



Ripon Grammar School Governors

Full Governing Board

Meeting Room 1

18 March 2026, 18.00h

MINUTES

1. Introductory Business

Attendance

Present: Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ) – Chair, Eric Medway (EM), Robert O'Hare (ROH), Matthew Bean (MB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Amy Tweddle-Bray (ATB), David Winspear (DW), Peter Von Hoven (PVH), Jonathan Webb (JMW), Ian Charlton (IC), Siny Jayan (SJ), Victoria Pang (VP), Vikki Barton-Brown (VBB), Adele Laurie-Wilson (ALW), Jonathan Branton (JB), Richard Johnstone (RJ), Graham Livesey (GL) – Clerk.

Apologies: Jayne Dale.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 2 December 2025

- Accepted as an accurate record, subject to minor typographical corrections noted by the Chair. No substantive errors or omissions.
- Proposed: TCT. Seconded: IC.

Review of Action Tracker

Items shown in green have been completed. In progress:

- Section 106 monies: Belmont Walk (£169k, shared between secondary schools) and West Lane (£514k, named specifically to RGS) held in NYC accounts. A case is being developed to secure outline approval for use toward the dining hall / assembly hall, likely by end of academic year. IC offered to assist in monitoring and reviewing original calculations.
- Solar panels: the 'Solar for Schools' route was not progressed (contract exceeded the LA's 25-year agreement threshold). The Headmaster has registered RGS for a government scheme offering free installation and electricity with no contract obligation; outcome awaited. Existing survey and planning remain applicable.
- School Development Plan: presented at this meeting (see below).
- Parental engagement session date: to be confirmed following meeting with Head of Year 9 (PS). Governors confirmed willingness to participate; targeted invitations agreed as preferable following previous low turnout.

Committee Membership Update

Jonathan Branton has joined the Curriculum Committee. Richard Johnston is considering committee membership and will confirm in due course. No other changes.

2. Principal Business

Headmaster's Report (JMW) — School Roll and Data

JMW presented a new breakdown of school roll data, benchmarked against national averages. Governors welcomed this and requested it become a standing feature of future reports, with comparative data over time. Key points:

- SEND: 33 students on roll (30 without EHCPs, 3 with). A minor discrepancy in Bromcom data noted; JMW to verify.
- Disadvantaged pupils (FSM / looked-after or previously looked-after): RGS proportion significantly below the national average of 25.7% FSM.
- Attendance: strong whole-school attendance. Year 11 approximately 3% below other year groups due to individual outliers. Year 7 SEN attendance monitored; recent comparative FFT data confirms all groups above national averages.
- Suspensions and exclusions: significant reduction compared to the COVID-period spike. CPOMS data confirms incidents are still being recorded and picked up by staff; the reduction reflects fewer serious incidents (particularly physicality, peer-on-peer language, and vaping). Internal pastoral centre isolations continue and are reported to Pastoral Committee.

ASSURANCE: Attendance data is strong and benchmarks well nationally. Reductions in suspensions reflect genuine improvements in behaviour, not reduced rigour, as evidenced by stable CPOMS incident reporting.

Admissions

- Revised admissions arrangements were communicated to parents in March, later than JMW had wished; NYC accepted responsibility for the delay, which was caused by its internal processes.
- Feedback minimal: one parental email regarding tutoring; no concerns raised by neighbouring primary headteachers.

Gas Leak – Business Continuity Response (18 March 2026)

JMW reported a confirmed gas leak detected on Sunday 15 March 2026 by contractors on site. Key points:

- Electrics isolated, windows opened, Transco contacted; building declared a potential risk.
- SLT WhatsApp group activated. 25 boarding students evacuated to Johnston House (20 went home Sunday, 5 Monday morning); all had UK Guardians in place.
- NYC responded rapidly Monday morning; a new gas pipeline bypass is under construction. Kitchen expected back online the following Monday. Catering contractor (Lodestone House) procured electric equipment and maintained food service for boarders and FSM pupils throughout.
- Curriculum impact: science block and DT workshop remain without gas; no identified risk to core practicals at this stage (alternative labs available). Head of Science to confirm no significant curriculum impact.

Governors recorded thanks to all staff for their prompt and effective response, and noted the value of the WhatsApp communications chain, asking whether any formal learning points would be captured.

