

ST HELENS COUNCIL
COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
OF COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON
TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2026 AT 5 PM

Members:

(Based on
Constitution = 16)

Co-Opted Governors

*Mr Garry Anders (Chair)
*Mrs Stacey Hill (Vice-Chair)
*Mr Innes Arnold
*Mrs Margaret Bellis
*Dr Claire Lucas
Mrs Angela Farrell
Mrs Linda Emmett
Vacancy
Vacancy
Vacancy
Vacancy

Local Authority Governor

Cllr Anthony Burns

The Principal

*Mr Russell Cormack

Staff Governor

*Mr Corey Gerrard

Parent Governors

Mr Karl Van Der Laan
Mrs Sharon Ahmed

Associate Members

*Miss Fiona Barry

*denotes those present

Also attending:

Mrs Jennifer Merrills, Governor Services, acting as Clerk

Part 1

1. Welcome and introductions

Mr Cormack welcomed Governors to the meeting.

2. Apologies and Consideration of Consent to Absence

Apologies were received from Mrs Ahmed, Mr Van Der Laan, Mrs Emmett, Cllr Burns and Mrs Farrell. Governors consented to the absences.

The meeting was quorate.

3. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were declared.

4. Governor Membership

There are 4 x Co-Opted Governor Vacancies.

It was noted that Dr Clare Lucas' DBS was still outstanding.

Action: Clare Lucas DBS to be actioned.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising from the Meeting held on 3 February 2026

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

Matters Arising:-

Mr Gosling has provided a summary note to Mr Anders.

Miss Barry proposed to staff a structured forum via the Cowley Development Group with a predetermined agenda, but the response has been non-committal. Miss Barry will mention this again.

Mr Cormack, this action should refer to the RE Policy not Careers Policy, Mr Cormack has actioned this.

Mrs Hill's action (Link Governor Report – Curriculum and SEND) has not been completed.

Action: Defer Mrs Hill's action (Link Governor Report – Curriculum and SEND) to the next FGB when the SENDCO Mrs McKay will be in attendance.

Mr Cormack's action re the School Calendar is to be discussed further today.
Governor Training for all Governors on the new Ofsted framework has been actioned.

6. Appointment of Clerk

Mr Cormack proposed continuing with the LA Clerking Service.

Resolved: Governors agreed to continue with LA Governor Services SLA

7. Financial Management

Mr Cormack informed Governors that the Budget Setting Meeting with the LA finance officer is scheduled to take place on Monday 23 March. Mr Cormack will provide Governors with an update thereafter.

Action: Mr Cormack to provide updated projections to Governors after the Budget Setting Meeting.

8. Principals Report

Governors noted the written Principals report which had been shared on Governor Hub prior to the meeting. Paper copies were also made available to Governors at the meeting.

Ofsted Inspection (verbal)

Governors were aware that last week the College had been subject to an Ofsted Inspection under the new framework on Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 March 2026.

Mr Cormack received the arranging call from Ofsted on Monday 9 March 2026.

The Lead HMI was Ahmed Marikar (the same lead who has recently inspected Rainford High School).

Following the call, support was immediately provided from Trinity MAT – arrived later that day.

7 x Inspectors (3 x HMI, 3 x Ofsted, 1 x senior HMI)

It was a 2 day inspection process. Inspectors saw a school that knows its challenges and is doing something about it. Inspectors were complimentary as to what they saw.

Summary:-

Safeguarding – met

Inclusion – needs attention

Teaching and curriculum – needs attention

Behaviour – needs attention

Sixth form - needs attention

Personal development and wellbeing – expected standard

Leadership and governance – expected standard

The leaders know the colleges challenges, they are doing something about it and have plans.

Dr Lucas, Mrs Hill, Mrs Emmett and Mr Anders were in the Governors meeting with HMI.

Mr Cormack expressed his thanks to leaders, staff, Governors and Trinity MAT for their support provided.

Principal's Report

Mr Cormack verbally expanded upon the following:-

Year 11

Next data drop due next week. Lots of work and interventions in place for Y11.

Action: Mr Cormack to share the latest Y11 projections with Governors after the Easter break.

Sixth Form

Governors noted the narrative by Mr Watkins about actions taken. Students are now likely to be on appropriate courses in Sixth Form due to the work done by Mr Watkins and Mr Painter.

Attendance

HMI very impressed with our work on attendance.

2% improvement on last year.

Still below national and St Helens average.

Year 10 still a problem – need to focus.

Question: Is this a Covid legacy?

Answer: Possibly – cohort would have been Year 6 when Covid hit and then started Cowley not in the usual circumstances. However, our Year 10 attendance is lower than in other schools.

Year 7 has really strong attendance and this wasn't expected to be the case based upon predictions from the primary schools.

EHE is still an issue – another request received today.

Behaviour

HMI were impressed with behaviour, systems / procedures, calm corridors etc.

Exclusion data

2 x Permanent Exclusions so far this year, this was at 10 at end of last year, so much lower number this year, but Mr Cormack informed Governors there may be a couple more before end of the academic year.

Reflection is working well.

New Intake

251 places for Year 7 next year – fully subscribed

Safeguarding

Drugs (Ketamine) is a key area.

9. College Improvement Plan

Mr Cormack informed Governors that Mrs McKay, Mr Watkins and Mr Bennett were going to come to the meeting today to speak to Governors, but due to Ofsted last week they have not.

Action: Defer to next meeting.

10. SEND updates (Mrs McKay)

Mrs McKay is working very hard, has a strong team. There is a disconnect between some parents expectations and real needs. Good leadership by Mrs McKay and noted in the inspection.

11. Sixth Form Update (Mr Watkins)

Mr Watkins has been doing a lot of work with Trinity MAT on standards, curriculum and QA. The numbers for next year are similar number to applications for next year, hoping for 180-200 in Year 12 next year.
A lot of work being done on Year 13 and next steps.
Work is being done on curriculum choices and on resits – classes smaller.
Difficult decisions need to be made re curriculum.

12. Alternative Provision Update (Mr Bennett)

Students who need to be FT / PT off site provision.

13. Safeguarding Update (Mr Bennett)

Training has taken place. Ketamine a real issue and far right politics – responding with curriculum for life programme and targeted assemblies.

14. 2026-27 Term Time Pattern

The Unions were unhappy with the proposed changes to holiday patterns.

Mr Cormack consulted with the unions. Unions proposed a staff vote, which Mr Cormack refused stating that the pattern is a decision for Governors, not staff. The college reverted to the previous holiday pattern (with 1 week in October) with a view to revisiting the issue.

The Unions have sent correspondence to Governors containing a data set of Union members views. Governors thereafter had discussions about the pros and cons of this data and the holiday pattern issue. Governors decided to defer their decision on the school holiday pattern, as there was no urgency now, given that the deadline for making a decision for 2027-28 pattern is in October 2026.

Resolved: Defer discussion to next full governing body meeting in May 2026, with decision to be made by Governors before the October 2026 deadline.

Actions: Mr Cormack to email staff and Governors.

Mr Cormack to provide spring / Easter attendance data for years 10 and 11 to Governors at the next full governing body meeting in May 2026.

15. Governor Visits and Governor Training

It was reported that Mrs Hill had been into college.

16. Policies for approval

The RE & Relationship Policy has been approved already by Governors on Governor Hub and has also been approved by Ofsted

17. Urgent Matters

Governors were informed that HR, Union, Mr Anders and Mr Arnold are meeting next Thursday.

18. Date and Time of Next FGB Meeting – 12 May 2026

Governors noted the same.

Part 1 of the meeting closed

