

ST HELENS COUNCIL
COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
OF COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON
THURSDAY 17 JULY 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 (*in attendance until 6pm*)
*Mrs Angela Farrell
*Mrs Linda Emmett
Dr Claire Lucas
Vacancy
Vacancy
Vacancy

Local Authority Governor

*Cllr Anthony Burns (*in attendance until 6.35pm*)

The Principal

*Mr Russell Cormack

Staff Governor

*Mr Corey Gerrard (*in attendance until 6pm*)

Parent Governors

*Mr Karl Van Der Laan
Mrs Sharon Ahmed

*denotes those present

Also attending:

Mrs Jennifer Merrills, Governor Services, acting as Clerk
Mr Nick Robinson, Executive Principal, Trinity MAT (*present from 5pm – 6.35pm*)
Mrs Helen Singleton Trinity MAT Head of Governance (*present from 5pm – 6.35pm*)
Karen Joinson, Cowley International College(*present from 5pm – 6.35pm*)

Part 1

1. Apologies and Consideration of Consent to Absence

Apologies were received from Mrs Ahmed. Governors consented to her absence.

Dr Clare Lucas was not in attendance, no apologies had been received.

The meeting was quorate.

2. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were declared.

3. Governor Membership

It was noted that Dr Clare Lucas' DBS was still outstanding.

Action: Clare Lucas DBS to be actioned.

4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 May 2025

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 Finance, Personnel & Premises Meeting held on 10 June 2025

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

7. Matters Arising from Finance, Personnel & Premises Meeting

There were no matters arising.

8. Recommendations from Finance, Personnel & Premises Meeting

The Committee recommended Full Governing Body approval of the Bursary Policy.
This is listed as a separate agenda item (item 11) for today's meeting.

9. Local Authority Standard Items

Pay Policy

Governors noted with concern the significant delay in the LA providing the Pay Policy, this was only made available at end of the academic year.

Question: Has the Appraisal Policy changed? As seems to be linked with the Pay Policy, as no longer Performance Related Pay?

Answer: We adopt LA Policy. Not aware of any new Appraisal Policy.

Resolved: Governors approved and agreed to adopt the Pay Policy.

10. Great British Energy Solar Partnership Programme

Mr Cormack provided Governors with a verbal update. The college are getting solar panels installed in the winter (February) on the 11-16 site. EV charging points will be installed over summer.

Mr Cormack expressed his thanks to the LA for extending the offer to the college.

The pupils in the Sustainability Committee have also been involved in this project, the pupils were credited by Cllr Burns for their positive involvement.

11. Policy Review

Behaviour for Learning Policy

Mr Cormack explained that the college have worked with Trinity MAT on this Policy. A lot of work has gone into it. It is based upon Trinity's Policy, but tweaked to suit Cowley. There are some similarities with Cowley's previous policy, but this is far more slick. Contains the principles of the Trinity system, but adapted to suit Cowley, aligns with Trinity.

Question: Page 19 Part-time timetabling – Why is that in the behaviour policy? A part-time timetable cannot be used for behaviour, concerned that this may look like we are using a part-time timetable as a behaviour sanction / method. It says it is not linked to behaviour, so then should it not then sit elsewhere other than in the Behaviour Policy?

Answer: It is included in the Behaviour Policy as there will be students returning on a phased return.

Question: Should it not then sit in the Attendance Policy instead?

Answer: It can sit there as well.

Question: Is there a locally agreed off site direction? Should there be an appendix to this?

Answer: Yes there is. Something we can discuss further.

Question: Does the Policy have the potential to increase our exclusion figures?
Answer: In theory, yes. But in reality, we have been tracking this since changes were made and so far has actually reduced exclusions due to the use of the inclusion room. A spike in exclusions was anticipated, but this has not been seen. There are more changes to be implemented in September. Exclusions may then spike initially, but because of the use of Connect and Reconnect provisions in September, due to these steps before exclusion it is likely to drop.

Governors expressed concerns regarding very disruptive students, persistent disruption at a high level, repeated suspensions, the cycle goes on for a long time before Permanent Exclusion can be considered. Governors are concerned about the effects on other students who are placed in classes with such high level disruption.

Mr Cormack explained that because we will now be using other interventions as well as suspensions, this enables the college to have a wealth of evidence to support earlier Permanent Exclusion of high-level disruptive students who will not change their behaviours. At a lower-level, the interventions address the behaviours and de-escalate and make them more manageable in school and less disruptive to their peers. Behaviour matrix.

Question: Re transition – have these changes to the Behaviour Policy been shared with Y6 coming up in September and their parents?
Answer: Yes it has been shared with parents at transition meetings. We have also consulted with our current parents.

Mr Gerrard commented about staff wellbeing being very important. Staff want calm lessons and disruptive pupils being addressed, which is what these changes will do.