ASSURANCE: The business continuity response was effective, communications were prompt, and boarder welfare was appropriately managed. Health and safety compliance culture was described as 'blown away' in the most recent audit.

Sixth Form Applications

- Approximately 260 offers issued for Year 12 entry, an increase of 20–30 on the previous year, reflecting increased demand.

School Development Plan (SDP) and SEF (JMW)

JMW presented the SDP and Self-Evaluation Form, noting these emerge from a structured SLT review and will be shared with all staff, with individual managers tracking specific measures. Key areas:

- Safeguarding: considered strong; work continuing to strengthen formal tracking of vulnerable, disadvantaged, SEND and co-curricular participation data. A site security test is planned.
- Inclusion: a major Ofsted focus area. Significant work by the Inclusion Manager; a forthcoming SEA visit is expected. Emphasis on embedding inclusive practice at departmental and lesson level. A parental survey is being prepared.
- Teaching and Learning: a joined-up literacy and oracy strategy in development (led by Head of English and Ben Fearnley). Intervention policy being moved earlier (Years 8 and 9). Non-negotiable classroom expectations being developed for an INSET day. A central monitoring pro forma under development.
- Boys' attainment: a specific SDP focus; a gender gap at GCSE (national phenomenon, evident at RGS) is being addressed, particularly for middle- and higher-attaining boys.
- Gifted and talented / highest attainers: EM raised concern this cohort is not referenced in the SDP despite some grade variability at the top end. JMW acknowledged the gap (not prominent in the Ofsted framework) and agreed to take it back to SLT.
- Digital strategy: a device-based approach (likely from Year 7 in 2028) and an AI curriculum strategy (policy exists; implementation being developed). Hardware costs rising significantly due to AI demand.
- Personal development / co-curricular: Oliver! production highlighted as excellent; governors asked for participation numbers to be formally recorded as evidence. A co-curricular registration trial is underway.
- Leadership and governance: an associate senior leader programme under consideration; Wellbeing Lead post to be re-advertised with revised terms. MAT and White Paper implications acknowledged as a strategic consideration.
- Finance and estates: SDP references existing plans (FRP, Estate Development Plan, Boarding Plan) rather than duplicating detail.

Governors agreed the SDP should be a standing agenda item, with committee oversight responsibilities clearly mapped. EJ to work with JMW and committee chairs to allocate SDP areas to relevant committees, with RAG-rated progress reported termly.

ASSURANCE: The SDP is a comprehensive framework and was approved as the working plan for 2025–26, subject to ongoing refinement. Governance oversight structures to be confirmed.

Financial Matters (ROH / GL)

Background and context:

- Expenditure exceeds income each year; this year's predicted in-year deficit is approximately £43k against a total budget of £7.8m.
- Cumulative reserves have been eroded over four years, primarily by post-Ukraine energy price increases. RGS is, for the first time, projected to enter cumulative deficit.
- Structural causes: a high proportion of staff on upper pay scales (increasing pay-award cost impact); and the minimum per-pupil funding mechanism, which favours schools with high FSM proportions and gives RGS a 0% increase this year despite a national schools budget uplift of £3.8bn.
- Additional risks: energy price volatility (75% pre-purchased this year); emerging capital underinvestment (roof, swimming pool, gas infrastructure); limited ability to borrow or grow non-pupil revenue.
- The White Paper proposes moving to real-time household income-based funding, expected to further disadvantage RGS.

Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) — prepared to accompany a Deficit Licence application to NYC:

- Without intervention, a deficit of approximately £263k is projected in two years.
- Primary saving measure: a reduction in teaching periods per week from 1,631 to 1,586 (1.25 FTE), via natural turnover, non-like-for-like replacement and adjustment of part-time fractions. No compulsory redundancies proposed at this stage.
- Curriculum impact (larger class sizes, reduced option breadth) reviewed at Curriculum Committee; overall curriculum breadth will be maintained.
- Non-staff budgets already significantly reduced; further efficiencies under review.
- Charitable fund contribution: one-off £15k plus £5k annually for capital investment (e.g. IT screens); governors noted charitable funds should not fund core staff costs.
- Development income has grown from c.£7k to c.£38k annually. Cost-benefit of a fundraising specialist discussed (no decision taken); EM offered to look further at grants.

The FRP was approved unanimously.

