



## East Reading Federation

### Part 1 Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Governing Board

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025. 4pm

**Present:** Robert Howell; Laura Kerr; Dave Dymond; Chris Robinson; Francis Jakeman; Aaron Hatherley; Andrew Burrell;

**Apologies:** Zoe Watling; Kris Jones; Simon Higgs; Katherine Fowler; Vincent Onuchi; Adedayo Benson.

**Did not attend:** Steph Mitchell – did not send apologies.

**In attendance:** Alice de Croos (SBM ASPS); Liz Newton (SBM Redlands); Victoria Maskell; Christian Lim; Richard Watson.

**Clerk:** Deborah Savage

Agenda Item	
1	<b>Welcome and Apologies.</b> Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and thanked for attending. Apologies had been received in advance from Simon Higgs, Kris Jones, Katherine Fowler, Vincent Onuchi and Adedayo Benson all for work commitment reasons. Zoe Watkins also sent apologies in advance due to family commitments (sick baby). Steph Mitchel did not attend but did not send apologies. Apologies were accepted.
2	<b>Declarations of Interest.</b> Governors were invited to declare any conflicts of interest with anything on the agenda – nothing was declared.
3	<b>Part 1 &amp; 2 Minutes of the meeting held 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025.</b> These minutes had been circulated in advance and a few errors were pointed out. <b>ACTION:</b> Clerk to correct these before they are published on the school websites. The action list from the last meeting was reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Statement of Internal Controls has been signed.</li><li>• Staffing plan error has been corrected to show 1 x senior DHT and 2x DHTs for September.</li><li>• A resource management advisor will visit school in June or July and sit with the SLT team to discuss financial planning.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were no changes to the school budgets and these have been submitted to the LA.</li> <li>• An update was requested on the injured staff member at Redlands and the GB was informed that the staff member had had a phased return to work with additional support given to her. The LA advised that this child did not need 1:1 but that the school should reduce its ratio of children to staff. Giving additional staff support had caused issues, but the support required was now lessening and the staff member will be back full time after the half term break. There is an additional child at Redlands with very high SEND needs who only attends school for 1 hour a day in 4 x 15minute chunks. An additional spotter is on hand for the 15minutes to step in if required. This arrangement will be reviewed after half term. <b>GOVERNOR QUESTION: What effect has this had on the rest of the staffing levels?</b> Initially it was a problem, but a member of the lunchtime team has been used to fill in and she has done a great job.</li> </ul> <p>Part 1 and Part 2 minutes were accepted as a true record.</p>
4	<p><b>HT reports.</b></p> <p>HT reports for both schools had been circulated prior to the meeting and questions in advance had been invited.</p> <p><u>ASPS HT report.</u></p> <p>The EHT asked governors if they had any comments or questions after reading the report.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Your SEF grades the school as “Good” in all areas – but where on the scale of “Good” are we and does this differ by area? For example, are we just hanging on to a good rating or are we pushing on the boundary of outstanding? The school is securely good. We want to move to outstanding, but maintaining good while we do this requires constant hard work.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> How can we get some areas to “outstanding”? Getting our SEND offer to outstanding is a target for next year. We have good capacity now and have time to write our development plan and fine tune this in order to reach outstanding.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> What is Weduc referred to in the report? It is our communication app used to communicate with parents.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Looking at the school roll, whilst we are full, what is our maximum capacity – can we take any more children? It is the nursery that distorts the figures due to the half days. In KS1&amp;2 we have 90 children per year group and are full with waiting lists. In KS2 we might be able to go over the 90 by one or two children if necessary, but would not be able to do this in KS1. A really positive aspect this the fact that “churn” (the turnover of children) has lessened.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Can you elaborate on the Safeguarding website issue discussed on page 5 of your report please? Yes – this refers to the national website “Everyone’s Invited” where people can share and report incidences of abusive behaviour. These are not filtered or dated so can date back a number of years. Alfred Suttons has been included (along with other Reading schools) as being mentioned in reports of inappropriate behaviour. As a result of this, the LA reviewed our policies and procedures. The alleged incident was a homophobic incident – but there has been no push back from the community.</p>

The EHT elaborated on staffing issues with staff absence impacting on the staffing team. The DHTs are filling gaps where they can. The newly appointed postholder of the Operations administrator role, filled by a staff member from Redlands, has now been off sick for a long time which has impacted the support team.

