

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF
THE VILLAGE INFANTS SCHOOL QUALITY OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2025
IN SCHOOL AND BY VIDEO CONFERENCE
(5:15 pm – 6:30 pm)**

Present: Councillor Harriet Spoor (Chair)
Amy Whiffin
Andy Carr
Bernadette Thompson **R**
Debbie Rosaman
Lee Buckingham
Louise Sparks
Richard Wells
Su Joy

Also present: Councillor Julia Williams, Co-opted Governor nominee
Councillor Muazzam Sandhu, Co-opted Governor nominee
Joe Lynch, Co-opted Governor nominee **R**
Jackie Day, BDSIP Governor Services

R = attended remotely

MINUTES – PART 1

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Glen Spoor and Martin Nicholson.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors had no personal or business interests to declare.

3 ELECTION OF CHAIR

Governors confirmed the appointment of Harriet Spoor as Chair, as discussed at the governing board meeting on 23 October 2025.

4 MEMBERSHIP OF THE GOVERNING BOARD

Governors:

4.1 Co-opted Governors

noted that there were three vacancies for Co-opted Governors. They considered supporting statements from Councillor Julia Williams, Councillor Muazzam Sandhu and Mr Joe Lynch and noted that they all brought areas of expertise. Governors agreed to appoint the candidates to fill these posts. Councillor Williams and Councillor Sandhu were welcomed to the meeting.

4.2 Headteacher Governor

agreed that Yolanda Cattle and Amy Whiffin should share the role of Headteacher Governor now that Yolanda had reduced her working days.

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2025 were confirmed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

6 POSTS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Governors reviewed the posts of responsibility and agreed that Lee Buckingham should be link governor for SEND. There were vacancies for Curriculum and EYFS. The Chair asked governors to contact the school if they were interested in one of these posts. Councillor Williams agreed to be link governor for Curriculum. The Chair agreed to cover EYFS until a new appointment was made.

Governors agreed that there should also be link governors for subject areas, focusing on Humanities and STEM subjects initially. These would be considered at the Spring Term meeting.

7 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Su Joy presented the report of the Internal Audit which took place in October 2025. Governors noted that the school received a rating of Reasonable Assurance. The main actions arising from the audit were the need for policies for computer screen locks and stronger passwords. The governors endorsed the Chair's action in approving the Password and Screen Lock Policy.

8 POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

Governors approved the following policies and documents:

- Pupil Premium Strategy
- Education of Children who have or have had a Social Worker
- Schools Leave of Absence Policy (LA policy)
- Summary of Levels of Financial Delegation 2025/26 – Amy Whiffin added to authorised signatories

9 SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The governors:

9.1 received the review of the School Improvement Plan 2024/25.

a) **Priority 1: Teaching and Learning**

The objectives were achieved. Curriculum teams had been created to share expertise across year groups. Curriculum walks took place, and teachers knew the current position for their subjects.

b) **Priority 2: Writing**

The year's objectives were achieved and this priority would continue in 2025/26. Staff had been trained for Talk for Writing and Power of Reading. Outcomes improved and children were more immersed in writing.

c) **Priority 3: Reading**

Children were enjoying reading and there were visits to the local library. Reading for Pleasure workshops for parents were successful and the feedback was positive.

d) **Priority 4: Science**

The school achieved the Primary Science Quality Mark with the highest rating. The Science lead delivered support for teachers and conducted learning walks.

e) **Priority 5: EduKey**

Debbie Rosaman supported teachers in using EduKey and it was now widely used to highlight interventions and children's learning plans. This provides good records for handing over to William Ford School when children transfer for Year 3.

f) **Priority 6: EYFS**

GLD continued to increase, rising to 69% from 62% in 2024. The school was proud of this improvement and expected to pass 70% in 2026.

g) **Priority 7: Inclusion**

The school was continuing to develop support and improve consistency across mainstream classrooms. Subject toolkits for SEND have been produced. All subject leads were now consistent, and adaptations were evident throughout the school.

9.2 received the School Improvement Plan for 2025/26 and noted that the number of priorities has been reduced to three.

a) **Priority 1: Writing**

This year's objective is to continue to raise standards of writing across the school. Handwriting and spelling are in the new writing framework, and the Little Wandle phonics scheme includes a handwriting programme. Talk for Writing is being used more than Power of Reading this year. Sequences repeat through the year, and the lesson structure should support children's progress. Oracy is also being supported.

b) **Priority 2: Curriculum**

The curriculum is mostly strong but some gaps have been identified. This will be monitored. Pupil Voice will be used more often.

c) **Priority 3: EYFS**

Improvement in GLD will continue. The Nursery outdoor environment will be developed. Governors **asked** what CPD would be provided for EYFS teachers. They were informed that this was being discussed with Susan Hodgson, BDSIP's Early Years Advisory Teacher.

Governors **approved** the 2025/26 priorities.

10 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1 The governors were reminded to update their declarations of interest, and to confirm that they have completed safeguarding training and KCSIE. New governors will need to complete these.

