



Kindness



Respect



Perseverance

'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 15<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at 8.00am at Ditchling School**

**Present:** Mrs Liz Curry (LC), Ms Nikki Elliott (Headteacher, NE), 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

**Absent:** Ms Heather Evans (HE)

**In attendance:** Mrs Verity Brown (VB, Clerk)

| No | Key Points                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Action |
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| 1  | <b>Welcome</b><br>GF invited LC to open the meeting with a prayer.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |        |
| 2  | <b>Apologies for absence</b><br>None. The meeting was declared quorate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |        |
| 3  | <b>Declaration of interests</b><br>No governor declarations at this meeting (in addition to any annual declarations recorded at the first FGB meeting of the year).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |        |
| 4  | <b>Chair of Governors Report</b> ( <i>previously circulated</i> )<br><i>Governors were invited to raise queries on the report.</i><br>GF reported with particular reference to:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. GF was happy to report that incoming Headteacher Nikki Elliott had settled in smoothly and expressed thanks to outgoing Headteacher Amy Clarke for her support in the transition.</li><li>2. GF and NP had attended school during SATS week and were impressed with pupils' behaviour and attitude and the efficient administration of the tests.</li><li>3. GF was sorry to report that Jade Miller would be leaving to take up a Deputy Headship, but governors joined him in congratulating her on a well-deserved promotion. Alice Edwards-Clarke will also be leaving at the end of the school year. NE and GF are working to recruit replacement teachers, with a view to appointing one Early Career Teacher (ECT) and one more experienced. A more experienced teacher is likely to need to give half a term's notice from 31.05.26, so interviews will be held on 22.05.26. Employing an ECT will also cost less for the school budget.</li></ol> |        |

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| 5 | <p><b>Subject Leader Presentation: Computing (Tom DeBanks-Hirst, TDBH)</b></p> <p>TDBH reported with particular reference to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What scheme does the school use?</i><br/>The school uses the Teach Computing curriculum across all year groups from Year 1. This is DfE recognised and regularly updated, including free resources. JM confirmed that the scheme is easy to use and supports teachers well who may not be as confident in IT. In order to further support the teaching of online safety, use of screen time etc, the school also uses Project Evolve from Reception onwards. The schemes offer both online and offline lessons.</li> <li><i>Does the school have enough equipment?</i><br/>Yes, the school recently purchased 32 new laptops.</li> <li><i>What kind of IT support is available?</i><br/>HET now provides IT support and this works well.</li> <li><i>How are pupils made aware of the importance of online safety?</i><br/>Partly through the curriculum, but also through the Year 6 Digital Leaders who devised information to be shared before each lesson. TDBH had circulated a questionnaire to all pupils and shared the results with governors, covering topics including screentime and use of devices at home; sites visited; parental awareness. Governors agreed it would be useful to add further questions, eg 'are you alone when you go online?' It would also be interesting to ask parents similar questions.</li> <li><i>How can the school convey the importance of using devices as little as possible?</i><br/>Latest research shows that any screentime for primary school age children is detrimental. NE reported that HET is planning to launch a new strategy from September. Governors agreed it would also be useful for the school to review its own policy internally, perhaps within a small group of staff and governors, and to share this with parents.</li> <li><i>How is TDBH's role as Computing Lead within HET working?</i><br/>Governors were pleased to hear that Tim Manly asked TDBH to represent HET at a National Society for Education Conference - Fully Human: AI and the Flourishing (Small) School of the Future. This is a new project run by Raspberry Pie for primary schools and as HET Computing Lead TDBH will be able to share his knowledge and expertise across the Trust.</li> <li><i>What is the Computing Quality Mark?</i><br/>TDBH is planning to work towards this award over the next school year to ensure that the school has sufficient evidence of embedded good practice. Two other HET schools are also working towards this, one of which has a dedicated Computing teacher.</li> </ol> <p>Governors thanked TDBH for his informative presentation and success as Computing Lead within HET.</p> |  |
| 6 | <p><b>Year 6 Leaders Presentation: Audio and Visual Leaders</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What are the aims of the Audio and Visual Leaders?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouraging safe use of devices and online safety</li> <li>Supporting teachers and visitors with tech while they are conducting Collective Worship (confirmed by LC and NE)</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>What skills does this develop?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of dangers of social media; over use of devices</li> <li>Troubleshooting while helping with tech support</li> <li>Teamwork</li> <li>Communication skills and confidence, eg helping other pupils understand social media and tech more effectively</li> </ul> </li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |

