Dorset Studio School

Meeting of the Full Board of Governors
THURSDAY 18 DECEMBER 2025 AT
4.00pm, at Poundbury

MINUTES

The Code of Conduct for Governors requires governors to be honest and open with regard to conflicts of interest (either real or perceived). Governors must not use their position for personal gain in business, political or social relationships. Therefore, a governor who has, or may be perceived to have, such a personal interest in a particular matter under consideration should declare that interest, withdraw from all discussions relating to it and take no part in any vote on such matter.

Items marked * are those in which a majority of Governors may have an interest because of some shared attribute. When considering these items, Governors should aim to achieve a balanced view, paying particular attention to the sources of information and advice, and remind themselves of their duties as governors and to act in the public interest.

Governors:	Andy Daw (Chairman); Mark Gibbens (Vice Chairman); Chris Biggs (Co-opted Governor); Nicholas Spearing (Co-opted Governor); Michael Chitty (Co-opted Governor); Wayne Clarke (Co-opted Governor); David Humphreys (Staff Governor); Christine Thresher (Parent Governor); Jason Giladjian (Parent Governor); Jason Malone (Principal)
In attendance:	Tim Stephens (Academy Member SA Trust), Kim Mason (DSS).

Item		Detail	
1.	Verbal	**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS** **Meeting started at 4.20 p.m.** • Introductions and to welcome those present, including new governors • TS outlined their role to observe governance, ensure effective governance and would attend approximately three meetings per year over a 6–7 year cycle. It was noted that the Chair and Principal report to the Academy Trust. • Context was provided on the evolution of governance models nationally, and the school's origins and sponsorship (established 11 years ago). • **ACTION:** Access to GVO for new parent governors.	Chair
2.	Verbal	**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** • To **Note** any Declarations of Interest • Governors were reminded of the process for declaring interests. Declaration noted: Mark Gibbens - A potential interest relating to the marketing budget, specifically payments for photography. No further declarations were made.	Chair
3.	Verbal	**APOLOGIES** • To **Note** any apologies for absence • Apologies were received from David Humphreys	Chair

4.	Minutes	**MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 9th OCTOBER 2025** • To **Approve** minutes as a correct record • The minutes were reviewed. **Amendments noted:** Page 6: Action regarding the Principal hiring a Director of Engagement – work ongoing, but no further action with the hiring company at this stage. Spelling correction ("Principal"). Clarification around the Good Character approach. **Resolved:** The minutes were approved as an accurate record. Non-confidential minutes were approved for publication on the website.	Chair
5.	Minutes	**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES** • To **Consider** any matters arising from the minutes The following matters were discussed: • **Link Governors:** Decision deferred. Agreed to allow Governors to report following school visits and sub-committee meetings, and to align link governor roles through these structures. • **SEND Policy:** Deferred to the next meeting. • **Disciplinary Panel:** Noted – arrangements to be confirmed. • **SAR / Complaints Policy:** • It was noted there is currently no designated individual to complete the initial SAR check. The process is documented but is being rewritten for clarity. Staff training will be delivered to ensure understanding of SAR procedures and expectations, including communications via email and Teams. • **ACTION:** SAR Policy to return to next agenda with revised wording and training plan.	Chair
6.	Verbal	**BUILDING UPDATE** • An update was received regarding the new school building. Key points noted: A site visit took place involving Jason and Mr Hedges with the Planning Case Officer, who was supportive. Concerns raised regarding: • road access to the school, • informal parking in the nearby lay-by, • coach turning arrangements from the KMC end. The contractor has confirmed sufficient: • parking bays, • parent turning area. Contractor site visit planned during half term. • Confirmation expected in January regarding contractor appointment. • DfE is managing paperwork for the build. • The school is not on mains water. • Any minor overspend would be met by DfE, not the school budget.	Chair

		Next meeting: Governors requested a clearer "vision of the internal layout" to be brought to the next agenda.	
7.	Verbal	**RATIFICATION OF POLICIES** To **Ratify** the following policies: uploaded to GVO: Comments on GVO. • **Abusive Visitors Policy** – it was **AGREED** this would be deferred to the next Agenda. Governors discussed recent incidents involving parental behaviour. It was noted the policy was to cover parents and external visitors. There had been two cases of parents becoming abusive. **Governor Question:** • Would the policy include children? **Response:** • The policy applies where there is threat, violence, or harassment; wording will be broadened and children would be included. • **Attendance Policy** • It was **AGREED** this would be deferred to the next Agenda. It was noted that the policy is based on Dorset Council guidance (September 2025). Yellow sections still to be completed. • **Capability Policy** It was noted the policy covered Teaching and support staff although the Finance Manager was overseeing support staff, not Teaching staff. The policy was **AGREED** subject to the minor amendment. • **Children Missing in Education Policy** • The policy was **AGREED** subject to the minor amendment to wording. It was noted that several non-statutory policies have been written in-house (Principal), with clear flowcharts to support understanding.	Chair
8.	Paper	**PRINCIPALS REPORT** To **Receive** the Principal's Report on the following: The Principal presented a detailed report covering teaching and learning, behaviour, outcomes, and culture. **Teaching and Learning / Appraisal** A demonstration of **StepLab** was provided, by Kim Mason, showing: • informal teacher to teacher drop-ins, • developmental feedback, • recording of observations, • celebration of good practice via "shout-outs". **Governor Question:** How are personality clashes managed? **Response:** Drop-ins are private and developmental; only positive shout-outs are public. **Governor Question:** Are individual packages linked to appraisal? **Response:** Yes, targets are evidenced through StepLab and used collaboratively in appraisal discussions.	Principal

Governor Question: Is performance-related pay linked?
A: No automatic link. Capability procedures only apply if advice is repeatedly not acted upon.
Governor Question: Does Student behavior change during the drop ins?
Response: The students are used to them happening and it drives consistency.

