

'ST MARTIN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS

Local Governing Body – Minutes of Meeting held on 19th May 2025 at 5.00 pm

Governors present:

Mrs M Down (MD)
Mrs R Duff (RD)
Mrs A Keith (AK)
Mrs K Marchesi (KM)
Mrs C McNab (CM)
Mrs P Roy (PR)
Ms E Smit (ES) (from 5.13 pm)
Mrs J Taylor (JT)
Mr D Wilkinson (DW)

In attendance:

Mrs T Jones (TJ) Clerk to the Governors
Clare Wynn-Mackenzie (CWM) Prospective Governor
Zoe Lever (ZL) ELT, Chief Finance Officer (from 6.10 pm to 6.27 pm)

* The Co-Headteachers (Mrs M Down and Mrs K Marchesi) share the role of Headteacher governor but count once towards a quorum and have a single vote where the Local Governing Body needs to vote on a matter.

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies for absence from this meeting had been received and were accepted from Revd N Parish (NP). No governors joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams. The meeting was in quorum

Declarations of Interest and confidentiality

2. The LGB noted the confidentiality reminder and St Martin's Vision, which was central to all that was done at the School. No governors declared interests in the agenda items for this meeting.

Governor training – Governor role in Admissions panels

3. AK led training on the Governor role in Admissions panels. Anonymised paperwork for one historical case was provided and AK gave an overview of the case which had been presented for appeal and approach to the School response at the Panel meeting. Background was given also on the steps prior to appeal and governor role. A governor with experience of appeals was asked to attend with the Co-Headteacher and represent the school at Panel hearings. ES joined the meeting part way through the training.
4. Key points from the training are summarised separately and available for reference and future governor training.
5. The Chair encouraged volunteers to sit on the School Admissions Committee, which considered applications and their ranking according to the oversubscription criteria defined in the Admissions Policy. At this stage in the process, the priority was to consider applications and rank them fairly in accordance with the Admissions Policy and agree a response letter which clearly set out the reasons for not upholding the case made by the parents. It was hoped that the parents would feel they had been heard, understand the decision and not appeal their application.
6. MD underlined the importance of the work of the Appeals Committee and said that appeals were both time consuming and expensive.
7. CM asked **if parents could appeal to a higher level if their appeal was not upheld**; there was an opportunity to appeal to the ombudsman, but this did not involve the School as Surrey prepared the paperwork, and the School only knew if the child was awarded a place as a result.
8. DW asked **whether staff found out if there were parallel appeals being lodged with other schools**; the Schools were rarely made aware of this.

9. KM commented that St Martin's publicised its admissions process and advised parents to include several schools on their application forms, to avoid being given a school which they did not want, as this could lead to appeals.
10. JT thanked AK for undertaking this role in the past and for delivering the training to support governors to be confident in this role.

Safeguarding refresher

11. MD led governors through four scenarios and invited governors to discuss the safeguarding issues in the scenarios presented and appropriate School response.
12. Governors **welcomed the opportunity to consider in greater depth how safeguarding operated at St Martin's** and felt that the examples supported their role in oversight of safeguarding. It was agreed to include discussion of safeguarding scenarios in the agenda for the summer 2 meeting. **Action: TJ**

