



Ripon Grammar School Governors

Full Governing Board Meeting - Minutes

Wednesday 26 March 2025

1. Attendees and Apologies

Chair welcomed all to the meeting

In attendance Matthew Bean (MB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Adele, Laurie-Wilson (ALW), Eric Medway (EM), Rob O'Hare (ROH), Victoria Pang (VP), Josh Stott (JS), Jonathan Webb (JMW), Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ)

Via MS teams – Jayne Dale (JD), Vicki Barton Brown (VBB), Amy Tweddle Bray (ATB)

Apologies were received from Dave Winspear, Sinay Jayan and Ian Charlton

No new declarations of interest were made.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 were approved as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters Arising

Parental Engagement Event confirmed for Monday, 16 June at 6:30pm. Annual Report was circulated and noted.

4. Governor Vacancies

Two co-option statements were received and reviewed.

Cllr Barbara Brodigan and Capt. Peter von Hoven have both met the Chair and VC of Governors and expressed interest in the roles. Both bring areas of expertise that will enhance the skill set of board membership. Both were approved for co-option to the FGB.

5. Headmaster's Report

The headmaster presented a comprehensive report covering admissions, curriculum, teaching and learning, pastoral matters, sixth form, estates, finance, and strategic development.

Key highlights included:

- a. Strong Year 12 applications – with a total number of applications for 2025 entry of 248 (matching last year's numbers), and strong numbers for Y9 – applications exceeding the number of places once again. The boarding interest continues to be a steady interest – this has been supported by significant publicity. A multimedia filming event will be occurring in April to produce a film for sharing – this will include demonstrations of curricular and co-curricular life as well as boarding – with staff, parent and pupil voice. The positive impact of the admissions coordinator was again noted.

- a. Discussions continue with regards to the test for entry at year 7 – the headmaster explained that NYC will be procuring an new contract for Sept 26 which may enable changes to be made. Governors asked for assurance that RGS would be involved in discussions before a tender process was started.
- b. Positive engagement with primary schools and suggestions for outreach – the headmaster has visited most local primary schools and met with respective heads. This has been positively received and resulted in ideas for outreach and in reach to try and encourage more in catchment students to apply.
- c. Curriculum – the curriculum remains under constant review with a particular focus on literacy and oracy interventions across the school. Governors were pleased to hear that the visits by the LA advisor had been positive and constructive. Governors noted that the Y12 KS4 scores were marginally lower than in previous years. Progress of those students will be reviewed by the curriculum committee.
- d. Teaching and Learning – Governors noted that student voice meetings were being used consistently to support our evaluation for Teaching and Learning.
- e. Safeguarding audit has been completed – the LA advisor has undertaken a safeguarding review, and no concerns have been identified. Governors were pleased to learn that there had been a reduction in the number of exclusions during the academic year to date compared to previous years. The explanation given for this was about the embedding of the positive behaviour policy, the consistency across the school and the continuous improvements regarding culture and respect. It was noted that attendance remains strong and exceeds national averages consistently across all groups. Governors asked about the small number of students who are persistently absent and how they are supported and monitored.
- f. Governors were delighted to learn of 10 Oxbridge offers being received by Y13 students this year. The headmaster explained the high calibre of the students in the year, the strong work ethic and commitment but also the support the students are receiving in preparation from the staff team. The headmaster described the work being done to support those students who may chose degree apprenticeship opportunities.
- g. Leadership – there has been an expansion in leadership opportunities across the school – with the expectation to enable more participation. This has been well received.
- h. Governors were told of the ongoing improvements across the school – which are being largely delivered by our in house team to an extremely high standard, despite limited budgets. The Board noted the challenge of the estate and the high cost capital projects which remain outstanding. Governors were pleased to learn that funding by the LA has been agreed for the repair of part of the school roof – but concerned that this did not extend to the whole roof. NYC has also funded boiler repairs. GL reminded the Board of the risk register and provided assurance that our estate's risks are well described and have been shared with the local authority team. Governors noted that there had been a fire incident in the Music Block. There had been no damage, and the event was not due to any electrical failing or failure of the process. Governors were assured of the investigation processes that had occurred. DW has been involved in this process and will provide the necessary updates.
- i. The Head reminded Governors of the current strategic priorities including SEND, digital strategy, staff wellbeing, and community outreach.

