



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Governing Body of Castle School
held on Monday 4th January 2016, 6.30pm**

Present: Mary Langran (Chair) (MLa),
Nick Brenton (Vice Chair) (NB),
Carol McCarthy (Head Teacher) (CM),

John Barnstable (JB),
Helen Dolling (HD),
Kate Dove (KD),
Jane Elliott-Poxon (JEP),
Janice Frankham (JF),
Lesley Leech (LL),
Mark Littlewood (MLi),
Elvira Spronck (ES).

In Attendance: Sally Hempson (School Business Manager)
Ann Trenchard (Camclerk) (AT)

The meeting started at 6.30pm and was quorate.

1.	Welcome & Apologies for Absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ML welcomed governors to the meeting.• Apologies were received and accepted from: Neil Egan-Ronayne and Jane Merrett.• AT was introduced as the new CamClerk and John Bastable was introduced as a co-opted governor candidate and around the table introductions were made.
2.	Declarations of Interest regarding items on the Agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None
3.	Governor Co-option <ul style="list-style-type: none">• JB was asked to leave the room.• It was noted that JB had already had a look around the school prior to putting his name forward. It was agreed that he would bring a wealth of experience to the role. Unanimous decision in favour of appointing him to

	<p>the governing body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John returned to the meeting and was warmly welcomed as a Co-opted governor.
4.	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes had previously been circulated for review. Governors unanimously agreed the minutes represented a true record and the minutes were signed by the Chair.
5.	<p>Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2015</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Governor Vacancy: item 6 on October's FGB – NER was asked to contact 2 parent governors who'd expressed an interest. It was overtaken by 2 requests into the office from parents for information about the level of commitment the role requires. It was decided that the Chair would contact those who had expressed an interest to ascertain further information about what prompted them not to follow up their enquiry with a positive decision. It was suggested that they be put in touch with an existing parent governor to learn more about the role. HD and MLI offered to do this. <u>Chair to email them.</u> • The minor changes made to the 'Governor Pledge and Code of Practice' were approved. The revised Governor Pledge and Code of Practice was recirculate prior to the meeting.. The Head was delighted that it emphasises the points regarding the need for governors to be involved in the school, and ties into actual practice, acknowledging the GB's strengths and weaknesses. • KD, HD completed the Register of Pecuniary Interest for the school's records. SH keeps this file. LL and JB to do so by next meeting. • Changes to the Head Teacher's Salary Panel (HTSP) were formally agreed, and the matter of membership of the Head Teacher's Performance Review (HTPR) panel was raised. <p>Current composition of the HTPR: NB and ES. Current composition of the HTSP: ML, KD and JM.</p> <p>The need for two more governors to join the 2016 HTPR panel was raised as ES's term will come to an end in December 2016. It was agreed that both JM and JB would join the panel for 2016-17 and it was agreed that their experience would make them an asset to the panel. It was also agreed that they would both sit in on the half year annual review of objectives in June. JM & JB will seek training via governor support services. Member for the HTSP postponed for now, giving GB time to consider their commitments. The head was asked to confirm what had happened as a result of the PE advisor coming in (6.3 in October</p>

