incidents have reduced. b. HET has requested a weekly safeguarding report from all schools to ensure rigorous oversight. The school is adequately supported as needs arise, both by ESCC and HET. c. Ditchling will review its policies for Administering Medicines and Online Safety this year. <i>[JM left the meeting at 8.35am]</i> 3. Quality of Education a. AC reported that the school has developed a team working with Year 6 across a number of curriculum areas in order to best support them for SATS.	
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	b. AC reported that the connection with Plumpton College, and their students, is working well with all year groups having the opportunity to visit and experience hands-on learning, thanks to JM. c. <i>Is the school confident about this year's Year 6 outcomes?</i> A number of intervention sessions have been put in place, including SPAG (Spelling, Punctuation & Grammar) and Maths. Tom DeBanks Hirst and JM are conducting moderation sessions. d. AC reported that Computing Subject Leader Tom DeBanks Hirst is aiming for the Computing Quality Mark this year. e. AC reported that the 32 laptops purchased by the FPTA over three years ago now need replacing and she has been advised that a lease arrangement is better in terms of keeping equipment up-to-date and cost-effectiveness. f. <i>Is there a way of HET arranging this in order to save money across the Trust?</i> Not at this time, as all the schools are at different stages regarding replacing IT equipment. g. <i>What happens to old IT equipment?</i> HET usually arranges safe disposal. With regard to the 32 laptops, the school will continue to use these for interventions etc. The school will ensure that pupils are aware both of the safe disposal of equipment and the importance of not wasting resources. 4. Personal Development Nothing in addition to details in Headteacher's report. 5. Behaviour & Attitudes Behaviour is currently good. 6. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Nothing in addition to details in Headteacher's report. 7. SEND and Inclusion Nothing in addition to details in Inclusion report and Headteacher's report. 8. Data <i>(latest data report previously circulated)</i> Governors asked for an update on data. AC reported with particular reference to: a. <i>Where does Ditchling sit within ESCC based on last year's data?</i> Ditchling placed 4th out of 150 schools. b. <i>What are the predictions for the end of this school year?</i> Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Good Level of Development (GLD) – 80% National 68% Year 1 Phonics – 93% National – 80% Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check (MTC) – 44% National 37% KS2 Combined Reading, Writing, Maths (RWM) 80% National 61% c. <i>How does the school collect this data?</i> At this stage in the school year it is based on teacher assessment and internal tests. d. <i>Which areas do EYFS pupils not achieve GLD in?</i> This tends to be in speech and language or emotional and social development. Pupils have a staggered start, but this is quite short to ensure children form close social links as well as benefitting educationally.	
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	e. <i>Are there any concerns about Year 3 data?</i> This cohort includes only 33% of 'home grown' (ie pupils who joined Ditchling in Reception) and this has an impact on attainment. AC is confident that there is time to improve results by Year 6. f. <i>Can AC share % of 'home grown' pupils in each year group?</i> Yes, in future. g. <i>How does the school follow up any concerns?</i> Regular pupil progress meetings allow interventions to be put in place as required. This is in line with all HET schools. Year 6 pupils are practising SATS papers weekly. The school's ethos of high standards for behaviour and learning ensure pupils make good progress.	
9	Year 6 Leaders Presentation: News Crew 1. <i>What are the aims of the News Crew?</i> • Gather and share news • Design and produce a fortnightly newsletter 2. <i>What skills does this develop?</i> • Confidence in speaking to people • Literacy and writing; improving vocabulary • Teamwork • Leadership opportunities 3. <i>What topics are covered?</i> • Any school news, including trips • Stories and activities which align with the school values Governors thanked the pupils for their informative, confident and enthusiastic presentation. Governors agreed it was important to hear Pupil Voice and pupils will continue to present to the FGB this year.	
10	Finance and Nursery update Governors asked for a budget update. Detailed documents will be circulated. School Administrator Michelle Hemes joined the meeting for this item and reported with particular reference to: Finance and Nursery 1. <i>What is the current state of the school budget?</i> The school currently has a surplus of c£5K. MH had budgeted for possible changes to staffing this year (two maternity leaves; one teacher on sick leave) and does not anticipate problems, or any unexpected expenditures. 2. <i>What is the current position of the Nursery expansion?</i> Work is expected to start at Easter with a view to being ready to open in September. Numbers will be able to increase from 16 to 25 children, from age two. MH already has a waiting list, both of new pupils and existing pupils who want to increase their sessions. 3. <i>What are the likely costs and how will it be funded?</i> These are in the region of c£250K. The school has already received a grant for £26K. MH has applied for a DfE grant of up to c£150K. As previously reported, if this is not received, HET would be prepared to cover initial costs (as a loan) and is satisfied that the projected Nursery income will cover any outgoings within a year, with an anticipated income of up to c£100Kpa. Governors thanked MH for her report and all her hard work on the Nursery project.	

