



COTHAM SCHOOL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Governing Body

Monday 8 July 2026, 5.00pm - 8.00pm, Room: K102, Cotham School

Governors Present		
Jo Butler (Headteacher), Accounting Officer	Sophie Hamilton (SH), PG	Kirsty Wynne (KW), SG
Sandra Fryer (Chair of Governors), CG	Dora Alderson (DA), MG	Peter Huckle (PH), CG
Rachel Jewell (RJ), CG	Jared Rufus (JR), CG	Susanne Lettau (SL), PG
Graham Nutbrown (GN), CG	Rebecca Reid (RR), PG	Richard Puttick (RP), CG
In Attendance (non-voting)		
Allison Crossland (DoFR/CS), Director of Finance & Company Secretary	Gosia Dreissig (CIGO), Compliance, Information and Governance Officer & Governance Professional	MC, quest/ prospective governor
Chris Reed (CR), Senior Deputy Headteacher		SM, quest / prospective governor
Apologies		
Aimi Potter (AP) Director of Post-16; Paula Bradshaw (PB), MG; Ruth Thomas (RT), PG; Tom Corrigan (TC), CG; Isabel Tobias (IT), MG; Henna Nathwani (HN), CG		
Absence: N/A		
Key: MG = Member Appointed Governor CG = Co-opted Governor PG = Parent Governor SG = Staff Governor	Quorum required: 5 Governors present: 11	

No.	Subject
1.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies The Chair welcomed all present, particularly the new prospective governors, MC and SM, who attended as observers pending the completion of their final compliance checks. Apologies received from AP, PB, RT, TC, HN and IT • Declarations of Interest: None • Items for AoB: reporting governors' absence • Meeting was quorate



2	Minutes of Last Meeting (30 March 2026) The minutes were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record. Decision: Minutes of 30 March 2026 approved as a true and accurate record.
3	Matters Arising and Actions of Last Meeting (30 March 2026) The summary of actions was reviewed. • Annual Conference: Notes are complete. • Skills Audit: Several governors have yet to complete the electronic skills audit. • Training: Links have been sent to those with outstanding required training. • Amend meeting schedule to correctly label Easter holidays (not as "half term"): Complete • Make agreed amendments to Educational Trips and Off-site Visits Policy (affordability reference and front sheet): Complete • Website Pathways: The review of the signposting for parent concerns and formal complaints is currently underway. • External Governance Review: This is in progress and will be coordinated with the audit actions. • Sustainability Lead: SL has been identified as the link governor for sustainability; a specific role description is being reviewed against White Paper suggestions • To review the school's data processors (Suppliers' Audit and Data Processing Census): Complete Actions: - Outstanding governors to complete skills audit by the end of Term 6 - Outstanding governors to complete required training by the end of Term 6
4	Headteacher's Report HT presented the report, which is now structured around the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the School Improvement Plan. Discussion focused on streamlining the report for future meetings. Governors discussed the length and format of the report. Suggestions included: - Adding a highlights/summary section at the front - Streamlining for governance purposes whilst maintaining operational detail for SLT - Focusing on more objective KPIs with measurable outcomes Q: GN raised concerns about whether the emphasis on subject component knowledge adequately addresses the need to equip students with critical thinking skills in the current intellectual climate, particularly regarding misinformation, fake news, and AI. A: Headteacher acknowledged this is a significant challenge across education. The school addresses these issues through citizenship, IT, and PSHE curricula. The new KCSIE guidance (published yesterday) contains updated requirements around educating students on these issues. The school must balance this with ensuring students master fundamental literacy and numeracy skills. Staff confidence in delivering this content varies.



Q: SL asked about student concentration and phone usage.

A: The school maintains a phone-free environment during the school day. Some schools use apps that block distractions during homework time.

Q: DA queried data discrepancy on page 4 regarding identical percentages for Year 9 attainment.

A: CR explained that at Key Stage 3, "working towards" (pathway to grade 3) and "working at" (pathway to grade 5) can result in the same percentage achieving grade 4+, as there is no other pathway to grade 4.

