

School

Victori... ▾

Synth model

Sonne... ▾



Approach

Hybri... ▾

Time frame

All time ▾



New Chat

**TIM'S QUESTION**

What are the key functions governors must fulfil

**ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)**

- Governors must set the strategic direction of the school, using the SIP and Federation Strategic Plan as the framework for priorities.
- Governors scrutinise and challenge leaders — monitoring attendance, safeguarding, pupil outcomes, and the effectiveness of interventions through termly link visits and committee reports.
- Governors approve and review school policies, which are the key tool for setting strategic direction and must be regularly reviewed.
- Governors oversee the budget — the Resources Committee monitors finances and reports termly to the FGB; governors also review CPD spend and approve budget measures.
- Governors ensure statutory duties are met, including safeguarding, health and safety, and ECT induction support.
- Governors visit schools termly (drop-in weeks) to see provision in action, then upload reports — with a clear process for staff sign-off on those reports.

**Evidence:**

- Policies are "one of a GB's key tools for carrying out our responsibility for setting the strategic direction of the school." [\[ð Governor Handbook Castle Fed...\]](#)
- "Governors monitor safeguarding closely. They support and challenge leaders effectively, such as regarding attendance." [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- FGB approved a new Terms of Reference addition: "to provide a summary of the Resources Committee budget monitoring outcomes to the FGB on a termly basis." [\[ð FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx\]](#)

→ Governor link visit reports and minutes demonstrate "robust challenge and a strong understanding of the strengths and areas for development." [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)

Open: Governor Handbook Castle Federation Sept 2024 (Draft).doc

Open: Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy.docx

Open: FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx

#### TIM'S QUESTION

Give a summary of the work done since the last ofsted and the strengths of the school currently

#### ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)

Victoria was rated Requires Improvement at its last Ofsted in October 2023, with three specific action points. All three have been addressed decisively, and the school's self-evaluation in March 2026 rates every area at expected or strong standard.

#### Response to the three 2023 action points:

- **Phonics/early reading** — Little Wandle scheme implemented immediately; school graduated from the English Hub July 2025; phonics screening check results now consistently above national and Herts averages (84% 2023, 91% 2024, 87% 2025); 100% of Y2 pupils passed the PSC re-take in 2025 including all SEND pupils.
- **Assessment** — Termly pupil progress meetings now in place; staff identify and target individual gaps; knowledge organisers being introduced in foundation subjects; working wall used across school to support retention; CPD delivered on assessment for learning.
- **Staff support and consistency** — CPD, mentoring and individual support delivered; all staff trained on core strategies; TA interactions strengthened; investment in neurodiversity CPD; ECTs fully supported with weekly protected mentor time.

#### Current school strengths (2025-26):

- **Achievement** — GLD above national/Herts for three consecutive years and above the DfE proposed 75% target; phonics consistently above national; KS1 outcomes in line with or above national.
- **Attendance and behaviour** — Attendance 96.3% (March 2026) vs 94.8% national in 2024-25; persistent absence 7.1% against national 12.6%; Herts SEA (March 2025) said the evidence "exceeds the criteria for Good" on behaviour and attitudes.
- **Inclusion/SEND** — SEA Inclusion visit (November 2025) found "strong inclusive practice and high standards"; HfL Every Child (VIP) programme tracking every pupil with a potential barrier to learning; early identification from pre-entry.
- **Safeguarding** — Self-evaluated as met; December 2025 pupil survey: 100% know who to talk to if bullied; culture of "it could happen here" embedded.
- **Leadership and governance** — Herts SEA (November 2025): "Governance is highly effective as the team around the school"; five-year strategic plan in place; governors described as "highly proactive" with robust challenge evidenced in link visit reports and minutes.
- **EYFS** — Among the highest outcomes in Herts per Early Years advisor; Essentials Writing implementation praised by EYFS Advisor (December 2025); GLD above national and Herts for three years.

#### Evidence:

- Three 2023 action points and detailed progress against each. [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- Phonics results 2023-2025 and English Hub graduation July 2025. [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- Attendance 96.3% March 2026; persistent absence 7.1% vs national 12.6%. [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- Herts SEA visit March 2025 — behaviour "exceeds criteria for Good". [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- SEA Inclusion visit November 2025 quote. [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- Herts SEA November 2025 — "Governance is highly effective." [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)

**TIM'S QUESTION**

What performance stats do the governors see split by SEND/PPG and what do those stats show.

**ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)**

Governors see a split picture: overall school performance is strong but PPG results are significantly impacted by small cohort size and SEND overlap, and SEN attendance is the one metric below national.

**Attainment — 2024-25 statutory outcomes (most recent available):**

Measure	Non-PPG	redacted: sensitive due to low pupil numbers.	National
EYFS GLD	81%	redacted: sensitive due to low pupil numbers.	51.3%
Phonics Screening Check	86.7%	redacted: sensitive due to low pupil numbers.	67%

redacted: sensitive due to low pupil numbers.

**Attendance — 2024-25:**

Group	Attendance
Non-PPG	96%
PPG	93% (up 9 percentage points across the year)
SEN (current year)	Below national average
Whole school (March 2026)	96.7%

**In-year 2025-26 attainment gap (PPG vs peers):**

- A gap exists between PPG and non-PPG in reading, writing, and GPS — governors were told at the March 2026 FGB and challenged leaders on it.

- Interventions in place: VIP/champion programme, Y5/6 additional teacher for smaller core-subject classes, pupil progress meetings each term.

### SEN attendance – why it looks low:

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- Small SEN cohort means each individual case moves the school-level figure materially.

#### Evidence:

- 2024-25 EYFS GLD and PSC split by PPG/non-PPG with national comparisons. [\[ð PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Review...\]](#)
- PPG attendance 93% vs non-PPG 96% in 2024-25; 9pp improvement across the year. [\[ð PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Review...\]](#)
- Governor challenge on PPG attainment gap in reading/writing/GPS at March 2026 FGB. [\[ð FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx\]](#)
- [\[ð sensitive: redacted FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx\]](#)

 Open: PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Reviewed Dec 2025.pdf

 Open: FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx

#### TIM'S QUESTION

Other than learning walks and meetings what else do governors do to ensure they have the complete picture of evidence of how the school is progressing?


#### ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)

Beyond learning walks and meetings, governors use several additional evidence streams to build a rounded picture of school progress.

- **Book looks / work scrutiny** — governors examine samples of pupils' work across subjects to check curriculum coverage, progression, and depth of learning; this is done alongside or separate from link visits.
- **Pupil voice** — direct feedback from children about what they have learned and how confident they feel; the school council and "book detective" pupil auditors produce findings that are reported back to governors.
- **External reviews and benchmarking** — findings from Herts advisors (HFL, SEA visits, Early Years advisor) are reported to governors and compared against local and national data; these provide an independent, external line of sight on provision quality.
- **Attendance data scrutiny** — governors review the school's own monitoring data alongside the DfE Attendance Summary Report each term, cross-referencing both sources and tracking trends by group (SEN, PPG, year group).
- **Parent surveys** — literacy and reading surveys sent to parents provide insight into home habits and engagement that is not visible from in-school observation alone.
- **Governor attendance at school events** — World Book Day, themed weeks, and similar events give governors direct observation of school culture and pupil engagement beyond formal lesson contexts.

#### Evidence:

- "We do book looks — looking at samples of pupils' work across the curriculum to check coverage, progression, and the depth of learning." [\[ð Ofsted model questions and a...\]](#)
- Book detective pupils audit book stocks and compile wish lists; parent surveys conducted on reading habits at home. [\[CastleLINKEnglishMarch2026.docx\]](#)
- "We also look at findings from external reviews, such as local authority advisors, and compare school performance to local and national data." [\[ð Ofsted model questions and a...\]](#)
- School monitoring data compared to DfE Attendance Summary Report each term. [\[ð Castle Federation AandB Link...\]](#)

 Open: Ofsted model questions and answers Susan Holmes v3.docx

 Open: Castle\_LINK\_English\_March\_2026.docx

Open: Castle Federation AandB Link Gov visit Vic 250109 EB.docx

### TIM'S QUESTION

What are the schools current priorities

#### ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)

The sources reference RAG-rated SIPs on GovernorHub as the definitive list, but the documents name the following live priorities:

