



Ruskin Community High School

Leadership, Management & Environment Committee 10th March, 2026 at 4:00pm Venue - School

MINUTES – PART ONE

Present:	Dean Postlethwaite (HT) John Rhodes (Chair) Denise McCumskey (DK) William Ollier (WO) Duncan Burrow (DB) Margo Veitch (MV) Peter Storey (PS) Milena Kwaczynska (MK)	Headteacher Co-opted - Chair of Committee Co-opted Governor Co-opted Governor – via TEAMS Co-opted Governor – via TEAMS Co-opted Governor Co-opted Governor Parent Governor
Apologies:	Debbie Jones (DJ) Peter Thorpe (PT) Donald Higgs (DH) Marion McKenzie (MM) Emma Szymura (ES)	Co-opted Governor Co-opted Governor Co-opted Governor Staff Governor Co-opted Governor
Staff Apologies:	Sarah Robson (SR) Natalie Burke (NB) Natalie Cross (NC) Claire Harrison (CH)	Assistant Head Assistant Head Assistant Head and SENDCO Assistant Head
In attendance:	Hazel Goodwin (HG) Su Garbutt (Clerk)	School Business Manager – via TEAMS Senior Governance Officer

	Agenda Item	Actions
1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>Governors accepted the apologies received from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debbie Jones (DJ) Peter Thorpe (PT) Donald Higgs (DH) Marion McKenzie (MM) Emma Szymura (ES) Sarah Robson (SR) Natalie Burke (NB) Natalie Cross (NC) Claire Harrison (CH) <p>Governors noted that the meeting had coincided with the Year 9 Parents’ Evening and Options Evening, which had resulted in staff being unable to attend.</p>	



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	<p>located in classrooms are currently inactive due to age and original placement. These cameras will be repositioned following safeguarding-based evaluation. Work is underway to upgrade the system so that all camera feeds can be viewed on a single screen. CH has consulted with the pastoral team, and suitable alternative locations for the cameras have been identified.</p> <p>Maths – TLA Meeting An update relating to Mathematics will be provided at tomorrow’s Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) meeting.</p> <p>YAMs – SDW Meeting The YAM presentations will be provided at tomorrow’s Student Development & Welfare (SDW) meeting.</p> <p>SIP Report The School Improvement Partner (SIP) report is due by the end of the week. It will be included within the Headteacher’s Report and uploaded to Governor Hub.</p> <p>Ofsted Training Ofsted training has been completed, with a particular focus on inclusion. SLT members are reviewing their respective areas across the seven Ofsted judgement strands and will prepare a series of 20-minute briefing sessions for governors to ensure clarity and confidence in each area. Governors will be invited to provide feedback after the next TLA and SDW meetings.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Link Governor Reports (SDW) Update from the Health and Safety Link Governor PT was unable to attend the meeting. An update would be received at the next meeting.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Site & Buildings Report HG presented the Site and Buildings update and highlighted the following key areas of progress and ongoing work.</p> <p>Asbestos Works Asbestos remedial work was completed successfully over the February half term. Although the project overlapped into the weekend, all works were finalised as planned. The certification has been uploaded to Governor Hub, and the updated Asbestos Management Plan is now in place. The project remains on schedule and was funded through DFC at a total cost of £12,000.</p>	



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Heat Source Pumps

The installation of the heat source pumps is still in progress. The sports hall has been handed back to the school, but there continue to be operational issues. Recent mock examinations were disrupted due to heating inconsistencies. The school is liaising with contractors to resolve the issues. Although the original intention had been to switch systems over at Easter, this now appears unlikely. HG advised that there remain concerns over both the pumps and overall heating levels, and governors will be kept informed, with support requested as needed.

Bell Tower Repairs

There has been no progress on the bell tower repairs. The project has been significantly delayed, but it is hoped that work will commence soon.

Main Hall Glazing

Replacement glazing in the main hall has not yet started.

IT Strategy

Progress continues to be positive. A further 20 student laptops are required to achieve full compliance and complete the IT upgrade cycle. The final phase will involve retiring the Server system, which is still used for the canteen, SIMS, and photocopying. All other systems have now migrated to the cloud.

