



MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF ABBEY COURT SCHOOL

MINUTES

Date: 20 January 2026 (Meeting 3)

Time: 10.30 am.

Location: Abbey Court School, Rede Court Site

Clerk: Cathy Poole

Attendees: Jon Carthy – JC (Chair)
Jane Hayes (Vice Chair)
Vicky Aspin – VA (Headteacher)
David Field - (DF)
Barry Kemp (BK)
Chloe Knight - (CK)
David Lane - (DL)
Matt Powell (MP)
Claire Richards – (CR)

Apologies: Tim Muggridge - (TM)

In attendance: Cathy Poole (CP) – Clerk

A	STANDARD ITEMS	ACTION
A1	Apologies: Tim Muggridge (TM) Apologies noted and approved	
A2	Declarations of Interest: There were no declarations of interest relevant to this meeting.	
A3	Quorate Confirmed that the meeting was Quorate	
A4	AOB Notified to Chair Additional policy – Finance – circulated and required ratification by FGB. To be considered under Policy/Finance section.	
A5	Minutes of the last meeting Minutes from the last meeting held on 25 November 2025 were verified for accuracy and confirmed as approved and signed by the Chair.	

Signed: Date:
Chair of Governors on behalf of the Governing Body

<p><i>JH asked about the figures for free school meals, the number eligible and the take-up. VA to provide for next meeting.</i></p> <p><i>JH enquired about nursery places due to the number of vacancies. VA confirmed that there were now more nursery pupils joining.</i></p> <p><i>JC enquired about the Government “attendance baseline improvement expectation (ABIE)” being issued to mainstream schools making them more accountable and whether this also applied to special schools. VA confirmed that ABIE did not apply to special schools due to the unique make-up and needs of pupils.</i></p> <p>Staff</p> <p>With the additional two classes from September 2026 an increase in teaching and teaching assistant posts will be required. Currently waiting for approval from the LA regarding increase to PAN and then adverts will be placed.</p> <p>A Lead Farm Teacher has been appointed and new site staff have been appointed.</p> <p><i>JC enquired if recruitment had improved generally. VA confirmed that it had. There was now more supply and sickness cover available although there were still challenges. Interviews are now taking place 4 weekly.</i></p> <p>Parents</p> <p>355 parents attended a range of events over the last term. Aware of how important it is for building strong home-school partnerships the Governors asked for their thanks to be passed to all staff for increasing the opportunities for parents to visit the school.</p> <p>Parent Voice – these meetings are now much more focused and have received positive feedback from parents. The meeting held in December was on the topic of Food. DL attended and will complete a monitoring form.</p> <p>Stakeholders</p> <p>In December the Safeguarding team met with the MASH team to discuss referral practices, triage safeguarding and the challenges of non-verbal disclosures. Abbey Court, MASH and another special school are able to provide some guidance on these issues.</p> <p><i>JH asked if the methods and strategies used by MASH to understand that needs of our pupils had come from Abbey Court. VA confirmed that the guidance included in a jointly prepared document to support social care professionals was created through a meeting with Abbey Court and two other special schools. JH agreed to write to Helen O’Brian of the MASH team (via VA) on behalf of the Governors to thank her for the collaboration.</i></p>	<p>VA</p> <p>DL</p> <p>JH</p>
---	--

<p>B2</p>	<p>The MCH contract has been retendered and the details of the discussion on this are recorded as a confidential minute.</p> <p>Finance Noted that the school is still awaiting receipt of some of the grants and funding for this academic year. VA is following this up.</p> <p>Capital funding – work will be undertaken in February half term on the outside area for FE making it more age appropriate.</p> <p>Rollover is currently about the 8% allowable. Once all monies are received a request will be made to retain these funds to support the growth of the school. No growth fund is provided for special schools.</p> <p>Quality of Education Tapestry has been expanded to include more information on pupils so that there is one place giving a full overview of the individuals.</p> <p>Learning Beyond the Classroom – the school continues to build links within the community.</p> <p>Pupil Aspiration Meetings (PAMs) have been introduced this term – these provide a long term vision for pupils. The meetings held to date have gone well. VA will continue to provide feedback.</p> <p>Complaints <i>JH asked for a status column to be added. VA confirmed that both the complaints referred to had been resolved at Stage 1. A column showing status will be added to future reports.</i></p> <p>Safeguarding Noted that there had been an increased number of pupils accessing Children in Need (CiN) meetings. With a Safeguarding Team of 3 the senior leaders do not have the capacity to attend all meetings – to date there had been 140 meetings.</p> <p><i>JC asked if it was time to consider increasing the size of the Safeguarding Team. VA confirmed that they are looking at options for dealing with this.</i></p> <p>Health & Safety Update Zoe Silvester, Deputy Head presented the Health & Safety update.</p> <p>Medway Local Authority have outsourced the Health & Safety support to WorkNest. This provides access to the following resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert guidance • Centralised compliance • Legal Updates • Audit tools • Improved planning 	<p>VA</p> <p>DL/ZS</p>
------------------	---	--------------------------------------

