

Governors General Meeting Minutes Worthing High School

**Wednesday 24 September 2025
Classroom B9, Worthing High School**

Members:	Louise Davey (LDA), Chair	Neil Ambrose (NAM), Vice Chair
	Amanda Allibone (AAL)	John Bull (JBU)
	Caroline Carroll (CCA)	Adrian Cook (ACO), Headteacher
	Ian Fielding (IFI)	Lorna Sinsbury (LSI)
	Emma Taylor (ETA)	
Clerk to Governors & Company Secretary	Tracy Reed	
Invited Guests	Richard Cohen (RCO), Chair of Trustees	
	Terry Parkin (TPA), Vice Chair of Trustees	
	Pan Panayiotou (PPU), CEO South Downs Education Trust	
	Sarah Jones (SJO), Chief Finance & Operating Officer	
	Alex Simpson (ASI) Deputy Headteacher	
	Nick Mariosa (NMA) Senior Assistant Headteacher/DSL	

PART ONE MINUTES

1.	Welcome The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Trustee Terry Parkin, Vice Chair of the SDET Board. Terry introduced himself briefly.	
2.	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence had been received from Emma Taylor and Richard Cohen.	
3.	Notice and Quorum Due notice had been served and the meeting was declared quorate.	
4.	Pecuniary Interests There were no pecuniary interests declared.	
5.	Resignations/Vacancies/Appointments to Governing Body It was noted that Neil Ambrose's term of office had been renewed to 18 October 2029.	
6.	Minutes of WHS LGB meeting 8 July 2025 Referring to the final sentence of the third paragraph on page 6 under item 11, JBU said he believed that the phrase 'it was a very decreasing picture moving forward' should say 'ever decreasing'. The minutes were agreed to be accurate pending amendment. [Post meeting note: having referred to the recording the clerk can advise that the phrase 'very decreasing' was correct.]	
7.	Matters arising from the meeting of 8 July 2025 JBU had questions about the Attend app, and working to turn passive engagement into positive engagement: these issues would be covered in the Headteacher's report. He also asked about the suggestion that exclusions were partly the result of the school not having	

	<p>enough funding for the SSC: ACO advised that they had presented the local authority with detailed case studies of all the examples where they had been unable to meet need. He also advised in response to JBU that the Chinese visit had gone well.</p> <p><u>Policies</u>. <i>Assessment and Feedback policy: comments to the Clerk before the end of term.</i> ACO advised that the one comment received had been implemented.</p> <p>Governors agreed that the Assessment Policy could now be published on the website.</p> <p><u>Policies</u>: <i>Trustee and Governor Training policy: to be circulated to all Trustees and Governors before the beginning of the new academic year.</i> This could be done now that Trustees had approved the policy.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>CEO Report [Taken earlier but recorded here for ease of reference.]</p> <p>PPU expressed huge thanks to ACO and the leadership team, saying that Worthing High School (WHS) held its own in terms of results relative to schools in the locality and nationally. He acknowledged that the +5s were not where the school wished them to be; this would be addressed in more detail later in the meeting, together with the curriculum offer.</p> <p>The breadth of Worthing High’s curriculum was key in that it was very different to many local schools: it was important for Governors to be aware that they were not comparing like for like when looking at WHS data and statistics in relation to other schools.</p> <p>WHS was fully staffed and this was not said lightly in view of the current recruitment crisis. PPU recounted that in his DfE role he had seen examples of schools being unable to find core staff.</p> <p>The open morning on the previous Saturday had been very well attended with really good engagement and feedback. PPU thanked all staff, and those children that had volunteered to come in to support the open morning. PPU remained optimistic that the school would be full on first preferences but Governors should be aware of a slight decline in the attendance at Open Mornings and consequently a slight reduction in first preferences. It was acknowledged that nationally Year 6 was smaller than Year 7 and so it followed that there were less children; it was not that WHS was less popular.</p> <p>[PPU left the meeting at 1619.]</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>GCSE results / Interpreting results data</p> <p>ASI explained that a key point to understand was that in the 2025 GCSE results there was no progress 8, the measure specifically used to compare results nationally. Therefore, the success measure being used for this particular year was attainment 8. Attainment 8 counted the eight best subjects with English and maths being double-weighted, so their points are doubled. A Grade 5 at GCSE would be worth five points unless it was in English or maths in which case it was worth ten points. A standard pass at GCSE was a grade 4, a good pass would be a grade 5.</p> <p>The points were added together to produce an attainment 8 score for the individual pupil; that score was averaged out for the cohort to give an attainment 8 for the school. The school looked at how their students compared to the entry data by using cognitive ability tests (CATs) at the beginning of Year 7. At that age, the average was 100 and so scores above that were above average, below 100 was below average.</p> <p>Lower prior attaining students were those that were below 100% on their entry data. A middle prior attaining student was between 100 and below 110, a higher prior attaining student would have an entry score over 110, and a higher prior attaining student would have entry scores of above 110. The students were then tracked so as to consider their attainment relative to their entry point.</p>	