**Governor Comment:** It is clear from the reports that staffing absence has improved at Redlands, which is down to the current leadership there establishing trust amongst the team. This is to be congratulated.

#### Redlands HT Report

An HT report for Redlands had also been circulated in advance and a governor commented that reading this would be good preparation for Governors meeting and Ofsted Inspectors.

**Governor Question:** There are no numbers behind the pupil mobility stats – can you give us the current situation please? We have had a total of 12 leavers and 14 joiners that academic year. Those that have left have not left for reasons related to the school (school dissatisfaction) but have left for family relocation reasons including some overseas. Some of the new joiners have arrived from overseas including one child who is new to English. Others have relocated to the area from other parts of the UK.

**Governor Comment:** This is a much better trend for pupil mobility and is really similar to historical patterns. Yes – the “churn” is in the lower school on the whole. Two of the new joiners have very high SEND needs and have come from overseas so establishing a back story is very hard. This will have an effect on our SATS. Redlands has also just been told that we are to be moderated for writing so that is increasing the workload for staff.

**Governor Question:** Your report mentions some children whose families have no recourse to public funds. Can you elaborate? Yes – there is a family here because the father has a work visa but faces uncertainty over its renewal. They are struggling.

**Governor Question:** Can you give us an idea of the number of children affected? It is really hard to know the number affected. In the EYFS, where we make home visits, we can get a much clearer picture of family circumstances and can help families make Pupil Premium applications. Having this can help track children even though it does not provide state support to the family.

**Governor Question:** How can we (with sensitivity) find out a figure for the numbers of these children? It would be useful to know the numbers we are dealing with but this is politically very tricky.

**Governor Comment:** Shouldn't the LA meet us half way with this?

**Governor Question:** Can we find a way to help from within the school community? This is actually a cluster wide issue and perhaps need investigation on this basis.

**Governor Question:** Your SEF also grades Redlands as “Good”. Are they secure “Goods”? We would say they are comfortable “goods”. We need to build security and embed these good grades before we try to build on this. The staff at Redlands have

worked really hard to achieve all that we have and are now experiencing change fatigue.

**Governor Comment:** It is noticeable how staff sickness has improved at Redlands – well done for achieving this. Thank you – we have some concerns that this report format automatically pulls data from our SIMS system and this data is not always accurate, but staff sickness levels have improved.

**Governor Question:** Can you confirm when the new SEND teacher started please? This person started in January and has settled well. They have added lots of capacity and support to our SENCO at Redlands. She is a good asset to have as she previously worked in the field of child mental health so has a wealth of skills and knowledge. We have no staffing vacancies at the moment.

Clarification was provided to governors about a child who has been awarded at Tribunal an ABA award (Alternative Behaviour Analysis) which means that the LA has been directed to fund 2 tutors for this child which the school needs to recruit. However, until the LA confirms in writing the funding, we will not be recruiting. The LA have also said that the child can't start in school until the tutors are in place which means the school are left to explain this to the parents. We are stuck in the middle of this really.

**Governor Question:** Can you confirm when the last parents survey was done please? We did a parents survey at Christmas.

**Governor question:** Can you also elaborate on the excessive workload referred to on page 27. What staff made this claim? This is a class teacher, but there are also personal issues at play in this case. The school has a duty of care to all staff, but can't solve their personal problems. We can however, put appropriate measures in place to support staff and having support from staff at ASPs has helped class teachers at Redlands. This staff member has had a phased return to work and will be full time after the half term break. Covering this role in the meantime has been challenging. A member of the support staff stepped up and had done a fantastic job, but we have not been allowed to make the R&R payment (as she is not teaching staff) to her that we wanted to make which is really frustrating.

