

MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL – BRACKLEY

Minutes of the Full Governing Body Business Meeting held in the school on Tuesday 8 July 2025 at 6.30pm

Present:	Mr J Alexander	JA	Parent Governor
	Mr N Arnold	NA	Community Governor
	Mr J Bilson	JB	Member Appointed Governor
	Miss K Brunton	KB	Parent Governor
	Mr R du Plessis	RP	Parent Governor
	Mr G Ellis	GE	Community Governor
	Prof J English	JE	Foundation Governor
	Mr J Gold	JG	Parent Governor
	Mr C Harte	CH	Foundation Governor
	Mr T Hollis	TH	Headteacher Governor
	Mr N Jones (Vice Chair)	NJ	Parent Governor
	Prof C Leitmeir	CL	Foundation Governor
	Dr B Naylor (Chair)	BN	Community Governor
	Dr M Pobjoy	MP	Foundation Governor
	Mrs H Tudor-Price	HTP	Community Governor

Apologies: None

In Attendance:	Mrs A Banks	AB	Deputy Headteacher
	Mr D Brown	DB	CEO, EPA Trust (left 7.50pm)
	Dr J Faulkner	JF	EPA Board of Trustees (left 7.50pm)
	Mrs C Powell	CP	Clerk to the Governors
	Mr S Singh	SS	Business Manager
	Mr C Thomas	CT	Deputy CEO, EPA Trust (left 7.50pm)
	Mrs J Wright	JW	Retiring MAT CFO and ex-Governor

The meeting was quorate.

Governor questions and challenge are highlighted.

Actions

1	Repeat the Governor challenge on the timeline for improving student outcomes – P8 +.5 and 5+	RP
2	Share the figures on staff engagement with confidential feedback opportunities with Governors.	CT
3	Share with Governors the questions received from parents, draft responses and notes for how the meeting on 15 July should be organised. COMPLETE	TH
4	Make an appointment with the SLT lead to conduct a Governor school visit aligned to your linked area of the RAP, with the aim of establishing a baseline for monitoring progress and complete a written report to feed into the review process.	All Govs
5	Consider the vacancies for Governor roles and responsibilities listed at item 6.2 and let BN and the Clerk know if you are able to put your name forward to fill any of those positions.	All Govs
6	Use this link to verify your identity with Companies House https://www.gov.uk/guidance/verify-your-identity-for-companies-house	All Govs

7.	Read Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025.	All Govs
8.	Send holiday dates to the Clerk.	All Govs

Decisions

1.	Governors approved the 2025-2026 Budget and 3 Year Plan for submission.
2.	Governors voted to appoint Mrs Jo Wright as a Community Governor.
3.	Governors voted to appoint Dr Jenny Faulkner as an Additional Governor.

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

BN welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Governors for attending. Professor Jordan English (JE) - Foundation Governor and Mrs Hilary Tudor-Price (HTP) - Community Governor were welcomed to their first in-person meeting of the Full Governing Board.

Dr Jenny Faulkner and Mrs Jo Wright were introduced as experienced Governors with expertise in key areas needed to strengthen the Governing Board (see agenda item 6.1)

There were no apologies, and all Governors were in attendance.

The meeting was quorate.

2. Declarations of interest in respect of any items on the agenda & notice of any amendments to the Register of Interests

There were no declarations made in respect of any items on the agenda.

BN reported an amendment to be made to the Register for 2025-2026, when his spouse will be a permanent member of the teaching staff at Magdalen College School (MCS).

3. Minutes of the meeting held 6 May 2025 & review of action points

The minutes had been shared in advance on GHub and were taken as read. One amendment to the date of the next meeting was noted by the Clerk. The minutes were approved as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chair.