The generated attainment 8 for this year was 48.2 as suggested by the CAT report. The update today was that the school had achieved 48.58: this was the first time in the school's history that it had outperformed the generated attainment 8 from the entry point. This was an improvement on last year's attainment 8 of just under half a point, which was half a grade on average. What was really pleasing was that DP attainment improved by over three points, and the attainment gap had narrowed by just under three points from last year. The whole school attainment 8 was 38.54

Worthing High's DP results were the fifth best in West Sussex: the pupil premium focus within the school development plan had worked, enabling the gap to be closed.

ASI turned to SEN K, explaining that SEN K students were identified as having special needs but did not have an EHCP. Their target performance was broadly in line with the rest of the school, perhaps 1 or 2% below.

There were two really pleasing successes: the best attainment to target that the school had achieved without exam concession, and the narrowing of the DP gap and the improving results. JBU asked how many DP students there were compared to the total number of students taking the exam. The proportion was about 15% and was broadly in line with the national average for disadvantaged pupils.

JBU asked if the range of achievement among DP students was bigger than that of the rest of the school. ACO explained that gaps had already started to emerge on entry and students might be disproportionately low prior attaining (LPA) and possibly also disproportionately SEND. He added that middle prior attainers (MPA) and high prior attainers (HPA) would also be represented. There would be a breadth of disadvantaged pupils across the LPA, MPA, and HPA bandings. It was difficult to measure the impact of HPAs on the gap in a year without progress 8 but they probably had the greatest effect because they accessed the curriculum at the higher level but might not have support at home, one reason for the gap widening.

ASI explained that there were 39 DP students in Year 11 this year, six of whom were HPA students. When the numbers were that low within a cohort, teachers looked at the individual, carried out a case study on them and looked at their curriculum as a whole.

TPA suggested that Governors might find it useful to know the numbers of candidates entered for each subject. It would help in providing a view as to where investment in the school might have a greater return.

TPA expressed an interest in hearing about the advice given to those students who had chosen to study biology, chemistry, and physics in order to pursue a career in science. ASI explained that the science team would allocate either the triple or the combined science course based on a student's attainment within the subject area and their career aspirations. He added that all the focus days were linked to STEAM. Subject leaders built specific career links within the curriculum; this was done from Year 7 in science by delivering Key Stage 4 content in Year 9 compared to Year 10. TPA suggested there might be a need to reflect on the selection method. ACO explained that among the reasons that the school had moved away from students applying to do the trilogy was because it felt very exclusive and could disadvantage the more vulnerable students: they might not have the tools at home to apply, or the confidence to do so, and they could be overlooked, which was not what the school wanted. He added that the Worthing High curriculum was inclusive, and they looked at the students' learning profiles to try and stretch them. ASI believed there was a moral obligation to encourage students who might lack aspiration and ambition: it was about considering the correct entry for the individual student.

ASI returned to his report and took Governors through the data. He commented on the dip in 5+ as mentioned by PPU, saying that this would be a focus for the whole school with targeted intervention work with parental engagement and a more thorough intervention strategy. He added that the Raising Standards team was being developed to address some of the issues with 5+. There was a desire to see more of a gap between WHS and nationally in terms of 7+ attainment, and for more grade 9s across the school, particularly in English.

