

ST HELENS COUNCIL
COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
OF COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON
THURSDAY 22 MAY 2025 AT 5 PM

Members:

(Based on
Constitution = 16)

Co-Opted Governors

*Mr Garry Anders (Chair)
*Mrs Stacey Hill (Vice-Chair)
*Mr Innes Arnold
*Mrs Margaret Bellis
*Mrs Justine Kellett (*present from 6.04pm*)
*Mrs Angela Farrell
*Mrs Linda Emmett
Dr Claire Lucas
Vacancy (3)
Vacancy (4)
Vacancy (5)

Local Authority Governor

Cllr Anthony Burns

The Principal

*Mr Russell Cormack

Staff Governor

Mr Corey Gerrard

Parent Governors

*Mr Karl Van Der Laan (*present from 5.15pm*)
*Mrs Sharon Ahmed

*denotes those present

Also attending:

Mrs Jennifer Merrills, Governor Services, acting as Clerk
Mr Cameron Sheeran, former Executive Principal (*present from 5pm – 6.50pm*)
Mr Nick Robinson, Executive Principal, Trinity MAT (*present from 5pm – 6.30pm*)

Part 1

Agenda Item 19 – Academisation Update was dealt with first.

1. Apologies and Consideration of Consent to Absence

This was returned to following Agenda Item 19.

Apologies were received from Cllr Burns, Dr Lucas and Mr Gerrard. Governors consented to their absence.

The meeting was quorate.

2. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were declared.

3. Governor Membership

It was noted that some DBS updates were required and relevant Governors were requested to action the same.

Action: DBS updates

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 December 2024

At Item 3 there is a typographical error in that Mrs Emmett is the Associate Principal at Little Lever, not Assistant Principal as stated in the minutes.

Otherwise, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters Arising from the above Minutes

There were no matters arising.

6. Minutes from Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing Committee Meeting held on 8 May 2025

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

7. Matters Arising from Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing Committee Meeting

There were no matters arising.

8. Recommendation from Pupil Behaviour and Wellbeing Committee Meeting

The Committee recommended Full Governing Body approval of the following policies:-

- Safeguarding Policy Incorporating Child Protection Policy Procedures
- Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School Policy
- Young People in the Care Local Authority Policy (Children we looked after)
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy (RHSE)
- Supporting Students as School with medical conditions Policy
- E-Safety

Resolved: Governors approved the above listed policies

9. Minutes from Quality of Education Committee Meeting held on 8 May 2025

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

Governors were informed that under Curriculum Led Financial Planning (CLFP) it had been decided that German MFL would be phased out.

10. Matters Arising from Quality of Education Committee Meeting

Mr Hewlett's action to invite pupils from a variety of subjects to update Governors is to be carried over to next time.

The Access Arrangements Policy and the Word Processor Policy, unfortunate timing in light of new guidance from JCQ re AI – the policies now needs to be updated with regards to this.

11. Recommendations from Quality of Education Committee Meeting

The Access Arrangements Policy and the Word Processor Policy will be revisited in the July meeting.

Action: Defer Access Arrangements Policy and the Word Processor Policy to next meeting

12. Local Authority Standard Items

Appointment of Clerk.

Action: Defer to next meeting.

13. Policy Review

Not all of the listed Policies were on Governor Hub.

Clerk advised Governors that she had been informed by Governor Services that the school confirmed they had sent all necessary documents and these had been added to the agenda pack/ GovHub.

Governors noted that the LA HR Policy Documents referred to a "Toolkit" on the intranet. It was queried whether schools have access to the LA intranet.

Action: Defer to next meeting.

14. School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Self-Evaluation

Mr Cormack advised Governors that the SIP was still not where we want it to be regarding attendance and outcomes. We are building SIP for next year using the Trinity model, using their analytics, this will be published in September

Governors had no questions.

15. Financial Management

Governors duly noted the updated projections:-

	Total Resources £	Projected Expenditure £	Surplus / Deficit £
2024/2025	13,559,771	12,503,838	1,055,933
2025/2026	13,216,034	12,743,245	472,789
2026/2027	12,746,673	12,773,941	-27,268

The Chair proposed a vote on ratifying the budget. Governors voted in favour.