**Governor Question:** Can you elaborate on the Behaviour table on page 37 please? What are the 37 peer-peer incidents for example? The majority are low level playground incidents picked up by LTCs such a rough play. There are no concerns within these numbers and they do look high when compared to the figures for ASPs but the physical space at Redlands is much smaller and the children are in much closer proximity to each other which might explain it.

**Governor Question:** I am pleased to see mention of staff training – can you explain what walk thrus are please? This is a 5-step programme designed to look at a

	<p>particular aspect of teaching. It is research based on high quality teaching and gives teachers ownership of their teaching practise. They are carried out with support from a line manager, such as a DHT who would be invited in to the classroom to see something in action. They are very positive but also logistically challenging to do.</p> <p>Staff were thanked for producing these reports for governors.</p>
5	<p><b>Curriculum updates and data review.</b></p> <p>Three reports, on the EYFS, KS1 and KS2 had been circulated to governors in advance of the meeting and the DHT's were present to answer questions.</p> <p><b><u>EYFS</u></b></p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> This report is full of colour and gives us a really good picture of the EYFS stage, so thank you for writing it. You discuss "school readiness" and how children are no longer ready for school when they arrive. Can you elaborate? We always had a few children who arrived in school not toilet trained, but since COVID this is much more common, meaning staff are having to change children and also give families support with toilet training. Children are also more immature, and less skilled in social interaction. There is a different family landscape now, parents work from home and at the same time also look after toddlers and schools have to ask themselves "how do we adjust our offer to cope with this situation?". There are staffing and curriculum implications and we are adapting our curriculum to reflect each cohort. Children also arrive with different feeder setting experiences and some have high SEND needs including limited physical mobility meaning the school needs to adapt its processes too.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> When you look at the phonics data, there is a difference between the two schools – again, can you elaborate please? Phonics is not embedded at Redlands in the same way it is at ASPS. It is harder to teach phonics in a single form school due to the intense staffing levels needed as well as the physical space needed to run an intensive programme. We have a gap of 3 years of children to catch up with their phonics learning at Redlands, but last years Year 1 Phonic results were good. The current years 4,5 and 6 have not had phonics teaching which impacts on large groups sizes. It is also tricky to have children from the upper years in the same class as children from the lower years being taught the same thing. The older children don't react well so mixing widely different ages does not work.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> What is the viability of the nursery next year? Current figure show reception will have 19 children in September and nursey will have 12. We really need to cap this nursery number at 13 as the teacher ratio is 1:13.</p> <p><b><u>KS1</u></b></p>

	<p><b>Governor Question:</b> Your data on Page 2 shows a difference between the two schools. Why is this? The Year 2 data for ASPS is lower than Redlands – but these figures are based on Spring assessments and we expect figures to be inline with national figures by the end of the academic year.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Can you explain the teacher feedback you mention please? There is a move away from teaching a lesson and then later marking a set of books to return to children at a later date to a more dynamic marking system involving giving live feedback during the lesson itself. The teacher will move around the class looking at each child’s work and maybe writing “VF” in a book to indicate that verbal feedback was given. Governors might be able to see this in children’s book when they visit a classroom. This is a method of feedback used over KS1 and KS2 in both schools but it can be challenging to achieve in a lesson. It is best practise to get around the whole class and see each book, but we do understand that this is a challenge.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> How do you balance this in a classroom then? There will usually be a table with the more vulnerable learners on it, doing work that is adapted so that they can do the work independently (but there might be support staff alongside) whilst the class teacher gets around the rest of the class.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Is the White Rose maths system used by all the years? Yes – but this is used as a basis to help sequence learning. It will be adapted by the class teacher to meet the needs of the children. For example, we find it to be very “wordy” so if English is not the first language for some children, it can be hard for them.</p> <p><b>KS2</b></p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> You talk about mentoring ECT’s which is a demanding role. How is this working out? The three DHTs and other staff are mentoring ECTs so the task is spread so as not to over burden staff.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> Should perhaps Governors speak to ECTs to explain what the Governor role is and meet them? Yes – we used to do a staff and governor lunch which was a good opportunity for governors to informally meet staff.</p> <p>The DHTs were thanked for writing their reports and sharing them with governors.</p>
6	<p><b>Governor Visits into School.</b></p> <p>Following the recent governor day in both schools, a number of governors had sent written reports which were loaded into GovHub. The CoG informed the meeting that there is a new feature in GovHub to record governor visits into school and upload reports. <b>ACTION:</b> There are a couple of governors who have not sent reports – the Clerk would be pleased to receive these as they are useful evidence for Ofsted.</p>