It was noted that the StepLab setup was bespoke to Dorset Studio School and included features such as PPE checks. The system breaks processes down into manageable steps, making them easier to monitor and support. It is a powerful tool for tracking teacher progress, reviewing logs, and identifying both positive practice and areas with common themes. Information is shared at the Monday briefing to support ongoing improvements, giving staff a weekly overview of quality assurance.

Data noted:

- Approx. **900 shout-outs** issued this term.
- **30–35 drop-ins** completed.

Themes from monitoring link directly to INSET priorities.

Curriculum Deep Dives

- Completed: **Land-Based Learning**
- Ongoing: **Maths**
- External challenge support from **LA Challenge Lead**.

Governor Question: What accountability exists if targets are not met?
A: Heads of School are accountable; actions are monitored and reviewed.
Improvements noted in induction, fallback lesson planning, and safeguarding processes.

Outcomes and Data
Mock examination outcomes shared:

- **4+ overall:** 62%
- **5+:** 43%
- **Maths 4+:** 34%
- **Maths 5+:** 9%

Attendance issues were discussed, particularly linked to:

- mental health,
- SEMH needs,
- pupil engagement.

Governor Question: Were absent pupils counted as failures?
Response: No – incomplete entries are excluded.
Governors discussed the progress expectations between mocks and final exams; leadership expects 2–3 grade improvements.

Behaviour and Welfare

- Suspension rates remain high.
- SEN figures broadly align with national data.
- Reduction in repeat suspensions noted.
- Two permanent exclusions confirmed this year.

Governor Question: Can applicants be refused?
Response: In limited circumstances; panels and safeguarding considerations apply.

Engagement and Surveys

		• Staff engagement survey: **64% response rate**. • Parent and governor surveys planned. It was noted that the school's continued success depends on attracting pupils with a genuine interest in land-based studies, and that current marketing efforts reflect this focus. In particular, a video demonstrating pupils' progression from school into further education or employment has proved to be a valuable tool in attracting suitable applicants.	
9.	Verbal	**BUILDING UPDATE** • It was noted an update had been provided under Agenda item 6.	Chair
10.	Verbal	**COMPLAINTS** • To receive information • An update was provided on: • Ofsted-related complaint, Dorset Council managed investigation, • Stage 2 and Stage 3 processes. It was noted that the Principal would deal with Stage 2 and 3 complaints and then would refer to the Disciplinary Panel. **Governor Question:** Was the complaint vexatious? **Response:** The policy includes provision, but the complainant escalated stages prematurely. **Governor Question:** Is exclusion an automatic consequence of ongoing behavioural issues? **Response:** Permanent exclusion is not an automatic outcome of ongoing behavioural concerns. In this instance, the two permanent exclusions resulted from incidents that constituted clear breaches of policy, for which permanent exclusion was deemed appropriate.	Principal
11.	Verbal	**Specialism Update** • To receive an update It was noted this had been reported under Agenda item 8.	Principal
12.	**Paper**	**SAFEGUARDING** • Keeping children safe 2025 – circulated on GVO • Governors Training update – noted.	Chair
13.	**Paper**	**BUSINESS MANAGER** • Academy Trust Handbook 2025 – updates – circulated on GVO • Schedule of Musts • Audit headlines noted; an appointed accountant to be confirmed. • Operating deficit – noted at the Audit and Finance Committee meeting.	Chair
14.	Verbal	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS FOR REPORT** To **Consider** Any Other Business for report only	Chair

		• SRR up to date. • DBS 3 years – Update service **ACTION**: Chair and Clerk to update DBS. • Cyber security training coming up. A proposal was made to include additional Committees/Sub-groups to cover: • Curriculum and Specialism Committee – Wayne, Christine, Kim. • Building and Communication - Andy, Mark, Anetta, Jason, Tracey, • Link Governor – Behaviour – Christine. • **ACTION:** Governors to provide information to the Clerk if interested in Committee membership to be considered at the next meeting.	
15.	Verbal	**2025/26 DATES** To **Note** dates for 2025/26 meetings: **Full Governing Body** • 18th December 2025 at 4.00pm • 26th February 2026 at 4.00pm • 23rd April 2026 at 4.00pm • 25th June 2026 at 4.00pm **Audit & Finance Committee** • 18th December 2025 at 2.15pm • 26th February 2026 at 2.15pm • 23rd April 2026 at 2.15pm • 25th June 2026 at 2.15pm Meeting closed at 6.50 pm	Chair