



The John Fisher School

Teaching, Learning & Standards Committee Part A Minutes – 1st July 2025

Governors	Category	Attendance
Ms G Grabowski (GG) Chair	Foundation Governor	Present
Ms S Nasser (SN) Vice Chair	LA Governor	Present
Ms J Cole (JC)	Parent Governor	Present
Mr D Fox (DF)	Foundation Governor	Present
Mr P Hall (PH)	Staff Governor	Present
Mr N McEvilly	Foundation Governor	Present
Dr A McGowan (AMc)	Foundation Governor	Present
Father Francis Murphy (FFM)	Foundation Governor	Present
Mr T Richmond (TR)	Co-opted Governor	Present
Mrs M Ryan (MR)	Foundation Governor	Absent
Mr R Teague (RT)	Headteacher, Ex-Officio	Present
Mr A Theobald (AT)	Foundation Governor	Absent
Mr A Tierney (ATi)	Foundation Governor	Present
Mrs N Walsh (NW)	Parent Governor	Present

Attendees

Mr D Jackson (DJ)	-	Head of Sixth Form
Mrs Y Epale (YE)	-	Diocese Observer
Mrs J Beeson (JB)	-	Croydon Education Partnership Clerk

MINUTES		
	FFM opened the meeting with a prayer.	
1.	Apologies for absence & declarations of interest Apologies for absence were received from AT and MR - these were accepted. The meeting was quorate. There were no declarations of interests.	
2.	Minutes from the meeting on 14th May 2025 The documents were taken as read. The minutes of 14.5.25 were scrutinised page by page. Both sets of minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meetings and approved by all governors. The Chair signed the hard copies to be held in school. The Chair commented that the Head Boy team had done a fantastic presentation to the previous meeting, which she asked to be minuted and for DJ to pass on the thanks of the committee. It was agreed to carry forward the action relating to the Careers presentation due to the teacher in charge leaving this summer. The new person starts in September, it was suggested that they should be invited to a Spring term meeting.	
3.	Policies update	
3.1	RT advised that the statutory policies were all being revised including Charging & Remissions, Privacy notices, Complaints is being totally rewritten in light of the DfE consultation, Attendance Policy is under	



	review and the Admissions Policy was revised in Autumn 24 and will come to governors again next term for Autumn 25. Policies relating to staff terms and conditions, including Pay, Appraisal, Grievances, Reorganisation, Capability and Disciplinary, have all been sent to the union reps for consultation. The Behaviour Policy has no changes but in light of the new appointments next terms it will be revised to be presented to governors for implementation. The Child Protection Policy will come to the next FGB. The suite of SEND policies are currently being reviewed. As are the RHSE, Exclusions and H&S policies. There are no changes to the Premises Management policy. A new Uniform policy is being prepared. There are a few branded items, but the key item being reviewed is the grey shirt for KS3 which some parents have complained is more expensive than white or blue. So there will be a consultation with parents next term to review this. The different colour is however very useful. There are quite a few branded sports items, so this will be reviewed. Other policies being reviewed are the Careers Policy, the Equalities policy and statement, together with Governors' Allowances. There will be a Provider Access statement.	
3.2	The Chair advised that governors have a responsibility for all statutory policies therefore there will be a working party to review them in early September. She asked if any governors were interested to join this working party they will then fix a date – ACTION .	1.
3.3	A governor asked if there is a Pupil Premium policy as he had not been able to find it on the website? RT advised there is a statement on the finance page of the website, which the school has to publish to state how the funding was spent. The Chair advised this is a statutory requirement every December and is also part of the Equalities policy.	
3.4	A governor commented that the diocese also expects there to be an RE and Collective Worship policy.	
6.	Feedback on Link Governor Catholicity visit (<i>out of number order due to the discussion in the meeting</i>) <i>DF had provided a visit report (24.6.25) and also a report on House Captains.</i>	
6.1	DF summarised the report to say he had met with the Head Boy, Deputy Head Boy and Chaplaincy prefects (CPs) together with the House Captains (HCs) to discuss how to build up the Catholic student leadership within a Catholic context school. The meeting had been very helpful. From September, they will have 6th former chaplaincy prefects leading prayers every day. Whilst the HCs see themselves primarily as sporting leaders, but they were also very open to teaming up with the CPs to support them. They were very knowledgeable and see they have a role to play. Within the houses they would help to organise activities e.g. the Lenten service. DF feels there is a lot to build on with the HCs. DJ added that there might be potential for the intercom system for chaplaincy students possibly to record prayers, this might help with a consistent message for prayer delivered across the school. DF added the team was very committed and understood their roles within the Catholic context of the	



