

# MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL – BRACKLEY

## Minutes of the Full Governing Body Planning Meeting held in the school on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 6.30pm

<b>Present:</b>	Mr J Alexander	<b>JA</b>	Parent Governor (left 7.30pm)
	Mr N Arnold	<b>NA</b>	Community Governor
	Mr J Bilson	<b>JB</b>	Member Appointed Governor
	Miss K Brunton	<b>KB</b>	Parent Governor
	Mr R du Plessis	<b>RP</b>	Parent Governor
	Mr G Ellis	<b>GE</b>	Community Governor
	Mr C Harte	<b>CH</b>	Foundation Governor
	Mr T Hollis	<b>TH</b>	Headteacher Governor
	Mr N Jones ( <b>Vice Chair</b> )	<b>NJ</b>	Parent Governor
	Prof C Leitmeir	<b>CL</b>	Foundation Governor
	Dr B Naylor ( <b>Chair</b> )	<b>BN</b>	Community Governor
	Dr M Pobjoy	<b>MP</b>	Foundation Governor
	Mrs Charlotte Wood	<b>CW</b>	Parent Governor

**Apologies:** None

<b>In Attendance:</b>	Mrs A Banks	<b>AB</b>	Deputy Headteacher
	Mrs L Martindale	<b>LM</b>	Deputy Headteacher
	Mrs C Powell	<b>CP</b>	Clerk to the Governors

The meeting was quorate.

***Governor questions and challenge are highlighted.***

### Actions

<b>4</b>	Check the DfE's power to direct the school to join a MAT.	<b>TH</b>
<b>4</b>	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.	<b>TH / SLT</b>
<b>4</b>	Draft a nuanced version of the letter to Sixth Form students, parents and prospective parents. Share with Governors for review.	<b>TH / SLT</b>
<b>4</b>	Establish Governor link roles to faculties within the school.	<b>BN / All</b>
<b>4</b>	Produce a list of faculties for Governors to consider – by the end of the week.	<b>TH</b>
<b>4</b>	Consider which faculty you would like to link to for Governor monitoring visits.	<b>All</b>
<b>4</b>	Take advice from support partners on the format and content of the action plan for improvement.	<b>TH / SLT</b>
<b>4</b>	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.	<b>TH / SLT / Governors</b>
<b>4</b>	Take advice from support partners on communication with parents and carers around the training days, including the use of social media.	<b>TH / SLT</b>
<b>5.1</b>	Progress the appointment of Jordan English as a Foundation Governor through the board of Magdalen College, Oxford.	<b>CL</b>

## Decisions

<b>4</b>	Governors approved the request from SLT to implement two additional training days on 2 and 3 June 2025.
<b>5.1</b>	Governors approved the nomination of Jordan English to the position of Foundation Governor.
<b>5.1</b>	Governors re-appointed NA as a Community Governor for a further term of 4 years from 06/05/25 to 05/05/29.

### 1. **Welcome & apologies for absence**

BN welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Governors for attending. No apologies had been received. Mrs L Crossley (LC) and Mr J Gold (JG), Parent Governors were not 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 and no amendments to the Register were noted.

### 3. **Minutes of the meeting held 26 March 2025 & review of action points**

The minutes had been shared in advance on GHub and were checked page by page for accuracy. There were no amendments made, the minutes were approved as a true record of proceedings and signed by the Chair.

#### **Review of Action Points**

<b>7.4</b>	Liaise with Finance to subscribe to the NGA's Learning Link package at a cost of £235 p.a. <b>COMPLETE</b>
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### 4. **SIP 2025 – 2026**

#### **4.1 Summary of feedback from the recent Ofsted inspection and the impact on improvement planning**

BN explained that the usual sequence of planning has been overtaken by the outcome of the Section 5 Ofsted Inspection, which took place between 23 and 29 April 2025. He noted that this meeting will continue to act as an opportunity for Governors to support the school leaders with improvement planning.

