



'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 20th March 2026 at 8.00am at Ditchling School

Present: Mrs Amy Clarke (Headteacher, AC), Mrs Liz Curry (LC), Ms Heather Evans (HE), Mr Geoff Forman (GF, Chair), Mr Richard Linstead (RL), Miss Jade Miller (JM), Mr Nigel Porter (NP, Vice-Chair), Ms Sarah-Jane Savage (SJS), Mr Chris Webster (CW)

Apologies: None

In attendance: Mrs Verity Brown (VB, Clerk)

No	Key Points	Action
1	Welcome GF invited LC to open the meeting with a prayer.	
2	Apologies for absence None. 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	Chair of Governors Report (<i>previously circulated</i>) 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, and extended thanks to Bolnore School for giving her time off during the transition. Governors thanked AC and GF for all their hard work at this time. 2. Governors welcomed Dr Justin Smith's latest positive report.	
5	Subject Leader Presentation: Phonics (Caroline Game, CG) CG shared details of Phonics teaching, including intent, implementation and impact, with particular reference to: 1. <i>What scheme does the school use?</i> ReadWriteInc. The cost of £2K pa includes training and an external data review. The school has been using the scheme for three years and data shows its effectiveness. 2. <i>Is the scheme used in all year groups?</i> The scheme has now also been introduced in the Nursery. Reception teachers can compare the learning outcomes of children coming up from Ditchling Nursery who have benefitted from the scheme in Nursery with those coming	

	from elsewhere. KS2 children who do not pass the Phonics test in Year 1 now use the Fresh Start scheme which is designed for older pupils. 3. <i>How many children are on track in their Phonics learning this year?</i> Reception: 97% Year 1: 97% Year 2: 100% Children on track at Storybook level: Reception: 93% Year 1: 93% Year 2: 96% 27/30 pupils in Year 1 are on track to pass the Phonics test this year. 4. <i>Is the incoming Headteacher familiar with ReadWriteInc?</i> Yes, and will be taking a small Phonics group as AC does now. Governors thanked CG for her presentation and work on successfully implementing ReadWriteInc across the whole school from Nursery onwards. CG has now completed the NPQ qualification in Early Years Foundation Stage Leadership.	
6	Matters affecting GB 1. Review terms of office - Governors expressed thanks to out-going governors Jeannie Brooker and Angela Page. - Governors noted that RL's term is due to end in June. A Parent Governor election will need to be held. 2. Vacancies: 1 x Co-Opted Governor. Ditchling Church is still awaiting a new vicar who will take on the role of Ex-Officio Foundation governor in due course. The GB's constitution includes two Foundation Governors. 3. Governors noted the ratification of SJS's appointment by HET 4. GB Link roles will be reviewed next term.	
7	Matters Arising and current school issues 1. Any urgent items/complaints None 2. Review Rolling Action Plan No outstanding actions	
8	Approval of minutes of previous meeting <i>(previously circulated)</i> Minutes of the FGB meeting held on 16th January 2026 were approved as a true record, and signed by the Chair.	
9	Year 6 Leaders Presentation: Environment Squad <i>1. What are the aims of the Environment Squad?</i> - Look after and improve the environment - Focus on healthy living - Reusing recyclables, eg paper - Encouraging composting of food waste	