ASSURANCE: The financial position is being managed with rigour. The FRP sets out a credible path to surplus and has been scrutinised in detail at F&P Committee. The Schools Financial Value Standard has been completed and signed off by the Chair.

Boarding Fees 2026–2027

- A 2.5% increase in termly and weekly boarding fees proposed for September 2026 (below inflation, reflecting a concurrent change to the food provision model), on F&P Committee recommendation.
- Food provision change: the weekly £30 lunch allowance is removed; boarders receive the same two-course hot meal as FSM pupils, with additional food charged to parents. This aligns with comparable schools and removes an existing inequity. Boarding House leadership supportive.
- Break-even set at 88 boarders; current projections are 90. £55k capex included for continued boarding infrastructure investment (Johnston House).
- The Boarding Committee has not yet formally reviewed the food provision change (timing); DW confirmed parents will be informed this term. Governors noted the need for careful, sensitive communication.
- Energy price risk (geopolitical instability) raised; GL confirmed 75% of energy costs pre-purchased, with boiler replacement also improving efficiency.

The boarding fee increase (2.5%) with the food provision change was approved by majority vote.

Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

- Completed, signed by the Chair, and uploaded to the governors' shared area. Three questions rated below best practice due to external financial pressures beyond the school's current control. Governors noted the submission.

Capital Expenditure Approvals

Governors approved the following, all within the draft budget:

- Boarding house improvements: £55k (rolling annual investment; Johnston House focus this year).
- IT infrastructure: £35k (continuing roll-out).
- North Corridor boys' toilets refurbishment: £25k (LA capital funding application submitted).
- Bike shelters and path lighting (active travel): GL to apply to the Mayor's Active Travel Fund; will only proceed if external funding is secured. Jepsen Trust funding already received for the path lighting element.

3. Safeguarding

Safeguarding Update (DW)

DW reported on two safeguarding activities since the last FGB, following concerns raised by governors in the autumn:

- NYC Safeguarding Audit: conducted by James Duran (NYC), a full day in school, DW in attendance. Summary described the visit as highly affirming of a strong safeguarding culture and a 'restless determination to keep developing safeguarding practice'. Recommendations minor and in hand.
- Governor Monitoring Visit: DW undertook a structured half-day in school with Helen Keelan-Edwards (DSL), to triangulate what is reported to the Governor Link against practice. Activities included form time observations, a whole-year assembly, two PSHE lessons, and meetings with the head of PSHE, pupil groups, and non-teaching support staff. A written monitoring report has been shared with governors.
- Further actions: a site security test is planned; discussed at EDC.
- Resilience: governors noted ongoing concern about DSL/safeguarding team workload (including late-night working), which is being actively managed; the DSL has built a strong team with strong Heads of Year, with capacity to build further middle-manager resilience.

ASSURANCE: Strong assurance was received on safeguarding. The NYC external audit was highly positive, and the Governor monitoring visit provided direct evidence of practice. DW confirmed safeguarding is in a very good place.

Website Compliance Audit (PVH)

- Annual audit completed; overall position strong, with only minor details requiring correction. PVH to share findings with JMW / relevant SLT lead for prompt correction.

4. Committee Reports

Admissions Committee (EM) – 24 February 2026

- Year 9 transition: all 16 students meeting the required standard have applied (a waiting-list scenario for three had been anticipated but did not materialise). Current Year 8 roll is 121; with these additions Year 9 intake will be 135 — the minimum roll required to protect income. In-year boarding applications for Year 9 provide further assurance. Governors noted this with optimism.

Boarding Committee (MB) – 3 February 2026

- Projected boarding numbers for next academic year: 90 (above break-even of 88).
- Staffing: Head of Boarding exploring a formal graduate assistant model to supplement the existing foreign language assistant model.
- Boarding Strategic Plan under development, with Boarding Committee input; governor meeting planned for 27 March 2026 (some rescheduling possible).
- Head of Boarding's SWOT analysis presented; new boarders' handbook and staff handbook both issued.
- Safeguarding: a small number of concerning issues reviewed and confirmed effectively dealt with. DW noted strong practice by the Senior House Master in School House managing two challenging pastoral situations, with positive feedback from boys involved.
- Marketing: taster days and other recruitment initiatives under development.
- December 2025 Boarding Review executive summary shared — a comprehensive review including a governance-focused safeguarding review (MB participated), identifying clear strengths and development priorities, feeding into the Boarding Strategic Plan.

