

A guide to writing governing body minutes

1. Purpose of Minutes

Minutes are an historical record and formal evidence of governance, a record of the governing body's decisions, the reasons for those decisions, and give authority to decisions.

They are vital to the success of the meeting acting as a reminder to participants to achieve necessary outcomes. They also give those who did not attend an idea of what was decided in their absence.

Governors must have access to an accurate record of all discussions and decisions so that they can demonstrate to stakeholders and external bodies such as Ofsted evidence of leadership and good governance to support the school self-evaluation (SEF) for the judgements made in Ofsted Inspections. Schools Financial Value Standards (SFVS) have also placed responsibilities on the clerk for recording specific decisions.

Minutes could be questioned as evidence for claims of litigation which may be dependent upon the governing body's decision making.

Fulfilling these functions in one document is a demanding task and places an important and responsible role on the clerk.

2. Content of Minutes

Each minute should be tied to an **agenda item** through a numbering system and the title (the headings in paragraph 3 can be used to formulate an agenda) and should have a beginning, a middle and an end. A minute is NOT a verbatim record of the meeting.

- Beginning – The beginning should be an explanation of the agenda item
- Middle – The middle summarises the main points of the discussion, and the questions asked of the Headteacher providing the evidence of how the school is governed. Questions from governors should be highlighted by using bold or underlined or coloured text e.g.
 - **In response to a governor question, the HT explained the.....etc.**
 - In response to a governor question, the HT explained the.....etc.
 - In response to a governor question, the HT explained the.....etc.
- End – The end states the outcome of the discussion, usually a recommendation or a decision, including the voting result. This will result in an action, who when and timeframe.

3. Minutes should record

- **The 3 core roles of governors (optional but a good reminder)**
 - Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.
 - Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
 - Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction
- **Heading** – Name of GB or committee, date and where the meeting was held
- **Those present;**
 - Governors listed alphabetically (identifying the chair and Headteacher),
 - Associate members,
 - In attendance (note office and from where),
 - Clerk (who produced the minutes)
- **Apologies** (and in Full Governing Body Minutes governors' acceptance of apologies). Every member of the governing body should be accounted for split between, those present, those apologies received from and those absent. A table can be used as below.

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Name	Position	Present (P) Apologies (AP)	Apologies agreed? (Y/N)
A governor	Chair	P	
B Governor	HT	P	
C Governor		AP	Y
D Governor		P (left at 7pm)	
E Governor		P (arrived at 6.30pm)	

- **Declarations of any ‘interests’** – governors should have an opportunity at every meeting to declare any ‘interest’ to an item on the agenda. *N.B this is in addition and separate to signing a register of business interest form*
- **Approval of previous minutes** – this section enables governors to approve or make any amendments to the minutes. Minutes are the responsibility of the committee/full governing body at the point of acceptance. The minutes should note approval or approval subject to the following changes (the previous minutes should be annotated with the changes and initialled by the chair)
- **Matters arising/progress update on action points** – This can sometimes be a chaotic section of the meeting, minutes should not be re-read/discussed but enable a report back on progress of action points, and general updates. Use the status of the action when minuting matters arising. i.e. completed, in hand, in hand with deadline date, or reason for lack of action or future actions.
- **Committee/governing body business.** Evidence of discussions, decisions, action to be taken, by whom and by when, of governing body responsibilities such as:
 - Discussions and agreement of the Finance Policy which must be reviewed annually
 - Evidence of ratification of the annual Budget as appropriate and a copy of the budget sheet attached (either in the FGB minutes or the finance committee minutes if this has been delegated)
 - Evidence of discussion of monitoring the termly budget and monitoring reports attached.
 - Discussions and agreement of policies and agreed review cycle dates (make sure that policies are signed and dated by the chair of governors and contain a review date or the governing board can record its approval of every policy in the minutes of the relevant governing board meeting).
 - Evidence of governor’s responsibilities for pay, performance staffing procedure (delegated to Headteacher)
 - Work of Performance Management and evidence of ratification of the Headteachers pay review
 - The annual review of structure and terms of reference of delegation to committees.
 - Evidence of governance/action which demonstrate the governing body’s strategies for pupil progress and school improvement priorities, monitoring and evaluation learning about the school.
 - Governor visits and staff feedback reports.
 - Evidence to Ofsted inspectors that governors have participated in their part in school evaluation and school improvement planning.
 - Confidentiality – Decision on any items of confidentiality. Only the governing body/committee (not the clerk, chair or head) decides what is confidential.
- **Headteachers report or Finance Report** – dependant on the focus of the meeting and the committee structure in use.
- **Dates of future meetings**
- **Signature once agreed and accepted of Chair and each page initialled.**