	- Consider the installation of solar panels <i>[it was noted that ESCC's requirements for the installation of solar panels were not acceptable to the school a few years ago, but governors may now explore this again via HET]</i> 2. <i>What skills does this develop?</i> - Caring for the school surroundings - Teamwork - Communication skills, eg Collective Worship presentations - Learning how to hold people responsible to account 3. <i>What is the impact?</i> - Encouraging respect for the environment - Reducing food waste - Reducing paper and plastic use Year 6 Leaders Presentation: Garden Gang 1. <i>What are the aims of the garden Gang?</i> - Protecting and improving the school grounds - Plant seeds and grow food to eat - Help nature thrive - Reducing food wastage - Encourage garden activities through the weekly club 2. <i>What skills does this develop?</i> - Caring for the school surroundings - Working outside - Learning about plants and respecting the natural world - Teamwork - Preparing information for the school newsletter 3. <i>How could governors help?</i> - Provide seeds and pots - Build raised beds and encourage each class to grow plants Governors thanked the pupils for their informative, confident and enthusiastic presentations. Governors agreed it was important to hear Pupil Voice and pupils will continue to present to the FGB this year.	
10	Head Teacher's report <i>(previously circulated)</i> 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 1, 2 and 4. They have been admitted under the Fair Access regulation which permits KSI classes to take more than the statutory 30 pupils. Children rarely leave Ditchling apart from to relocate. b. <i>Is attendance good?</i> Yes, current attendance figure: 95.2%, above the national average of 94.15%. c. <i>What is being done to address Persistent Absence (PA)?</i> This is currently 7.6%, largely due to three children with SEND who are currently not attending school while awaiting the outcome of Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) applications and places in special schools. Parents have chosen to keep them on roll at Ditchling, although, as ESCC is aware, the school does not have funding to provide home-schooling. It was pointed out that the new OFSTED framework now links Attendance and Behaviour in its judgements, but these are not necessarily related, as indicated by the three pupils above. d. <i>Is the school fully staffed?</i> Yes, following some resignations and new appointments (details in Headteacher's report). 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. The DSLs are monitoring a small number of child protection cases, but these relate to issues outside school. b. The recent ESCC Quality Assurance audit did not raise any concerns or outstanding actions. c. The school is installing a new online filtering system with support from HET. d. Ditchling's Preventative curriculum is being shared by ESCC in other schools. e. Staff have undertaken Asthma training and policies have been revised, including the Emergency Plan, to cover storage and accessibility of medicines. f. The Anti-bullying Policy was shared for consultation and updated for approval this meeting. 3. Quality of Education a. <i>Governors had asked how many pupils are 'home-grown', given the impact outcomes?</i> AC reported on the number of pupils who had been in Ditchling from Reception in this school year: Reception: 100% Year 1: 93% Year 2: 86%	
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	Year 3: 63% Year 4: 43% Year 5: 40% Year 6: 41% b. <i>How many children come from outside the village?</i> An increasing number. The village catchment is quite small and the school's excellent reputation is attracting pupils from further afield. AC expects Reception to be full in September, although numbers of children are low across the county. 4. <i>Is the school confident about this year's outcomes?</i> - A number of intervention sessions had been put in place for Year 6 and AC is confident about good outcomes. JM is a Writing moderator within ESCC. 87% of Reception pupils achieved GLD (Good Level of Development). - AC expects good results in the Year 4 Multiplication Tables Check (MTC), although it was noted how easy it is to make a typo, given the online nature of the test and the required speed. Children must achieve 25/25 or fail. 5. Are the SDP priorities (Big 6) on track? - AC recommends that Write Start remains a priority for next year. This will ensure continued embedding of key writing skills, especially spelling, punctuation, capital letters etc. - 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. Governors agreed that an awareness of non-AI related careers was very beneficial for pupils. - JM has also conducted a Science workshop in the locality for Disadvantaged and SEND pupils. - The school continues to develop a focussed and consistent approach in Maths across the whole school. - The school is on track to achieve the Arts Mark and Geography Mark this year, as well as the Computing Mark. 6. Personal Development The trip to the Big Sing at Wembley was very successful. 7. Behaviour & Attitudes Behaviour is currently good. 8. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Nothing in addition to details in Headteacher's report. 9. SEND and Inclusion HE reported on a positive monitoring visit as the SEND Link Governor (<i>report to follow</i>). 10. Data Update next meeting.	
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11	Governor Monitoring - Governors were reminded to meet with their teacher Subject Leader and report back to the FGB. - HE reported on a positive SEND monitoring visit.	
12	Finance and Nursery update <i>Governors asked for a budget update.</i> School Administrator Michelle Hemes joined the meeting for this item and reported with particular reference to: Finance and Nursery <i>What is the current state of the school budget?</i> The school currently has a profit of c£25K from the Nursery, with a likely surplus of £11K by year end. <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. MH will advertise the Nursery once building work has started. <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 three years, with an eventual anticipated income of up to c£100Kpa. Governors recorded thanks to HET for offering to loan the school the Nursery expansion costs, should a grant not be received. <i>After this meeting governors were very pleased to hear that MH was able to confirm receipt of the full grant of £150K.</i> - MH reported that the school would be taking out insurance to cover teacher (and EYFS staff) absence. The preferred option includes a staff well-being package. - Governors expressed thanks to the PTA for their on-going support and funding, including 32 new laptops and a mud kitchen. - Utility costs have been a bit lower than expected. Governors thanked MH for her report and all her hard work on the Nursery project.	
13	Christian Distinctiveness Vicar vacancy As previously reported GF and LC had still not had a response to letters to the Diocese and the Bishop reminding them of the importance of filling this vacancy for both the school and local community. Governors agreed a stronger approach may be needed. - Governors thanked LC and the church wardens for their on-going support of the school in the absence of a vicar. - LC reported that the Church continues to offer a number of activities for pupils and families, eg Shrove Tuesday pancakes, which fell in half-term and was very well attended. - It is not yet known when the next SIAMS inspection may take place.	
14	Health & Safety/Premises Nothing to report.	

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: 1. AI Policy 2. Anti-Bullying Policy 3. Behaviour Policy 4. Flexible Schooling 5. Key Person 6. Sleep Policy	
16	Strategy Nothing in addition to items above.	
17	Governor training 1. 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. 3. Governors are invited to attend HET training fri 17 July 9.00am-1.00pm	
18	Thanks to the Headteacher Governors thanked the out-going Headteacher for her outstanding and inspirational leadership over the last three years. She has consistently demonstrated and promoted the school's values of kindness, respect and perseverance in a nurturing environment. She has ensured a culture of excellence is expected for staff and pupils and leaves the school in a strong position to move forward. Mrs Clarke will be greatly missed by the whole school community and the governors wished her the very best in her future endeavours. 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> • Governors noted how pupils were supported to achieve their best, as evidenced by the EYFS Lead's Phonics presentation • 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 atmosphere 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 15 May 2026 8:00 The meeting ended at 10.10am	
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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