Resolved: Governors agreed to adopt the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

Bursary Policy

Governors were informed that Mr Watkins and Mrs Callaghan had worked on this Policy. The FPPS Committee had recommended Governors agree and adopt this Policy.

Resolved: Governors agreed to adopt the Bursary Policy.

12. Financial Management

Governors duly noted the updated projections:-

	Total Resources £	Projected Expenditure £	Surplus / Deficit £
2024/2025	13,559,158	12,345,344	1,253,814
2025/2026	13,555,550	12,855,919	699,631

2026/2027	13,132,987	12,964,718	168,269
2027/2028	12,596,584	13,015,478	-418,894

Pay awards were discussed at the FPP Committee Meeting, we had less budgeted for pay rises than was given.

Mr Cormack informed Governors that the college is spending more than we have, need to address this. Curriculum Led Financial Planning is being use, this is a lot of work. Some staff that are leaving are not being replaced.

The new Year 7 intake is full which is good news. There is a focus on Mr Watkins to keep trying to drive the Sixth Form numbers.

13. Staffing Structure 2025/2026

Mr Cormack informed Governors that the main change was re SLT. Simon Acton on SLT has left, not replaced, huge savings. Mr Cormack is looking at SLT roles and responsibilities. Cowley SLT are working well and collaboratively with the Trinity links in similar roles at Trinity Schools.

New Pastoral roles have been introduced – College Managers and Deputy College Managers. Some are LSAs. There are 10 staff on corridors during lesson times. Staff are trialling these new roles, been ongoing for 4 weeks. The trial is working well so far, still a trial, but it will ultimately have to be decided what we are going to adopt as there will be HR / job role adjustment / salary implications. A lot of work has gone into the trial.

Question: Are the College Managers / Deputy College Managers existing staff?

Answer: Yes

Question: As some are LSA's, how are we bridging that gap in college?

Answer: It is ok for now, as Y11 have left, so we have some spare capacity.

Mr Cormack informed Governors that suspensions were down and it feels calmer round the college building, though it is still early days. A behaviour review recently took place – positive. The next behaviour review will be in October.

Mr Cormack praised the staff who are trialling these new roles and systems as being enthusiastic, adapting well, and welcoming the training.

Question: Is a College Manager the same as the old Year Co-Ordinators?

Answer: Yes, the 5 x College Managers are the old Year Co-Ordinators. The Deputy College Managers are a mixture of LSAs and other roles.

Resolved: Governors approved the staffing structure for 2025/2026

14. Academy Update

Mr Cormack opened by reminding Governors it was one year ago when he first met Michael Gosling, Trinity MAT CEO, at a presentation. Cowley are now effectively operating as a Trinity School. Mr Cormack expressed his thanks to Michael, Nick and the wider Trinity team.

The focus this term is on behaviour and pastoral systems. Tom and Stuart from Trinity Halifax and Bradford came into Cowley this week. Cowley has new policies and procedures, inclusion room is going well. Connect and Reconnect rooms will be introduced in September.

Work has started on aligning CPD. A lot of support from Sixth Form. A lot of collaboration between Trinity and Cowley which is going well.

Mr Robinson, Trinity MAT, spoke to Governors, main points summarised below:-

- We have made connections and links, building on this.
- Inset days aligned as far as poss.
- Curriculum areas linked. Sharing resources.
- Thanks to Mr Watkins at Sixth form, aligning systems with Trinity Sixth form.
- Paired up departments, colleagues can contact one another
- Conduct system at Sixth form will be implemented. Sixth form embracing making changes.
- PHSE curriculum for life – being brought in in September.

Mr Gerrard, the Staff Governor made the following points:-

- Professional Standards – expected behaviours. Trinity involvement and support has been great. Staff and students – changes presented slowly to both. Consistency from staff – working together.
- Professional standards assemblies for pupils. Keep reinforcing messages at Team Time etc. Resources provided by Trinity. Booklets.
- Students realising why professional standards are in place, links with behaviour policy.
- Emphasis on rewards – staff limited to 10 per day, they now have more value.
- C system being used – consistency by staff.
- Pupils getting the message.
- Staff morale is better.
- System to alert the College Managers if assistance needed. C3 red card. To inclusion, restorative justice, for example one student came back and apologised, showing it is working.

Mr Cormack spoke to Governors regarding attendance.

- Attendance is Cowley's biggest challenge.
- Support received from Sharon at Halifax.
- Cowley are working with Trinity rather than the LA re attendance, Trinity's figures are better than any school in St Helens.

- Attendance is a huge challenge, need to start strong in September.
- Not a quick fix. Targeting the right students is key.
- Students need to be here at college to learn and achieve outcomes.
- We have attendance analytics software, helps pinpoint patterns and which pupils to target. Identify issues and challenge / support. For example, a repeated same day of week off, ask is there an issue with lessons on that particular day?
- Attendance team are moving upstairs in September near to Mrs Callaghan's office.

The Chair read out an update from Michael Gosling, Trinity MAT CEO, and Cameron Sheeran.