Governance information

13. The LGB noted the governor membership status reported in the agenda for the meeting. AK's term of office as Foundation governor would end in June 2025 and she had given notice that she did not wish to be re-appointed. JT recorded thanks to AK for her contributions and support as a Governor.
14. There were three vacancies for Foundation Governors, an additional vacancy for a Foundation Governor would arise at the end of June and a further vacancy with effect from end of the academic year.
15. TJ had contacted unsuccessful parent candidates to invite them to consider putting themselves forward as candidates to fill the Foundation Governor vacancies and a previous candidate for election, Clare Wynn-Mackenzie, was in attendance as an observer at this meeting. TJ clarified that Foundation Governors were appointed by the Trust Board and needed to confirm their commitment to uphold the Christian character of the School in their application form. NP would meet with CWM to discuss this.
Action: NP
16. RD advised that she would step down as Staff Governor at the end of term as she was leaving the School. A staff governor election would be held in summer 2.
Action: TJ
17. DW asked if **it was possible to change the categories of governor to enable more parent governors to be appointed**. TJ clarified that the constitution of the LGB was defined in the LGB Terms of Reference and it was not possible to increase the number of parent governors, although parents could be appointed as Foundation Governors subject to being able to demonstrate their Christian commitment. TJ would consider options for reducing the size of the LGB.
Action: TJ
[Post meeting clarification; The agenda for the next meeting will include consideration of the size of the LGB and whether to fill all governor positions (subject to ensuring that the specifications in the Local Governing Body Terms of reference are met)].
18. ES said that it would be good to appoint a new Safeguarding Governor to shadow her in the role before she stepped down at the end of the academic year. ES had put together a framework to support monitoring of safeguarding by the Link Governor and volunteered to support handover if required after the end of the academic year. The LGB **welcomed this offer and thanked ES for her support**.
Action: ES

Chair's Actions and other Urgent Business

19. JT had approved the revised Positive Behaviour Policy on behalf of the LGB. No emergency actions or decisions had been taken as Chair's Actions on behalf of the Governing Body since the last LGB meeting.

Leadership report

20. Governors received the Leadership report showing data for the spring term. MD highlighted that the change in distribution of the pupils with SEND reflected the transition of the previous year Year 2 into Year 3 and that both Ofsted inspection teams had praised the schools for their actions to improve attendance and commented that staff knew the children well. Although attendance rates were higher than local and national data, school leaders continued to be ambitious for improvement.
21. AK asked **whether the reasons for absences were similar for all pupils**; there were a variety of reasons for absence from school and examples were quoted. AK asked **what the school's response would be where a pupil premium family requested term time leave to take advantage of an off-peak holiday they had been offered**; MD said this could be difficult, as such trips could be educational

and beneficial to the families. Term time absence to visit attractions could also be a way for children with special needs to have these experiences. [Noted as demonstration of taking account St Martin's values in decision-making.]

22. JT commented on the impact on learning and that a two-week period of absence led quickly to children meeting the threshold for persistent absence as shown in the graph in the report. CWM asked **how the longer autumn half term would affect attendance figures**; schools which had already introduced this reported a positive impact on absence on account of sickness but there could be a challenge to manage autumn term time holidays as holiday companies were likely to increase their charges with increased demand.
23. DW asked **whether absences associated with attendance at open days and test days for private schools were authorised**; such absences were authorised but still impacted the school attendance data negatively.
24. Governors **congratulated the schools on the improved attendance rates and its strong data compared with that of other local schools**.
25. Governors asked MD to clarify in future reports data for pupils on reduced or partial timetables.
Action: KM
26. JT **welcomed the improved trend for complaints and concerns evident from the data**; governors noted that staff training had improved relations with parents and teachers dealing with concerns sent a message to parents that the school took their concerns seriously and could avoid progression to the next stage. JT asked the Co-head teachers **to pass on governors' thanks for their role in addressing concerns which had led to improved data**.
27. CM asked **whether it had been helpful to publish email addresses for year groups**; this was not new, and it was thought that the improvement resulted from a mix of initiatives, including use of year group emails, grasping opportunities for informal catch-ups and speaking face to face rather than through email. AK asked **if parents' use of WhatsApp groups to escalate issues had reduced**; the PTFA had undertaken some work to clean up the less official WhatsApp groups and ensured that a member was involved in class WhatsApp groups to support this.
28. Governors received an update on changes to staffing and their financial impact and welcomed where staff moving for promotions and new opportunities.
29. A verbal update was given on progress on EDI which was embedded in the School's SIP. Governors had seen evidence of the inclusive practice, for example through reference to children's heritage and languages in all classrooms.
[Post meeting note: An update has been posted to the summer 1 meeting folder].