	school.	
6.2	DF had also carried out a visit with GG & MR to review RE teaching. They had found the teachers and the pupils very engaged. He said the teacher had good subject knowledge. The Chair added that not all the teachers in the RE department are currently specialists. RT advised one of their challenges had been to get RE specialists; however, this will change from September because they have appointed another two specialists including a new Head of RE. DF advised governors of the fact there had been a change of RE syllabus half way through the current GCSE and one of the questions in the exam had not been covered in Y11. Governors should be aware this might have a direct impact on the results this year. A very positive thing was what the students said about the teachers. The Chair agreed that the students had been very articulate and positive. DF added that as a Catholic school, they are trying to sustain faith development and the impact outside the classroom.	
6.3	A governor asked RT whether for the Y10s there are gaps due to the change of syllabus, whether that will be address for them in Y11? RT confirmed it would. He said they had put provision in place for the Y11 GCSE students over the Easter holidays too to support this factor.	
6.4	A governor asked why the exam board had been changed? The Chair said that AQA was a better board than Eduqas. RT said they had felt AQA was more suitable for the students and it also deals with the RHSE content.	
4.	A presentation and discussion of John Fisher sixth form going Co-Educational and the future.	
4.1	The Chair introduced the matter and said there would be a presentation by RT and DJ, however initially it was asked that each of the governors give their personal view on the matter being considered namely introducing girls into the 6th form. Governor 1 – felt it would be a positive approach and would be more inclined to increase the numbers in the 6th form. He felt the influence of both genders would be positive for the boys. Governor 2 – said this had already been proposed a couple of years ago and currently most schools are co-ed in their 6th form. It would be good for numbers. He gave the example of Wimbledon College which has 300 in their 6th form and is a vibrant 6th form. JF has the capacity for 279 in the 6th form – as confirmed by the diocese representative who did the assessment – therefore it could take larger numbers which would mean they would be able to offer more subjects. Governor 3 – said she was ambivalent, but from an academic point of view research shows that girls who go to boys' schools perform less well, so this would be a hurdle they would have to get over. Governor 4 – said it would be a good financial decision, but his concern would be more about the	



behaviour which might arise including lower down the school (gave different examples). If they proceeded with this idea, this would be something they would have to ensure there was appropriate respect for the female students.

Governor 5 – said he had only ever taught in boys' schools so did not know about the results research, but felt it was more about the spiritual and moral element which had to be considered. He would be happy for the school to go either way, but if it happens it would be vital to manage it well to ensure there was no deep-rooted misogyny.

Governor 6 – said he had taught in mixed 6th forms and asked if the intention was to share with another school or to be totally mixed? He agreed they would have to deal with misogyny for it to be a success. He is not opposed to the idea and agreed that it might help the boys to mature, because they behave differently in the presence of girls. Financially he recognised it was a positive thing, but the day-to-day management of behaviour would be key to it becoming successfully embedded.

Governor 7 – was of 2 minds, whilst recognising how it would be a benefit to the school financially and in terms of the wider offer of subjects, she was unsure about how it would impact on the boys. She agreed it might lead to greater maturity due to living in a mixed environment. In terms of the parental response, she asked how this would be communicated to the parents and what notice was planned so that parents can also plan about the education of their son when choosing JF and other schools at Y7?

Governor 8 – said she could see the benefits but also asked about what the costs will be to accommodate girls e.g. toilets, changing facilities, sporting opportunities etc? She agreed that it might help the boys to learn how to deal with girls and might help the boys with their behaviour. She felt it might be a clash of cultures and said it would need to be handled very carefully.

Governor 9 – said she had experience that either way works. However, she gave the personal example of her daughter moving to Trinity's 6th form when it was only 4 years underway. It had been a huge learning curve for her daughter coming from an all girls' school and the adjustment was difficult.

Governor 10 – asked why the school feels it needs to change from single sex to co-ed? Is this the right time to consider this change with all the other changes going on? She wondered whether the school might be better to get those changes embedded and then review this question in a few years' time. Whilst everyone talks about being a safe space for women, but it also needs to be for boys. In terms of the financial aspects, she asked if this is what the governors should be focussing on, because welfare should be the primary if not overriding focus. She gave her personal experience of her daughter moving to a co-ed 6th form and thrived; however, said this was not relevant to any decision.

Governor 11 – said he was ambivalent but can see the academic case but this will be introducing a different dynamic so he wondered if the staff are equipped to manage it. He is unsure if it can be done without broader development.

4.2 The Chair thanked governors for their input. She said DJ and RT would present differing views.

4.3 DJ gave a handout with his thoughts on girls' admittance to the 6th Form and a breakdown of JF leavers in 2023 and 2024 who had enrolled for JF 6th form but opted for mixed settings, together with their attendance, punctuality, Y11 APS, Y11 BPS scores. The report did not include those students who enrolled and left to go to a grammar school (WCGS & Wilsons).