Review of Action Points

4	Check the DfE's power to direct the school to join a MAT. COMPLETE
4	With advice from support partners, draft a carefully worded letter to parents, carers and prospective parents, ready to go out on the day the Ofsted report is published. Share with Governors for review. COMPLETE
4	Draft a nuanced version of the letter to Sixth Form students, parents and prospective parents. Share with Governors for review. COMPLETE
4	Establish Governor link roles to faculties within the school. SUPERCEDED BY GOVERNOR LINKS TO RAPID ACTION PLAN (RAP)
4	Produce a list of faculties for Governors to consider – by the end of the week. SUPERCEDED BY GOVERNOR LINKS TO RAPID ACTION PLAN (RAP)
4	Consider which faculty you would like to link to for Governor monitoring visits. SUPERCEDED BY GOVERNOR LINKS TO RAPID ACTION PLAN (RAP)
4	Take advice from support partners on the format and content of the action plan for improvement. COMPLETE
4	Draw up a draft action plan for Governors to consider by 2 June and a definitive version for Governors to sign off by 9 July. COMPLETE
4	Take advice from support partners on communication with parents and carers around the training days, including the use of social media. COMPLETE
5.1	Progress the appointment of Jordan English as a Foundation Governor through the board of Magdalen College, Oxford. COMPLETE

Minutes of the FGB update meeting held 3 July 2025 & review of action points

The minutes had been shared in advance on GHub and were taken as read. The minutes were approved as a true record of proceedings. It was agreed that the actions would be reviewed at the next update meeting in September.

The following agenda items were taken out of order. Discussion points have been grouped by theme in the minutes.

4. Update from David Brown, CEO of the EPA Trust

DB gave a presentation on 'Expectations, partnership & key actions' using a set of slides, which are available on GHub. He raised the following key points and invited questions.

- We need to build a culture of high expectation for all students.
- This relies on a quality and empowered staff team.
- Rigorous assessment is at the heart of raising achievement and this is a priority.
- Governors need to focus on what value they are adding.
- The submission to the DfE is in progress and their decision will be known in early September.
- Governors need to establish an Interim Board to work more efficiently and quickly in September. This should involve some of the new Governors brought in to strengthen the Board, including HTP on Safeguarding.

Governors challenged the timeline for improving student outcomes.

CT explained that there is a balance to be found between focussing on exam grades and all the other work required. He suggested the aspiration should be for a positive P8 score by summer 2026, and then 70% 5+ Eng/Maths within the next 2-3 years. He noted this as challenging, but realistic and added that conversations are already happening around timetabling, staffing and curriculum to support this.

Governors asked how staff are responding to all the change? It was noted that staff response and feedback is discussed in detail at the weekly FGB update meetings focussed on the RAP. CT reiterated what he said at the last meeting on 3 July, which was there are a few green shoots. He explained that there was a feeling of change at the Heads of Faculty (HoF) meeting, with more staff engaging and contributing to the conversation. CT noted that there is still work to be done to build bridges and gain trust. AB added that her work with the HoFs has changed a lot since the start of the process which began by listening to staff at the training days on 2 & 3 June and is being followed up with weekly meetings that include time for feedback and questions. The tight cycle of weekly meetings with staff at all levels was noted, together with the establishment of focussed working groups and the planning happening in preparation for the training days in September.

DB summarised that feedback so far is positive, but work has to be maintained to build the relationship.

CT added that confidential questionnaires with staff are also being done, so that issues and trends can be tracked, including the main one which is a lack of trust and confidence in leadership.

JW highlighted the need not to overload the staff who are delivering on a day-to-day basis. She reminded Governors that the 'doers' are critical and must be supported.

DB pointed out that this is how leaders can add value.

Governors questioned CT on whether staff feedback is moving in a positive direction? CT clarified that there has only been one confidential questionnaire so far. He summarised that although there are a few green shoots of positivity, there is still an overwhelming amount of suspicion and a real lack of confidence about whether the progress made so far can continue.

Governors asked whether they should expect a mass exodus of staff? TH reported a sense that the majority want to stay to be part of the journey to becoming a better school, and it feels like they are becoming more committed to this. DB reminded Governors that it is their role to lead this momentum and ensure it is sustained.

Governors challenged the uptake of staff feedback opportunities. TH suggested that 60-70% of staff are engaging with feedback opportunities. CT added that they are aiming to capture as many of the others as possible and agreed to share the figures on engagement with Governors.

JW added that these figures should also be shared with the staff, so they too can see the work being done and progress being made.

AB reported that she met with 13 new staff members today, which was a positive experience. She noted the value of having a fresh injection of new staff.

JW asked how Early Career Teachers (ECTs) will be supported? AB reported that the school have an experienced professional tutor on the staff as well as a strong mentorship programme for ECTs.