- Admissions process clarity: the dual-section NYC admissions website has caused parental confusion; JMW preparing a comprehensive Year 7–12 FAQ document (including coordination with other LAs) for prospective families.

Curriculum Committee (EM) – 3 March 2026

- A Level benchmarking (25 comparable state grammar schools): RGS ranked 1st for progress, 3rd for A Level point score, 5th for A/B-or-better percentages. Full A Level comparison now available again (post-COVID baseline restored).
- Year 11 progress tracking positive; a decent summer results set anticipated. The historic gender gap at GCSE has closed in Year 11 — unusual and encouraging.
- Pupil Premium: enhanced reporting now available on impact of PP spending, not just expenditure.
- Policies approved: Examination Malpractice and Maladministration Policy (new, JCQ template), AI Policy, Off-Site Educational Visits Policy (updated for mobile phone regulation powers for visit leaders).
- Terms of Reference reviewed and rewritten (not updated in over 10 years) and presented to FGB for ratification. ATB proposed adding reference to staff professional development alongside student learning quality, and to the School Development Plan; both amendments agreed. FGB ratified the revised Terms of Reference as amended.

Estates Development Committee (DW) – 27 January 2026

- Section 106 and solar panels covered under the Action Tracker (above).
- Ongoing maintenance: boilers and hot water tanks replaced. LA's priority 1–3 maintenance list totals approximately £2.3m outstanding.
- Three-phase site development proposal (dining hall, Sixth Form extension, potential new theatre): a further exploratory meeting held in early March. Two active workstreams — a modular design company preparing a brief and costings, and a parent-architect preparing outline drawings for the LA — aiming to unlock c.£600k of Section 106 funding. A new theatre with refurbished dining hall is the preferred longer-term vision.
- IT hardware costs rising sharply due to AI-driven demand; to be factored into future capital planning.
- Health and safety: two significant incidents since the last EDC (swimming pool and rugby fixture), both investigated with remedies implemented (two staff now required at rugby fixtures; revised swimming pool procedures). Fire safety audit: over 80 minor recommendations completed; NYC has commissioned two further inspections (fire management systems; fire door compliance in accommodation areas) to inform whether further LA-funded changes are required.
- Martin's Law (Terrorism Protection of Premises Act): RGS falls within Tier 2 scope but schools operate under Tier 1 requirements (staff awareness, training, preparedness plan). Registration body not yet established; GL monitoring.

ASSURANCE: Fire safety compliance is being actively managed. Outstanding action items are tracked through EDC and will be reported to FGB. Martin's Law compliance is in progress.

Finance & Personnel Committee (ROH) – 13 January and 10 March 2026

Main business covered under Financial Matters above (FRP, boarding fees, SFVS). Additional points:

- Budget monitoring reports reviewed at each meeting; the Bursar's reports were described as detailed and giving confidence in monitoring rigour.
- Catering contract re-tender on schedule, expected to complete by the start of next academic year.
- Printing / reprographics contract: next major renewal after catering.
- Boarding fee arrears: a small number of cases being managed; recovery processes being reviewed and strengthened.
- Financial risk matrix maintained and up to date.

Pastoral Committee (TCT) – 10 February 2026

- PSHE curriculum review: Helen Mars (Head of PSHE) presented RSE/PSHE curriculum changes effective September 2026, following national curriculum changes. Governors felt Helen demonstrated a strong grasp of the brief and a highly enthusiastic, intellectual approach.
- All routine pastoral metrics positive; wellbeing metrics up; early intervention approaches seen as effective (safeguarding covered separately).
- Pastoral team resilience remains a continuing focus. Helen Keelan-Edwards has built a strong team with strong Heads of Year; further distribution of responsibilities being developed.

Staff Pay Committee

- No meeting since the last FGB; next meeting anticipated in the following academic year.

5. Governors with Specific Areas of Responsibility

Inclusion Governor (EM)

- The Curriculum Committee has now mapped SEND funding and expenditure in detail (previously not well understood), led by Jayne Brine. Funding and expenditure are broadly aligned, with no significant over- or under-spend, though funding would not reduce proportionately if the SEND cohort were smaller. Position under review pending the Education White Paper; no near-term resolution expected.

