

ST HELENS COUNCIL
COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY
OF COWLEY INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE HELD ON
TUESDAY 12 MAY 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

Mr 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
*Mr Chris Dickinson

*denotes those present

Also attending:

Mr Mike Bennett
Mrs Kay McKay
Mrs Jennifer Merrills, Governor Services, acting as Clerk

Part 1

1. Apologies and Consideration of Consent to Absence

Mrs Hill chaired the meeting and welcomed attendees.

Apologies were received from Clare Lucas, Anthony Burns and Corey Gerrard. Governors consented to the absences.

The meeting was quorate.

2. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations of interest were declared.

3. Governor Membership

Mr Cormack informed Governors of a Proposal to appoint Mrs Clare Powell as a Co-Opted Governor, she is the Headteacher at Rivington Primary School. Mr Anders formally nominated Mrs Powell and Mrs Hill seconded the nomination. Governors voted in favour.

Resolved:	Mrs Clare Powell appointed as Co-opted Governor.
Action:	Governor Services to update Governor Hub and deal with onboarding.

Mr Anthony Burns has sent his apologies today. Following the outcome of the local elections last week he has confirmed he still wishes to remain on the Governing Body. The Clerk advised that Mr Burns can remain in post.

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

Action: Clare Lucas DBS to be actioned.

4. Minutes from the Meeting held on 17 March 2026

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. Matters Arising

Item 4 – Clare Lucas DBS still outstanding.

Item 5 - Mrs Hill's action (Link Governor Report – Curriculum and SEND) is still outstanding.

Item 7 - Mr Cormack has provided updated budget projections.

Item 8 – Mr Cormack has shared the latest Year 11 projections in the Principal's Report.

Item 9 – College Improvement Plan – this is in the Agenda pack.

Item 14 - Holiday patterns, this is still outstanding. The Unions have requested we stick to the LA pattern for October half term for this year.

Action: Defer Mrs Hill's action (Link Governor Report – Curriculum and SEND) to the next FGB meeting.

Defer discussion on 2027/28 school holiday pattern to the next FGB meeting.

6. Local Authority Standard Items

Appointment of Clerk was dealt with at the last FGB meeting.

LA Pay Policy is not yet available.

Action: Defer LA Pay Policy to next FGB meeting.

7. Policy Review

Governors noted the following updated Policies uploaded on Governor Hub.

E-Safety Policy

Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy (RSHE)

Supporting Students at College with Medical Conditions Policy.

Mr Bennett informed Governors that the LA Safeguarding Lead suggested some minor amendments. This Policy is not affected by the current Union issues.

Resolved: Policies x 3 approved.

8. College Updates (SEND, Sixth Form, Safeguarding, Alternative Provision)

SEND

Governors noted the Ofsted Report, Spring Term 2026 summary, the SEND Update to Governors Report dated 12 May 2026 and the Trinity Summary Note of Visit for SEND 2025/26 contained in the Agenda Pack.

Mrs Mackay verbally expanded upon these as follows:-

There has been a lot of scrutiny on SEND recently in the Ofsted Inspection and the JCQ Inspection (deep dive). There was no advance notice the JCQ inspection was to be a deep dive. In relation to SEND, the JCQ were looking at documentation for concessions. The JCQ have had increased numbers of requests post-covid for access arrangements, mainly extra time / scribes. New guidance in September 2025. Change of approach – that the student has always used / needed it. Changes in internal processes before JCQ application for access arrangements is made by SENDCO. A lot of supporting evidence needs to be gathered. This is an all year round job as we have sixth form doing November GCSE resits, some Sixth Form students have come from other schools, so for them we have to get information from their previous settings.

The Trinity Review and Ofsted Report accurately reflect the position of SEND at Cowley.

Mr Cormack reported it had been a difficult year for SEND, inclusion scrutiny/focus in Ofsted, JCQ, external pressures (i.e. parental expectations) and Mrs McKay and her team are doing a great job. Governors similarly congratulated and thanked Mrs McKay on doing an excellent job.

Question: How are you getting on with the SEND Changes?

Answer: Been to a conference, was unable to attend the DFE webinar. (Mrs Emmett will send Mrs McKay her note from this).

Sixth Form

Governors noted the Sixth Form Overview Report to Governors from Mr Watkins Dated 30 April 2026.