Governors challenged whether staff have already resigned as a direct result of the Ofsted inspection? TH reported that the staff leaving at the end of term had resigned before the Ofsted report was published, noting that the resignation deadline for teachers falls at the end of May. The reasons for those resignations had been previously reported to Governors and were a mixture of relocation, career progression and personal reasons.

NJ reported that he and HTP have met with staff today as part of their Governor Visit on Behaviour, and the feedback was not as positive as reported in this meeting. He noted the two main themes taken from the discussions as;

- Staff want sustainable change that lasts
- Communication is a serious concern

He summarised that staff seem to want reassurance that action is being taken, noting that there were also a lot of positives.

HTP added that they met with a mixture of staff in a drop-in style session. She confirmed that there is still a lot of mistrust and uncertainty amongst staff, as well as a lack of understanding about the process happening. She suggested that this needs to be revisited and re-communicated for clarity.

Governors asked what percentage of staff were involved and whether there was a division between teaching and support staff feelings expressed? The total number was noted as less than 30%. It was noted that support staff seem to feel more threatened in relation to their jobs.

NJ reported that an email received from a member of staff since the drop-in session indicates that more staff did not attend for fear of retribution, making reference to the CCTV cameras in the corridor off which the meeting room was located.

CT reiterated that trust at this school is a massive problem that will take time to work through. He noted that a positive first monitoring visit by HMI will help with this.

NJ repeated the challenge brought at a previous meeting, that the situation could benefit from external input to carry out staff surveys, noting that staff seemed to be open with himself and HTP today. DB noted that staff are also being open with CT and that impartiality helps. He agreed that both staff and parent responses have been extreme.

A Governor asked whether there is any gesture that they can make now to show staff the intention to improve their working environment and wellbeing? CT suggested that the most important thing is for staff to see that the issues they have raised are being acknowledged and dealt with. He added that the problems here are more embedded than can be resolved with a gesture.

BN reiterated that the key things for Governors to do now is to increase their visibility and accessibility, reminding them that a visit on a linked area of the RAP can also be an opportunity to observe other things and to engage with staff and students.

Governors asked whether a way of gathering questions from parents in advance of the next meeting on 15 July has been actioned? TH confirmed that it has, and a significant number of questions have been received. He noted that these will be shared with Governors in advance of 15 July meeting, together with a proposal for how that meeting should be run.

Governors asked what they can do now to be more hands-on that is different from their usual strategic role? DB clarified that Governor visibility is very important. Governors also need to keep themselves informed on the work with the EPA Trust, so they are in a position to share positive messages with the community at any opportunity. He reminded Governors that expert advice on their role will be provided by Debbie James, external HMI, who is supporting the submission to the DfE now and will join the first FGB meeting in September.

Governors asked for an update on the position with the DfE. DB repeated what was reported at the update meeting on 3 July and noted that the school's response to the Termination Warning Notice (TWN) must be submitted by 17 July and then there will be a wait until early September for the DfE's decision.

Governors asked DB for his feeling on what that decision will be. DB explained that his relative unfamiliarity with the East Midlands regional team in comparison with the Southeast team whom he regularly works with, means he is less confident of reading what the outcome might be. He noted that the DfE will not want to take any risks, but whether they are considering other MATs is unknown. He added that they have accepted the need for stability and a decision as soon as possible.

Governors asked about the timeline for the school joining the EPA, should that be the DfE's decision. DB explained that with the time required for due diligence to be completed, for TUPE arrangements to be made for employees and for the legal work on land ownership to be done with Magdalen College, Oxford, the most realistic hope would be April 2026. He added that it may be possible to try for January 2026.

Governors asked whether a 'yes' from the DfE in September will mean that the work with EPA can continue and develop with confidence? That was confirmed.

Governors thanked DB for a thought-provoking presentation and agreed that the students at MCS are capable of better outcomes. They challenged whether inspirational teaching and raising student aspirations are the key to raising the quality of education?

DB agreed and noted that students' desire to succeed comes from a sense of self-worth, which the school needs to fuse them with, as well as building their resilience. CT responded that the quality of teaching and the quality of the curriculum are equally important and so there is a need to focus on both. He added that the drive for improvement requires consistency across the curriculum to enable an improved quality of teaching.

Governors challenged again on how the quality of teaching will be improved.

