COTHAM SCHOOL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Governing Body

Monday 30 March 2026, 5.00pm - 8.00pm, Room: K102, Cotham School

Governors Present		
Jo Butler (Headteacher), Accounting Officer	Paula Bradshaw (PB), MG	Jared Rufus (JR), CG
Sandra Fryer (Chair of Governors), CG	Ruth Thomas (RT), PG	Henna Nathwani (HN), CG
Rachel Jewell (RJ), CG	Isabel Tobias (IT), MG	Kirsty Wynne (KW), SG
Graham Nutbrown (GN), CG	Sophie Hamilton (SH), PG	Peter Huckle (PH), CG
Susanne Lettau (SL), PG	Dora Alderson (DA), MG	
In Attendance (non-voting)		
Allison Crossland (DoFR/CS), Director of Finance & Company Secretary	Owen Morgan, Deputy Headteacher	Aimi Potter (AP) Director of Post-16
Chris Reed (CR), Senior Deputy Headteacher	Gosia Dreissig (CIGO), Compliance, Information and Governance Officer	
Apologies		
Richard Puttick (RP), CG	Rebecca Reid (RR), PG	
Absence: Tom Corrigan (TC), CG		
Key: MG = Member Appointed Governor CG = Co-opted Governor PG = Parent Governor SG = Staff Governor	**Quorum required:** 5 **Governors present:** 14	

No.	Subject	Who	By when
1.	**Welcome, Introductions and Apologies** • Apologies: RP, RR • Absence: TC • Declarations of Interest: None • Items for AoB: Additional trips approval to be dealt with under item 6 (Educational Trips). DA raised a question about music clubs to be addressed later in the meeting. • Meeting was quorate		

2	**Minutes of Last Meeting** (8 December 2025) The minutes were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record. **Decision:** Minutes of 8 December 2025 approved.		
3	**Matters Arising and Actions of Last Meeting** (8 December 2025) The summary of actions was reviewed.		
4	**Chair's Business Report** <u>4.1 Annual Governor Conference - Reflections</u> The Chair thanked the SLT for an inspiring conference. GN noted Claire Price's emphasis on governors both supporting and challenging leadership, observing that time constraints can limit questioning opportunities. The Chair agreed this was significant - effective governance requires time for questions. RJ suggested governor visits and lead governor roles provide opportunities for detailed questioning beyond full board meetings. **Action:** CIGO to complete conference notes. <u>4.2 Governor Vacancies, Recruitment and Succession</u> Current vacancies: two co-opted governors (possibly three by autumn) and one parent governor (pending confirmation). The Chair has two potential co-opted candidates: a councillor and someone with education experience. DA queried "careful handling" - the Chair explained this means ensuring candidates are not deterred by the significant responsibility. RJ asked about the skills list; the Chair confirmed it reflects board needs (education, legal, finance). RJ suggested adding communications, marketing, fundraising and business development skills. **Decision:** Add communications, marketing, fundraising and business development to governor skills requirements. <u>4.3 One-to-Ones and Skills Audit</u> Some governors haven't completed the skills audit or required training. **Actions:** • Outstanding governors to complete skills audit • Outstanding governors to complete required training	CIGO Outstanding governors	By end of Term 5 ASAP

	<u>4.4 Draft 2026-2027 Meeting Schedule</u> Draft schedule circulated for approval. DA noted Easter holidays incorrectly labelled as "half term." **Action:** CIGO to correct Easter holiday labelling on schedule.	CIGO	By next meeting
5	**Headteacher's report** The report provided updates on Key Performance Indicators in the School Improvement Plan. The Headteacher invited questions, with the SLT members available to answer queries. <u>5.1 Highlights</u> The Headteacher highlighted: ● Extracurricular activities: Significant volume of activities and trips taking place (see Weekly Mailing) ● School improvement: Progress across all priorities, particularly inclusion, curriculum, teaching and learning, SEND and intervention ● Finance: Budget setting underway with limited resources; must cover three years ● Post-16 and exam seasons: Major recruitment efforts; Year 11 and Year 10 in exams; Year 10 preparing for work experience ● INSET day: Positive feedback on sessions covering writing, oracy, misogyny and careers, mostly staff-led <u>5.2 Questions and Discussion</u> IT asked about oracy data capture. OM explained the school developed an assessment rubric based on Voice 21 guidance, capturing physical speaking skills and cognitive aspects through specific descriptors at data drop points. IT asked about student survey themes. CR confirmed focus on behaviour experience, discriminatory events, and school responses to discrimination. 954 students responded (near-full cohort), with results close to or above targets.		