	<p><b>Governor Comment:</b> I really enjoyed my day – it was fantastic to see the level of engagement of the children with their learning. Future governor visits will focus on school priorities in the SDPs.</p>
7	<p><b>SEND Update.</b></p> <p>Both SENCOs had written a reports on SEND which were circulated to governors in advance of the meeting. Governors were informed that behind each SEND child there is a long history of bureaucracy and form filling which is not reflected and requires an enormous level of staff resource. It is now thought that 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the population has a SEND need. It is certain that both the numbers of SEND children and also the level of need has increased.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> What struck me reading the report was that I was under the impression that the SEND needs were often physical, but it seems that the majority are social, emotional and involve mental health issues, which means it is not obvious how you can support these children. Yes – and there are long timescales involved. The current waiting list for a CAMHS triage appointment is 26 months, however, whilst waiting, we talk to parents about the child’s needs and get the provision in place regardless of a lack of diagnosis. The SEND register lists significant needs, but there are a much larger number of children who also need support in a classroom. The way that CAMHS organised itself into “pathways” means that children with complex and multiple needs often don’t fit the CAMHS set up. It also means that children with support needs that are not as high (such as those with dyslexia) are not getting the right support as support is focussed on children with the highest need.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Is there a way to categorise SEND needs? One way would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EHCP</li> <li>• SEND</li> <li>• Pre-SEND or Low SEND</li> </ul> <p>There was a previous system of 4 tiers but it is hard to rank children – for example how to compare very different needs such as mental health needs v dyslexia? And then, when you add in children with EAL and also SEND needs, it becomes even harder. SEND is a very broad category and many children with a support need are not actually on the SEND register. It was suggested that <b>ACTION: the SEND link Governor should meet with both SENCOs to unpick the figures.</b></p> <p>Governors were also reminded that the pay structure for staff working with children with special needs does not align with the job that needs to be done, so recruiting and retaining staff is challenging.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Is there anything that governors can do? It is important the governors understand the context and the challenges schools face. We could add it to a future agenda for a more in-depth discussion.</p>