DB advised that laptops should be purchased sooner rather than later, due to national rising costs in the IT market. It was agreed that quotes will be obtained for student laptops, which are already included within the current budget. Once procured, the additional devices will help progress the transition to a fully cloud-based network.

HG reported ongoing work with teaching staff to understand how IT will be integrated into curriculum delivery over the coming years.

DP noted that the education sector is progressing towards online GCSE examinations, with early introduction anticipated in the next few years and full implementation potentially by 2030. This transition will require significant infrastructure investment, including enhanced Wi-Fi capacity and additional technical provisions, and will therefore require careful advance budgeting.

BO raised concerns about scenarios where laptop use or Wi-Fi reliability may compromise examinations. HG confirmed that contingency planning is underway. A recent full-day internet outage highlighted the vulnerability of current systems. The school's IT provider is exploring the installation of Starlink as an independent backup to ensure continuity. DfE guidance indicates schools will be expected to have dual-system resiliency.



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	<p>Planning is ongoing, although Starlink may require planning permission due to its external mounting location.</p> <p>Governors discussed the implications of holding simultaneous online examinations across multiple rooms. HG confirmed that this already occurs for SEND learners across several locations with invigilators and scribes, and the move to digital examinations will increase complexity. A planning meeting with DB has been scheduled.</p> <p>Fire Doors Cheshire East inspectors have reviewed the fire doors in the main building. Due to age, all doors failed. North West Fire Door representatives attended alongside CE staff to assess practical remedial options. Work will focus initially on the science block and the lower area of the main hall. A draft strategy has been uploaded to Governor Hub. A quotation is awaited, and CE has committed to supporting some of the associated costs.</p> <p>Q: Can the replacement doors be in keeping with the character of the main building? HG confirmed that examples have not yet been received but that efforts will be made to ensure replacements remain sympathetic to the style of the building where possible.</p> <p>Completed Projects HG confirmed the successful completion of several projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Centre works • CAD/CAM room development at the rear of the Design & Technology block • Asbestos remedial works in February half term <p>Special thanks were given to Mark Lynch, Design & Technology Technician for his excellent project management through the CAD/CAM room development.</p>	HG/DB
8.	<p>Financial Update HG presented the financial update, addressing each item as outlined in the agenda.</p> <p>a) Budget vs Actuals for 2025–2026 HG reported that the Budget vs Actuals for the current year are broadly on track. While the school is not earmarking funds at this stage, it is anticipated that there will be an approximate £100k carry-forward, which should remain well below the clawback threshold.</p> <p>Staffing costs are currently over budget due to a higher-than-expected national pay award. However, the additional government grant has partially</p>	



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<p>offset this, and the school has been careful and efficient in recruitment when staff have left.</p> <p>b) Three-Year Financial Plan</p> <p>HG reported that she had met with JR the previous week and attended a Schools Finance meeting the day before. The school now uses new financial-planning software provided via Cheshire East once per year, which supports a full alignment check of assumptions.</p> <p>There are differences between the Local Authority’s assumptions and the school’s—for example, CE has modelled 6.5% teachers’ pay increases for the next three years, whereas the school has modelled increases of 3%, 2.5% and 1.5%. The school will request that CE aligns its assumptions with those used internally.</p> <p>Current projections indicate a £580k deficit in Year 3, which will be discussed further in Part 2. Years 1 and 2 remain balanced.</p> <p>HG noted that the new software is extremely effective and allows multiple scenario models to ensure best possible decision-making. It remains vital to keep staffing below 80% of total expenditure.</p> <p>HG also advised that maintaining the annual external check with the LA provides important reassurance and is now more cost-effective: what previously cost around £5,000 for three visits now costs significantly less for one visit, plus the £1,000 software licence.</p> <p>Schools finance documentation will be presented to the Full Governing Board.</p> <p>Q: Are pupil numbers secure for future years?</p> <p>HG confirmed that supporting documents on Governor Hub show projected Year 7 intake at 144 pupils for September 2026. The budget is slightly under-modelled to remain cautious. Local housing developments in Nantwich and Shavington may also increase demand for Crewe schools.</p> <p>c) Staffing Structure for 2026–2027</p> <p>HG referred governors to the teaching and support staffing structures uploaded to Governor Hub. Staffing continues to be reviewed against curriculum needs and the financial plan.</p> <p>A review of TLRs is planned due to vacancies currently being covered by SLT. The STRB has been asked to consider TLR allowances nationally and a report is awaited. Changes cannot be made until this is published.</p>	<p>HG</p>
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HG highlighted upcoming legislative changes from September 2026, under which part-time staff holding management responsibilities (TLRs/leadership duties) must receive full allowance, even when working reduced hours.