10.2 The Chair informed governors that she had arranged a one moth trial for card machines to enable parents to make cashless payments. The Finance Committee will receive an update

11 MEETING DATES

Governors noted that the next meeting would be held on 19 March 2026 at 5:15 pm.

12 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

The governors considered an item of a confidential nature as detailed in Part II of the minutes.

Actions/Follow up		
Min 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 Co-opted Governors appointed• HT governor post to be shared by Y Cattle and A Whiffin	Governor Services
Min 6	Lee Buckingham = SEND governor Cllr Williams = Curriculum governor Link governors for subjects to be considered	Agenda item
Min 10	Governors reminded to update their declarations of interest, and confirm they have completed safeguarding training/KCSIE	Governors

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(Not for publication)

VILLAGE INFANTS SCHOOL QUALITY OF EDUCATION COMMITTEE

11 DECEMBER 2025

MINUTES PART II

13 MERGER PROPOSAL

The Chair presented a proposal which had been raised at the latest meeting of William Ford Junior School governors. The Junior School Headteacher had suggested that the schools explore a merger or federation arrangement.

- 13.1 The chairs, headteachers and school business managers had met to discuss options which included a soft or hard federation, or a merger. The proposal was raised for financial reasons.
- 13.2 The governors of both schools had previously considered a merger in 2012 but had decided against this because the differences between the schools was too great and governors could not see clear benefits. Governors could change their minds. The clerk agreed to provide the minutes from the 2012 meetings.
- 13.3 William Ford Junior School has a budget deficit, but Village Infants does not. If the schools merged Village's budget would be used to support the William Ford deficit.
- 13.4 A merger or federation would promote closer working between the schools, e.g. on curriculum and transition. The schools would cover the journey of pupils from EYFS to Year 6. Most primary schools are now all through rather than separate infants and junior schools. Governors **asked** if transition could be strengthened without a merger.
- 13.5 The schools share a site, and a merger would benefit families. However, there would still be a physical transition between the two buildings.
- 13.6 The schools have a similar ethos but there are also differences because William Ford is a Church of England school. Staff specialisms were also different. A merger would be difficult because one school is Voluntary Aided and the other is a Community school. The Diocese and the Local Authority would need to approve any changes. The schools have different governing board structures which would need to change if the schools merged or formed a hard federation.
- 13.7 Governors noted that the proposal was not an agenda item at the William Ford meeting, so governors were taken by surprise.
- 13.8 Governors raised the following questions which would need to be addressed:
 - a) Could transition be improved without merging or federating.
 - b) Village Infants would have more to lose if it had to cover William Ford Junior's budget deficit. William Ford School had more to gain. A merger would enable the schools to share resources.
 - c) Governors **asked** who would be the headteacher. They were informed that there would be a selection process. There was a potential redundancy situation which would create additional costs.

- d) If Village Infants School became part of a church school, would the Diocese need to buy the land?
- e) Could William Ford School consider becoming a community school? This would help church finances, but the Diocese was probably not willing to give up a school. Andy Carr informed governors that he had not heard of any other mergers involving church schools and community schools. It might not be possible under the current framework for schools. Governors **asked** if the LA might decide to close Village Infants. They were informed that this was unlikely due to the demand for school places in this part of the borough.
- f) Why had the proposal been raised now? Governors noted that William Ford School was in a very challenging financial position with a significant deficit despite restructuring. Village Infants was in a stronger position with a tightly controlled budget, but it only had a marginal surplus. There would be some savings, e.g. only one office, one SBM, shared contracts, etc. Village did have a large carry forward, but this had been used to support staffing levels. William Ford spent more, and this would not be sustainable for long if the schools merged – further staff cuts might need to be considered. If staff over 55 were made redundant they would be entitled to have their pensions made up, and this would come from school budgets. It would be a significant cost.
- g) Governors **asked** how the William Ford budget deficit had become so large. They were concerned that the deficit was still increasing after several staffing cuts had been made. Village had managed to avoid a deficit without making any redundancies. Lee Buckingham informed governors that falling rolls, underfunding, and teachers on high pay scales contributed to the overspending.
- h) Was there a political backdrop to the proposal? No, it was raised by the Headteacher of William Ford School. He had been looking at case studies. Lee Buckingham informed governors that he had discussed this with the Headteacher and informed him, as a governor of Village, that he did not expect strong support here. However, he was willing to consider all the pros and cons. Governors appreciated his integrity in continuing to act in Village's best interests.
- i) The pros and cons would need to be considered by both schools before making any formal proposals. Children and families would also need to be considered.

13.9 Governors **agreed** that a working party should be formed to explore the possibilities. The working party should include at least the chairs of governors and two governors from each school plus the headteachers. Andy Carr also agreed to look into possible options. Further advice would be obtained, and an update would be presented to the full governing board.

Actions/Follow up		
Min 13.2	Minutes of 2012 merger proposal meetings to be provided.	Governor Services
Min 13.9	A working party to be established to explore the possibilities for merging or federating.	Chair