The Chair thanked the headmaster for the comprehensive report.

6. Financial Matters

a. Budget Monitoring Report

The headmaster reminded governors of the continued tight control on spending within school. Governors asked if there had been any detriment because of this or adversarial impact on students – and were pleased to learn that this was not the case.

The report illustrated that the opportunities to increase our income continue to be limited, and financial control is dependent on reduced spending.

ROH and GL presented the Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending February 2025. The overall financial position has improved by approximately £20,000 since the January report, primarily due to revised forecasts and updated departmental expenditure estimates.

Revenue Budget:

- Income: No significant changes reported. One Year 12 day student has converted to a boarder, bringing the total number of boarders to 90.
- Boarding Fee Debt:
 - *2023/24 Academic Year:* £6,326 outstanding. A payment plan has been agreed, with full repayment expected by August 2026.
 - *2024/25 Academic Year:* £1,941 outstanding. The debt has been referred to NYC Legal following non-payment and lack of response from the parent.
- Expenditure:
 - Supply Costs: Elevated due to staff illness and school fixtures; forecast assumes continued high expenditure.
 - Utilities: Electricity forecast reduced to £112,062; gas forecast increased to £88,117.
 - Maintenance: Four insurance claims are ongoing; the school is liable for £500 per claim.
 - Catering: Revised forecast reflects increased costs due to underestimation; now based on £6 per day for 77 boarders.
 - Department Budgets: Updated forecasts from budget holders have resulted in a favourable variance. Additional income is anticipated from English textbook sales (£2,500) and Art resources via ParentPay.
 - Bursary Funding: £4,000 of 16–19 Bursary Funding remains unspent and must be used in the next financial year or returned.

Capital Projects:

- Forecast Capital Income: £343,647, including contributions from NYC, Development Fund, private donors, FoRGS, and various loans. The IT Project is fully funded with £95,100 allocated.
- Forecast Capital Expenditure: £362,135, covering major projects such as the IT Project (£94,616), Cummins Grant (£58,853), and CH&Co catering items (£15,816). Work on the Fitness Suite has been deferred due to roof issues – which will be addressed first.
- Capital Carry Forward: £36,912, comprising £23,328 for the 3G Sinking Fund and £13,584 in other capital balances.

b. Boarding Fees 2025/26

The Board received a paper 07c recommending an increase in boarding fees for the 2025/26 academic year.

The Finance & Premises (F&P) Committee recommended a 4.0% increase to boarding fees for both weekly and termly boarders. This is slightly above the forecast RPI (3.4%) and is intended to:

- Cover the full cost of boarding provision.
- Generate a contingency of just over 8%, in line with DfE guidance.
- Address the shortfall between costs and fees that has developed in recent years.

Context and Rationale:

- Inflation has varied significantly in recent years, with boarding fee increases lagging behind national inflation rates.
- The proposed increase is based on a projected boarding population of 95 students and a total estimated cost of £1,437,682 for 2025/26.
- A 3.1% increase would cover costs; the additional 0.9% (approx. £13,000) is to be ringfenced for boarding maintenance improvements (e.g. carpets, decoration, servery upgrades).

Additional Considerations:

- Benchmarking shows RGS remains mid-range compared to other state boarding schools.
- The 8% contingency built into 2024/25 fees was eroded due to lower-than-expected boarding numbers, resulting in a projected income shortfall of £82,767.
- Inflation forecasts for 2025/26 remain uncertain, with key cost drivers (energy, food, wages) continuing to impact boarding provision disproportionately.

The Board noted the recommendation and agreed that the proposed increase should be published by the end of the Spring Term (4 April 2025).

c. Schools Financial Values Standard

The SFVS was reviewed and approved (subject to minor amendment) as recommended by the F+P committee. It was agreed that the document should be signed by the Chair of Governors and Submitted.