	<p>minutes). School has moved on from the PE issues, since the matter has now been dealt with. It was confirmed that the school's pool is too big and too deep to be a hydro pool, meaning that normal pool regulations apply. The advisor confirmed that our pool operating procedures were robust. The group that was misbehaving at the pool have been given a term's stay of execution, giving them time to meet these deadlines.</p>
6.	<p>Prevent Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered by CM. • The GB acknowledged the content of the training overview and thanked CM for providing this training.
7.	<p>Safeguarding Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered by CM. • A question was asked about the prevention of over-vigilance. CM emphasised that school actions do not immediately lead to police turning up on the doorstep of parents/children since safeguarding issues go to the LA/social services first. It was expressed that it was better to be over cautious, and a relief when concerns are proven unfounded. Statistics indicated a similar prevalence as the most vulnerable children will be the ones who are targeted, and sadly often by individuals known to them. It was argued that people are not bad parents, but rather may lack the knowledge, skills or resources to parent well. The school feels a duty to support with the acquisition of those skills. "Hug first, sort out later". • A question was raised about the parental duties regarding e-safety. The head highlighted the parental information evening that the school will be hosting shortly, potentially making use of the pupil premium to support (vulnerable) parents' attendance. • The GB acknowledged the usefulness of the training overview and thanked CM for her efforts. CM to circulate copies of the training slides.
8.	<p>Governor Development Discussion - linked to focused visits.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CM recognised the work put into this matter so far. It was felt that the documentation accompanying Governor Visits is robust, and the simplified procedure surrounding how visits will be carried out was praised because it enables the GB not to get bogged down in unnecessary details, but still holds up to internal and external scrutiny (supporting the school's development. Visits to be completed by the end of term, enabling governors to give presentations /brief reports and a discussion of their usefulness during the last FGB this academic year (27th June 2016). A question was asked regarding the appropriateness of photographs on these visits. The Head confirmed that to do so would be fine, if pre-

	discussed with teachers who could identify students and staff who do not wish to be photographed.
9.	<p>Governor Visits Spring Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JEP – complex needs 9th February 2016. • NB – behaviour for learning • JM – KS3-4 • ES – Sixth Form • ML – Foundation and Early Years • HD – Primary • JB will liaise with CM to arrange a more specific visit of the school. • All to liaise with Head to arrange the dates for their visits.
10.	<p>Governor Visits Policy and Protocol – for discussion and agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair requested that governors conducting visits this term use the policy to trial it. Suggested that the policy be revisited in the Summer FGB with the benefit of it being put into practice. • A governor mentioned that she found the documents from official sources a little bit too negative in their tone. It was felt that these could be more positively phrased, noting for instance that visits provided governors with valuable learning experiences. It was agreed that the drafted documentation surrounding visits by governors should be used as an aide memoir for the time being. Another governor indicated that some of the highlights of visiting include having lunch with the pupils, as well as meeting members of staff, becoming a recognisable face and effectively part of Castle’s community. The contrast between learning on a given day and learning over an extended period of time was noted, such as improvement in individual pupils’ engagement, which is challenging to capture in the documentation. It was suggested that an opportunity to capture visits over a period of time to chart such progress, (social interaction, engagement) would be advantageous, the Head suggested that the forms can be used to this purpose.
11.	<p>Governor Visit Report (JEP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JEP reported that she had carried out a whole day visit to school on 25th June 2015. During the visit she experienced a number of classes across the range of age and ability. Spoke with learners, teachers and teaching assistants and took part in the interactive sessions.

12.	<p>Agree Nominated Governors for HTPR 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along with NB, JM and JB were nominated for the HTPR 2016 panel. Their membership of the panel was agreed. • JM and JB agreed to undertake the HTPR training, when available.
13.	<p>FGB Delegation Planner 2015-16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not many changes from last year. A governor asked about whether or not collective worship was provided. The Head replied that we have not disapplied these regulations, but that parents had the opportunity to request that pupils be allowed to opt-out of collective worship. • It was noted that there was nothing on Prevent training in the planner. • It was agreed that the delegation planner would be as it was for another year.
14.	<p>Co-opted Governor Vacancies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are still 2 co-opted vacancies. The need to juggle the need to have a specific set of skills on the board with the need to keep spaces free to be able to bring people on board with specific skills should they be required in the future was acknowledged. • It was recognised that paucity of time was an issue affecting whether or not people volunteered to be governors. The value of volunteer governors over coopted governors was recognised by the chair. The matter of web expertise and the complexity of the website being a point in particular. • HD mentioned that she might know someone suitable to handle the website. The Head requested that that person get in touch with her, as she is putting together a selection of possibilities to present to the FGB in January. There is not currently a budget assigned to the task. The Head expressed a desire to retain an individual website rather than a template adapted to meet Castle's complex and unusual needs as a provider of education from early years to sixth form. • Spring Common and Highfield's websites were highly praised. The need to have an accessible website that is not overly complicated was expressed by the GB. It was recognised how the site was a tool used by external organisations, in particular Ofsted's section 8 inspections – whether what we say is indeed what we do!
15.	<p>Finance and Personnel Committee Terms of Reference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee's terms of reference were formally approved. The Terms of Reference were circulated prior to the meeting.

