COTHAM SCHOOL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Governing Body

Monday 8 December 2025, 5.15pm - 8.00pm, Room: K102, Cotham School

Governors Present		
Jo Butler (Headteacher), Accounting Officer	Rachel Jewell (RJ), CG	Paula Bradshaw (PB), MG
Sandra Fryer (Chair of Governors), CG	Graham Nutbrown (GN), CG	Ruth Thomas (RT), PG
Rebecca Reid (Vice-Chair), PG	Richard Puttick (RP), CG	Isabel Tobias (IT), MG
Tom Corrigan (TC), CG	Sophie Hamilton (SH), PG	
In Attendance (non-voting)		
Allison Crossland (DoFR/CS), Director of Finance & Company Secretary	Owen Morgan, Deputy Headteacher	
Aimi Potter (AP) Director of Post-16	Gosia Dreissig (CIGO), Compliance, Information and Governance Officer	
Apologies		
Susanne Lettau (SL), PG	Dora Alderson (DA), MG	Ian Spencer (IS), CG
Henna Nathwani (HN), CG	Jared Rufus (JR), CG	Lucy Hunt (LH), MG
Absence: N/A		
Key: MG = Member Appointed Governor CG = Co-opted Governor PG = Parent Governor	**Quorum required:** 5 **Governors present:** 11	

No.	Subject	Who	By when
1.	**Welcome, Introductions and Apologies** ● **Present/Apologies:** ○ Apologies: SL, HN, DA, JR, IS (IT and RJ early departure noted) ○ LH's absence recorded ● **Declarations of Interest:** None ● **AoB:**		

	○ DA re-appointed as governor (3 of 5 members) via ordinary resolution - covered under Governor update. • **Meeting was quorate**		
2	**Minutes of Last Meeting** (22 September 2025) • **Corrections noted:** ○ RP's status to be corrected to co-opted governor (no longer parent governor) ○ Governor vacancy numbers to be updated ○ Governance panel description to be clarified as a standing panel drawn from the governing body, constituted as needed **Decision:** Minutes of 22 September 2025 approved subject to corrections noted above. **Action:** CIGO/Chair to amend minutes (RP's category; governance panel clarification) - By end of Term 2	**CIGO/ Chair**	**End of Term 2**
3	**Matters Arising and Actions of Last Meeting** (22 September 2025) CIGO reported on the existing action log (see page 11).		
4	**Headteacher's report** The Headteacher presented the report, structured against School Improvement Plan KPIs. **4.1 Behaviour and Yonder Phone Pouches** • **Improved behaviour reported**, with Yonder pouches believed to be a contributory factor alongside curriculum work, teaching quality, and behaviour management strategies. • Implementation: Introduced last summer with limited initial issues. The majority of students and parents now support the system. • Operating model: Students keep phones in locked pouches in bags. Lost pouches must be paid for; phones without pouches go to school safe. • **Impact:** Reduction in behaviour incidents, particularly among girls, possibly linked to reduced social media conflict. **4.2 School Improvement Partner (SIP) - Claire Price** • Claire Price (ex-HMI) commissioned for multiple days across the year.		

	● Work includes: Faculty reviews, safeguarding audit, quality assurance systems, Post-16 and curriculum support. ● **Outcome:** Curriculum review validated current strengths and identified areas for refinement; no major weaknesses revealed. **4.3 Curriculum, Assessment and Feedback** ● Summative assessment developing differently across subjects; data drop points coordinated across year. ● Feedback practices: Mix of whole-class and individualised feedback, varying by subject. Aim to refine under a responsive teaching model. **4.4 Home Learning and Digital Platforms** ● Homework expectations: Set on Google Classroom/digital platforms. ● Challenges: Consistency varies by faculty; some students complete work on phones. ● Support: The school has ample IT resources and a homework club in the library. Communication with families about resources to be improved. ● Marking approach: Digital platforms (e.g., Sparx for maths) auto-mark where possible. Not all homework can be fully marked, but should be acknowledged and discussed in class. **4.5 Library and Reading Strategy** ● The library was highlighted as "jewel in the school's crown" by governors - well-resourced, attractive space central to reading strategy and intervention. **Decision:** Report received and noted.		
5	**Annual Report and Accounts - Deferred** **Decision:** Approval deferred to FP&GP Committee meeting on 15 December 2025, 17:00 (virtual). ● Chair and Headteacher must attend; quorum is three governors. ● FP&GP delegated to approve 2024-25 annual report and accounts. ● Summary to be reported back to the next FGB.		
6	**Chair's Business Report** ● **Remuneration Committee** ○ Recent meeting held with RP and RJ. ○ Reviewed staff appraisal, support and development frameworks.		