DJ summarised that his personal view was against the idea of going co-ed at 6th form based on his experience both as a former pupil at Carshalton Boys' School which went co-ed when he was a student and as a teacher there. It has taken 20 years to reach the number of 40 girls and therefore he feels it



would be unlikely that JF would fill up quickly. However, given the cultural shift which has been JF's focus with the Behaviour Policy and successful data points, these might be undermined with such a new initiative. Whilst the numbers have not gone up with the strict new entry criteria, it has helped to change the culture.

A large proportion of leavers in 2023 and 2024 said they were leaving because they wanted to be educated with girls. This year they are hopeful they will retain students with an average grade of around a 6 together with better attendance and behaviour points. If JF were to admit girls, if the motivator is around that, it might keep some of them but it might also undermine the culture of the students with an end goal and he would question whether they were staying for the right reasons. He worries about the impact on the culture and whilst he feels confident they can manage it in the 6th form block, it would be a challenge, but he feels they would have to consider for the whole package.

Regarding the question of which schools they would be coming from, it could be those of any denomination, and this would mean more non-Catholics. Also the question of would be which type of student are being targeted and courses offered, in that boys' schools tend to project an image of sports orientation and JF has decreased the sport office and therefore if girls came wanting this the school would have to consider the impact on the staffing.

They have been making strides to attract the numbers required, therefore this should not be a driver. They have 11 externals in Y13 and 6 in Y12. The marketing is now better and they have shortlisted around 22 pupils wanting to come in September.

DJ thinks they would need to survey the parents about how this would have affected their decision for their Y7 son. There are very few other single sex schools all the way through from Y7-13 so if parents want a Catholic boys' education they might feel unhappy not to have what they had originally chosen.

With very small numbers of girls expected, were there to be bad feedback from them, this could have a knock-on effect about the 6th form which is increasing..

There would be staff training required and there would be different uniform requirements – all of which are cost implications.

It might also inadvertently push high attainers to other all boy environments. We are the only all boys school in Croydon, Sutton and Merton except Wilsons. This would mean we might lose our USP.

DJ said he was adamantly against the principle, and these were his thoughts as to why it was not his preferred option.

A governor commented that if you look at the push for going to JF if you want to go to university as a strategy, he thinks they should see how this embeds over 2-3 years and how successful it is. If the numbers build, then any change might counteract that.

- 4.4** RT said both he and DJ want what is best for JF and this is the place for all views to be aired and debated. He wanted to present a counter-argument. He said that looking at schools with the same characteristics as JF of things like ambition, Saturday fixture lists, high academic aspirations etc, these included Richard Challoner, Cardinal Vaughan, London Oratory and Wimbledon College. All of these were either co-ed or cooperated closely with girls' schools. The aim was to be a great school and do good for all pupils and this does not hinge on being co-ed or single sex. Introducing girls would allow JF to cast the net wider and increase the numbers to benefit the school.

It would allow JF to be able to widen the curriculum and enrichment activities. Subjects like MFL, music



might otherwise struggle to survive, as would drama and debating. Also, it would add an extra dimension to the sixth form experience helping students to prepare for university and working life. Research carried out in 2006 by Prof Smithers followed the experience of girls and boys, and showed there was no great difference in how they socialised and was more about how the school focuses on personal development.

Regarding the statistics presented, RT said these were very interesting but he felt it is hard to unpick why those who left did so. Many are at colleges with wider curriculum offers, but which are also co-ed.

He agreed that the risk of losing the school's USP is definitely to be considered but also a good co-ed 6th form is very attractive. It shows that as long as the school is good, it would not be a risk as long as the change is well managed. JF has a strong sense of identity but anything which risks that has to be considered.

The logistics and infrastructure would need to be considered (toilets, changing rooms etc) but he did not feel this would be massively financially onerous, but also it was vital that the girls were included from day 1. The Admissions Policy would need to be framed carefully so as not to disadvantage existing students or male external applicants.

In terms of marketing, this is already a saturated market, but the school would anticipate interest from Thomas More, St Mary's High School, St Philomena's and Coloma (both of these last 2 lose girls and not to Catholic schools, therefore admitting girls to JFS would open up a pathway for girls from these schools to continue in a Catholic school).

Cultural considerations are complex and are influenced – but not entirely determined – by the co-educational or single-sex status of a school.

4.5 The Chair summarised that these were 2 interesting pedagogical arguments and asked governors if they had any questions?

A governor commented that at St Philomena's despite numbers of 1500 in the school, their 6th form was the same as JF therefore it shows that many leave and girls want to go to co-ed.

A governor added that some years ago at JF, there were girls for 2 years when they were part of an alliance with St Philomena's for certain subjects. She suggested it might be worth looking at this option.

RT said this had been when Sutton-wide there was a curriculum sharing arrangement.

