



Harlands Primary School

Striving for excellence, valuing everyone and our world

THE TRUSTEES OF HARLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL HAYWARDS HEATH

MINUTES

DATE: Thursday, 19 March 2026 @ 7.00pm in School

PRESENT: Dave Brooks, Jennie Doyle, Frank Gainsbury, Russell Goodrum, Debra Hollingum, Kim Lower, David McKeown-Webster, David Nisbet, Mark Pawson, Laura Pollard, Chris Robbins and Michael Swiggs (Chair)

IN ATTENDANCE: Karen Michael (Governance Professional/Clerk)
Kate Binchy (Finance Manager, for item under Part II minutes)
Carl Phillips (Associate Trustee)
Beth Larkman (Trustee, appointment to be confirmed)
Toni Watson (Trustee, appointment to be confirmed)
Alex Buckley (Associate Trustee, appointment to be confirmed)

1 **Apologies for absence** had been received in advance from Charlotte Blake. The Chair welcomed the Trustees-in-waiting, noting that their appointments would be confirmed just as soon as an issue with Companies House could be resolved.

The following **declarations of interest** should be noted for Trustees in post:

Dave Brooks	Children at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
Jennie Doyle	Child at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
Russell Goodrum	Child at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
Debra Hollingum	Children at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
Kim Lower	Children at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
David Nisbet	Child at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee

And for those in attendance:

Alex Buckley	Children at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
Beth Larkman	Child at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
Karen Michael	Headteacher's PA/Office Manager
Carl Phillips	Children at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee
Toni Watson	Child at Harlands, but not a Parent Trustee

2 There were no urgent matters.

3 The **minutes** of the routine meeting held on Tuesday, 2 December 2025 and the special budget discussion held on Wednesday, 28 January 2026 were approved.

4 Under **matters arising**, it was noted that in respect of items in the budget discussion, the school was working on a new website, which it hoped to have in operation by Christmas.

Harlands Educational Trust

5 **White Paper/MATS** – a paper summarising the latest developments had been circulated. In respect of the *Schools Bill*, Harlands was not in contravention of any of the provisions in the bill, but would need to bring in a new allergy policy, alongside the appropriate training for all staff, and the purchase of school injector pens.

There was nothing in the *White Paper* that changed the school's position of continuing to watch and await developments.

Asked whether the Headteacher could share anything about the experience of other local heads whose schools were part of trusts, he commented that they were positive, but had not experienced any massive gains, although headteacher collaboration was strong. He noted, as an aside, that he was not missing out due to a new collaboration for Harlands – see item 7 below. He also noted that it was the Regional Schools Commissioner who had ultimate oversight over academies, and that the crucial point was to maintain a good OFSTED outcome.

6 **Proposal** – this item was minuted as a Part II Confidential item.

7 **Headteacher's report** – The Headteacher advised that he had spent the day with a school improvement adviser, Andy Mason, who was Director of Education at Unity Education Trust, a MAT which operated schools in East Anglia. Asked whether the format of the headteacher's report to Trustees was acceptable, Andy had confirmed that it was, though could benefit from a section on staff absence and multi-agency working. Highlights he had noted included evidence of clear progression of learning, the quality of TAs and their relationships with children, and discussion around SEN.

Turning to his own report, the Headteacher noted the following highlights:

- Attendance was outstanding.
- Year 6 data was looking better.
- The confidence of children via pupil agency, leading their own learning, was noted.
- Writing - for world book day the school had used one book for everyone, providing a really positive whole-school stimulus.
- It was also noted that the school would work with the SIA to help develop middle leaders.

Asked about staff well-being, it was noted that during recent pupil progress meetings, staff had shown greater appreciation of the reasons for limits on TA support. The school was currently in the process of recruiting teachers (one career change, one maternity leave, and one other leaver for PM reasons), and had already talked to existing staff about where they would like to be for the next academic year.

Trustees commented that at the INSET day where the deficit and other challenges had been discussed, they had noticed a real community feeling from staff, a positive "let's work together" attitude.

Asked whether the staff felt supported by the Trustees, it was noted that the INSET day had included a number of slides on the role of Trustees, and the fact that Trustees had agreed to this year's deficit. The decision Trustees had taken under the Part II item would also affirm Trustee support for the school.

Trustees thanked the Headteacher for a detailed and informative report.

8 **Reporting to the Trustee Body**

Resources – the minutes of the latest meeting had been shared. It was noted that the current PDP needed prioritising, but required input from all stakeholders

Audit – the minutes of the latest meeting had also been shared,

School Improvement – the minutes of the latest meeting had been shared.

Other Updates

- *Safeguarding* – covered under School Improvement/Headteacher's Report. It was noted that a self-audit had been carried out
- *SEND* – covered under School Improvement. Trustees commented on the provisions in the White Paper around SEND, noting that this was likely to put pressure on SENCos in respect of writing EHCPs and the new ISPs. It was suggested that potentially AI, which could already be used to create eg a differentiated teaching plan, might be able to play a part, if given the appropriate information.
- *Premises* – the outcome of the CIF bid was still awaited.
- *Community matters* – It was noted that Michael Swiggs, Russell Goodrum and Jennie Doyle had now met with the PTA who were interested in any potential big projects that would accord with their objective of benefit to the children. Links with the College existed, such as using the theatre, but more could potentially be done.
- *Training* – Trustees were reminded that this was mainly self-led, with all trustees having access to resources on The Key for Governors. *[The Governance Glossary which Russell mentioned has been e-mailed to all Trustees.]*

9 **Admin Matters** – it was noted that new Trustees were in the process of being appointed following a successful advert/interview process.

On the question of succession planning, Michael Swiggs advised that he would remain as Chair and a Trustee until 31 August 2026, but at that point would be standing down, not because he particularly wished to, but because good practice suggested no one individual should serve for too long as Chair. The Governance Professional would, as usual, ask Trustees in the summer for indications of who would like to be put forward to take on the roles, but it was noted that Russell Goodrum had already indicated his willingness to become Chair, with Jennie Doyle becoming Vice-Chair, subject to Trustee agreement in due course.

10 **Policy update** – none to approve

11 **Chair's Action** – it was noted that the establishment of an account with Insignis as a deposit platform for reserve funds, to replace the Santander account, had been agreed after due diligence. Funds would be protected under the FSCS.

13 **Date of next meetings** (all at 7.00pm at Harlands)

Thursday, 9 July 2026

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Signed:

Chair of Governors

9 July 2026