7. Safeguarding Update

- The Safeguarding Audit** was approved by the FGB. Governor compliance with mandatory training was confirmed.
- The safeguarding governor DW, submitted a written summary in advance of the meeting. This highlighted the effectiveness of the DSL team in managing safeguarding systems and monitoring processes. There are times of strain – where workload is high – around changes of years – but also and increased workload because of the Smoothwall software- where high volumes of daily alerts are requiring intense work. This is being reviewed by the SLT in collaboration with the DSL team. DW noted how well safeguarding is managed with a strong staff commitment.
- Governor concordance with mandatory training** – this was confirmed by the Vice Chair of the Board.

8. Committee Reports

Summaries were provided by committee chairs. Key points included:

08a Admissions Committee 26/02/2025

RGS FGB Meeting 26/03/2025 DRAFT Minutes

- The committee reported improvements including streamlined communication, consistent messaging, and more efficient tour scheduling as a direct consequence of our admissions officer.
- Strategies to increase boarding uptake are ongoing
- Governors discussed feeder school engagement and supported initiatives such as a Year 5 visit afternoon and inter-school sports day.
- 21 candidates passed the Y9 entrance test; all will be offered places to achieve a target intake of 14.
- Planned changes to the Y7 entrance test (to include English and Maths) delayed until 2026 due to NY contract.
- Sixth Form applications are strong, with a notable increase in male boarders and 98% of Y11 applying to stay on.

08b Boarding Committee 29/01/2025

- Boarding numbers are slightly down, with concerns over the number of boys applying for Y7 entry; however, sixth form male numbers are healthy.
- Discussions around limiting boarding to Years 12–13 were not supported at this stage.
- Weekend activity provision inconsistent; a plan is being developed to ensure regular, quality activities.
- Mental health concerns among boys noted; not seen as a school-specific issue but being addressed in pastoral teams.
- Marketing efforts are ongoing and include engaging Year 11 ambassadors and targeting military and independent school families.
- Staff engagement with boarding remains limited; committee acknowledged this as a long-term cultural shift. No safeguarding concerns reported; NYC advisor visit planned

08c Curriculum Committee 05/03/2025

- Sixth form class sizes discussed; no artificial limits set, but staff wellbeing and learning style considerations noted.
- GCSE and A-Level results reviewed; Pupil Premium students showed mixed progress, with targeted support in place.
- Departmental reviews (Biology and Classics) were positive, with areas for development identified.
- Home Learning Policy implementation is progressing well; further student feedback to be gathered.
- Digital strategy evolving with staff collaboration and external visits.
- UCAS outcomes remain strong despite a drop in offer rates; attributed to increased competition.
- Learning interventions and Pupil Premium spending reviewed and deemed effective.
- Inclusion governor role to be filled; interim coverage in place.
- Health & Safety incidents reviewed; no major concerns.
- Safeguarding and lesson register compliance monitored; reminders to be issued.
- Policies on Careers, Exams, and Privacy approved.
- Proposed change to Combined Science GCSE pathway supported in principle; final details to be presented in July.

08d Estates Development Committee 12/02/2025

- Discussion on clarifying EDC's remit to avoid overlapping with other committees. Focus areas include due diligence, optioneering, and non-finance policy reviews.
- Estate Strategy was discussed and reviewed progress on site developments. Funding for capital projects is limited; potential for new loan discussed.
- **Project Updates:**

- H&L toilets reinstatement (~£15–20k) recommended for F&P approval.
- Boarding improvements within £55k budget; impact on fees to be reviewed.
- Ongoing works include safeguarding upgrades, fitness suite, kiln, and IT upgrades.
- **NYC Works**
 - Boiler repairs, roof inspections, and minor works discussed. Concern raised over NYC's funding approach.
 - Sustainability
 - Solar for Schools project progressing; awaiting planning update.