A governor commented that it would also help with recruitment of teachers and quality teachings for quality students was the long-term vision of what the school is trying to create educationally.

A governor added that perhaps sorting out the ethos of the school first to establish the culture, the academic side of things and the strength of pastoral care and ensure they had got all of those right was the best way forward. It was important not to forget what kind of school they want to be.

Another governor said that the earliest this would be able to be implemented would be September 2027 because it would first have to go to the LA and the diocese to change the Admissions Policy.

A parent governor said the reason she had chosen JF for her sons was because it is an all boys' school, she wanted it to be a safe space rather than where they had to worry about how to be around girls. Her son had said he would go elsewhere if girls were introduced.



	A governor added that she was not sure she fully understood how this will make things more positive and what the impact on the boys would be if the school goes co-ed. She did not feel they had heard the case for what will create that and about the impact not just for the boys in the 6th form, but for the whole school. Whilst it perhaps might attract one cohort but they also need to think about the interests of all the boys in the school and what were the drivers. RT thought all these points worthy of consideration but he felt there were 2 key advantages : 1) The greater curricular and co-curricular breadth that would result from a co-ed Sixth Form would be of significant benefit to all students. 2) From a financial viewpoint, the school must continue to attract students. A larger, co-educational Sixth Form would help the school to cement its academic reputation thus benefitting Year 7 admissions as well as Year 12, A governor commented that the biggest difference would be to change the culture and broaden the experience for the students. Another governor said she agreed with regard to the arts, but questioned whether that could be a project on its own working with St Philomena's. She felt her conclusion was she would say this change should not go ahead now, but rather be reviewed in 2 years' time. A parent governor added the school should be mindful about the amount of change happening. She felt – looking at the views of her Y11 son - there was greater focus on getting where they wanted to be. She said she would like to understand better why the previous relationship with St Philomena's had ended. RT advised this had happened when all schools in Sutton had a common timetable, but it became too impractical and therefore St Philomena's stopped coming to JF and the JF boys going there. A governor added that it was also because it was costing JF more than they were getting, so there was an imbalance in the subject choices. A governor commented that with the school also thinking about academy status in the future, he wondered what impact this might have on the co-ed decision. The Chair advised this discussion was just an initial exploration of the possibility of introducing girls to the 6th form. She thanked RT and DJ for their clear arguments for and against the proposal. YE (diocese advisor) commented that if the school did go down the route of introducing girls, they must be mindful that if there was only a small number initially, this was not true co-ed but simply girls in a boys' school. She queried what number was the school envisaging? RT confirmed the intention was not to become 50/50, but probably in the region of 25-30% girls.	
5.	AOB	
5.1	The Complaints Policy – as this had only been ready for distribution on the day of the meeting, it was agreed it would go to the FGB on 9.7.25.	
5.2	UCAS numbers – DJ reported that now they were at the point in the school calendar where most students had confirmed their offers. These were:-	



	• there had been 92 UCAS applications (of 111 students in Y13; 2 of these were from last year's cohort and both of these had received unconditional offers in that they already had their results). • Of the 92, 91 had received at least 1 offer. The outstanding student was a medical student who was unsuccessful therefore was going to through UCAS Extra. • 84 have now accepted their offers. • 5 have not responded which might indicate that they no longer plan to go to university. • 1 has declined the offer because he wants to go through UCAS Extra. • 33 of the offers are to go to Russell Group universities, as their firm or insurance place. • 2 have guaranteed Russell Group offers. • The most popular destination with 17 offers is the from the University of Surrey. • The most popular Russell Group destinations are 8 at Exeter and 8 at Nottingham. • The most popular destination is Nottingham (24 offers from University of Nottingham or Nottingham Trent). • The most popular course/subject is Sport in its various forms – 26 of the 92 offers. • For BTEC only students, the most popular courses are skewed towards Sport. • For A level only students, the most popular courses are Accounting and Business. • For combined BTEC and A levels students, the most popular course is Computing. DJ said he will update this information in September once the results come in and places are confirmed. He added that the school is very pleased with this initial outcome because this Y13 cohort is the lowest performing one in recent years. It is also pleasing that the boys are following the school's UCAS advice which shows they are a more UCAS-educated cohort. A governor asked about Oxbridge applications. DJ responded there had been 2 applications but neither was successful in securing an interview. However, early interest had been expressed for next year's Oxbridge applications from Y12. The Chair thanked DJ for this update.	
	The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting closed at 7.15pm	

Actions list 2024 - 25

	Action	For	Date	Comments	Status
Meeting of 9.7.24					
1.	Careers report	NW	Spring term 26	Carried forward pending arrival of new Head of Careers.	Open / cf
Meeting of 1.7.25					
1.	Working Party of governors to review policies.	GG	Early Sept 25		Open