BN thanked everyone for their support through the inspection process, especially staff and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). He recognised that the process had been very challenging, and the outcome highlights the need for the school to move forward on a journey of rapid improvement. BN added that this will continue to be challenging and asked Governors to take this opportunity to consider their role in the process and think about what support they can offer.

TH thanked all those involved in the inspection and especially AB and SLT. He had prepared and shared a document outlining the initial outcomes and areas for action from the inspection, as presented by HMI at the feedback meeting on 29 April. TH spoke to this document and took questions from Governors. The following key points were covered.

- Of the 6 areas of judgement, inspectors consider 3 to be inadequate, 2 to require improvement and 1 (safeguarding) to be ineffective.
- Overall Ofsted has judged that the school lacks the capacity to improve and as such will be placed in Special Measures. TH noted that being a standalone Single Academy Trust, a lack of support and capacity is a factor in this situation.

- This was a Section 5 inspection, and very different from previous Section 8 inspections. There was a big team of inspectors in the school over 2 days and covering multiple areas at the same time.
- The implications of Special Measures are that the school will be subject to greater scrutiny and regular monitoring by Ofsted, with frequent, short-notice inspections to monitor progress. Another full inspection can be expected within 18 months, although this could happen sooner or later.  
**Governors asked whether Ofsted inspectors would attend Governing Body meetings?** TH confirmed that they would not routinely attend but will want to speak regularly to Governors about the action plan and how they are monitoring the impact of that.  
**Governors asked whether this level of scrutiny and inspection would still be the case if the school were to join a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?** TH confirmed that the process would continue. He added that in the past, failing schools directed by the DfE to become academies would close and then re-open with sponsorship, but this is no longer the case.
- MP reminded Governors that as a significant landowner (St John's), the response and attitude of Magdalen College, Oxford University to any suggestion of the school joining a MAT will be a very important factor to consider. Previous experience indicates that the College will want representation at both local governance and board level within a MAT. He noted that at this stage, he has no clear idea of what the College's attitude will be but highlighted that this will be a big decision.
- TH noted that it is within the power of the DfE to direct the school to join a MAT if they judge that the necessary improvements are not being made quickly enough. He agreed that there will be a delicate balance to strike. BN added that Ofsted make their judgement and then hand over to the DfE to make the decision on what action will be taken.  
**Governors asked TH to check the terms of the DfE's power to make this direction.** It was suggested that the DfE can do this by withdrawing the school's Funding Agreement. *The Regional Director (Carol Gray – East Midlands) can issue a directive academy order which legally requires a school to join a designated MAT. The school may be given some input in choosing the MAT.*  
**Governors suggested that the school must be given the opportunity to make the necessary improvements first. The need to be clear about Magdalen College, Oxford's position was noted.**  
**Governors highlighted that any partnership or supportive affiliation entered into now does not necessarily need to be a permanent one.** It was discussed and agreed that the school leadership will embrace the support available to them now to make the rapid improvements needed.
- TH noted that the Areas for Improvement listed in the summary document will become clearer with the publication of the final report in about 3 weeks time. He provided context to the points on the list.
  - The SEND issue is currently a greater focus of all Ofsted inspections, not just this one. The principle is that if Quality First teaching is happening and meeting the learning needs of pupils with SEND, it will be meeting the needs of all learners.  
**Governors were not all in agreement with this approach.** TH noted that inspectors did not ask about the SEND support or lack thereof offered by the Local Authority, who have themselves been