Attainment 8 was very strong and the best result for the school to date. The 4 + crossover was very strong and the DP attainment gap had closed.

ASI spoke to the whole school targets focus for the year and then the current data which showed a CAT average of 46.4 which was 2 points below the projection for the year.

ACO pointed out that the notion of 70% of pupils achieving their target grade was a highly aspirational number; the outcome this year was 50%. ACO advised that if 100% of the current Year 11s achieved their target rate it would bring attainment 8 to 49. He acknowledged that the attainment 8 number would be lower this year but the school would continue to work its hardest to obtain the best progress from the students. He assured that nationally the school would be considerably above average re the basics: the areas it would be possible to affect would be the 9-5 and 9-4 crossovers with English and maths.

In response to a question from JBU, ACO said that Progress 8 would be back for the current Year 10s.

It was agreed that Covid had some bearing on the lower CAT scores. The current Year 10s would have done SATs and that would be the best metric to use until the return to Key Stage 2 averages, rather than CAT scores.

ACO confirmed that the school did share destination data; LDA commented that the Ofsted Inspector had asked about it.

ACO was able to provide some extra context having received provisional data from West Sussex that had been shared by some schools. Pupil premium attainment 8 for the county 33.36, compared to Worthing High 38.54. West Sussex claims the attainment 8 for all pupils to be 46.48; Worthing High was 48.58.

ACO said it was frustrating not to have broken the 50 barrier. He added that predictive grades would not be shared with students this year. There was consideration of the psychology around predictions where some students had been predicted to achieve the grades they would need for college, or predicted grades higher than were likely in order not to crush their confidence. Predictions would only be shared internally and hopefully teachers would provide accurate outcomes. Progress and attainment throughout the year would be lower but the school was confident that the data would be more accurate and enable interventions with the correct students at the right time.

In line with other schools, the reports home to parents/carers would show a current grade, and at the end of Year 10 it would be a predicted grade based on the Year 10 mocks. The approach from teachers was that the individual student was on a grade 5 and they needed to do x, y and z to get to a grade 6. ASI confirmed that the incremental steps process was helpful for HPA boys and, in some cases, HPA girls. It was felt that the changes in the accuracy of predictions and the psychology of students would improve outcomes.

There was discussion around providing predicted grades for college applications and the deadlines for applying to college. Exam fatigue and examination techniques were also discussed, particularly preparing students for the stress of actually sitting an exam.

LDA asked if the Year 11 study leave was of benefit, adding that not all schools provided it. CCA asked if the school maintained contact with students during the exam period. ASI advised that some subjects would come together as a group in morning or afternoon interventions, but this was optional.

There was also the issue of exams starting earlier in the year, having moved up two days a year since Covid. By the time it was half term, some students had already sat two thirds of their GCSEs. Trying to keep them in school all day was a question of balancing outcomes with wellbeing.

CCA asked if the interventions introduced after the mocks had been successful. ASI said the majority of students did go up a grade but it was impossible to say whether it was due