16.	<p>Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were a couple of revisions to be made to the draft minutes. • Next meeting with our School Financial Adviser is on the 21st January.
17.	<p>Overview of current financial situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting was held on the 30th November 2015. The draft minutes of this meeting were circulated prior to the FGB. CM reported the minutes back to the FGB and was willing to answer questions from governors. It was expected that the budget would balance this year, but that the long-term outlook was not quite so positive in light of the austerity cuts. 2016-17 will be a challenging year for Castle, as much as other schools in the County. Planning, and considering how the budget is being used will all be important in the months and years ahead. • The government has announced that they are looking at 'fairer funding' – but this will not appear in Cambridgeshire until 2017, if it comes at all. It's unclear how the 'high-needs block' will be catered for, nor how the Schools' Forum will divide any additional funding they receive. It was suggested that it was unlikely that there would be additional funding coming from them, as it would not make financial sense for the Schools' Forum to do so. • We have the room to have an additional class, but the school has not been able to budget for any additional staff. Whether or not the income and expenditure for the new class will balance will be seen in the fullness of time.
18.	<p>Staff Retention and Well Being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover was raised and reported back. Concerns were expressed about this and about the necessary high numbers of supply staff. MLa raised the possibility of a working party to look at how the governing body could respond to this growing concern. • The merit of this topic was agreed. Castle's very proud that many of its TAs have gone into the teaching profession. It was recognised that the quality and amount of training provided prompted staff to use this school as a starting point. Likewise that the cost of living in the area was a challenge for our staff. • It was suggested that some sort of survey would enable the governing body to evidence to Ofsted that it was an issue the school was taking seriously. • The career path open to TAs – coming in at level 2, moving up to L3/4 only when spaces became available through staff loss – was noted. The

	<p>idea of incentivising staff to be more engaged, whilst recognising the financial challenge that the school's budget faced was raised. It was felt that this was something in need of consideration. Intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation discussed, as well as the need to gain more varied experience and the matter of financial progression. The prestige of reaching a senior position as a motivator was recognised. Likewise the demotivation associated with going for a post and not being appointed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair has asked SH to investigate how other special schools retain their staff. Suggested that JEP could be chair of the party, since although the GB Chair wanted to be involved, they did not want to lead it. The need to have a focused committee with clear objectives was recognised. Areas for consideration included staff retention, engagement and well being. It was suggested that one approach could be to identify positive aspects in school, in addition to what aspects are not quite working before considering how those latter aspects can be changed. • It was noted that the school has no problem attracting good people. The issue was with retention. • JEP to further refine the research question with the Chair and the Head in her next visit 9th February 2016. The intention is to get information in place to be able to justify a project on it when the funding becomes available. • It was noted that the provision of training courses as an incentive to remain has had varying success in the past. The schemes' conditions were not always concrete at the start of the training (for example unclear how the courses would be funded), and some courses were particularly geared towards one style of learning over another. The difficulties in balancing academic studies alongside work and family life were recognised. • Financial reasons are evidently not always the main reason for staff moving on – a lot of staff come with a view to staying only a short period of time, to gain key skills and experience needed to move elsewhere. The need to understand why people are leaving when the reasons are not so clear was recognised.
<p>19.</p>	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.

<p>20.</p>	<p>Items for the Next Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DTA re reducing carbon footprint and energy bills • E-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy • Behaviour Management Policy • Governor Skills Audit/Governing Body training • School Website • Review of Health and Safety Statement
<p>21.</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Monday 25th January 2016</p>

Meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed Date.....