Headteacher shared an update on the Dovetail Orchestra workshop, where refugee and asylum seeker students collaborated with professional musicians to compose and perform an original musical piece.

Q: (PH) Does the uncertainty at Stoke Lodge hamper sports fixtures?

A: Most fixtures are not at Stoke Lodge. Resolution at Stoke Lodge would help staff feel more welcome.

Decision: Headteacher's report received and noted.

Action: HT and SLT to prepare a more streamlined report format with a highlight summary for governors for September.

5 **Approval of the Three Year Budget**

DoFR presented the three-year budget.

Context: The budget has been through three cycles of review at the FPGP committee. Since preparation, the government announced teachers' pay increases, but associated funding details are not yet available. The budget includes 2% for pay increases in year one, 2% in year two, and 2.5% in year three. An additional 1.5% will need to be found, but DoFR is confident additional funding will cover this.

Key Points:

- Year 2 shows improved position due to inclusive mainstream funding
- Increased LSA (Learning Support Assistant) staffing due to incoming Year 7 needs
- Year 3 balanced but challenging, as typical
- Budget includes foreign language assistant for 2026-27 (reviewable annually)
- All three years are balanced despite funding challenges

Q: PH queried the foreign language assistant budget given declining interest in modern languages.

A: DoFR explained this is affordable for 2026-27 and provides targeted GCSE support. The position is reviewed annually and could be reduced if necessary.

Q: PH asked about the Academy Governor reimbursement budget.

A: DoFR explained this covers governor expenses such as conference attendance or school visits. It is rarely fully spent.



	Decision: Three-year budget for 2026-27 to 2028-29 approved.
6	Approval of the Management Accounts DoFR presented management accounts using new software integrated with a new accounting system. <u>The new format provides:</u> - Charts comparing current year spending against previous year - Automated data pulls from accounting system - Easier navigation and monitoring - Good checks for missing data Management accounts for five months (February - June 2026) were reviewed and recommended by FPGP. Decision Summary: Management accounts for 10 calendar months, September 2025 to June 2026 approved by the Full Governing Body.
7	Approval of the RISK Register for 25/26 DoFR and RP presented the risk register for 2025-26 for sign-off ahead of year-end accounts in September. <u>Context:</u> - This is a statutory requirement for audit purposes - The register has had a cursory review but not a full overhaul - RP and RR are working on revolutionising the risk register, reducing it to approximately 11 strategic risks - Strategic risks will be allocated to committees as standing agenda items - A full update will be provided to FPGP on 19 October 2026 Q: The Chair queried the meaning of risk ratings. A: DoFR explained the register shows risk before mitigation (left side) and post-mitigation risk score (right side). Some risks remain red even after mitigation, which typically triggers internal audit procedures or external advice. Q: Does a Risk Register link to Ofsted compliance requirements. A: The risk register covers all aspects of academy risk management including legal entity, governance, curriculum, HR, finance, IT, and cyber security. It is a requirement in the Academy Trust Handbook but is separate from Ofsted action plans. Q: GN noted that "declining quality of teaching and learning" is assigned to the Personnel & Training committee but should also involve Learning & Wellbeing. A: RP agreed to consider splitting the risk to enable component parts to be appropriately allocated to relevant committees. Decision: Risk Register for 2025-26 approved. Full review and updated strategic risk allocation to be presented in autumn 2026.