	◦ **The chair commended** the strength of the school's staff development and appraisal processes. ◦ **Future approach:** Pair senior governor with less experienced governor for capacity building. • **Headteacher's Appraisal** ◦ Held with the Chair, GN, SL and Claire Price (external adviser). ◦ Claire's feedback: Outstanding strategic leadership; governors ask probing, high-level questions; Headteacher's leadership highly effective. • **Strategy and Annual Governor Conference (AGC)** ◦ **Date agreed:** 16 March 2026, 17:00-20:00 ◦ **Content:** Whole-school business update, likely input from Claire Price on governance and school improvement, potential additional external voice, possible audit and risk work. ◦ **Action:** Chair to request volunteers after Christmas for planning. • **Governor Vacancies, Recruitment and Succession Planning** ◦ LH: Term ends 13 December 2025; thanks recorded for significant contribution. ◦ Peter Huckle: Returning as co-opted governor, focusing on Learning & Wellbeing. GN and Peter to discuss roles and feedback mechanisms. ◦ SH: Parent governor term ends 20 March 2026. **Decision:** FGB agreed to co-opt SH from end of current term (new term: 21 March 2026 to 20 March 2030). **Decision:** FGB agreed to co-opt Peter Huckle by the end of Term 3 2026. **Decision:** FGB agreed that TC will be recommended as a member appointed governor by the end of Term 3 2026. • **Resulting vacancies** ◦ One parent governor vacancy (once SH co-opted) ◦ Two co-opted vacancies remain (one taken by Peter) ◦ IS's position to be reviewed nearer March term end **Staff governor election:** Currently underway, closes Wednesday.		
7	**Internal Audit Update** RP presented audit updates on: • **Information Security Audit**		

	◦ Overall risk score: Improved from 89% to 92%; most areas low risk with strong compliance. ◦ Actions: Eight generated; two in progress, two under investigation at time of reporting. ● **Safeguarding Review** ◦ Conducted by: School Improvement Partner ◦ Findings: Strong safeguarding practices, clear policies, well-understood staff responsibilities, strong culture effectively discharging statutory duties. ◦ Actions: 14 generated; 10 completed during review, three in progress, one pending. ● **Curriculum Review** ◦ Led by: Claire Price (School Improvement Partner) ◦ Findings: Curriculum securely "good" with strengths in decolonisation and faculty leadership. Variation exists between faculties. ◦ Focus: Ensuring all staff understand component knowledge; refining curriculum and assessment rather than wholesale changes. ◦ Actions: Six identified; two completed, four in progress (some spanning four half-terms across academic year). Comprehensive update at year-end. ● **Integrating Audit Actions with Risk Register** ◦ **Decision:** All outstanding audit actions to be incorporated into the risk register with clear annotations showing origin. ◦ Aligns with July 2023 governance review recommendation and Academy Trust Handbook requirements. ◦ Eleven strategic risks produced; to be allocated to committees as standing monitoring items. ◦ Action: CIGO and RP to refine risk register formatting/numbering - By end of term ● **Outstanding audits** ◦ Attendance and SEND/Inclusion audits remain in the backlog. ◦ FP&GP to discuss scope and commissioning, potentially involving Claire Price. ◦ Note: SEND audit to be framed broadly around inclusion and disadvantaged students.		

8	**Terms of Reference (ToR) and Scheme of Delegation (SoD) for approval** **Terms of Reference (ToR) - Key Changes:** ● FGB ToR: Parent governor number corrected to 4 (not 6) ● "Governance Appeals" renamed "Governance Panel" ● Remuneration Committee: To have own column/entry as core board function (not within governance panel) ● Headteacher appraisal: Remains FGB/Chair function; not under governance panel ● Question marks in "website" column to be removed **Scheme of Delegation - Key Changes:** ● "Appeals" committees updated to "Governance Panel" where appropriate ● Row added: FGB determines appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair ● Row added: FGB determines school's vision, values and ethos ● Audit Committee renamed "Audit and Internal Scrutiny Committee" ● Attendance policy explicitly allocated to Learning & Wellbeing Committee ● Note: Not all website policies are governor-approved statutory policies; some are SLT-approved for parent information **Decision:** Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation approved. **Action:** CIGO to update ToR and SoD as per suggestions.	CIGO	Before uploading to website