	<p>to the intervention or curriculum delivery. Subject leaders and TLR holders had been asked to provide robust entry and exit data for the interventions going forward.</p> <p>TPA commented that some of the subject areas appeared to have very high numbers of students with high grades. He asked what the school did to help departments learn from one another. ACO explained that there had been a lot of work on encouraging subject leaders to work together and share best practice. Last year's subject leadership programme focused on writing good department development plans and highlighting targets. ACO and ASI continued to support subject leaders by going through the results with them and suggesting support strategies.</p> <p>This year's GCSE results remained provisional until validation in January but ASI was able to update Governors with the information that outgoing Year 11s had a CAT mean of 101.4 compared to the previous year group which had a CAT mean of 102.6, meaning that this was a slightly weaker year group according to CAT results.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Headteacher's Report</p> <p><u>Behaviour and attitudes</u></p> <p><u>Attendance.</u> NMA began by confirming that attendance was a big driver both nationally and for individual schools, but it was not improving at an appreciable rate. However, according to the Attend app, WHS was slightly above the national level. Data also showed that persistent absenteeism at WHS was definitely lower than nationally.</p> <p>NMA went through the 2024/25 headlines in his Executive Summary. The key focus was on students within the 5-15% attendance group, as well as pupil premium and female students.</p> <p>Early intervention had the biggest impact in getting children back into school quickly. NMA explained that the Attend app was a way for the school to communicate promptly with families, rather than the time-consuming method of asking tutors to make contact with home following a first instance of absenteeism.</p> <p>The app was also used to celebrate with those families that had achieved 100% attendance for the first two weeks of term; this was sent out on behalf of the head of year in only a couple of minutes. Similarly for students who had recovered from absenteeism and were back to 100%.</p> <p>Targeted 5 by Fridays focused on students struggling with attendance by making contact with the family and engaging them with school life in the hope that it would enable them to return to school. Early indications suggested that attendance increased an average of 5% for those that received a positive message. The Attend app allowed NMA to keep track of that group and would become a key resource.</p> <p>Changes to KCSIE were mainly technical updates with the largest being around digital risk - misinformation, conspiracy theories, and disinformation. The school's filtering and monitoring systems would be key to managing this. The school carried out monitoring every term, whereas the guidance recommended annually.</p> <p>Staff were well aware that non-attendance was a potential flag of a safeguarding issue and would report that on CPOMs; the Attend app also flagged up issues on the tutor's behalf.</p> <p>NMA thanked NAM for his amendments to the Safeguarding policy and added that significant updates to the Government's Relationships and Sex Education guidance were expected. In the meantime, he reminded Governors to complete the annual online safeguarding training. NMA would continue to provide termly safeguarding updates.</p> <p>IFI asked what was meant by 'polite scrutiny' under the key approaches in the Attendance Report. NMA explained that it was the challenge to parents where they were condoning their child's unnecessary absence from school. Scrutiny was important and there were families that unfortunately had a pattern of attendance issues.</p>	<p>Govs</p>

<p>JBU asked about ‘Thought-Full begin their work with students in HT2’. NMA explained that it was low-level cognitive behavioural therapy offered by West Sussex Mental Health Support Teams in schools. JBU asked how many students they had seen: NMA said he would source the data and provide it to him.</p> <p>NAM asked if there had been another technical audit of the school carried out since the one in early 2024. NMA advised that the IT manager carried out regular filtering monitoring reports and he would be happy to share them. He added that a whole audit was always on offer from the local authority.</p> <p>LDA asked about the key target of 2% above the national attendance rate in relation to the fact that the school faced some hard questioning on attendance during the Ofsted inspection. TPA cautioned that he believed Ofsted’s attitude was that if the school was going to have aspirational targets, then Ofsted would expect the school to reach them. ACO said that he would robustly challenge Ofsted that if the 2% target was not being met, but the school was above national average, then some of the measures that had been put in place were working.</p> <p>There followed discussion about aspirational targets, how they would be questioned by Ofsted, and the robust conversations that were had about attendance during the inspection in March. It was noted that interpretation would be different under the new Ofsted framework.</p> <p>ACO pointed out that the new framework would quantify data better and divorce attendance from behaviour in a more logical way and make it clearer. He stressed that the school was outstanding in the area of behaviour and attitudes.</p> <p>CCA asked about the focused attendance push on absence bandings 5-10% and 10-15%. NMA explained that some of the individuals within those bandings would never be shifted. He suggested that with the next set of attendance data he would identify the individuals and numbers within the range, together with an analysis of any shifts on a termly basis.</p> <p>Before NMA left the meeting, JBU commented on how much improved the Safeguarding Policy was.</p> <p><u>Behaviour.</u> Speaking to his report ACO said that behaviour in the school was evolving from standards and routines to a behaviour for excellence. He elaborated on this citing students’ presentation, engagement, and body language in class. There would be work with students and staff on expectations of excellence and more crossover with the teaching and learning team in terms of pedagogical approaches. One example would be duplication of the silent do now task at the end of the lesson. In response to a question from CCA, ACO clarified that different teachers would have different ways of delivering it. As a consequence, the data would show that there had been an increase in sanctions during the first half term where some students found the raising of expectations difficult. Another example was the tweaking of the times of day for internal exclusions to make it a harsher punishment and therefore more of a deterrent with a view to reducing the number of repeat offenders. ACO described the internal exclusion provision for the benefit of the Governors.</p> <p><u>Personal development.</u> The first of three focus days had gone really well and been very impactful with Year 9 students being quite inspired by hearing from some of the alumni. However, there had been a notable impact on Year 11 attendance having had the day so early in the academic year and consequently there would be a change to the timing.</p> <p>ACO said that the Year 7 cohort had settled in well and was one of the brightest there had been, according to entry SATs, but there were a lot of lower prior attaining students as well. Claire Farrell, Year 7 progress leader, and Gracie Dormer, Year 7 pastoral leader, had done a really positive job.</p> <p>There would be more tweaks to the delivery model for PSHE in terms of timing. ACO reminded Governors that PSHE came out very positively in both Ofsted and student voice. It was important to ensure a firm foundation for any RSE changes that might come from the government; ACO felt that was in place.</p>	<p>NMA</p>
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Leadership and management