Note: Remember minutes should record the key points in a fair and balanced way and clearly record the decisions and actions taken

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4. Minute takers responsibility

Minutes are not a record of what was said, they are a record of what was discussed.

It is important that accurate notes are kept which describe the main points of discussion and any decision that was reached, what action is to be taken and who must do what as a result. The skill for taking minutes is the ability to listen to the words, absorb and evaluate and identify the speaker's point of view.

'Making sure you accurately record what governors say and decide can be difficult particularly if you are also contributing to the meeting'

The use of could, would and should for instance will change the outcome of the discussion

- Could – suggesting that something might happen
- Would – suggesting that something will happen
- Should – suggesting that something ought to happen

Good practice preparation for writing minutes

- Maximise understanding by reading papers before the meeting
- Recognise what is to be achieved from an item
- Take sufficient notes – use bullet points, note what the person is talking about and the message, the decision and the action.
- Clarify any points of discussion that you are not clear about – Anything not understood is better clarified at the meeting than later. If interrupting is not appropriate, note what it is i.e. John talking about the IT problem that caused the crash. Facts and figures can be clarified after the meeting
- Have clear understanding of any points that require action.

5. Presentation of Minutes

The work of the governing body and its' committees is important and the minutes are considered formal documents. Minutes should therefore be written using business-like language in a clear, concise and simple way. They should be typed using a formal layout with headings for each item. The headings should follow the numbering and headings of the agenda. The use of white space, numbering, headings, bold and underline greatly improves the readability of minutes, particularly when highlighting governor questions.

It is important to know who agreed what for future reference. The information needs to be accessible to busy governors and others (Ofsted Inspectors!) to scan the minutes. Most people do not read the minutes in great depth. Their concern is to see what was talked about i.e. the heading and what was done i.e. the action.

The Action Points should be typed as a separate paragraph or a table at the end of the minutes.

Example:

Action	Who	When
Carry out governor visit to look at Single Central Record (SCR)	A Governor	Next FGB Meeting
Meet with the student council and produce a gov visit report	C Governor	dd/mm/yyyy

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6. Language and Grammar

Words and Phrases - Plain English

- Do not use long or obscure words where a common or short one will do. Use a plain English style which is clear and reader friendly.
- Use short sentence and paragraphs - make the subject clear in the first sentence and do not pad out sentences with extra words.
- Avoid vague terms such as “soon as possible”, “several”, “many”, “few” – use specific time, numbers or quantities.
- Acronyms – where the use of acronyms is used, at the first time of its use in the minute put the meaning in brackets. i.e. SEN (Special Educational Need)

Tense

Minutes should be written in the third person and in past tense. Try not to repeat the same phrases too many times and begin paragraphs differently, this will prevent minutes from becoming repetitive and boring.

Mood/Judgements

Don't make judgements i.e. heated discussion, eventually decided, lengthy/brief discussion

Punctuation

It is important to punctuate your minutes correctly or you leave the readers' understanding to chance. It is important to use commas and apostrophes in particular, with care.

Acronyms

Acronyms should always when used for the first time within the minutes be written out in full followed by the acronym in brackets. Subsequent use of the acronym in the minutes can then be used. i.e. School Improvement Partner (SIP)

Naming Names

How you record the discussion, decision and information is crucial. Do not use names (or initials) when summarising discussion unless the source of the comment is essential. The only exception is showing who is responsible for the action. Or if a governor expressly asks that his opinion against a decision is noted. Decisions within the governing body are taken by consensus and governors remain corporately responsible. Governors should be discreet how they report on governors' meetings, not saying anything that puts colleagues in a bad light or is disloyal to an individual's opinion. It is sufficient to report decisions made, and indication of points and not who said what or disagreed with what.