11	Governor Monitoring - Governors were reminded to meet with their teacher Subject Leader and report back to the FGB. - Governors thanked NP for his Maths Learning Walk report (08.12.25). NP noticed a high level of pupil engagement and good behaviour. - AC proposes setting up the Debating Club later this year. <i>[JB left the meeting at 9.30am]</i>	
12	Matters Arising and current school issues Any complaints? No complaints received by the school. Any urgent items? None Review Rolling Action Plan All other actions from previous meetings had either been completed, were covered elsewhere on the agenda or if still pending are detailed at the end of the minutes.	
13	Christian Distinctiveness Vicar vacancy GF reported that he and LC had still not had a response to his letters to the Diocese and the Bishop reminding them of the importance of filling this vacancy for both the school and local community. - LC reported that the Church continues to offer a number of activities for pupils and families, eg Shrove Tuesday pancakes (although this falls in half-term).	
14	Health & Safety/Premises AC reported that a zebra crossing cannot be installed near the school because of insufficient pavements.	
15	Policies (<i>HET models where available</i>) All recommended HET model policies are approved by the GB and can be accessed on Policy Tracker. Any school-specific policies were reviewed and approved separately: - Admissions Policy - Food Policy - Pupil Premium - PSHE and RSHE Policy AC reported that all stakeholders have been consulted on this policy and governors were invited to comment. The school's RSHE curriculum is based on the Jigsaw model policy. While the school welcomes and supports families of all kinds within the school community, parental concerns expressed to AC mean that the curriculum does not include teaching of non-traditional genders.	
16	Strategy Nothing in addition to items above.	
17	Governor training Governor Training record (<i>previously circulated</i>)	

	2. Governors were reminded to complete mandatory safeguarding training (if not done so) and to report any training to the Clerk.	
18	Vision and ethos <i>In what way did this meeting, reflect the vision, values and ethos of the school?</i> • Governors recognised that the school continues to set high standards and expectations, both academically and behaviourally, and that these are maintained consistently across the whole school. • Governors welcomed the presentation by Year 6 pupils, noting how they referenced the importance of the school's values of respect, resilience and kindness which underpin all interactions and practice within the school. • Governors agreed that all key points were discussed in a welcome atmosphere of openness and were beneficial to supporting the school community. • The GB's perseverance in addressing any challenges ensures that the school continues to move from strength to strength <i>How has this meeting made a difference to pupils at the school?</i> • The latest data indicate that the school is supporting all pupils to achieve the highest possible outcomes. • The PE curriculum ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to thrive in whatever physical activity best suits them. • Governors were pleased that the Nursery expansion will provide the best start for pupils and enhance the school's offer to the local community. • Governors noted that the school's culture of support and openness was reflected among governors, staff and pupils.	
20	Agenda items for next meeting SDP review & school monitoring visits programme; policies	
21	Next meeting dates FGB date 20 March 2026 8:00 The meeting ended at 9.45am	

Approved

Signed:

Date:

Ditchling FGB meetings 2025-26 FGB dates: 26 Sep 8:00 FGB dates: 21 Nov 8:00 FGB dates 16 Jan 8:00 FGB dates 20 Mar 8:00 FGB dates 15 May 8:00 FGB dates: 10 Jul 8:00	Year 6 Leaders presentations Friday 26 Sep – Librarians Friday 21 Nov - School Councillors Friday 16 Jan - News Crew Friday 20 March - Garden Gang Friday 15 May - SATS Friday 10 July - WHAM Leaders, Reflection of Life as a Year 6
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Rolling Action Plan

No outstanding actions