	<p><b>Governor Question:</b> Can you talk to us about the ARP and Hub and how things are going in these units please? These are work in progress but we are pleased with how things are working now. However, future funding is a concern – in which case if funding is to cease, these children would have to be re-absorbed into their classes again. We have been told that funding is likely to be withdrawn in 12 months' time.</p>
8	<p><b>SATS administration visit report.</b></p> <p>Governors were informed that SATs went well at both schools. Alfred Sutton was visited unexpectedly to check the security set up for papers and how the tests are administered and was given a clean bill of health. Results are expected in early July.</p>
9	<p><b>Leadership verbal update.</b></p> <p>This agenda item was recorded under Part 2 confidential minutes.</p>
10	<p><b>Staff wellbeing verbal update.</b></p> <p>The 3 DHTs are offering a strong mentoring offer to staff and are acting as a sounding board for staff to air issues which are being well managed. Wellbeing is on every SLT meeting agenda. The roof works at ASPS are causing additional stress as classrooms are having to be relocated regularly.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Are the works delayed? Yes – they are likely to carry on into the new academic year but the builders have been considerate with SATS and the noisy part of the works has not really started yet. Our Site manager has established a great relationship with them.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Have you carried out staff survey recently? Redlands did a staff survey at Christmas, ASPS is due to do one. The CoG mentioned he was planning to survey governors too.</p>
11	<p><b>Attendance.</b></p> <p>Attendance stats were included in the HT reports and governors were reminded that just a few children with poor attendance can make a big impact on the figures. Once problem families are removed, the attendance picture is much better. The schools both make a big effort to work with families to get children into school and can evidence this if required e.g. for Inspections.</p>
12	<p><b>Policies for approval.</b></p> <p>The two policies that were due for approval had not been reviewed by staff in time for this meeting, so <b>ACTION: will be carried forward to the next meeting.</b></p> <p>There was a discussion during which governors were informed that where possible, future policies will be Federation ones, although it will be necessary to have some policies only apply to one or other of the schools where there are different requirements. Some guidance for governors on how to read and questions staff about policies had been added to GovHub. There will be work done soon on a sustainability policy and an equality objectives and impact statement. It was hoped that the new post of Operations administration would assist in the big task of policy management but due to long period of sickness absence this work has not yet started.</p>
13	<p><b>Parent Survey.</b></p> <p>The schools are planning a parent's survey – especially seeking feedback from year 6 parents as they leave the school.</p>



<b>14</b>	<b>DDC Tribunal.</b> The Tribunal directed meeting with the family and their legal representative had recently taken place and a governor who was involved from the start with this spoke about this meeting. The discussion was recorded under Part 2 confidential minutes.
<b>15</b>	<b>Matters Arising.</b> There were no matters arising.
<b>16</b>	<b>Issues for Parents/Confidentiality.</b> There were some discussions that were recoded under Part 2 confidential minutes. There were no issues that needed communicating to parents/carers.
<b>17</b>	<b>Any Other Business.</b> Governors where reminded of future LA training sessions with many planned for the autumn term which are available to book now.  Governors were informed that the schools have been made aware that an LA staff member, Vanessa Hurdle, who has died of cancer. The school and GB send their condolences to her family and colleagues.  The CoG intends to survey governors to gather their thoughts for meeting next academic year and the arrangement of the GB moving forward.
<b>18</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July – final review meeting.</b>

A Part two meeting was held with only 3 school staff members present along with the governors and clerk, and this part 2 meeting was recorded under Part 2 Confidential minutes.

Meeting Closed: 6.05pm

### **Actions:**

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Responsibility:</b>	<b>Timescale:</b>
Edit minutes from 22nd April 25 and upload Part 1 minutes to school websites.	Clerk	ASAP
Any remaining Governor reports following the Governors in Schools day to be sent to the Clerk.	Govs	ASPS
SEND link Gov and both SENCOs to meet	KF/SENCOs	TBC
Policies to be reviewed at next FGB meeting	SBMs	15th July
Follow up from Tribunal meeting to be completed	RH/LK	By 27th May

## Attendance at FGB meetings Jan-July 25 (5 meetings to date)

Dave Dymond	5 of 5 meetings
Robert Howell	5 of 5 meetings
Laura Kerr	5 of 5 meetings
Adedayo Benson	1 of 5 meetings
Vincent Onuchi	3 of 5 meetings
David Colwill	1 of 5 meetings
Zoe Watling	2 of 5 meetings
Chris Robinson	5 of 5 meetings
Katherine Fowler	4 of 5 meetings
Francis Jakeman	4 of 5 meetings
Aaron Hatherley	5 of 5 meetings
Kris Jones	2 of 5 meetings
Andrew Burrell	4 of 4 possible meetings
Stephanie Mitchell	2 of 4 possible meetings
Simon Higgs	2 of 3 possible meetings