This is intended to support staff retention and flexibility. It does not apply to teaching salary, only to management allowances. This could drive the need for restructuring.

The budget currently allocates £130k to TLR allowances. Three or four part-time staff would benefit from this change.

Q: Can the school forecast SEND staffing needs in advance?

The school has received 46 EHCP requests but only 6 pupils have been placed so far. The school reviews all requests each year, but cannot plan staffing until needs are confirmed by the LA. The LA is moving towards greater inclusion and fewer alternative placements.

The school maintains flexibility through strong internal provision and the ability to employ TAs on short-term contracts when required.

Apprenticeships are also used to support capacity—two are currently in post, and recruitment for two more is underway.

Q: Do apprentices attract funding support?

Yes. Apprenticeship levy funding covers their programme costs and placements last 18 months.

d) Draft Budget for 2026–2027

The draft budget for 2026–2027 is available on Governor Hub and will be confirmed at the next FGB. It is currently balanced.

Assumptions include:

- 3% pay award (full figures not yet known)
- Similar inflation allowances to the previous year
- Continued uncertainty around energy prices (heat source pumps may increase electrical use, with some offset in reduced gas consumption)

The school is still awaiting a £15k water-overcharge credit from the LA, which will fall into next year's accounts.

There remains unspent DFC, with a further £16k due next year. This may support music or IT investment.



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	<p>High Needs funding is provisionally down £30k, pending confirmation of Year 7 SEND profile, and will be updated before the summer approval meeting.</p> <p>Solar panels have begun generating income, particularly noticeable in the summer months.</p> <p>Q: Will income generation attract tax liability? HG confirmed schools do not pay corporation tax or VAT on this income, but will check and confirm formally.</p> <p>Governors approved the draft budget and recommended it to the FGB for final approval.</p> <p>e) Approval of SFVS The SFVS has been completed jointly by JR and HG and uploaded to Governor Hub.</p> <p>The Committee approved the SFVS for submission by 31 March 2026. Governors noted that the opportunity to contribute to the document was valuable.</p> <p>f) Review and Approval of the Manual of Internal Financial Procedures (MIFP) No changes were required this year. The unchanged version has been added to Governor Hub.</p> <p>Governors recorded their thanks to HG for the extensive work undertaken behind the scenes to ensure strong financial management and compliance.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Debt Recovery HG provided an update on current debt recovery activity. The Committee was informed that the main area of outstanding debt continues to relate to dining hall accounts. Since the introduction of the £3 daily emergency cap, the volume of emergency meal charges has reduced significantly.</p> <p>HG explained that although occasional debts arise from both staff and pupils, reminder emails are sent to inform account holders that the school cannot continue to support ongoing debt. All parents and carers receive automatic alerts when their balance drops below 1p, prompting them to top up promptly.</p> <p>For higher levels of debt, pupils are called up individually and offered support, ensuring families are aware of the situation and can engage with repayment. As at 2 February, the total dining hall debt stood at £685, but this figure fluctuates daily and often reduces significantly as payments are</p>	



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	<p>made. HG confirmed that debt is no longer a substantial concern, and current processes are proving effective in managing and reducing outstanding balances.</p> <p>No items were identified for write-off at this meeting.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Data Protection Officer Report</p> <p>The Committee noted that no formal written report had been submitted for this meeting. An update was, however, provided verbally.</p> <p>It was reported that the school has handled one Subject Access Request (SAR) since the last meeting. This is the fourth SAR received from the same parent, and continues to be extremely labour-intensive. The process requires staff to review large volumes of emails, many of which are retained longer than necessary. Staff are reminded regularly of the requirement to delete emails after five years, and additional work is underway to improve compliance. Responding to the SAR requires significant anonymisation and filtering, making it a substantial administrative task for the Data Protection team.</p> <p>HG also reported that a further phishing-scam test email has been completed. A cyber-security simulation attack is scheduled to run shortly, as part of the school’s ongoing programme of strengthening digital security and staff awareness.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to update key IT and data policies, including policies for Artificial Intelligence, Data Protection and GDPR. The school is also exploring the development of a designated secure data storage environment, in collaboration with DB, to improve data security and facilitate safer access to sensitive information.</p> <p>Q: Why does the parent keep submitting SARs?</p> <p>It was explained that the parent is believed to be seeking information to support engagement with external agencies rather than querying the school’s actions. The requests appear aimed at gathering documentation to support wider family circumstances, rather than raising concerns about school practice.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Health & Safety Update</p> <p>Approval of LA Health & Safety Audit</p> <p>It was noted that the Local Authority Health and Safety Audit has not yet taken place. The most recent Health and Safety report was presented to governors at the previous meeting.</p>	