9	**Policies - For Approval / Review**
	CIGO presented updated documents for approval:
	● **Code of Conduct (Governors)**
	  ○ Migrated to standard school policy template
	  ○ Minor formatting changes only; content matches last year's version
	Decision: Governor Code of Conduct policy approved.
	● **Admissions Arrangements for 2027 Entry -** proposed changes:
	  ○ **Proposed change:** Published Admission Number (PAN) reduced from 243 to 240
	  ○ Rationale:		

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Supports planned move from 9 to 8 tutor groups per year
Maintains staff numbers through natural wastage
Additional growth targeted in post-16 recruitment
3-place reduction per year ensures class size and staffing models work across five years

Corrections required:

Application deadline and related dates to be updated to 2026 dates for 2027 intake (exact date to be confirmed with Bristol City Council)
Clarification needed on "school's joint area" and priority area terminology (Bristol City Council to confirm meaning and correct use)

Decisions:

FGB approved PAN reduction from 243 to 240 for September 2027 entry
FGB approved admissions arrangements in principle, subject to date corrections and terminology clarification from Bristol City Council

Actions:

CIGO to adjust admissions policy dates after LA advice - Before final policy issue
CIGO to email Bristol City Council re: "school's joint area" definition - Before final policy issue

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First set of Management Accounts for the financial Year September 2025 P1

First set of management accounts for the financial year to September 2025 was presented (papers circulated).
No specific concerns or queries minuted.

Decision: Management accounts approved by governors.
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Cotham Playing Fields, Stoke Lodge Update

Recent Decisions

Economy and Skills Committee voted not to enforce claimed public right of way

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	◦ Article 4 Direction proposal not taken forward ◦ These sit alongside school's earlier High Court victory ◦ Supreme Court appeal by objectors not allowed ◦ Public Inquiry: Public rights of way issue to be examined at Planning Inspectorate Public Inquiry, expected October 2026 • **CCTV Planning Application** ◦ Application submitted for CCTV at Stoke Lodge ◦ Decision being made by Planning Inspectorate ◦ Public consultation period: comments invited until 17 December 2025 • **Fence Damage and Site Security** • **Community Relations** ◦ Roundtable meeting arranged by the City Council for school and campaign representatives ◦ Future plan: Establish broader Stakeholder Forum, chaired by independent person • **Future Use of Fields** ◦ School published planned usage policy and indicative plans on website ◦ Ongoing conversations with local sports clubs about returning to Stoke Lodge ◦ Intention: Return PE lessons and organised sport to fields when safe and practical; ensure use benefits students, partner clubs, and wider community		
12	**Committee Chairs Updates and Minutes** **Learning & Wellbeing** • Teaching and Learning focus (23 September): ◦ Exam analysis and assessment data reviewed ◦ Strong GCSE results; confidence in teacher assessment accuracy ◦ Strong progress of EAL students ◦ Some subjects with lower grades identified; improvement strategies in place ◦ Post-16: Strong results for pupil premium students; significant Maths/English retakes (inclusivity measure) • **Wellbeing-focused meeting (11 November):**		

	○ Safeguarding, attendance, RSE, and English faculty review discussed ○ Attendance policy reviewed and approved (change in late coding) ○ Behaviour: Increase in suspensions noted ○ Behaviour policy ratified, now explicitly referencing mobile phones/Yondr pouches and misogynistic discrimination **Finance, Premises & General Purposes (FPGP)** ● **Governance roles:** ○ RP appointed Vice-Chair of FPGP; remains Chair of Audit ○ Chair of FPGP to act as Vice-Chair of Audit for resilience ● **Key updates:** ○ Premises: Asbestos audit works completed; HSE survey passed with minor non-asbestos observations ○ IT investment: DDoFR presented new ICT spend proposal; to develop updated IT investment plan ○ Insurance: Positive progress on damage claims; anticipated coverage with ~£500 excess ○ Data protection and Health & Safety policies: Reviewed, updated and approved ○ Pupil numbers: In line with previous year; DfE census audit positive **Personnel & Training (P&T)** ● Teachers' Pay Award: Joint finance/personnel meeting approved pay award and multi-year recommendations ● Retention: Biggest challenge is retention (mirroring national trends); leavers typically moving for promotion or retirement ● Governor recruitment: IT and DA to review recruitment form to ensure safer recruitment standards without deterring candidates ● Safer recruitment: School follows KCSIE and safer recruitment guidance		
13	**AoB:** ● **Christmas lunch and staff celebration:** End-of-term event planned for staff; governors invited and asked to donate raffle prizes.		

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 20:00

Approved as correct by the Chair and Board on 30 March 2026