School development plan. Speaking to the draft school development plan 2025-26, ACO pointed out that the attendance target and the DP attendance target had been amalgamated into point 1 to make room for a specific target on Grade 5 outcomes because data had indicated that it needed a strong focus.

Staff understood that the target of no gap between Attainment 8 and DP attainment (point 3) was a moral obligation. It would not be achieved this year but closing the gap by four points would be a significant achievement.

Speaking to point 4, ACO went into detail about HPA outcomes. In particular there would be some school-to-school work to look at how some really high attaining schools were improving their English outcomes.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum (point 5) was a work in progress to ensure that the structure of the curriculum area met the needs of students. A lot of work had been done to make sure that assessment and data were better at Key Stage 3. There might be a challenge in that the Key Stage 3 review would take place before the publication of the Government white paper and curriculum review.

Point 6, teaching and learning, was concerned with pedagogical expectations, and the last point of the plan looked at working with other schools. There was a link with the CEO's efforts to grow the Trust and to be seen as a school that wanted to work collaboratively and bring back best practice.

Department targets had been agreed and directly correlated with the draft school development plan. Governors would be able to scrutinise the plan during their link visits to the school. It was noted that during the inspection, the Ofsted inspector had commented that there were too many areas of focus on the then current plan. ACO went into detail about the amount of internal work ongoing and said that the distributed leadership model was beginning to show greater impact on the school.

There was a full complement of teaching staff and HLTAs, but this was not the case with the learning support assistants.

CCA commented that where she was a governor previously, governors attended the exam grade meetings and they provided useful insight. ACO responded that this happened in the past and it could certainly be looked at for the next academic year. He added that when Governors attended for their link visits subject leaders would be able to update them on their discussions on the school development plan, the area to develop and their area of strength.

11. CFOO Report

[Taken earlier but recorded here for ease of reference.]

SJO reported that the end of year forecast outturn was a deficit of £270k, but £100k of that related to funds from last year's carry forward, unspent pupil premium, resulting in an actual in-year deficit of about £179k as anticipated. Grants for the teacher pay award and National Insurance increase contributed.

The school received about £100k less in SEND income than had been budgeted for, the reasons for which were currently completely unclear. ACO advised of a forthcoming meeting with the Head of Finance and one of the Heads of SEND at WSCC in an effort to better understand the SEND funding. CCA noted that the WSCC SEND budget was in deficit.

Parental donations had been budgeted at £20k but only reached £10k.

Looking at the FMR, there had been moves to allocate staff to the correct business areas by breaking out South Downs Education Trust as a business centre. A proportion of the time of PPU, SJO, HR support, marketing, clerking and the Finance Director would now be cross charged.