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	<p>The updated audit remains scheduled for the summer term meeting, at which point governors will receive the full report and be asked to approve the outcomes and associated actions.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>Staff and Students Wellbeing Staff and Students Wellbeing Report A comprehensive report on staff and student wellbeing had been uploaded to Governor Hub in advance of the meeting. HG provided an overview of key developments.</p> <p>Community Cover Scheme The Community Cover Scheme report was available on Governor Hub. The scheme continues to operate effectively following refinements introduced in September. DP reported that staff are now able to take up to two days of flexible leave per academic year, and the system is functioning well. A review of cover allocations shows that the scheme continues to offer significant benefits, including a considerable saving on supply costs. Long-term absences are supported through direct supply, and the school has significantly reduced reliance on agency staff over the past few years. Teachers also benefit from increased flexibility, contributing positively to wellbeing.</p> <p>DP confirmed that internal “direct supply” has been strengthened, with all supply staff now aligned to the same pay grade, ensuring greater consistency and fairness across the school.</p> <p>Staff wellbeing continues to be strong. Although a small number of staff do not access the scheme, approximately 90% of staff participate, and overall feedback is positive. A full review will take place at the end of the academic year.</p> <p>The scheme remains an essential wellbeing tool. Without it, staff timetables would increase from 42 to 43 or 44 periods, whereas Ruskin currently has one of the lowest contact loads in Cheshire East. Most academies operate at 44 periods per fortnight.</p> <p>The school also grants limited paid time through the personal leave allowance—for example, for sports day or special family events. Sickness levels have decreased compared with previous years, which HG attributed partly to the scheme.</p> <p>Q: What reasons are typically given for Community Cover requests? DP explained that approval is always granted, and staff are not required to give a reason. Staff may request cover for personal commitments—for example, attending the London Marathon and taking the following day off, or attending a weekend wedding. Certain restrictions apply (e.g. no leave</p>	



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	<p>on the last day of term; no two consecutive days unless in exceptional circumstances such as bereavement).</p> <p>Q: How do staff “pay back” the cover? Cover is mostly planned. Staff provide reciprocal cover for colleagues throughout the year, and cover requirements are spread evenly. On average, staff complete the equivalent of 13 hours of cover per year, approximately 1 hour every three weeks. The system is capped so staff complete roughly the same number of cover sessions.</p> <p>Timings of the School Day DP provided an update on proposed adjustments to the timing of the school day.</p> <p>The Committee was reminded that a previous Government White Paper proposed a minimum 32.5-hour school week. Although the legislation did not pass, the requirement is now embedded in the new Ofsted framework. Last year, the school made changes to lunchtime arrangements, including opening an additional food service point, which helped ensure that pupils could be served within a 40-minute break—though Fridays remain more pressured.</p> <p>To comply with the new requirement, the school proposes adding 10 minutes per day, incorporated into lunchtime to support clubs and ensure pupils have sufficient time to eat. Lesson durations will remain unchanged. The school day will therefore end at 3.10 pm instead of 3.00 pm from September 2026.</p> <p>Q: When will parents be informed? DP will write to parents before the Easter holidays to give a full term’s notice plus the summer break.</p> <p>The Committee formally approved the proposed change to the school day.</p> <p>The Chair will report this to the Full Governing Board.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DP</p> <p style="text-align: center;">JH</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Directors Report Due to the number of apologies received for this meeting, the Clerk advised that the Director’s Report would instead be taken at the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee meeting scheduled for tomorrow, when a greater number of governors are expected to be present.</p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p>Policies Governors noted the following policies and recommended them for approval at the next FGB:</p>	