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to online training and templates. <p>ZS gave an overview of the WorkNest system. ZS and DL will compare NGA checklist and WorkNest when they meet in the near future.</p> <p>An Estates Manager has now been appointed and commences duty on 7 February. He has a career in educational site management. He is qualified in fire safety, traffic marshalling and hydro pools.</p> <p>A new caretaker has been appointed and caretaking hours overall have been adjusted/redistributed to provide operational improvements.</p> <p><i>JC asked if the Health & Safety package included Fire. ZS confirmed that this sits separately but the new system will alert you to check that it has been done. New Estates Manager is qualified to check fire extinguishers.</i></p> <p><i>MP noted that it is now possible to obtain fire extinguishers with an expiry date of 10 years. ZS to investigate.</i></p> <p><i>MP asked about the WorkNest documentation. ZS confirmed that you can upload documents to the system and set up alerts. Currently Abbey Court is set up as one school and WorkNest have been asked to set this up at three separate sites.</i></p> <p>If anyone has further questions following the meeting they should email VA directly.</p> <p>The Governors thanked ZS for her very informative presentation.</p>	
C	POLICIES	
	<p>The following policies were presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English (for information only) – no questions • Learning (for information only) – no questions • PAR (for information only) – no questions • Capability – for ratification - noted this is a Local Authority Policy which has not been updated since 2019. VA had contacted Medway to ask about a review. <p>Agreed that VA will contact Medway again for clarification.</p> <p>Subject to the above the policy was AGREED.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance Policy this policy had been reviewed and updated by the Finance Committee and required ratification by the FGB. On the recommendation of the Governor Finance Committee Members (JC/JH/DL/BK) this was AGREED. 	VA

Signed: Date:
Chair of Governors on behalf of the Governing Body

C	Finance	
	Annual and Three Year Budget Plan Review - AGREED SFVS – APPROVED Finance Policy – AGREED as noted in Section C1	
E	GOVERNING BODY MATTERS & STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES	
E1	Training 2025/2026 DF/BK completed Introduction to Cyber Security & Social Media Awareness’ and ‘Email & Internet Security December 2025’ with Medway Council JH completed Arts & Culture with the NGA December 2025 DF participating in Introduction to Governance on 28 January (NGA) JC completed Stress Awareness and Cyber Security with National College December 2025 Training record to be updated. All Governors to consider other NGA training they might undertake e.g. FGM, Child Exploitation, Prevent etc.	Clerk All Governors
E2	Monitoring and Tasks 2025-2026 Updated and Term 2 monitoring tasks discussed.	
E3	Improvement Plan Update Food –a few Governors had questions such as how are dietary requirements dealt with, allergies, new staff awareness. Agreed that JH would create a list of questions from the Whole School Food training and circulate this to all Governors to add to. This would then be collated and sent to VA for follow-up and discussion at a further meeting when examples could be given and samples provided. JH to update and to be circulated with the Minutes Meeting goals set Noted training, monitoring and actions following meetings are working well. Target for SDP for next year – Arts & Culture	JH JH/Clerk VA/JH
G	CONCLUDING MATTERS	
G1	Any Other Business Nil Meeting closed at 12.20pm.	
G2	Date of next Meeting: Tuesday 10 March 2026 Tuesday (Mtn 4) Cliffe Road, 11.00am	

CP:21/01/2026

Signed: Date:
Chair of Governors on behalf of the Governing Body