Mr Watkins verbally expanded upon this as follows:-

194 students started last September. For this September there have been 340 applications so far, to date have interviewed 230 of these. Pushing for more interviews and the target is for at least 200 new intake.

Ofsted, destination planning, outgoing report was summarised. Currently working with 7 students as to what their intended destination is after leaving Sixth Form.

The USP of Cowley Sixth Form is the wrap around support, this was recognised in Ofsted report. Mission statement is “life ready learning” whatever destination is after college (university, work, apprenticeship).

Governors suggested for destination publicity as well as Russell Group Universities showcase those who have really great alternative apprenticeships, prestigious drama schools etc in the Arts.

There are major changes coming up within next 3-4 years, there is a recent paper re how results / outcomes are shown in future. V levels are being introduced. IDSR is not fully reflective reporting wise, there is a DFE Consultation ongoing online.

Funding changes upcoming. We will need to look into our curriculum design in the future, what our next steps will be post-16 with A levels and V levels.

Mr Cormack informed Governors that the Ofsted lead for Sixth Form understood Mr Watkins' vision for Sixth Form and was complimentary about the community connection and inclusivity.

Question: Are Cowley working with Trinity in responding to various DFE consultations?

Answer: Yes, Mr Watkins is working closely with Trinity and Michael.

Safeguarding

Governors noted the Safeguarding Update Report from Mr Bennett to Governors dated 30 April 2026.

Mr Bennett verbally expanded upon this as follows:-

This year has seen big changes with how staff report concerns and an increase in the wellbeing team – Safeguarding officers and a wellbeing officer.

Relationships have been built with vulnerable students and families. The increase has led to more time with our most vulnerable families. Seems to be a greater willingness by staff to use yellow forms to refer safeguarding issues. This is also allowing Mr Bennett and Sue to be more strategic.

Concerns are analysed for patterns, what is happening outside school in the community, links with CPD training to staff and sessions to students.

Prevent work has been done to reflect the changing nature of Cowley. We have asylum seeker families coming in here, whilst there were local protests at the Carr Mill hotel about this – raising awareness with staff and students.

Student voice develops their confidence to raise a concern and links with the developing curriculum for life topics.

Question: Are you prepared for safeguarding concerns re AI use?

Answer: Some in Curriculum 4 Life and in IT computing. KCSIE – more in it this year. Last year there was an incident involving AI which we dealt with.

Mr Cormack informed Governors that Safeguarding was under a lot of scrutiny by Ofsted, documentation was looked at, Mr Bennett was challenged, Governors were challenged. Safeguarding new procedures are operating well. Mr Cormack thanked Mr Bennett.

Question: Safer recruitment?

Answer: Someone on the interview panel / recruitment panel needs to be trained in safer recruitment to offer a balanced approach. SLT have had safer recruitment training. Middle leaders were offered it, but this was not taken up. Governors should be offered this training in the future.

Alternative Provision

Governors noted the Alternative Education Update Report to Governors from Mr Bennett dated 30 April 2026.

Mr Bennett verbally expanded upon this as follows:-

What we do before AP was looked at by Ofsted (Inclusion). We only consider AP as an option when we have gone through other support first (i.e. mental health, attendance, SEND support etc as appropriate).

STAR meetings – put case forward as to why AP is the best option.

Tend to use LAAP offer – Ofsted registered. Others not full time are sent to MPH / Aspire locally for programmes. Tuition – numbers look high, some are LAC where we are using PEP money, some are school refusers due to sit maths GCSE.

Reviews – we prefer face to face, see students each half term, track attendance daily. Safeguarding, we vet any new AP. PHSE curriculum is still provided to AP students.

Governors commented in future reports it would be helpful to provide better breakdown of year groups, full time / part time etc, will help Governors understand and challenge.

Question: As Governors Safeguarding is our responsibility – AP students are often the most vulnerable students. What reassurance can you provide that processes – SG, SEND, behaviour are the right ones?

Answer: Re AP we prefer to have students on site with us, next area of development – would offsite numbers decrease due to continued work being done on our pathways. Most vulnerable students are here with us from a safeguarding point of view. OFSTED and LA have validated this.

Mrs McKay informed Governors that there was a lot of scrutiny from Ofsted re vulnerable students, we are working collaboratively across departments i.e. Safeguarding / SEND, they were impressed.