E.g. *“The committee discussed the possibility of However, because of concerns it was decided to”*

not

“Anne Jackson suggested that, John Smith pointed out the problem And Peter Brown suggested that there would be resistance by parents.....”

Confidentiality

Confidential items should be used sparingly. Governors' business is basically intended to be open. Items that are decided as confidential should be reported on a separate sheet, this is often referred to as “Part II of the minutes – Confidential Items”. Copy the heading and those present from the main body of the minutes over to this page and include the page within the page numbering of the minutes.

The main body of the minutes at the relevant item should minute for example:

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‘the item regarding the staffing structure is minuted in Part II – Confidential Items of these minutes’.

It is good practice to use a **coloured sheet** for the confidential page as this then stands out and is less likely to be accidentally published to the public.

Note: Confidential minutes do not necessarily mean the information is confidential – Information could be asked for under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI) and certain issues may not be exempt.

Named Persons

Only where it has been essential to name an individual (or it can be easily assumed who the individual is) and any personal information is given should the item be regarded as confidential.

Other Specific Items

Sometimes it is necessary to decide an item is confidential for a specific period when it is then no longer deemed confidential. i.e. when discussing the future staffing structure, once it has been agreed and implemented it may no longer be confidential.

Page numbering

Minutes should be page numbered 1 of 3, 2 of 3, 3 of 3 – in that way it is obvious if pages are missing.

Signing Minutes

Minutes are signed as extra proof that everyone at the table agreed to their accuracy. The chair should initial & date each page, sign and date the back page; this will discourage any future disputes or changes to the minutes once agreed.

7. Good Practice

Approval of Minutes

Approval of minutes should be gained from the chair, the chair is responsible for the factual accuracy of the minutes; the chair however, should not change or add information to suit personal views.

Circulation of Minutes

Once approved the ‘draft minutes’ should be circulated to all governors on the committee (FGB minutes to the governing body), ideally within 15 days so that they inform those not present and act as a timely reminder to discussion and actions agreed to by those who were. Changes to the minutes from other governors should be kept until the next meeting ‘approval of minutes’ item. Committee minutes should ultimately be shared with the whole governing body (usually these would form the supporting papers of full governing body meetings)

Reports/minutes to meeting

Reports given at meetings tend to be fast and factual and delivered in a flat style which is difficult for the minute taker to keep up, where a verbal report is given it is good practice to give the minute taker a few lines of summary for the minutes. If this is not an option, the minute taker should cover in the briefest detail.

Filing

Minutes must be kept indefinitely – Make sure that where any reports are mentioned to be received by the committee/governing body in the minutes that they are attached or a clear filing system for retrieval defined. It is also good practice to keep one hard copy and at least 2 electronic copies of approved minutes and reports on hard drive (internal or external/memory sticks)

Statutory tasks

- Appointment of clerk, chair & vice chair
- Membership items, notice of vacancies, new members
- Annual review of committee structure and delegation (TOR)
- Any variations to the Instrument
- Governors opportunity to declare any personal interest

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Annex A: Sample Agenda.

The 3 core roles of governors.

- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
 - Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

A School meeting: DDMMYYYY, Xpm at A School site

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of any 'interests'**
3. **Approval of previous minutes**
 - a. **Accuracy**
 - b. **Matters arising/progress update on action points**
4. **Committee/governing body business.**
5. **Headteachers report or Finance Report**
6. **Safeguarding Governors report**
7. **Governor visits**
8. **Items for the next agenda**
9. **Dates of future meetings**

Note: the use of standard agenda items e.g. items 6 & 7 serve as a valuable reminder to governors.

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Annex B: Sample Minutes.

The 3 core roles of governors.

- Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent.
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils
 - Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction

A School meeting: DDMMYYYY, Xpm at A School site

1. **Apologies** (and in Full Governing Body Minutes governors' acceptance of apologies).

Name	Position	Present (P) Apologies (AP)	Apologies agreed? (Y/N)
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2. **Declarations of any 'interests'** – governors should have an opportunity at every meeting to declare any 'interest' to an item on the agenda.
3. **Approval of previous minutes** – this section enables governors to approve or make any amendments to the minutes.
4. **Matters arising/progress update on action points** – See table below.