Resolved: School Budget approved

Mr Cormack informed Governors that the Budget was already out of date and updated Governors on the following points:-

- This was based on projections around teacher's pay. It will need revisiting as only part funded.
- We are spending more than we have coming in so eating away at our reserves.
- Numbers are falling for Y7 next year - 251. We may therefore have to take some managed transfers. Await call from LA.
- Sixth Form projections looking better, Mr Watkins working very hard.
- Will have to look at our staffing and curriculums for next year.
- We have purposely not recruited certain staff and not replaced leavers

Action: Defer approval of SLAs to next meeting.

16. School Newsletter

Governors noted the contents of the same and confirmed that they also receive Mr Cormack's weekly newsletter.

17. International Trips

Mr Cormack informed Governors that further trips were planned to China and the Loire Valley.

18. Wellbeing of Students

Mr Gerrard had provided Mr Cormack with some notes.

- Exam support and care has been excellent, some difficulties including issues with some students not wanting to sit the exams, getting children into the exams. 38 students on red list at risk of not attending, staff are attending at their homes. Some issues with illness and pupils having to do exams in isolation.
- Wellbeing is a challenge – a lot to do, need a wider team.
- Attendance issue – 20 electively home educated.
 - Question: Is that robustly challenged?
 - Answer: Yes
 - Question: Do you have an audit trail of this?
 - Answer: Yes, we have letters etc actively discouraging home education.
- A lot of these are because parents are not happy with support and perceived challenge re attendance and behaviour.
 - Question: Are they still on roll?
 - Answer: No, though sometimes they come back, usually before exams, as parents do not want to pay for exam entries.
 - Question: If you had Safeguarding concerns would you refer? Automated front door.
 - Answer: Yes, as it is a worry.
 - Question: Is it a potential Safeguarding issue if staff are going to the home address for exam students, into their bedroom?
 - Answer: It is not an issue – staff would never go in a child's bedroom without family also being present.
 - Question: This Y11 cohort, do you notice a difference in this cohort who have never sat a formal assessment before due to covid?
 - Answer: No, not really different to other years.

19. Academisation update

This agenda item was discussed first. Discussion led by Mr Cormack and Mr Robinson.

Mr Cormack introduced Mr Robinson to Governors and said this discussion is following on from an earlier meeting where Governors decided Trinity MAT was their preference over TCAT.

Mr Robinson / Trinity have been at Cowley a lot over the past 6 weeks.

Areas of focus:-

- Attendance – Cowley is significantly below national average.
- Behaviour – exclusions at Cowley above national average.
- QE outcomes – Cowley is below where it should be.
- Finance – Cowley facing both internal and external challenges

Trinity were really keen to start working with school, staff have been really positive. Doing things with and for Cowley, alongside staff, support.

Trinity are excited to be involved with Cowley and are pleased with the engagement.

Cowley are effectively now operating as a Trinity school already, even though the academisation process is not finalised.

11 senior staff from Trinity have been in over the past few weeks providing help and support. E.g. - Attendance Lead at Trinity having daily Teams meetings with Mr Bennett.

18 members of Cowley staff have been over to Trinity also, learning systems, building working relationships etc.

Progress update. Working on –

- MIS (Bromcom)
- Behaviour
- Finance
- Attendance
- Curriculum
- Administration
- Quality of Education
- Safeguarding

MIS

- Cowley were using SIMS, lots of issues, the contract was up, so was a choice to renew or move. Left SIMS, brought in BromCom for MIS (same as Trinity so aligned with them). We did the transition in 1.5 weeks, usually takes a term.

- Staff training. Data sharing set up.
- Mr Cormack praised how quickly this went through, with a lot of support from Trinity. Trinity have previously gone through the MIS system change from SIMS to Bromcom in other schools before. Trinity IT – excellent in supporting. Still more to do next term and in longer term.

Question: Did the staff find the process ok? Are the staff all trained up now?

Answer: Yes. Generally seamless process. Ongoing training delivery to other staff.