DB reported that this has started with the work with the HoFs already reported and giving them the support and time they need to focus and ensure their faculties are effective. There will also be opportunities for peer observation, peer-on-peer support and whole school training, all of which needs to be applied consistently.

Governors asked how peer support would work geographically within the EPA Trust? CT explained that MCS is close enough to both Heyford Park and Bartholomew to make this possible.

A Governor questioned whether class seating plans will be considered within quality of education improvement planning? TH confirmed that they will be and noted this as an important tool that teachers review regularly and need to use well.

A Governor questioned whether the curriculum is throttling teaching? CT confirmed that this is not the case, and the need to improve the quality of the curriculum is about what is being taught, and the consistency of how the curriculum is applied. He noted that there should be a 60-70% content base, with the remainder as space for teacher creativity.

BN added that Ofsted's comments were about the consistent application of the curriculum.

DB reminded Governors that the actions taken while the school is in Special Measures will not be the same as when it comes out of category.

DB and CT were thanked for their contribution to the meeting and left at 7.50pm with JF.

BN summarised 3 strong threads from the discussion.

- Engagement with staff
- Sustainability of change and the need to maintain it
- The need to put forward the best case possible to the DfE by 17 July.

Governors noted that the feedback from staff about the leadership not listening is also coming from parents.

CL urged caution and highlighted that everyone is still reeling from the immediate impact of the Ofsted outcome. He advised that it would require time to address the deep-rooted issues and the green shoots discussed are all that can be expected at this early stage.

A Parent Governor noted that feedback from parents on changes to the uniform code will help with the trust issue.

JE added that parents need to know that they are being heard and proposed that an honest approach at the next parent meeting, acknowledging the questions and being clear on what can and what cannot be answered will be valued.

TH agreed and advised steering the conversation carefully to communicate a sense of steadiness on a longer-term journey.

Governors asked for clarity on TH's aims for the next meeting with parents on 15 July. TH reiterated the aim to show parents they have been listened to, and the conversation will be ongoing.

Governors asked what they can do to help? TH asked them to close off any concerns raised with them by staff and take opportunities to engage with staff when they are in school. The opportunities for Governors to come into school were revisited and noted as their visits linked to the RAP, and coming to weekly staff meetings.

A Governor asked if they could come in and have free range to talk to anybody? It was discussed and agreed that would not be encouraged in the last week of term given how busy the staff are. Governors were reminded that their visits should be focussed on the area of the RAP they are linked to and they should make an appointment with the SLT lead first. The aim of the first visit should be to establish a baseline for monitoring progress and complete a written report to feed into the review process.

Governors asked for clarification of the 'concerns raised with them by staff' and asked if there is a list of these and systems in place to deal with them. BN explained that in addition to one formal grievance raised in relation to the Behaviour Policy, there are 2 outstanding issues. For the benefit of newer Governors, details of the process being followed were explained, as was the delegation of tasks through

the committee structure and to individual Governors in key roles. BN noted that the school contracts EPM, an external HR service for advice and support on these processes.

5. **Master's Report to inc,**

5.1 RAP – this was covered in discussion under Item 6. TH noted that the document was updated slightly following this week's SLT meeting.

5.2 Risk Register – TH noted that there has not been time to focus on this, and it will be a task for the summer.

5.3 3 Year budget plan for Governor approval. SS noted that the revised final budget and 3-year plan had been shared on GHub. SS presented the changes made since the budget was presented to the Finance & Resources Committee.

Income

- Post-16 income has been increased by £25,000.
- Pupil Premium funding has increased slightly.
- Income from rent of the caretaker's house on the St John's site has been added (although this will first require £20,000 expenditure on refurbishment)
- The addition of inflation at approx. 2.5% on all GAG funding

Expenditure

- The staffing establishment has been reduced by 2 (staff leaving not replaced)
- 2 cover supervisors will be recruited to help reduce agency staff costs
- This will result in an overall reduction of £170,000 on staffing
- A saving of £150,000 on utilities has been identified by the forecast budget from the current supplier, against which a comparative quote showed a similar figure

Governors asked for clarification on where the £300,000 additional income has come from. Following discussion, it was noted that the pupil numbers on which GAG-funding is based have not changed since the budget was presented to the Finance & Resources Committee. The increased income comes from the addition of inflation to income to match the inflation already applied to expenditure.