Action	Who	When
Carry out governor visit to look at Single Central Record (SCR)	A Governor	Next FGB Meeting
Meet with the student council and produce a gov visit report	C Governor	dd/mm/yyyy

5. **Committee/governing body business.** Evidence of discussions, decisions, action to be taken, by whom and by when, of governing body responsibilities.
6. **Headteachers report or Finance Report** – dependant on the focus of the meeting and the committee structure in use.
7. **Safeguarding Governors report**- Check of SCR carried out by A Governor.
8. **Governor visits** – C Governor gave an overview of the meeting with the school council.
9. **Dates of future meetings**

Action	Who	When
<i>New actions to be entered here</i>		

Name of Chair.....

Signature.....

Date.....

Note: Ensure questions from governors are highlighted in some way

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Annex C – Sample HTs report

The Headteachers report is a governors report and its scope should be determined by the governors in consultation with the Headteacher and SLT. The report should be factual with narrative the minimum needed to give the governors enough information, while allowing for robust questioning. This is a suggested format and should be developed based on the needs of the school.

A School Head Teacher Report																																	
Headteacher	Date																																
1.Contextual Information:																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has xxx pupils on roll. • 21% (xx pupils) did not start in Reception • xx pupils on Pupil Premium • xx pupils on FSM • x Forces • x Forever 6 • xx pupils in the Special Educational Needs list 																																	
2.Leadership and Management:																																	
The Staff as of September, YYYY:																																	
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 25%;">Class</th> <th style="width: 45%;">Teacher</th> <th style="width: 30%;">Teaching Assistant</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Reception</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Y1</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Y2</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Y3</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Y4</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Y5</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Y6</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tbody> <tr><td style="width: 40%;">School Business Manager</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Admin Assistant</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Midday Supervisors</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Caretaker</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>		Class	Teacher	Teaching Assistant	Reception			Y1			Y2			Y3			Y4			Y5			Y6			School Business Manager		Admin Assistant		Midday Supervisors		Caretaker	
Class	Teacher	Teaching Assistant																															
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Y6																																	
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Admin Assistant																																	
Midday Supervisors																																	
Caretaker																																	
3.Teaching, learning, curriculum development:																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus for the year • Areas for development 																																	

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4. Progress and attainment data:

Reception

- ARE (Age related expectations) in Reading %
- ARE (Age related expectations) in Writing %
- ARE (Age related expectations) in Number %
- ARE (Age related expectations) in Space, shape and measure %

Reception GLD predictions –% (2016 %) (Nat %)

Phonics prediction –% (2016 %) (Nat %)

Year Two

- ARE in Reading % (Nat %)
- ARE in Writing % (Nat %)
- ARE in Maths % (Nat %)

Year Two Predictions

- Reading % (2016 %)
- Writing % (2016 %)
- Maths % (2016 %)

Year Six

- ARE in Reading % (Nat %)
- ARE in Writing % (Nat %)
- ARE in Maths % (Nat %)

Year Six Predictions

- Reading % (2016 %)
- Writing % (2016 %)
- Maths % (2016 %)

Data check points throughout the year:

November – 33% of coverage should be seen – pupils should be beginning or beginning +

March – 66% coverage should be seen – pupils should be working within or working within +

July – 100% coverage should be seen – pupils should be secure or secure +

To gain Mastery – 100% of statements and then evidence of it being applied across a wide range of contexts.

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5.SEND and vulnerable pupils:

- xx pupils on Pupil - *actions taken*
- xx (24%) pupils in the Special Educational Needs list - *actions taken*
- x (8.9%) children are currently receiving FSM. - *actions taken*
- Universal Infant Free School= 90% - *actions taken*

6.Wider outcomes (attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, looked after pupils)

Looked After Pupils

- How many
- Actions

Lateness

- How many
- Actions

Attendance

- Overview of the school year
- Percentages
- Actions taken

Behaviour

- Report of Behaviour strategy in place
- Bullying incidents (including online): x
- Derogatory/Aggressive behaviour incidents: x
- Racial Incidents: x

7.Progress towards Ofsted and SDP key areas for improvement:

Focus	Impact
Focus 1	
Focus 2	
Focus 3	
Focus 4	

8. Staff & Governor Training Log

Date	Member of staff or governor	Course Title/Content