CEIAG Governor (TCT)

- Careers Fair taking place the following day (19 March 2026) with over 70 organisations confirmed, spanning agricultural, medical, veterinary, university and vocational provision. Mr Bob Walker's continued commitment noted (now working partly from home due to family circumstances).
- Year 10 work experience: costs passed to parents this year; approximately 20–30 students not participating. An in-school programme is being developed for those not attending. Mr Walker preparing an action plan for the next meeting covering the Year 10 offer.

Staff Welfare Governor (EJ)

- No formal staff welfare lead in school at present. Since the last meeting, EJ has met with four individual staff members in the context of other matters; themes noted were access to and effectiveness of external support resources, and variability in Occupational Health experience.
- Sickness absence data monitored through F&P, with JMW providing monitoring reports; return-to-work processes and supportive management of attendance are in place and performing well.
- Tania Davidson (Head of Boarding) holds specific one-to-one responsibility for staff welfare relating to attendance (not the broader welfare lead role, which remains vacant).

Health & Safety (DW)

- Covered under the EDC report and Headmaster's Report; no additional items.

6. Complaints

- One Stage 3 complaint (Governor appeal panel) has been heard since the last FGB, relating to inclusion provision. The panel did not uphold the complaint, was satisfied the school had already put in place substantial responses to the concerns raised, and that relevant learning had been embedded; the panel concluded the school's provision had been appropriate. Parents have been communicated with.

7. Policies for Approval

No policies presented for approval at this meeting (Curriculum Committee-approved policies noted under committee reports, above).

8. Off-Site Visits and Activities

- GL presented the updated visits schedule (changes since the last FGB marked in red). All items previously flagged as requiring approval had already been approved; no new visits required approval at this meeting. Governors noted the breadth of the programme and the significant staff commitment involved in residential visits.

9. Governor Training

No governor training events since the last FGB. Governors were reminded to:

- Notify EM of any training completed, so it can be added to the training log.
- Access NGA e-learning (platform changing at end of this term; updated access details to be circulated).
- Prioritise complaints training, given the frequency with which panels need to be convened and the requirement to use governors not previously involved in the matter.

10. Any Other Business

- Teacher interviews: governors invited to participate in recruitment interviews as lay members; short-notice requests likely at this time of year.
- Work experience / interview practice: Bob Walker invites governors able to offer work experience placements or mock interview support in areas of specialist interest to contact him directly.
- Catering contract procurement: GL will seek a governor to sit on the evaluation panel.

11. Date of Next Meeting

- Additional short FGB (budget approval, online): Tuesday 12 May 2026. Quorum required for budget approval; attendance requested.
- Full Governing Board: Tuesday 14 July 2026, 1800hrs, Bishopton House.

The meeting closed at approximately 20:35.

Appendix: Summary of Actions

Action	Responsibility	Deadline
Assign SDP areas to relevant committees; prepare committee column in SDP. Communicate to committee chairs.	EJ / JMW	By 14 July 2026
Take gifted and talented / highest attainer gap back to SLT for consideration within SDP.	JMW	By 14 July 2026
Record Oliver! participation numbers as formal co-curricular evidence.	JMW	By 14 July 2026
Confirm Head of Science's position on curriculum impact of gas leak.	JMW	Immediate
Communicate boarding fee and food provision changes to boarding parents.	JMW / GL	Spring term 2026
Bring boarding fee structure / food proposal to Boarding Committee for strategic review.	ROH / MB	At next Boarding Committee
Explore grant income opportunities and report.	EM / GL	Ongoing

Action	Responsibility	Deadline
Submit active travel bid to Mayor's Active Travel Fund.	GL	In progress
Share website audit findings with JMW/SLT; ensure corrections are made.	PVH / JMW	Before 14 July 2026
Confirm date for parental engagement session with Head of Year 9.	EJ	By end of March 2026
Circulate updated NGA training platform access details to all governors.	EM	End of Spring term 2026
Prepare Year 10 careers / work experience action plan for next FGB.	TCT / Bob Walker	By 14 July 2026
Review all committee Terms of Reference in light of SDP; liaise with committee chairs.	EJ	By 14 July 2026
Register with Martin's Law oversight body when body is established.	GL	When body established