	<p>Contributing to the deficit was the cost of significant essential capital work carried out by the premises team, including roof insurance and associated expenditure. Costs had previously been taken out of the budget but were later reinstated hence the deficit.</p> <p>Reserves stood at about £590k, being close to 6% of GAG income, more than the DfE recommendation and for which ACO and team were to be commended.</p> <p>The 2025-26 budget forecasted an in-year surplus of £446.</p> <p>Pupil premium had a carry forward into 2025-26 of £8,646. LDA asked if there was now better visibility of where pupil premium was being spent. SJO responded that spend had been targeted very effectively as evidenced by the attainment gap having closed.</p> <p>Lettings realised almost £100k, the most they had ever achieved, due to an incredible job by Ella Whitfield. It was proposed to increase lettings fees for 2026 to incorporate cleaning charges to take the pressure off the facilities team. It was also proposed to have a flat rate fee, rather than winter and summer rates. SJO confirmed that WHS prices were in line with other schools in the area. In response to a question from LDA, SJO advised that the rates had been rounded up to either the nearest 50p or £1.</p> <p>Governors approved the new rates for lettings from 2026.</p> <p>[The item about the caretaker’s house can be found in the Part Two minutes.]</p> <p>The Facilities team had done another excellent job and managed to save approximately £35k in utilities costs over the year.</p> <p>[SJO left the meeting at 1626.]</p> <p><u>Trips.</u> Governors were happy to approve the history trip to Ypres and the Somme.</p>	
12.	<p>Link Governors</p> <p>Governors confirmed that they were happy to stay with the same subject areas. ACO advised that he needed to update some stakeholders on the central document so that Governors knew who to contact for the SLT link: he would update and then circulate the document.</p>	ACO
13.	<p>Clerking matters</p> <p><u>Governor code of conduct.</u> TRE would circulate the document to Governors for signature.</p>	TRE / Govs
14.	<p>Policies for Review</p> <p>LDA asked for feedback on the policies circulated with the agenda, noting that NAM had already provided his. Referring to the Assessment and Feedback policy, JBU commented that the language was very much education orientated and questioned whether parents would understand it. ACO explained that the policy was for all stakeholders, including teachers, and the pertinent parts relating to parents, carers and students were communicated to them through various different means.</p> <p>TPA made a general point about policies which was that for him the quality of a policy was about the impact it had on learning and how that impact was being measured by those using it. He continued that one reason for having policies was to satisfy Ofsted and the Government. The Assessment and Feedback policy was slightly different in that it said something about the relationship of the school with its students. The question to consider when reviewing it would be what difference had it made so far that could be measured and shown to parents and perhaps students, and had it helped the school reach its attainment goals. This would be something to reflect on the next time the policy was reviewed. ACO believed this was a really useful development point and he would take it on board when looking at the key policies.</p>	

	<p>It was agreed that Governors would review the policies and provide feedback for the Safeguarding and child protection policy by 1 October 2025, and by 8 October 2025 for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Code of Conduct Searching and Confiscation Policy Teaching and Learning Policy Single Central Record 	Govs
15.	<p>Chair's actions</p> <p>LDA had no actions to report.</p>	
16.	<p>Any other business</p> <p><u>Open Morning.</u> TPA commented that the Open Morning itself was superb, but he flagged up some reported issues with the on-street parking around the school. ACO was aware and was dealing with the feedback.</p> <p>The students gained a lot of praise for their enthusiasm and behaviour in showing prospective parents round the school.</p>	
17.	<p>Dates and times of GB Meeting for Academic Year 2025-2026</p> <p>The proposed date of 19 November 2025 clashed with an all school meeting and would have to be changed. [Post meeting note: the meeting would be on 3 December 2025.]</p> <p>Remainder of the dates for 2025-2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21 January 2026 18 March 2026 13 May 2026 1 July 2026 	
	<p>Before the meeting closed, TPA thanked the LGB for inviting him to the meeting adding that the Trust felt governing bodies were really important and the Trust genuinely believed that the local community should run its schools.</p> <p>LDA closed the meeting at 1802.</p>	

Chair

Date