# ST MARY'S C of E Primary School

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF ST MARY'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, ISLINGTON, ON MONDAY, 23RD MARCH 2026 AT 8:00, AT THE SCHOOL.**

| Name | Governor Type | Term of office |
|---|---|---|
| Julia Abrey (JA) | Foundation Deanery | 25.04.2023 – 24.04.2027 |
| Katerina Bolden (KB) | Parent Governor | 02.12.24 – 01.12.28 |
| Anthony David (AD) | Interim Executive Head teacher | (ex officio) |
| Imogen Erskine | Foundation Governor | 13.10.2025 -12.09.2029 |
| Natalia Finfando (NF) | Staff Governor | 13.11.2022 - 12.11.2026 |
| Philip Gardner | Foundation Governor | 13.10.2025 -12.09.2029 |
| Rev. James Hughesdon (JH) | Foundation Deanery | (ex-officio) |
| Dr Maria Koumi-Elia (MKE) | Parent Governor | 09.02.2026-08.02.2030 |
| Rebecca Shilling (RS) | Vice Chair, Foundation PCC | 19.04.2025 - 18.04.2029 |
| Eric Sorenson (ES) | Chair, Foundation Deanery | 06.11.2022 - 05.11.2026 |
| Other attendees | | |
| Lucy Courtney-Diggins | Assistant Head, Inclusion, RE Leader | |
| Laura Mayende | Interim Head of School | |
| Angelica Menelaou | Clerk, Islington Governor Services. | |

| Item | | Action |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | **Opening Prayer**<br>JH opened the meeting with a prayer. | |
| **2.** | **Welcome**<br>The Chair welcomed all governors, staff and invited attendees. | **ES** |
| **3.** | **Apologies**<br>● **Julia Abrey** | **ES** |
| **4.** | **Declarations of Interest**<br>● Governors were reminded to declare any personal or business interests.<br><br>**GovernorHub confirmations noted:**<br>● Register of Business Interests – confirmed<br>● Governor Code of Conduct – confirmed<br>● KCSIE 2025 – confirmed | **ES** |
| **5.** | **Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd March 2026 and Matters Arising/Actions**<br><br>The Part One minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2026 were approved as an accurate record.<br>**Action Review:** All actions were reviewed. Completed actions were noted; any outstanding items were carried forward with updated timelines | **ES** |
| **6.** | **6. Finance Update & Draft Budget 2026–2027**<br>AD and Kim presented the finance update and draft budget for 2026/27. Governors were reminded of their statutory duty to ensure the school remains financially solvent.<br><br>**6.1 Overview of Current Position**<br>● A slight overspend was noted in after-school clubs and TA staffing (TA 4.4).<br>● Agency staff costs remain higher than planned, though reductions are expected.<br>● Savings have been identified in other areas to offset pressures.<br>**6.2 Staffing & Budget Assumptions**<br>The draft budget is based on:<br>● 12 teachers, 2 senior leaders, and 1 agency teacher.<br>● A high variance in teaching staff costs compared with the previous year.<br>● One additional part-time administrative post.<br>● A pay award issued to a member of staff.<br>**6.3 Income & Funding Changes**<br>● St Mary's continues to benefit from counter-cultural behaviour, which has had a positive impact on funding.<br>● An increase in government funding and donations was noted. | **AD/KIM** |

- Income from supporting another school is helping to offset staffing costs, with 10 support staff contributing to reduced agency expenditure (target: £20k, expected to be lower).

**6.4 Pupil Numbers & Projections**

AD reported:

- Pupil numbers have grown steadily over the last three years.
- Reception intake has increased significantly:
  - Two years ago: 12 pupils
  - This year: full class with a waiting list (first time in 8-9 years).
- 20 pupils are leaving Year 6; 30 pupils are joining Reception.
- More than half of all classes are expected to be full.
- The budget is predicated on approximately 25 additional pupils compared with last year.
- Roll has increased from 169 (last year) to 194 (this year).
- Additional in-year admissions are anticipated, including pupils from the New North Academy closure.
  - Three pupils have already joined mid-year, generating approximately £5k per pupil in block funding ("windfall").