Governors asked for confirmation that a saving of £220,00 on staffing has been found? SS confirmed this as reported above. TH added that the implications of this will present a challenge around breadth of staffing in terms of the curriculum offer. JW noted that it may be necessary to be flexible on this.

Governors asked SS if he has evidence of the saving on utility costs? SS confirmed that he has two forecast quotes for comparison as reported above. It was noted that these are forecasts and not fixed quotes. Governors were made aware of the volatility and unpredictability of utility costs based on global conditions.

For the benefit of all Governors, GE summarised that with £700,000 of change found since the previous iteration of the budget, the deficit position has been improved and reserves will now remain the same for the 3 years. Governors were pleased to note the improvement.

GE thanked SS for his work on the budget in a short time and noted the requirement for it to be submitted in August. BN thanked Governors for their challenge.

By a show of hands, Governors approved the 2025-2026 Budget and 3 Year Plan for submission.

6. **Governance**

6.1 Governing Body membership

The appointments since the last meeting of Hilary Tudor-Price as a Community Governor and Jordan English as a Foundation Governor were noted.

The resignation of Charlotte Wood as a Parent Governor was also noted, meaning that there are now two Parent Governor vacancies which will be filled by election in the Autumn term.

The retirement of GE as a Community Governor was recorded with regret. On behalf of the Governing Body, BN thanked GE for his contribution and expressed how much his detailed analysis and robust challenge will be missed.

New appointments

- JW was asked to leave the room. BN explained that Jo has a strong track record in financial management having been the Chief Financial Officer of a MAT in Milton Keynes. As a former MCS Governor she also knows the school well and in her most recent role has direct experience of moving a school from being a Single Academy to joining a MAT, all of which will be invaluable to build the skills and strength of the Governing Body. By a show of hands, JW was appointed to the Governing Body.
- JF had already left the meeting. With her prior agreement and by a show of hands, JF was appointed as an Additional Governor following nomination by the EPA Trust and with the agreement of the DfE Regional officer. Jenny's experience as Chair of the Standards Committee at EPA Trust Board level was noted as a valuable addition to the Governing Board.

6.2 Governor roles and responsibilities

It was noted that there are current vacancies for the following positions on the Governing Board.

- Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit, Risk & Assurance Committee
- Chair and Vice Chair of the Finance & Resources Community
- Online Safety Governor

BN asked Governors to consider these vacancies and let himself and the Clerk know if they would like to volunteer for any of the roles.

6.3 RAP monitoring plan, Governor monitoring visits and reports

This had been covered in discussions under previous agenda items.

6.4 Governor training review

The Clerk was thanked for producing the document summarising Governor training sources, which was noted as available on GHub. The Northants Governor Training Programme for 2025-26 had also been shared on GHub.

7. Committee reports

The following reports had been shared on GHub and were taken as read.

- 7.1 Health & Safety Committee meetings – 18 March & 13 May
- 7.2 Personnel Committee meeting – 25 March & 3 June
- 7.3 E&W Pastoral Committee meeting – 10 June
- 7.4 Audit & Risk Committee meeting – 17 June
- 7.5 Finance & Resources Committee meeting – 17 June
- 7.6 Chairs' Committee meeting – 24 June
- 7.7 Weekly FGB update meetings

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 Governors noted the message from Companies House as follows: *New legislation means that all Company Directors and People with Significant Control (PSCs) will have a legal requirement to verify their identity with Companies House from Autumn 2025. From 8 April 2025, individuals will be able to voluntarily verify their identity in advance of the changes becoming mandatory from Autumn.* This can be done online using this link,

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/verify-your-identity-for-companies-house>

- 8.2 It was noted that staff exit interviews have been arranged and are being supported by MP & JE.
- 8.3 It was noted that the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) has been published and comes into force in September. The links to Ofsted’s comments on Alternative Provision were noted, as were references to the use of AI. Governors discussed and agreed on the need for them to familiarise themselves with KCSiE 2025.
- 8.4 Governors were reminded to send the Clerk their holiday dates for the GHub calendar.

9. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 16 Sept 2025 – FGB business meeting

BN confirmed that there will be no FGB update meeting on 17 July and no other FGB meetings are planned over the summer break.

The meeting with parents will be on **Tuesday 15 July**.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Dated.....