Mr Van Der Laan arrived at 5.15pm.

- The new app for parents to use to launches after half term.

Question: Any issues / data loss etc?

Answer: No. Has also given us ability to clean up data. BromCom – single source of data, as opposed to 2 previously - SIMS and Class Charts.

Finance

- Trinity came in to help advise.
- Need to look at a curriculum led finance plan (CLFP), a lot of work.
- Mrs Callaghan is working with Trinity looking through SLAs and utilities, once we academise we will use Trinity's providers – should be savings and better service.

Question: Will HR / Payroll be in house?

Answer: Yes – Trinity. In the long term Trinity want to have a HR officer in each school.

Behaviour

- Behaviour for learning – making sure we get environment for best learning to take place. Pupils need to understand and be aware. Less disruption makes it easier for teachers to teach.
- Cowley have gone out to parents and students and staff asking what their views are re behaviour. Trinity have done similar.
- Looked at tweaking current behaviour system.
- Looking at creating a large non-teaching pastoral support team from existing staff.
- Professional standards curriculum – teaching children WHY we have these rules. Team time – i.e. why wear uniform, manners, organisation, being punctual etc – world of work etc. Can go hand in hand with issuing a sanction.
- Assemblies are lined up and booklets to work through in team time.
- Sanction – inclusion room. Booths – less distraction. Communications with parents.
- Detentions – unchanged for now.

- Disengaged students – developed new pathways. Reconnect, taught key subjects and some options, work on behaviours etc. Bespoke. Strong teachers. 16 weeks reintegration. 12 pupils.
- Connect – for students permanently excluded at primary or at risk of permanent exclusion coming to Cowley at secondary – similar but hopefully reintegrate sooner.
- New process – will be well embedded as implementing now so in September years 8-11 will be well used to it.
- Parental consultation meeting last night – not high attendance, but a good spread of different types of pupils. Other consultations will take place.
- Cowley has never recovered from behaviour post covid. This is something different, we need to do different.

Question: Is this centred around 11-16? Any suggestions post 16?

Answer: Yes. Trinity staff are working with Mr Watkins. Will look different post 16, as different audience. Called Conduct – lack of work, attendance. We have it working at Trinity 6th Form Academy.

Attendance

- Our attendance is below average. Mr Bennett working with Trinity, shadowing, learning about their interventions.
- Team being expanded. Separate team doing CIN work. Attendance focusing on attendance.
- Want raise existing students attendance.
- Targeting students when we see ones with good attendance starting to dip – doesn't have to be confrontational – more concern. Support early before it becomes worse. Offering / signposting to support.

Curriculum

- Have made tweaks and changes, more to come.
- Curriculum led financial plan.
- German – we are phasing this out – staff aware. Just French going forwards.
- Increased teaching time for staff
- Increase to class sizes.

Question: Any pushback from staff?

Answer: No

- More time for English & Maths for target students.
- Curriculum for life PHSE to be delivered in team time rather than separate teacher. Trinity have designed the resources / curriculum.

Quality of Education

- Trinity invest in their staff – 8 training days. Next year we will align with 5 of those days. Once academised thereafter we will also have 8.

- Contact / Directed time. Teaching and extra-curricular clubs / revision sessions – how can we drive attendance at these.
- Right thing for staff and students, still working on it. May be some tweaks to the school days timings – i.e. team time not first thing, during the day. Spilt lunch / break times – less queuing.
- Adjust school holiday timings – longer at Oct half term, less time off at Easter (before Exams).

Administration Systems

- Want things to run smoothly.
- E.g. – admin should be able to answer calls re children not come home, they can check if there is a club and if child is there.
- Communication between parents and school needs to be good.
- Aligning systems

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding lead has been to Cowley and done assessment.
- New lanyards and electronic sign in will be introduced.

Governance within Trinity MAT.