**6.5 Expenditure & Planned Investments**

- The budget includes provision for refurbishment and hardware, including painting and laptops.
- Growth projections remain conservative to ensure financial resilience.
- Contingencies have been built in to maintain a healthy financial position.

**6.6 End-of-Year Projection**

- A projected deficit was reported.
- With contingencies, grants, and savings applied, the predicted position improves.
- Governors discussed the risk of adding additional TAs if pupil numbers do not materialise as projected.

**6.7 Governor Challenge & Questions**

Governors asked questions regarding:

- Sustainability of staffing levels
- Agency cost reduction plans
- Reliability of pupil number projections
- Contingency planning for in-year admissions
- Long-term financial stability

Responses were provided by AD and Kim.

**6.8 Decision**

The draft budget for 2026–2027 was reviewed and formally approved.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| **7.** | **Leadership Update – Attendance, Behaviour, Staffing & Home School Support Proposal**<br><br>AD presented the leadership update, with a focus on attendance, safeguarding pressures, pupil numbers, and a proposal to invest in Home School Support (HSS).<br><br>**7.1 Attendance Update**<br>AD reported that attendance has shown sustained improvement over the last three years:<br>• Whole-school attendance has risen from **88–89%** to **approximately 92%**.<br>• Persistent absence has reduced from **44%** to **26.7%**.<br>• Improvements have been strongest in Years 1 and 2; Year 5 remains the most challenging cohort.<br>• Attendance work has been a key strand of the School Development Plan, with the Head of School leading significant progress.<br>**HOS(LM)** provided a detailed explanation of the statutory attendance process, including:<br>• Twice-daily registers and the requirement to code every pupil accurately.<br>• Daily "golden hour" checks to account for all children by 9:30am.<br>• Prioritisation of vulnerable pupils (SEND, EHCP, safeguarding).<br>• Weekly monitoring meetings and reporting to the Local Authority.<br>• Early Help referrals, medical evidence checks, and escalation pathways.<br>• The increasing complexity of parental anxiety, illness reporting, and post-pandemic attendance behaviours.<br>Governors noted the intensity and volume of attendance-related work and commended the leadership team for the progress achieved.<br><br>**7.2 Safeguarding Pressures**<br>AD highlighted a significant rise in child protection (CP) activity:<br>• A serious CP incident occurred the previous Friday, requiring the Head of School to dedicate the full day to safeguarding.<br>• AD emphasised that each CP case removes senior leaders from operational duties, including recruitment, curriculum, and strategic planning.<br>• The school is managing multiple complex cases simultaneously, increasing workload and risk. | **AD** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Governors acknowledged the strain on leadership capacity and the need for additional support.<br><br>**7.3 Proposal: Investment in Home School Support (HSS)**<br>AD proposed that governors approve investment in **Home School Support**, a charity-run service providing a **Family Support Worker** for:<br>• **Three days per week**<br>• **Caseload of nine families**<br>• **Cost: £16,000 per year**, heavily subsidised by charitable funding<br>• **Cost to the school for 2026–27: approx. £8,000 (7/12ths)** as the service would begin in September<br><br>**Rationale for Investment**<br>AD outlined the benefits:<br>• Intensive work with the nine most complex families, including home visits.<br>• Support with safeguarding, multi-agency liaison, and casework.<br>• Development of case studies for Ofsted.<br>• Reduction of workload for senior leaders, particularly the Head of School.<br>• Dedicated capacity to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.<br>• Support for families who may be reluctant to engage with school leaders.<br>• Ability to run parent workshops, housing support sessions, and practical interventions (e.g., grants for essential items).<br><br>AD added that HSS would allow the school to differentiate between families requiring statutory intervention and those who would benefit from targeted early help.<br><br>**Governors' Questions**<br>Governors asked for:<br>• A clear summary of what the HSS worker will deliver.