- judged as inadequate in this area. He highlighted that this is one area where leaders could have made a better case for the school's position.
- Low expectations of behaviour means that teachers are allowing poor behaviour.
  - The common use of derogatory language reported by students was noted as new information for school leaders.
  - 50 out of 98 staff who responded to Ofsted's survey reported not feeling supported.
  - The reported 'lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities of leaders' was thought to have been related to Alternative Provision (AP).
  - The 'inappropriate use of AP / part-time timetables' cited was in relation to just 1 or 2 cases which inspectors took a specific interest in.
  - **Governors asked what was meant by 'not acting quickly enough'?** LM explained that this seemed to be about behaviour and the fact that the external review is only happening now, when leaders have been aware of staff concerns for some time.
  - **Governors asked about the safeguarding issues raised in relation to the St John's site.** The reasons for the inspector's view of this were considered. It was discussed and noted that the main concern relates to the Sixth Form students and specifically to the processes of movement between the sites and signing in and out. The message received was that there needs to be better control over this, which was noted as something that can be fixed.

**Governors asked whether HMI asked to see the school's SEF?** TH explained that schools are no longer required to have a SEF, they are optional, and it requires experience to write one that will be beneficial to the process.

**Governors noted the need for support from someone with Ofsted training and/or experience.**

**Governors discussed whether to challenge the Ofsted report.** It was agreed that while the formal process of challenge could be time-consuming, costly and unlikely to change the outcome, it will be important to respond to the draft and put down markers to indicate where there is disagreement with the Inspectors judgements. **Governors agreed that the outcome provides a baseline for improvement.** TH proposed that the whole school leadership, including Governors, will need to work as a team to lean into the negative feedback, show that it has been taken on board and that there is a robust plan for improvement in place.

**Governors asked about the reasons given for Ofsted's judgement of the Sixth Form as 'Requires Improvement'.** LM reported that student feedback focussed on the teaching vacancies that have had an impact on 3 A-Level subjects: psychology, sociology and business studies. AB noted that the vacancies have now been filled and added that there were also a lot of positive comments made about Sixth Form.

**Governors asked what impact the recommendation by Ofsted not to employ Early Career Teachers (ECTs) is likely to have on recruitment?** TH noted that this is a recommendation for any school in Special Measures, but not a directive. He added that he will continue to employ ECTs where that is the only alternative to teacher vacancies. It was discussed and noted that there is no way of knowing what the impact will be on recruitment. AB noted that some teachers will embrace and thrive on the challenge of working with a school in Special Measures and the additional support and pace that brings, while others will prefer to avoid that situation.

**Governors raised concerns about rumours and misinformation circulating in the school community, based on speculation about the Ofsted outcome.** TH

highlighted the need to have drafted a carefully worded letter to parents, carers and prospective parents ahead of the final report being published. It was agreed that the tone and message of this letter will be critical and needs to focus on the plans already in place to make rapid improvements, as well as the positive points made in the report. TH added that the opportunity to ask the school community to support the school on this improvement journey should be taken. **Governors suggested that a nuanced message be given with respect to the Sixth Form and prospective students.** It was agreed that advice from support partners on the messaging used should be sought and both drafts shared with Governors for review before sending.

TH explained the external support already being sought. He noted that the EPA Trust will meet with SLT and Governors on 7 May and outlined their recent experience of taking another local secondary school from Special Measures to Good. He noted that there is a lot of Ofsted experience on the leadership team of the EPA Trust. Other possible contacts with experienced Ofsted inspectors were discussed.

**Governors asked whether an alliance with Oxford University PGCE course might be helpful?** TH noted that the focus will need to be on practical support for teachers in the classroom, rather than academic research, which is the university's strength. He confirmed that this practical help will be part of the support package being brokered with both West Northants and the EPA Trust.

**Governors asked about the specific criticisms made by Ofsted about their role and what they can do to address these.**

LM highlighted that Ofsted judged that school leaders have mis-diagnosed problems. It was noted that the main evidence they have used to support this judgement is taken from the staff surveys completed during the inspection.

**Governors discussed the staff survey and noted that the feedback is very different from the results of the Teaching Staff Workload Survey completed in February and scrutinised by Governors in March.** TH explained that the reason for this is that the Ofsted survey is anonymous, whereas the school's internal survey is not in order to allow appropriate support and training to be put in place for individuals. The need to anonymise future internal staff surveys to get a more accurate reflection and better understanding of staff mood and concerns was discussed.