	GN queried data discrepancy (page 13) and cautioned about "cognitive load" terminology. CR clarified KS3 assessment descriptors and explained the term relates to conscious use of language and process. DA asked about the suggestions box themes and welcomed misogyny work. CR confirmed 291 responses grouped into eight topics, with three prioritised. PH praised objective KPIs and asked about extracurricular participation compared to the White Paper's 33% non-participation figure. The Headteacher explained tracking by group rather than individual students; 63.5% report sense of belonging. SL pointed out attending the open mic night last week, which had a fantastic atmosphere with strong student-teacher connections, though noted it lacked diversity and suggested more inclusive events. **Decision:** Headteacher's report received and noted.		
6	**Educational Trips and Off-site Visits Policy - comprehensive review** DoFR introduced the item: The school has not thoroughly overhauled the trips policy for some time. CIGO has since taken on trip checking, staff training, and research to update the policy. The revised policy now properly reflects trip leader requirements and meets compliance, including DfE advice (2018) and OEAP updates, with cross-references where required. A second part covers PE fixtures. The proposal is to streamline parental consent using electronic methods, trialling this with PE fixtures before potentially expanding to all non-high-risk, non-residential trips. CIGO prepared a report explaining the rationale and proposed amendments (shown in red). **Discussion points:** PH praised the policy but raised concerns about the 95% attendance threshold (page 13) for trip eligibility. With whole-school attendance at 92.1%, PP students at 89%, and SEND at 88%, this could disadvantage vulnerable groups.		

	The Headteacher noted the 95% target is historic but aspirational. Pre-COVID it was achievable. In practice, individual circumstances are considered. The policy could say "good attendance" rather than specifying 95%. CR confirmed decisions are case-by-case, and the attendance requirement can motivate improvement over specific periods. IT queried section 4.7 (Emergency Procedures). DoFR explained each trip has a risk assessment and emergency card (Appendix 5, page 35). The Chair suggested: removing historical amendments from the front sheet and adopting as a new policy; adding reference to affordability and the charging policy. CIGO confirmed affordability is addressed through differentiated letters for PP/non-PP students, website information, and the charging policy (referenced on pages 20-21). The Headteacher noted DfE grant funding this year supports disadvantaged students, particularly for kit and equipment. **Decision:** Policy approved subject to: adding affordability reference linking to charging policy; correcting front sheet as new policy adoption. **Actions:** • CIGO to make agreed amendments • CIGO to upload final version to Governor Hub **6.1 PE Fixtures - Electronic Consent Proposal** DoFR explained that PE fixtures create a significant workload. The school wants to increase extracurricular engagement but may not be reaching all parents/carers for consent. Currently, students need one annual consent form covering multiple sports, but not all students return it. New OEAP guidance (November) and DfE guidance on electronic consent enabled the PE faculty leader to develop a Google Form system, similar to the first aid medication consent approach. The electronic form captures all paper form requirements, with responses stored in an auditable spreadsheet linked to parents' email addresses.	CIGO CIGO	Before final publication Within 2 weeks

	The school proposes starting with football fixtures, where many students cannot participate due to unreturned consent forms. This should enable more participation and reduce frustration. JR: Asked whether the similar first aid system increased uptake. DoFR: Confirmed more medication consents were collected.. KW: Asked about options for parents with internet connection issues. DoFR: Confirmed paper forms will remain available for those who prefer them. **Decision:** Electronic consent system for PE fixtures approved. PE staff authorised to implement from Term 5 2026. **6.2 Overnight Trip Approvals** DoFR presented three overnight trip proposals requiring governor approval due to camping/hiking risk elements: 1. Duke of Edinburgh Bronze (April 2026): Camping and hiking, typically in Brecon Beacons or Dorset coast. Well-attended programme with element of risk, particularly hiking 2. Duke of Edinburgh Silver (May 2026): Similar activity and risk profile. 3. Slapton Field Study Centre: Post-16 field trip (60+ students). More support from centre staff than DofE. Students remain within the field centre, not entering the village unaccompanied. The Chair confirmed these are long-running annual trips. Governors asked whether student behaviour should be noted under "contentious/reputational risk" for Slapton. DoFR explained that Slapton is Post-16 with field centre staff support. Students don't leave the centre unaccompanied or access the village/pub. More contained than DofE expeditions with limited staff in remote locations. Governors asked if annual FGB approval is needed for recurring trips. The Chair confirmed that yes, overnight and high-risk trips do require annual approval.		