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|    | <p>3. <i>What is the impact?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safer use of IT in school</li> <li>• Smooth running of Collective Worship</li> </ul> <p>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.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |  |
| 7  | <p><b>Matters affecting GB</b></p> <p><b>1. Review terms of office</b></p> <p>a. Governors noted that RL's term is due to end on 16.06.26. A Parent Governor election will be held after half-term.</p> <p><b>2. Vacancies</b></p> <p>a. GF has found a potential candidate for the Co-Opted Governor vacancy; governors approved the appointment of Graham Knowles, subject to HET ratification.</p> <p>b. A new vicar has been appointed and will join the GB as Ex-Officio Foundation Governor.</p> <p><b>3. GB Link roles</b></p> <p>Will be reviewed in September.</p> <p><b>4. Governor training</b></p> <p>a. Governors are invited to attend HET training on 17.07.26 and were asked to confirm with GF if they can attend.</p> <p>b. Governors were reminded to complete the cyber training module circulated by MH as part of onlien safety monitoring.</p> |  |
| 8  | <p><b>Matters Arising and current school issues</b></p> <p><b>1. Any urgent items/complaints</b></p> <p>None</p> <p><b>2. Review Rolling Action Plan</b></p> <p>No outstanding actions</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
| 9  | <p><b>Approval of minutes of previous meeting</b> <i>(previously circulated)</i></p> <p>Minutes of the FGB meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2026 were approved as a true record, and signed by the Chair.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
| 10 | <p><b>Head Teacher's report</b> <i>(previously circulated)</i></p> <p>Inc School Development Plan (SDP) updates; Self Evaluation (SEF); SIAMS evaluation schedule</p> <p><b>SDP priorities for 2025-26 'Big 6'</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding: Support Mental Health of both adults and children; foster a culture of vigilance and care</li> <li>• Write Start: Focus on foundation skills in Writing across the school; high expectations for clear foundation skills in all Writing</li> <li>• Early Language: Create a language-rich environment that nurtures listening, understanding and confident communication from the earliest stages</li> <li>• Green Minds: Traditional skills in a modern world through our Farm Twinning Project with Plumpton</li> </ul>                                                               |  |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Awareness: Achieve our Artsmark and Geography Quality Mark</li> <li>• Talk Maths: Introduce structured peer discussion during problem-solving and embed oracy in Maths lessons</li> </ul> <p>The 'Big 6' are underpinned by detailed actions from the OFSTED framework headings. NE presented an updated SDP and SEF for this meeting; priorities are largely on track.</p> <p><i>Governors were invited to raise any queries on the Headteacher's report.</i><br/>NE reported with particular reference to:</p> <p><b>I. Safeguarding</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Are pupil numbers stable?</i><br/>Yes, overall.</li> <li><i>Has the new OFSTED framework changed regarding attendance?</i><br/>Yes, this is now linked with Behaviour, so that a school which has excellent behaviour, as does Ditchling, may still be judged negatively in this category because of the poor attendance of a few pupils. Many Headteachers have expressed concern about this.</li> <li><i>Is attendance good?</i><br/>Yes, current attendance figure: 95.2%, above the national average of 94.2%.</li> <li><i>What is being done to address Persistent Absence (PA)?</i><br/>This is currently 7%, largely due to two children with SEND who are currently not attending school while awaiting the outcome of Education Health &amp; Care Plan (EHCP) applications and places in special schools. Although they have to remain on roll at Ditchling, thus affecting the attendance figures, WSCC has now provided some funding towards home tuition which is better for the children and also means that their absence can be reduced for those hours.</li> <li><i>How is the school tackling attendance of SEND and Disadvantaged (Pupil Premium and Free School Meals: PP/FSM) pupils generally?</i><br/>Figures are currently SEND: 89.4%; PP/FSM: 91.5%<br/>National SEND: 92.1%; PP/FSM: 92.4%<br/>There are several factors to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not taking in the two PA pupils, attendance overall for SEND pupils is 94%, above National.</li> </ul> </li> <li><i>Overall the school's demographics are changing with numbers of SEND pupils increasing this year from 17 to 38 and PP from 2 to 13. There is no discernible pattern here, although could be a result of more diagnosis, which in turn could be a result of parents themselves being diagnosed as adults, eg with ADHD.</i></li> <li><i>Does the school accept external private diagnoses?</i><br/>No, the school will only accept a professional Educational Psychologist's diagnosis and these are hard to get privately.</li> <li><i>How does the school tackle the rise in SEND?</i><br/>The most important approach is to ensure timely, time-limited (if not working) and relevant interventions, so that eg a child who might need ear defenders does not just wear them all the time. Equally important is to teach children resilience and coping mechanisms. NE has also observed that children in Years 2 and 3 who have ADHD symptoms may not have reached earlier physical milestones and need to be taught physical resilience. There does not seem to be any significant difference between 'home grown' and incoming children.</li> </ol> |  |
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|           | <p>i. <i>Is it always a good idea to get a diagnosis?</i><br/>Not necessarily, because this can become a label and inhibit resilience, although it was noted It was noted that a diagnosis helps and supports children to be understood. Children also need to cope with the real world. Likewise a lot of current teaching practice is now proven to be good for all children, so everyone benefits from clear structure and instructions etc.</p> <p><b>2. Leadership &amp; Management</b></p> <p>a. <i>Does NE get enough support?</i><br/>Yes, as NE is new in post HET has provided a Headteacher mentor from another HET school.</p> <p>b. <i>Is the new SEF user-friendly?</i><br/>NE has reformatted the schools SEF in line with latest OFSTED guidance and will continue to share the updated document with governors.</p> <p><b>3. Staffing</b><br/><i>How will NE ensure the ongoing smooth running of the school with the forthcoming staff changes?</i><br/>NE will keep the 2026-27 SDP focussed on a small number of key areas in line with new OFSTED criteria, continuing some of this year's and including a new assessment system. NE will ensure that initiatives successfully introduced by outgoing teachers will continue.</p> <p><b>4. Quality of Education</b> <i>(Spring data previously circulated)</i><br/><i>Are there any concerns about outcomes?</i><br/>No, the school expects SATS results to be good. NE is aware of which cohorts need particular focus next year (Years 3 and 5).</p> <p><b>5. Personal Development</b></p> <p>a. NE reported that next year the school will be working towards a Well-Being Award under the auspices of the National Children's Bureau.</p> <p>b. Victoria Mandy is the school's Life Skills Lead and will look at a HET-wide support for well-being. The school's values also underpin the importance of well-being.</p> <p><b>6. Behaviour &amp; Attitudes</b><br/>Behaviour is currently good.</p> <p><b>7. Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)</b><br/>Nothing in addition to details in Headteacher's report.</p> <p><b>8. SEND and Inclusion</b><br/>Nothing in addition to details in Headteacher's report.</p> <p><b>9. Data</b><br/>SATS results next meeting.</p> <p>Governors thanked NE for her detailed report.</p> |  |
| <b>II</b> | <p><b>Governor Monitoring</b><br/>Governors thanked LC for her recent Safeguarding Monitoring reports (02.02.26; 19.03.26 and 27.04.26) and CW's Humanities report (20.03.26).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |

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| 12 | <p><b>Finance and Nursery update</b></p> <p><i>Governors asked for a budget update.</i></p> <p>School Administrator Michelle Hemes joined the meeting for this item and reported with particular reference to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What is the current state of the school budget?</i><br/>The school may be in deficit by the end of the year, but there are no concerns because the nursery income is projected to cover this with a likely future profit of c£80K pa. This money is not ring-fenced for the Nursery and can be added to the main school budget. The deficit is only as a result of the nursery extension expenditure and without this the school would be in surplus, day to day and year to year the school is running within budget. This has not always been the case in the past but now that the school is full this is reflected in the budget.</li> <li>2. <i>What is the current position of the Nursery expansion?</i><br/>A hold-up with building regulations approval has prevented work starting on the nursery construction, but MH continues to chase this and the contractors are ready to start asap.</li> <li>3. <i>What are the likely costs and how will it be funded?</i><br/>These are in the region of c£250K. The school has received grants of £26K and £150K. As one of the first recipients of the whole DfE £150K grant towards setting up a nursery, the DfE is taking a close interest in Ditchling and may visit when it opens. MH anticipates a spend of £10K for furniture etc and has received generous terms from a company. The PTA also offered to fund resources.</li> <li>4. <i>Is HET in support of the Nursery expansion?</i><br/>Yes, HET has been positive, but the school is determined to make a success of the Nursery without needing to ask HET for funding, even if it means there is less profit in the first year, eg if construction is slightly delayed, affecting numbers, and the Nursery has to take on additional staff to meet ratios.</li> <li>5. <i>Are there nurseries at other HET schools?</i><br/>There are a few.</li> <li>6. <i>Are children attending the Nursery guaranteed a school place?</i><br/>Not necessarily, although it is clearly an attraction for parents. When the school's Admissions policy comes up for review again. It may be possible to amend the criteria to guarantee Nursery children a school place.</li> <li>7. <i>How is the Nursery integrated into the school?</i><br/>NE and the Nursery Manager ensure that pupils all start to mix when appropriate, eg during the summer term for Collective Worship, lunch, buddy schemes.</li> </ol> <p>Governors thanked MH for her report and all her hard work on the Nursery project.</p> |  |
| 13 | <p><b>Christian Distinctiveness</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GF and LC were pleased to report that a new vicar will be joining the school and GB. There should be a smooth transition as the local church has maintained and developed the strong links between church and school over the period without a vicar.</li> <li>2. NE pointed out that the school's values had been put into practice in making her very welcome.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |

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| <b>14</b> | <b>Health &amp; Safety/Premises</b><br>GF will conduct a H&S inspection with MH. No concerns.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |       |
| <b>15</b> | <p><b>Policies</b> (<i>HET models where available</i>)<br/>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:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leave Policy (HET)</li> <li>2. Whistleblowing Policy (HET)</li> <li>3. Restrictive Force</li> </ol> <p>NE reported that new DfE guidance requires clearer reporting of the use of force to parents. She will review the guidance alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, as well as a policy from another HET school, share with NP and adapt this for Ditchling for approval next meeting. Governors agreed that a policy should not be too prescriptive, as teachers needed to be able to react with reasonable force and dynamic interventions for the safety of all children and staff.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | NE/NP |
| <b>16</b> | <b>Strategy</b><br>The GB continues to focus on the new Headteacher settling in; the new SEF and the Nursery development.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |       |
| <b>17</b> | <p><b>Vision and ethos</b><br/><i>In what way did this meeting, reflect the vision, values and ethos of the school?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors noted that the school's values, particularly of perseverance, underpinned the importance of teaching all pupils resilience</li> <li>• Governors welcomed the focus on pupil and staff well-being as reflected in the values of kindness and respect</li> <li>• Governors recognised that the school's behaviour is excellent indicating kindness and respect</li> <li>• Governors agreed that all key points were discussed in a welcome atmosphere of openness and were beneficial to supporting the school community.</li> </ul> <p><i>How has this meeting made a difference to pupils at the school?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governors welcomed the school's awareness of the importance of computing and technology, particularly the focus on the safety aspects</li> <li>• Governors welcomed the presentation by Year 6 pupils, noting how the school enabled them to showcase their confidence and presentation skills</li> <li>• Governors were pleased that the school continues to work closely with parents to support their children in the best way</li> <li>• Governors noted that the school's atmosphere of support and openness was reflected among governors, staff and pupils, in particular in welcoming the new Headteacher</li> <li>• Governors were pleased that the Nursery expansion will provide the best start for pupils and enhance the school's offer to the local community.</li> </ul> |       |
| <b>20</b> | <b>Agenda items for next meeting</b><br>SDP review; outcomes; policies inc Restrictive Force; Homework for pupils; White Paper summary; improper use of children's images from school websites.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |       |

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| <b>21</b> | <b>Next meeting dates</b><br>FGB: 10 Jul 8:00<br>The meeting ended at 10.20am |  |
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## Approved

Signed:

Date:

## Rolling Action Plan

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| 15.05.26 | FGB | 15.3 | Restrictive Force Policy | NE/NP |
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| <b>Ditchling FGB meetings 2025-26</b><br>FGB dates: 26 Sep 8:00<br>FGB dates: 21 Nov 8:00<br>FGB dates 16 Jan 8:00<br>FGB dates 20 Mar 8:00<br>FGB dates 15 May 8:00<br>FGB dates: 10 Jul 8:00 | <b>Year 6 Leaders presentations</b><br>Friday 26 Sep – Librarians<br>Friday 21 Nov - School Councillors<br>Friday 16 Jan - News Crew<br>Friday 20 March - Garden Gang<br>Friday 15 May - SATS<br>Friday 10 July - WHAM Leaders, Reflection of Life as a Year 6 |
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