<br>• A breakdown of responsibilities between the school and HSS.<br>• Clarity on expected impact and how success will be measured.<br>• Confirmation of the recruitment process.<br><br>AD confirmed:<br>• The charity will shortlist candidates; the final three will be interviewed jointly by the charity and school leaders. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • The school is not obliged to continue after the first year if impact is insufficient.<br>• **A one-page summary will be prepared for governors.**<br><br>**Decision**<br>**Governors agreed in principle to invest in Home School Support from September 2026**, subject to receiving a one-page summary outlining:<br>• Scope of work<br>• Expected outcomes<br>• Division of responsibilities<br>• Safeguarding implications<br>• Monitoring arrangements<br><br>**Action: AD to provide one-page summary outlining Home School Support scope, responsibilities, expected impact, and monitoring arrangements.**<br><br>**7.4 Pupil Numbers**<br>reported:<br>• Pupil numbers continue to rise steadily.<br>• Reception will reach **26 pupils** by June, including new admissions from New North Academy.<br>• The school is projecting **low 190s** for September, with potential to exceed **200**.<br>• Weekly tours for prospective families continue, with strong interest in EYFS and KS1.<br>• Increased numbers will place additional pressure on behaviour, safeguarding, and pastoral systems.<br><br>Governors noted the implications for staffing and resource planning.<br><br>**7.5 Governance Matters Raised During Discussion**<br>• Governors were asked to read the **Governor Inspection Briefing Report**.<br>• A separate meeting will be arranged to discuss the school's relationship with Barnet, LDBS proposals, and future structural options (federation/MAT).<br>• Governors requested papers in advance of that meeting.<br>• Timing proposed: **mid to late June**, once pupil numbers for September are clearer.<br><br>ACTION : ES/ AM Arrange separate meeting on Barnet relationship, LDBS proposals, and structural options; circulate papers in advance. | |
| **8.** | **School House Funds – Management Policy (Decision)** | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Governors reviewed the updated School House Funds Management Policy, including the proposed arrangements for oversight, authorisation, and reconciliation.<br><br>**8.1 Summary of Discussion**<br>• Governors noted the importance of ensuring that the **bank statements reconcile** with the agency-provided financial reports.<br>• A governor requested confirmation of **current bank signatories** and oversight arrangements.<br>• It was confirmed that the Business Manager administers the account and the Head of School authorises payments.<br>• Governors emphasised the need for a **clear, secure mechanism** for managing withdrawals and maintaining transparency.<br><br>**8.2 Governor Queries**<br>Governors asked for:<br>• Confirmation that the **bank statement balances** match the agency's records.<br>• A list of **current signatories** on the account.<br>• Assurance that the new policy formalises a robust governance process.<br><br>A governor volunteered to support the reconciliation process once statements are provided.<br><br>**8.3 Decision**<br><br>**The School House Funds Management Policy was formally approved.**<br><br>**ACTIONS:**<br>• **Business Manager** to provide recent bank statements for reconciliation.<br>• **EHT** to ensure the policy is implemented and shared with governors. | |
| **9.** | **Ratification of Policies / Documents**<br>Governors received an update on the school's policy strategy and the progress made in ensuring statutory documents remain compliant and up to date.<br><br>**9.1 Policy Strategy Update**<br>• Governors noted the significant work undertaken to review, edit, and proofread policies ahead of the end of the academic year. | **AD** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • The EHT confirmed that an Ofsted inspector had recently reviewed the school website, prompting further updates to ensure statutory compliance.<br>• A governor was thanked for their extensive support in editing and aligning policies with statutory requirements.<br><br>**9.2 Parent Code of Conduct**<br>• Governors were reminded that the **Parent Code of Conduct** had been approved at the previous meeting.<br>• No further amendments were required.<br><br>**9.3 Next Steps**<br>• The EHT will circulate the remaining policies requiring governor approval.<br>• Governors agreed that all statutory documents must be fully updated and published by the end of the academic year.<br><br>**Decision**<br>**Governors ratified the policies presented and endorsed the ongoing policy strategy work.** | |