	CIGO explained that following discussion with Jack Barber (Duke of Edinburgh coordinator), the plan is to add approval of recurring annual trips (Duke of Edinburgh and Slapton) as a standing agenda item at the first FGB meeting in September each year. DoFR: Clarified Slapton runs annually for A Level studies. The trip was booked early but the trip leader decided later by the science team. IT raised funding concerns, particularly for Bronze DofE (prerequisite for Silver/Gold). Asked about financial support for Pupil Premium students beyond the walking boots grant mentioned. DoFR responded that Cotham's DofE is benchmarked at half the price of other schools, making it more accessible. Would check with Jack about specific PP funds but confident support is available. IT expressed governors would be willing to contribute to ensure no student misses out due to cost, given DofE's value. **Decision1 :** Three overnight trips approved: 1. Duke of Edinburgh Bronze (April 2026) 2. Duke of Edinburgh Silver (May 2026) 3. Slapton Field Study Centre (Post-16) **Decision 2:** Recurring annual trips (Duke of Edinburgh, Slapton) to be added as a standing agenda item for approval at first FGB meeting in September from 2026-27 onward.		
7	**Annual Complaints Report 2024-25** CIGO presented the Annual Complaints Report for 2024-25 (13 March 2025 - 13 March 2026). The school received 15 complaints, with 9 resolved informally at stage one. Governors raised concerns about website accessibility for parents distinguishing between general concerns and formal complaints. They suggested clearer pathways to help parents understand when to contact year groups/learning coordinators versus making formal complaints, to avoid inadvertently widening the complaints route.		

	CIGO explained that the informal stage allows for listening to parent concerns, which resolves most issues. Governors recommended adding clearer signposting on the website to direct parents appropriately. **Action:** The Headteacher and CIGO to review website pathways for parents raising concerns vs formal complaints, ensuring clear signposting. **Decision:** Annual Complaints Report 2024-25 received and noted. Next report due September 2026, moving to an annual reporting cycle.	Headteacher and CIGO	By end of Term 5
8	**Management Accounts** DoFR presented the management accounts on behalf of the FPGP Chair, who was not present. DoFR explained the approval process: The management accounts for November (Period 3) were uploaded to Governor Hub for the required length of time for the Finance, Premises and General Purposes (FPGP) committee to review and post any questions or statements. The management accounts were then taken to the FPGP meeting. No questions or statements were raised, and the committee accepted the management accounts. SF, as Chair, accepted the management accounts in her role. The next stage is for the Full Governing Body to receive the recommendation and approve them, which is part of the Trust Handbook process. DoFR offered to take any questions that might arise from governors seeing them for the first time. **Decision:** Management accounts approved by the Full Governing Body.		
9	**Letter of Representation for Bishop Fleming - End of Year Accounts** DoFR presented the proposal to continue using Bishop Fleming as external auditors for year-end audit and accounts preparation. The school must annually decide whether to continue with external auditors. Accounts are published on the school website, submitted to the DfE, and sent to Companies House.		

	Bishop Fleming has been used for several years, with the last tender process approximately two years ago. **Decision:** Full Governing Body approved the appointment of Bishop Fleming as external auditors for 2025-26.		
10	**Cotham Playing Fields, Stoke Lodge Update** <u>10.1 Current Use</u> A solution has been proposed: full return to the fields in autumn/winter months, with majority use during Terms 5 and 6 due to curriculum changes focusing on athletics and field sports (more students and staff present simultaneously). <u>10.2 Public Rights of Way Inquiry</u> The inquiry regarding public rights of way will begin 6 October 2026 at City Hall over several days. <u>10.3 CCTV and Fencing</u> The permanent CCTV planning application should be submitted this week. The application will take approximately three months total (8-week planning period plus committee decision). The fence is currently in place with daily checks by the site facilities team. <u>10.4 Roundtable Meeting</u> Following the Economy and Skills Committee meeting, a roundtable was held in early December.		
11	**Committee Chairs' Updates and Minutes** The committee chairs shared an overview of their last meetings. It has been agreed to add the Post-16 report to the committee chairs' updates. **Decision:** Committee Chairs Updates and Minutes received and noted.		

12.	**AoB** 12.1 Trips for approval Discussed under Point 6. 12.2 Music Clubs DA enquired about music clubs that might appeal to students not interested in traditional instrumental lessons. The Headteacher confirmed the school offers choir, instrumental ensembles, and music technology clubs. The music technology and production clubs use digital tools and are open to all students. The challenge remains engaging students who don't see themselves as traditionally "musical". All opportunities are advertised via the Weekly Mailing and Tutor Time announcements.		

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 20:38.

Approved as correct by the Chair and Board on 8 July 2026