Finance

30. ZL joined the meeting online at this point and reported changes to the current financial landscape, impacting the current position shown in the March management accounts and budgeting for future years. The LGB noted that financial uncertainties and tight budgets continued, despite all the efforts to make significant savings over the past two years.
31. The early draft budget presented projected an overall deficit of £90k for 2025-25 and reserves would be in deficit in 2027-28, and in-year deficits projected in the early draft would need to be addressed. The leadership team continued to work and think creatively to reduce costs, As an example changes to staffing response to the vacancy for a SENCO, arising at the end of the summer term, would have a positive impact on the budget.
32. ZL highlighted as a sector-wide issue the discrepancy between the increase in per pupil funding this year of 0.5% compared with increased staffing costs, utilities and general inflation, which would squeeze expenditure on costs which were not fixed. Governors welcomed the expectation for Reception admissions, and resulting improvement to the budget expected from 2026-27. ZL, MD and KM would continue to refine the budget for presentation to the Finance committee on 20 June 2025.
33. Governors acknowledged the need to monitor the financial situation and the need to ensure that financial decisions are taken in line with St Martin's values and are not to the detriment of St Martin's. The LGB **expressed support for the Leadership team faced with further difficult decisions** and thanked the Co-Head teachers and the finance team for their support to address the budget issues and ZL for the clarity of her report.
ZL left the meeting at this point.

34. Regarding the risk recorded in respect of the contract with the catering company, AK said that **the arrangement may be affected by St Martin's not being part of a bigger group and how other local schools had responded**; two local schools had benefitted from a joint approach to secure a better arrangement with a different provider. MD highlighted issues and said that the Trust was in discussion with the company regarding the sum due from the school which was £10k higher than advised. Governors supported **the school in ensuring that the lunch time experience for pupils was not compromised through cost cutting measures.**

Safeguarding

35. Governors noted the data reported in the Head teacher's data report and that the increase in incidents related to the fact that staff were recording all incidents on CPOMs, in line with the safeguarding audit, whereas lower-level incidents had previously been filtered out.
36. Governors asked **whether this also reflected increased contact from social workers** and MD confirmed that there had been an increase in such contacts, reflecting the wider need in the community. ES said that this also reflected social work reforms and the approach to involve schools at early help level.
37. AK noted that the school passed on relevant safeguarding data to new settings as required and in line with St Martin's ethos of putting children at the heart of this process and that staff knew pupils' contexts well. MD said that internally, this communication between class teachers supported smooth transition for the children.
38. ES reported that her planned spring term Safeguarding visit had been delayed by the Ofsted inspection but she had conducted a safeguarding visit in May and highlighted the increased reporting of incidents, the value of CPOMs particularly in producing chronologies of incidents to support decision-making and on her meetings with groups of children from KS1 and 2. ES had been assured regarding the strong safeguarding culture at the Schools and would provide a written report to governors. **Action: ES**
39. ES said that pupil voice indicated that pupils felt safe at the schools, with children from key stage 1 saying that they liked their teachers, who were kind and friendly. The children had raised concerns about the possibility of the school burning down, of foxes getting into the school grounds and about people who do not belong in the school, such as visitors. Leaders thought that concerns may relate to two recent fire alarms and recent visitors, such as for open mornings. ES reported positive feedback from discussion with KS2 pupils about what they had learnt about keeping themselves safe, including e-safety and relationships.
40. ES offered to share the annual planner she had developed and set of safeguarding questions for teachers to support the incoming Safeguarding link governor and interested Governors who were invited to discuss the role with ES or JT. TJ underlined the value of this offer and of being able to shadow the outgoing Safeguarding Link governor if possible. **Action: ES**
41. Governors identified a correction to the Trust Safeguarding Audit Report which referred to St Martin's as a primary and secondary school and requested clarity in reports about the whole of the Trust so that they are aware of points which relate to St Martin's (particular reference was to the Trust Safeguarding audit report). MD reported that as a follow up action, St Martin's would ensure that written procedures in relation to the Prevent Strategy were in place.