- Trinity schools all have their own Governing body – we think it is important.
- Strong relationship between Head Teacher and Governing body.
- Understand and appreciate Governors give up a lot of time, but that impact is good. We want to make it as easy / streamlined as possible to be a Governor.
- Training.
- Simplicity - 6 meetings a year, with timed agendas 2 hours maximum. Tends to be mix of in person and teams to maximise attendance.
- Governor support officer – Helen – works across the trust, works with NGA, the Key. Manages the agendas / paperwork.
- Governors portal – sharepoint to paperwork etc.
- Arranges minuting.
- Content of the Minutes. Capturing the questions. Defined actions, tracked at next meeting.
- Annual skills audit – identify any gaps.
- Recruitment.
- Example of Trinity Principal's Report for Governors Meetings. Enables Governors to ask questions.

Mrs Kellett joined the meeting at 6.04pm.

Mr Robinson invited questions from Governors.

Question: Are there no committee meetings? Just those 6 per year?

Answer: Yes that's it. Finance done at MAT level and just goes to Governors at the 2 key points of the year.

Question: If the trust board is making decisions, how would I know?
Answer: E.g. finance – if there was anything significant that would affect Cowley it would flow down into your agenda.

Question: Is the agenda set by the trust, not Cowley?
Answer: By the trust in consultation with Mr Cormack, so Cowley can influence agenda. Trust will put certain statutory things in these at relevant times of year. Principal's report is slick and generated from MIS.

Question: At committee meetings we have Mr Bennett and Mr Dickinson who are "on the shop floor". As there will be no committees will we still get to hear from them?
Answer: Yes if you want to. They may come to meetings and present on certain issues.

Question: Is there no issue to us moving to structure before we academise?
Answer: No, we are still statutorily compliant with the 6 x meetings per year.

Governors commented everything seems to be going very well.

Question: What is Trinity's ambition for Cowley?
Answer: To make it the highest performing school in St Helens, Ofsted outstanding. A school to drive the community, raise aspirations. Recognised as an outstanding school. More going on to college / university. Community of St Helens. Change.

Trinity's commitment to Cowley since March has been staggering. Mr Cormack commended Cowley's SLT who are already doing a very busy job and lots more to do now but they have embraced it.

Question: Is everyone at Cowley involved, not just teachers / pupils?
Answer: Yes everyone needs to have the aspiration to make this school great. Need to involve everyone that is linked to Cowley.

Question: Re finance – focus seems to be on managing costs. Concerned we are not actively looking for income, sponsorship, grants?
Answer: Procurement and lettings from Trinity has already been looking at our charges for lettings and the potential. Trinity are not saying no to anything.

Governors expressed thanks to Mr Robinson and the Trinity Team and Mr Cormack and his team for all the hard work that has been done.

Mr Robinson left at 6.30pm.

Mr Sheeran dealt with Part 2 agenda item 26, then this agenda item was returned to.

Mr Sheeran informed Governors that the RSC seem to support the academisation with Trinity following the Council / RSC / Cowley meeting.

Question: Are there any issues re the Saints building?

Answer: There should not be. There is a legal lease in place. There will come a point in the future towards end of lease term when a decision will have to be made as to what will happen with Saints.

Mr Sheeran asked Governors to decide should we go forwards at this point in time and submit our application to convert and join Trinity now? We have an Ofsted looming. If we were applying now, that would give us the ability to defer any Ofsted inspection if we were in the process of converting.

Question: What would the benefit of delaying everything being?

Answer: Potentially if we wanted a more positive indication from RSC.

Everything with Trinity so far has been really positive, Governors expressed a desire to keep the momentum going and push it to an end point.

Mr Cormack informed Governors that Cowley is currently operating as a Trinity school in reality, making changes already. There have been no issues with locations. Regular Teams meetings are held. IT dial in remotely. A training day has already been organised.

Governors voted on whether to submit an application to join Trinity MAT now.

Resolved: Governors voted unanimously in favour of submitting an application now for Cowley to join Trinity MAT.

Mr Sheeran left the meeting at 6.50pm

20. Governor Development

There were no updates.

21. Date and Time of Next FGB Meeting – Thursday 17 July 2025

Governors noted the same and in light of the error of the start time on today's agenda it was confirmed the start time would be 5pm.

22. Urgent

There were no urgent matters.