**Governors suggested reinstating a Staff Governor position on the Governing Body.** TH reported a suggestion made by SLT that Governors link to faculties with a view to deepening their understanding of the school context. It was agreed that this approach could also help build vital relationships with staff and may prove more beneficial than reinstating the Staff Governor role, which had not had impact in the past. The reasons for this were noted as the impact of the additional time pressure on the staff member resulting in a lack of commitment to the role and a lack of contribution to Governor meetings.

**Governors agreed with the proposal to establish faculty links in order to build relationships with staff.**

TH agreed to produce a list of faculties for Governors, so they can consider which they would like to link to.

Discussion moved on to focus on the action plan. It was agreed that this will need to be concise, easy to understand and include clear accountability. The plan will need to be based around a set of standards that Governors can use to monitor progress both during faculty visits and in Committee and FGB meetings. It was noted that there needs to be clear guidance on the evidence that Governors will need to see progress. **Governors noted that the current School Improvement Plan (SIP) includes too many 'Hows', which make it over-complicated and create a barrier to understanding. The need for work on this to create a new action plan focussed on the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted was agreed.**

***Governors queried whether the new action plan should directly reflect the Ofsted framework and be around the areas of judgement?*** TH agreed to take advice on the format and content of the action plan from the support partners.

***Governors asked about the timetable for producing the plan.*** It was discussed and agreed that the aim should be to have a draft in place by 2 June, and sooner than this if possible. Governor comments were invited, and it was agreed that they should see the development stages where possible.

***Governors asked to see a robust, final version of the action plan at their next FGB meeting on 9 July.***

***Governors questioned the proposal in the report to remove 'movement time' from the school day and asked what the benefit of this would be and when the students would be able to use the toilets?*** TH recognised that this is an ongoing challenge and noted that there is no ideal model, but the proposal is in response to Ofsted's view that in the current model, movement time is wasted time and looks sloppy. He agreed that the current model is not working as planned and this provides the opportunity to change that. TH added that the afternoon tutor time will also be removed to be more effective use of time in the school day. Toilet trips will need to be made during break times.

***Governors addressed and discussed the request for two additional staff training days on 2 and 3 June.*** The short notice for parents and carers was considered against the clear benefits of using this time to work together as a team on owning the improvement journey. The fact that these days will follow the half-term break was noted.

***Governors approved the request from SLT to implement two additional training days on 2 and 3 June 2025 to focus on improvement planning as a staff team.***

TH agreed to take advice from support partners on communication with parents and carers, including the use of social media.

## **5. Governance**

### **5.1 Governance Review**

It was noted that this will go ahead as part of the EPA support package and will aim to address the Ofsted judgements on governance as previously discussed.

### **5.2 Membership**

A nomination to the vacant position of Foundation Governor was made by CL on behalf of Magdalen College, Oxford University. Jordan English was proposed as an academic lawyer with practical experience and an excellent strategic thinker. CL added that he lives fairly close to Brackley. MP confirmed that the nomination has his support.

***Governors were pleased to accept the nomination of Jordan English to the position of Foundation Governor and asked CL to progress the appointment with Magdalen College as necessary.***

The Clerk advised the Governing Body that Neil Arnold's term of office as a Community Governor is due to expire at the beginning of July, just before the next FGB meeting. She confirmed that NA has indicated his willingness to stand for re-appointment.

NA left the room and Governors voted unanimously to re-appoint him as a Community Governor for a further term of 4 years from 06/05/25 until 05/05/29.

NA re-joined the meeting and was thanked for his ongoing commitment to the Governing Body.

## **6. Any Other Business**

None

BN thanked TH for his report and thanked all involved for their contributions to a very constructive meeting.

**7. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 9 July 2025 – FGB business meeting

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

**Signed..... (Chair)**

**Dated.....**