8	Cotham Playing Fields, Stoke Lodge update The Chair presented the vision for a "Sports Hub" and a new local park at Stoke Lodge. Key issues include the public inquiry for rights of way in October 2026, lease variations, and maintenance of walls/trees. Decision: Update received and noted. School to continue developing sports hub feasibility and partnership options.
9	Governance: chair update <u>9.1 Vacancies and Recruitment:</u> - Two (possibly three by autumn) co-opted governor vacancies - One parent governor vacancy (pending confirmation) - Two potential co-opted candidates identified - MC and SM attending as prospective governors (not yet fully on board) - Third prospective governor lagging in process - GN leaving in autumn unless persuaded to stay <u>9.2 Skills Requirements:</u> Skills list updated to include: communications, marketing, fundraising, and business development. <u>9.3 Succession Planning:</u> - Chair to complete one-to-one conversations about roles for 2026-27 - September FGB will vote in Chair, Vice Chair, committee chairs, and audit chair - SH appointed as Allergy Lead Governor - SL appointed as Sustainability Link Governor <u>9.4 Compliance:</u> CIGO reminded governors to complete outstanding compliance training and skills audits. Auditors assess skills audit completion. Individual reminders have been sent. <u>9.5 Meeting Planner 2026-27:</u> Draft planner discussed. Concerns raised about: Q (Chair): Why is there a large gap in FGB meetings between December and April? A (DoFR/CIGO): December is needed for accounts and September for setup; the gap coincides with the strategy workshop. Decision: Meeting Planner 26/27 taken offline for a final check on FGB meeting distribution. Actions: - Outstanding governors to complete skills audit and training - Chair and CIGO to finalise 2026-27 meeting planner - Chair to finish succession planning conversations with committee chairs.
10	Committee Chairs' Updates and Minutes: <u>10.1 Learning & Wellbeing (GN):</u> Two committee meetings were conducted on 28 April and 30 June: • 28 April meeting:

- Presentation delivered by a Foreign Languages faculty lead
- Updates regarding curriculum assessment reviews
- Review of mock results for Years 11 and 13
- Progress monitoring for Year 7 and Year 10 students
- Enhancements to provision for Reading, LSAs, and English as an additional language
- Reports from individual lead governors
 - 30 June meeting (wellbeing focus):
- Safeguarding update provided by a Safeguarding Lead
- EDI report presented by IT
- Reporting on SMSC, RSE, and British Values
- Briefing on student attendance and punctuality
- Positive update on careers, work experience, and Post-16 destinations
- Behaviour report from Adrian showing a reduction in suspensions
- Deliberation and approval of the Community Cohesion Plan

GN confirmed the committee is successfully monitoring teaching standards, potential risks, and protected characteristics, including SEND, PP, and ethnicity profiles.

GN extended thanks to the staff, Headteacher, and CIGO for their ongoing cooperation.

10.2 Finance, Premises & General Purposes (RR):

- Catering Contract:
 - Conclusion of current contract and completion of the tender process
 - Shortlisting of five bids down to three final presentations
 - Successful Appointment
 - The new provider noted for positive performance at other local schools
 - Priority placed on age-appropriate meal portions
 - External monitoring to be handled by external company
- Cleaning Contract Extension:
 - Finalisation of the existing three-year term
 - Insufficient time to conduct a new tender process
 - One-year extension confirmed
 - New tender for a subsequent two-year contract to commence in the autumn

Decision: FGB ratified the one-year extension of the cleaning contract.

- Policies Approved:
 - Data Protection Policy updated to reflect a new statutory requirement
 - Allergy Policy adopted as a new statutory requirement (Benedict's Law), necessitating staff and governor training
- Premises Update:
 - Significant CIF-funded works resumed after exam pause and remain on track for completion by September

10.3 Personnel & Training (SH):

Meeting discussions focused on:

- Comprehensive staffing report encompassing leavers and service duration
- Arrangements made for supply cover
- Approval of the Governor Recruitment and Governor Induction Policies as key reference material



	- Successful progress reports for ECTs and ITEs approaching qualification <u>10.4 Governors Panel</u> - verbal update from Chair Decision: Updates and minutes from all committees received and noted.
11	AoB <u>11.1 Reporting Governor's absence reminder:</u> RR reminder all governors to post apologies via Governor Hub with at least two working days' notice where possible. For transparency, governors have been asked to add their apologies via GovernorHub by commenting on the notification when committee papers are published. The Chair thanked: - SLT for their work throughout the year - CIGO for keeping the school governance on track - All governors for their contributions - MC and SM for attending The Chair wished everyone a good summer holiday and noted anticipation of August exam results.
12	Next meeting: 21 September 2026

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 19.45.

Approved as correct by the Chair and Board: 21 September 2026