| **10.** | **Termly Review – Pupils Unable to Attend School Due to Medical Needs**<br><br>AD provided the termly update on arrangements for pupils who are unable to attend school due to medical needs.<br><br>**10.1 Current Case**<br>• One pupil has been absent due to a significant medical condition requiring hospitalisation.<br>• The pupil is now **expected to return to school shortly**, as they are no longer in hospital.<br>• Appropriate reintegration planning is underway to ensure a smooth transition back into school.<br><br>**10.2 Statutory Compliance**<br>• Governors were assured that the school continues to meet its statutory duties under the *Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions* guidance.<br>• Work has been set and monitored during the pupil's absence, and liaison with the family has been maintained.<br><br>**10.3 Next Steps**<br>• A full update will be provided at the **next governing body meeting** once the pupil has returned and reintegration support has been implemented. | **AD/HOS** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Decision**<br>Governors noted the update. No further actions were required at this stage. | |
| **11.** | **Any Other Business**<br>The Chair invited governors to raise any additional items for discussion.<br><br>**11.1 Governor Inspection Briefing Report**<br>Governors were reminded to familiarise themselves with the **Governor Inspection Briefing Report** ahead of the next meeting. This will support preparedness for the forthcoming Ofsted cycle.<br><br>**11.2 Future Meeting on School Structure & Partnerships**<br>Governors discussed the need for a **separate meeting** to consider:<br>• The school's current relationship with Barnet<br>• The emerging **LDBS proposition** encouraging schools to explore federations and MAT structures<br>• Local demographic pressures and their impact on strategic planning<br>Governors agreed that:<br>• A dedicated **60-minute meeting** will be arranged.<br>• Papers will be circulated **in advance** to ensure the meeting is focused and productive.<br>• Timing should be **mid to late June**, when pupil numbers for September will be clearer.<br><br>**11.3 School House Funds – Follow-up**<br>Governors confirmed the earlier approval of the School House Funds Management Policy (Item 8) and requested:<br>• Bank statements for reconciliation<br>• Confirmation of signatories<br>• Assurance that agency reports match bank records<br>A governor volunteered to support this reconciliation once documents are provided.<br><br>**11.4 Policy Updates**<br>Governors noted the ongoing work to update statutory policies and ensure website compliance. The EHT will continue circulating policies requiring approval.<br><br>**11.5 No Further Items**<br>No additional matters were raised. | **ES** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **12.** | **Date of Next Meeting**<br><br>Monday 6TH JULY 2026 18:00 | |

## PART TWO- CONFIDENTIAL

There meeting moved on to Part 2 (Confidential Business) at **9:00AM**

CHAIR: _____

**On behalf of Islington Governor services**

DATE: _____

**ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF ST MARY'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL, ISLINGTON, ON MONDAY, 18 MAY 2026.**

| Item | Action | Owner / Deadline |
|---|---|---|
| **7.3** | Support scope, responsibilities, expected impact, and monitoring arrangements | **AD** Before next FGB |
| **7.5** | Arrange separate meeting on Barnet relationship, LDBS proposals, and structural options; circulate papers in advance | **AD** Mid June 2026 |
| **8** | Provide bank statements for School House Funds reconciliation | **BUSINESS MANAGER** Before next FGB |
| **8** | Reconcile bank statements with agency reports | **IE** Before next FGB |
| **8** | Circulate remaining policies requiring approval | **AD** Ongoing – by end of academic year |
| **10** | Provide update on reintegration of pupil with medical needs | **HOS(LM)** Before next FGB |