08e Finance and Personnel Committee 15/01/2025, 12/3/2025

Financial Management & Budget Monitoring

- Governors agreed to attend NYC's financial management training; logistics to be confirmed.
- Budget Monitoring Reports showed significant improvement:
 - January: In-year deficit reduced to £2.3k.
 - February: Forecast moved to a £16k surplus.
 - Cumulative balance now projected at £30.7k surplus (vs. £56.8k deficit in Start Budget).
- The School will no longer apply for a Deficit Licence due to improved financial position.
- Recovery Plan measures (e.g. increasing student numbers, deferring IT projects) will continue.
- **Boarding Fees & Arrears**
 - Boarding Fees for 2025/26 to increase by 4.0%, subject to FGB approval.
 - Detailed review of arrears cases conducted; appropriate actions confirmed.
 - Committee requested a paper exploring options to reduce sixth form fee risk (e.g. accelerated payments, finance providers).
- **Policies & Compliance**
 - Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and related HR policies approved.
 - Updates to policies on staff leave (e.g. neonatal care) to be implemented upon NYC guidance.
 - SFVS 2025/26 approved with minor amendments; to be submitted to NYC by end of March.
- **Capital Projects & Estate**
 - Four capital projects approved for 2025/26:
 - Boarding improvements (£55–69k)
 - Sixth Form cloakroom repairs (£22k)
 - IT upgrades (£50k)
 - Sports Hall floor protection (£16k)
 - Ongoing concerns raised about NYC's reluctance to fund urgent repairs (e.g. roof, heating).
 - Committee expressed dissatisfaction with NYC's approach and supported escalation
- **Fundraising & Development Fund**
 - Proposal for a Fundraising Officer under development; business case to be presented to FGB.
 - Concerns raised about Development Fund accounting practices; review underway to ensure it reflects genuine donations only.
- **Contract Reviews**
 - Catering contract to be extended to August 2026; retendering to begin for September 2026.
 - IT backup systems to be consolidated under Redstor, saving £12.1k over three years.

Cleaning contract increase (9.3%) accepted due to wage and NI cost pressures.

Staffing

Staffing updates reviewed; recruitment and procedures confirmed as appropriate.

08f Pastoral Committee 19/3/25

- **Wellness in Mind Team:** Service has improved but remains inflexible. Weekly and fortnightly meetings with staff and Early Help continue. Benefits just outweigh drawbacks.
- **Safeguarding & Pastoral Report:**
 - Hate incidents are reported to and followed up by police; PCSO to deliver assembly on hate crime.
 - Child-on-child abuse: 84 boys involved in 181 incidents; 9 students responsible for a third of all cases.
 - Concerns raised about low engagement of white boys in leadership and co-curricular activities.
 - Risky behaviours and self-harm data reviewed; attendance remains excellent (top 2% nationally).
 - SEND/FSM attendance data affected by individual outliers; support confirmed for EHCP students.
 - Suspensions at lowest level in years; attributed to consistent year leadership.
 - No security or curriculum-related health & safety issues reported.
 - Governors praised improvements in behaviour and well-being metrics.
- **Policies & Training:**
 - Respectful Relationships and Lost Property policies recommended for approval.
 - Safeguarding refresher training for governors ongoing.
 - Safeguarding Audit and Prevent Risk Assessment completed and signed off.
- **Student Voice & Participation:**
 - SDP planning to include co-curricular participation and RGS Award development.
 - Low male engagement in leadership roles noted; to be explored further.
 - Heads of Year to be invited to next meeting via Teams.

9. Governors with Specific Responsibilities

- a. Inclusion Governor: there is currently no SEND governor
The Board noted that the SEND report had been reviewed in detail by the curriculum committee – it was reviewed by the Board.
- b. CEIAG Governor: TCT updated the committee on the recent events involving students and parents which attracted hugely positive feedback. A formal report will be prepared for the next meeting.
- c. Staff Welfare Governor: No specific update.

10. Health and Safety

DW had submitted a paper in advance of the meeting.

166 incidents were reported, including one fire and one staff collapse.

PE remains the highest source of accidents.

Site security review held with priorities including electronic locks and fencing.

11. Complaints

No new complaints were reported.

12. Policies for Approval

SEND Policy and Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy were approved.

13. Off-site Visits and Activities

A wide range of curriculum-linked and enrichment visits were presented by GL – all were reviewed and approved.

14. Governor Training

Governors were asked and agreed to undertake the NGA safeguarding training

15. Calendar

Reviewed and noted.

16. Any Other Business

None raised in advance.

17. Date of Next Meeting

Confirmed: Wednesday, 16 July 2025

18. Meeting Closure

The meeting closed at 20:05.