Mr Dickinson suggested in the future there should be some training for Governors on the different processes and plans in place and that they are workable and achievable.

Mrs Ahmed informed Governors that her son is in AP, but fed back that Cowley are in regular contact, AP feeding back to Cowley, still feels that his needs are being met - very positive experience of AP with Cowley. He still very much feels like he is still a part of Cowley.

Mr Cormack stated that despite an increase in initial steps before AP, there will always be pupils who have to go to AP. But these pupils will always be treated as Cowleians.

Governors commented on the issue of children going into the world of work having lack of social skills, some children do not have these. Need to positively teach these skills so that when a pupil goes on from Cowley they have these basic skills - eye contact, manners, awareness of how to behave and to present the best version of themselves.

Mr Bennett said this ties in with the introduction of the Professional Standards Curriculum during Team Time – different topic each week, corridor expectations etc. In its infancy, but being developed.

Governors thanked Mrs McKay, Mr Watkins and Mr Bennett for their reports and hard work in managing their responsibilities.

9. College Improvement Plan (CIP) and Self Evaluation

Mr Cormack proposed discussing the College Improvement Plan and Self-Evaluation (Item 9), Principal's Report (Item 11) and Ofsted Report (Item 12) all together, as these are all linked.

Governors noted the College Improvement Plan, Self-Evaluation, Principal's Report and Ofsted Report as contained in the Agenda pack.

Mr Cormack verbally expanded upon the above as follows:-

This time last year we decided to begin a rapid improvement plan. Ofsted more interested with CIP rather than SEF. The significant changes and are we seeing impact. CIP – Many are green, some amber, just one red. Still another review to be done.

Principal's Report – slight KS4 improvements are envisaged – getting closer to national. Y10 – still have attendance issues. Anticipate current Y9 KS4 results (when in Y11) will be significantly better.

Inclusion agenda – improvements in vulnerable groups seen.

CIP is working – evidence seen and validated by OfSTED.

Ofsted report is now in public domain – where Cowley was in March. 2 x at expected and rest Attention needed. That fitted with our SEF at that time. Inspection was at a difficult time as was at an early stage in CIP and the introduction of the new inspection framework. If it was later we would have had more evidence of the impact. Leadership and Governance – recognised rapid improvements and these being in the best interests of children. Things have been difficult with the industrial Union action. Governors commented that the Ofsted report does reflect considerable challenges where progress has been made, improvements seen, reflects a move forwards. Acknowledges we are going in the correct direction.

Question: Has there been much reaction from parents to the Ofsted Report?

Answer: Not really, Mr Cormack did his own summary to the parents (on website).

Mr Cormack wished to have to have Nick and the Trinity team's involvement formally acknowledged.

Question: Action points – are they being actioned?

Answer: Yes, all are part of the current action plan. Need to work with Middle Leaders to take ownership of these next steps, but difficult due to current industrial action. Working on 2026/27 action plan.

Mrs McKay, Miss Barry, Mr Dickinson, Mr Watkins and Mr Bennett left the meeting at 6pm.

10. Financial Management

Governors noted the updated budget and 3 year projections contained within the Agenda pack. Mr Cormack confirmed the work being done with curriculum led financial planning, staffing and 6th form recruitment is having impact on the budget. This time last year was a worse picture. The plan is working. A lot of work with the LA Finance Officer has been done. More funding re FSMs is coming.

A vote was proposed ratifying the budget. Governors voted in favour.

Resolved: Budget approved.

11. Principal's Report

See item 9.

12. Ofsted Report

See item 9.

13. Link Governor Reports and Monitoring Visits

None to report.

Action: Linked Governors to visit College before the end of the academic year and report back at the next FGB meeting.

14. Governor Development

Nothing to report.

15. Date and Time of Next FGB Meeting – Tuesday 7 July 2026 at 5pm

Mrs Emmett will be unable to attend on this date.

Mrs Merrills (Clerk) will be unable to attend on this date, but confirmed Governor Services had been made aware of this and another Clerk would be in attendance.

16. FGB Meeting dates for 2026-27 Academic Year

Mr Cormack advised that these mirror the dates for this year. Governors noted the same.

17. Urgent Matters

There were no urgent matters.

Part 1 of the meeting closed at 6.15pm

Signed.....(Chairperson)

Date.....