- Regional Schools Commissioner / Regional Director. Summary – they would like Trinity to apply to have a wider presence in St Helens including Cowley. Other schools in St Helens are talking to Trinity, but Trinity don't want to pressure them just to please the Regional Director as this is unfair.
- Usage of Sarah Cowley building has been agreed in principle. Cowley can use rooms. AP have said that a base for Permanently Excluded students will not be on a school site.

A proposal yesterday was received from the Chair of Trinity MAT's Board:- Trinity will invite Cowley to be an Associate Member of the Trust whilst all this ongoing work regarding conversion is being done. This would be a show of commitment from both Cowley and Trinity. This would not be legally binding in any way, just a show of faith and commitment to one another.

Resolved: Governors voted unanimously in favour of Cowley becoming an Associate Member of Trinity MAT.

At 6pm – Mr Gerrard and Mrs Kellett left the meeting.

Item 18 on the Agenda was deal with next.

15. School Newsletter

This item and following items were dealt with after Item 18 on the Agenda

Governors noted the content of the school newsletter.

16. International Trips

Mr Cormack informed Governors that the recent trips to China and the Loire Valley went really well.

A Cambodia camps international trip has been arranged.

17. Wellbeing of Students

Mr Cormack updated Governors as follows:-

- Pastoral changes have sharpened up behaviour.
- We have a number of vulnerable students, poor attendance etc.
- Currently 25 are electively home educated.
- Medical room has been closed, wellbeing room now instead.

Staff Wellbeing:-

- A lot of changes taking place. In September Cowley will look very different.
- Some staff are worried / concerned and there have been some union challenges.

The structure of the college day will be changing, meeting routines changing, uniform changing. Behaviour and pastoral changes – we were braced for battles, many haven't happened BUT currently do not have a full school.

18. Moving to Local Governing Body Structure and Consent

This agenda item was dealt with out of sequence after item 14.

Governance within Trinity MAT.

Helen Singleton, Trinity MAT, Head of Governance, gave a presentation to Governors. Main points as follows:-

- Mrs Singleton looks after 11 schools in the MAT, both secondaries and primaries.
- Slides shown of Trinity MAT Governance structure / hierarchy.
- Board of Directors – will do most of the policies etc.
- Local Governing Board – you will deal with what Affects your school. LGB – up to 13 members. 6 meetings a year – no committee meetings. They will cover everything over the year to deal with all statutory items. Work with HT / Chair to set agenda. Meetings are 2 hours and strictly timed. Minutes and actions.
- Examples given of structure and what dealt with at each meeting – what focus is.
- Budgets then sent up to Directors for approval.
- Links with Directors / Linked Governors – reporting. Written report format is used – not too onerous.
- Principals Report for every meeting. Standard across the trust. Covers numerous topics. A lot is generated from Power BI data. Principal can write a narrative to accompany.
- Training offer / requirements for Governors.
- Ofsted support.

Mr Cormack confirmed that Mrs Joinson at Cowley will be linking with Mrs Singleton. Mrs Joinson will continue to be Governors first point of contact with the school.

Mr Cormack acknowledged it had been a difficult academic year having to deal with complaints, permanent exclusions, all of which are subject to strict time constraints. Mr Cormack thanked Governors and said he really appreciates the time given by Governors this year. Mr Cormack informed Governors that he had attended a Trinity Principals meeting at Leeds and Trinity were very impressed by the calibre of the Governing Body at Cowley.

Question: We currently use Governor Hub? Will we still use that with Trinity?

Answer: Trinity have a Governor Portal, Sharepoint, Microsoft 365. Cowley don't currently use this. There will be a portal of some sort, we will work it out.

The Chair expressed his gratitude to Trinity for all their support and all they have done and also commended Cowley staff and Governors for their work.

Mr Robinson thanked Cowley Governors for putting their faith in Trinity and for the support of Governors, staff and SLT at Cowley who have all embraced change in an impressive fashion.

Governors commented that it was beneficial to hear the staff governor today speaking so positively of the support, systems etc and the impact, especially on staff wellbeing.

Mr Robinson, Mrs Singleton, Cllr Burns and Mrs Joinson all left the meeting at 6.35pm

19. Date and Time of Next FGB Meeting – Tuesday 30 September 2025

Governors noted the same.

20. Full Governing Board Meeting Dates for the 2025-2026 Academic Year.

Governors noted the dates for the meetings as set out in the Agenda:-

Board Meeting Dates for the 2025-2026 Academic Year	
Date of meeting	
Tuesday 30 September 2025	
Tuesday 25 November 2025	
Tuesday 3 February 2026	
Tuesday 17 March 2026	
Tuesday 12 May 2026	
Tuesday 7 July 2026	

Question: Which dates will be in person and which will be online?

Answer: We can decide this at the first meeting in September, meetings can be blended if necessary.

21. Urgent

There were no urgent matters.