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	<p>a) Acceptable Use of ICT Policy b) Adaptive Teaching c) AI Policy d) Business Continuity Management Plan e) Dignity at Work Policy f) Flexible Working Policy and Procedure g) Premises Management h) Risk Assessment Policy i) Science Health & Safety Policy j) Student Equality, Equity and Diversity Policy k) Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy l) Visitors Procedure Policy m) Whistleblowing Policy n) CCTV Policy (to be reviewed and updated following installation of additional cameras, as requested by FGB)</p> <p>HG introduced the item and confirmed that all listed policies had been uploaded to Governor Hub, with changes highlighted where applicable.</p> <p>HG advised that the Adaptive Teaching document should be removed from the policy list, as it is not a policy. This document will therefore not be forwarded to FGB for approval.</p> <p>The AI Policy requires further review and will be brought back to a future meeting.</p> <p>HG noted that the Student Equality, Equity and Diversity Policy should more accurately be titled Student Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. This policy will be taken to the Standards, Diversity and Wellbeing (SDW) Committee for further consideration.</p> <p>All other policies listed have either been updated or reviewed with no changes and are available on Governor Hub.</p> <p>DP reminded governors that several of these policies are non-statutory, but have been included following Ofsted feedback to ensure a comprehensive governance record. Policies have been shared with the full board to ensure visibility, and link governors may wish to take particular interest in those relevant to their portfolio areas.</p> <p>Governors noted the updates.</p>	
<p>15.</p>	<p>Meetings Governors noted the next meeting will be held on 16th June 2026 at 4.15 pm</p>	



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16.	AOB	<p>BO extended his congratulations to students and staff for an outstanding performance in last week’s production of <i>The Wizard of Oz</i>. Governors noted how valuable it was to host the production on site in the theatre, with purpose-built seating, lighting and technical facilities making a significant difference to the overall quality and experience of the performance. The Committee expressed their appreciation for the work involved and the positive impact on the school community.</p>
17.	Impact Statement	<p>The Committee reflected on the impact of the meeting in relation to the core strategic functions defined by the Department for Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction • Hold the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school • Oversee the financial performance of the school, ensuring value for money • Promote the highest possible standards for safeguarding <p>Governors noted that the meeting provided important clarification of the school’s budget position and longer-term financial planning, including modelling assumptions, anticipated pressures and the strategic approach being taken to ensure sustainability.</p> <p>Governors also valued the detailed discussion around future pupil numbers, recognising the impact these projections will have on curriculum planning, staffing structures and the overall financial health of the school.</p> <p>The update on staff wellbeing, particularly the Community Cover Scheme, gave governors confidence that the school is actively supporting staff while also delivering measurable improvements in attendance and reducing supply costs. This demonstrated a clear link between wellbeing initiatives and value for money.</p> <p>Governors welcomed the discussion on SEND students, gaining deeper understanding of the challenges faced by the school and the responsive measures in place to ensure provision is both appropriate and adaptable. This reinforced the school’s commitment to inclusive practice and its strategic alignment with national expectations.</p> <p>Governors also recognised the importance of spending current budgets wisely on the pupils who are in school now, rather than holding funds back unnecessarily for future projects. This reflects a clear commitment to maximising the impact of resources on present cohorts.</p>



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	<p>The Site and Buildings Report further demonstrated the extensive progress made since 2022. When itemised, the scale of work undertaken, and the difference it has made to the school environment, became much clearer to governors. Improvements to the fabric of the building have significantly enhanced the quality of student experience and supported the broader strategic priorities.</p> <p>Governors also noted the positive impact of the Performing Arts Studio, which enabled high-quality performances last year, alongside the continued development of the library, both of which contribute meaningfully to student engagement, enrichment and wider cultural capital.</p> <p>Overall, governors agreed that the meeting reinforced strong evidence of progress across leadership, finance, wellbeing, curriculum, inclusion and estates management, all contributing to improved outcomes and a stronger strategic position for the school.</p>	
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There were part 2 minutes recorded at this meeting.

The meeting closed at 17.35