Estates, Health and Safety and Compliance

42. The LGB noted that Health and safety data for the Spring term 2025 would be presented to the summer 2 meeting and the establishment of a new School Health and Safety committee in accordance with the new H&S policy agreed by the Trust. The Committee covered H&S across the school, was attended by representatives from all parts of the school and attendance would support governor monitoring of this area.
43. CM volunteered to sit on the panel to select new caterers. **Action: CM**
44. No questions were raised on JT's written report from her visit to monitor premises, health and safety.

Reports from Governor monitoring and visits

45. Governors were invited to raise questions on reports and Governor links to highlight key points from their meetings to seek assurance of priorities. CM reported that ZL had responded in the paperwork presented to this meeting to the questions she had raised.

46. AK would add to the written report from her visits to seek assurance of Christian Distinctiveness a note that NP had attended relevant training and share her written report with governors. **Action: AK**
47. Governors were invited to suggest a focus for the Governor learning walk to monitor school improvement plan (SIP) priorities in practice which would take place from 9.00 am on 24 June 2025. It was suggested that the teaching and learning focus include writing and seeing how practice supported SEND pupils in classes. In addition, the morning would be an opportunity to see evidence of spirituality and St Martin's Christian character, in preparation for the SIAMS visit. MD would provide a suggested framework for the morning. **Action: MD**
48. JT would combine the learning walk with her monitoring visit on Teaching and Learning and report after that meeting.
49. The LGB noted the need to appoint a substantive Link Governors for Health and Safety and Safeguarding and new governors were encouraged to consider which of the roles they would like to take on for 2025-6. **Action: PR/DW**
50. No questions were raised from Governors the Link meetings but Governors noted challenges in of scheduling and attendance at these meetings.

Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

51. The draft minutes of the previous meetings of the Local Governing Body held 12 May 2025 were approved as an accurate record for signature by the Chair. The updates on actions arising from the previous minutes was noted. MD would share the SEND mapping document for 2025-26 for the new academic year. **Action: MD**

Policies

52. The Local Governing Body noted the Trust-wide Communication Policy, Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme and Records Management Policy approved by the Trust Board since the last meeting,
53. The LGB confirmed the Positive Behaviour Policy, which updated the policy seen in the spring term and had been agreed by the Chair between meetings, and approved the Health and Safety Policy, based on the Trust template, the Accessibility Plan and the Relationships and Behaviour Policy.
54. CM asked whether the school conducted a lockdown drill; a lockdown drill was conducted with staff but not with children as leaders had seen this practice impact pupils negatively.

Governance Update, training

55. Governors discussed the Link meetings and new governance structure and noted the following feedback to the Trust:-
- the flat structure (no committees) with twice termly meetings of all members works well.
 - Governors were concerned that the link governor model and Link meetings were challenging to schedule, and not best use of their time, given that this is limited and Governors would rather devote their time to their own school.
 - The LGB felt that newer or inexperienced governors can learn more from other governors at the school they are appointed to.
56. The LGB suggested that the approach could benefit from ensuring that agendas for the Link Governor meetings were focused on discussion of a particular question which was published ahead of the meetings (what safeguarding measures does your school have in place in respect of visitors to the school).
57. Governors valued the training opportunities from NGA membership.

Confidential matters

58. Part 2 confidential matters are recorded separately.

Meeting evaluation

59. Governors felt that discussion at this meeting had demonstrated focus on the St Martin's vision in decision-making at the school.

Date of next meeting

60. The next meeting of the LGB would take place on 18 June 2025. Governors noted a preference to schedule meetings in 2025-26 on Monday evenings, with Wednesday evenings less popular. JT would contact NP to ascertain availability. **Action: JT**

Part 1 of the meeting closed at 7.15 pm. CWM left the meeting at this point.

Signed.....Chair Date.....