- **Oracy** — the whole-school priority for 2025-26; the Federation joins Voice 21 in September 2026, with communication and language being developed from EYFS upwards to reduce the vocabulary gap for vulnerable pupils.
- **Writing** — a cross-school development area; a Herts adviser is supporting Years 3 and 4 at TC where data is below expected, and Year 4 writing outcomes at TC are currently lower than expected with interventions in place.
- **Narrowing the PPG attainment gap** — governors challenged leaders at the March 2026 FGB on a gap in reading, writing, and GPS; the VIP programme, smaller Y5/6 core classes, and pupil progress meetings are the current levers.
- **Attendance** — maintaining rigorous monitoring and continuing bespoke support for persistent absence; SEN group attendance remains a focus.
- **sensitive: redacted**
- **Year 1 of the 5-year strategic plan** — ensuring all leaders understand and are implementing the key strategic priorities across the Federation.

#### Evidence:

- "The Federation will be joining the Voice 21 Oracy Programme in September." [ð FGB  
[Minutes 25-03-2026.docx](#)]
- "Writing outcomes in Year 4 are currently lower than expected... a Hertfordshire adviser has been working with Year 3 and this support will be extended to Years 4 and 6." [ð  
[FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx](#)]

→ PPG gap in reading/writing/GPS raised as governor challenge at March 2026 FGB. [\[3\]](#)

[FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx](#)

→ sensitive: redacted

[Exec HT Report March 26 V2.docx]

 Open: FGB Minutes 25-03-2026.docx

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 Exec HT Report March 26 V2.docx

### TIM'S QUESTION

How does the school oversee how PPG is spent?

### ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)

Oversight of PPG spending operates at three levels: strategy, monitoring, and reporting.

- **Named accountability** — the PPG strategy is authorised by Rebecca Roberts (Executive HT), led by Lisa Freeman (PPG lead), and has a named governor link (Nicci Boddam-Whetham) who is responsible for scrutinising use of the grant.
- **Published strategy with budgeted lines** — the plan sets out three spending categories with explicit budgets: Teaching/CPD (£4,000), Targeted academic support (£2,000), Wider strategies/attendance/wellbeing (£1,575), totalling the full £7,575 allocation with £0 carried forward.
- **Termly pupil progress meetings** — teachers track attainment and intervention impact each term; Arbor and Little Wandle trackers are the named tools for measuring progress from starting points, so spending decisions can be evaluated against outcomes.
- **Annual Part B review** — the strategy includes a mandatory annual review (Part B) comparing intended outcomes against actual results; the December 2025 review assessed each of the four challenges with data including statutory assessment outcomes split by PPG/non-PPG.

- **Governor reporting** — per the Pupil Premium Policy (March 2025), the headteacher must report at least annually to governors on progress toward narrowing the gap, an outline of provision, and a cost-effectiveness evaluation of each intervention.
- **Strategy published and reviewed on schedule** — published December 2025, next review December 2026, covering the 2024-2027 three-year plan window; publication on the school website meets the DfE transparency requirement.

#### Evidence:

- Named lead (Lisa Freeman), named governor (Nicci Boddam-Whetham), authorised by Rebecca Roberts. [\[ð PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Review...\]](#)
- Three budget lines totalling £7,575 with zero carry-forward. [\[ð PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Review...\]](#)
- "The Headteacher will produce, at least annually, a report for Governors on the progress made towards narrowing the gap... an evaluation of the cost effectiveness." [\[ð Pupil Premium Policy March 2...\]](#)
- Part B review covers 2024-25 outcomes against each challenge with statutory assessment data. [\[ð PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Review...\]](#)

 Open: PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Reviewed Dec 2025.pdf

 Open: Pupil Premium Policy March 2025.docx

#### TIM'S QUESTION

How do we communicate with parents - how do we ensure we get the parental voice coming through

#### ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)

The provided sources give a partial picture — they capture specific mechanisms but not a complete communications strategy. Based on what is documented:

- **Parent consultations** — the PPG strategy sets a target of 100% of vulnerable/PPG parents supported to attend parent consultations, with the Schools Family Worker actively engaged to support families in attending.

- **Direct outreach for events** — PPG families are proactively contacted by the office ahead of PTA events and trips so no family is inadvertently excluded; all external trips are fully funded for PPG children.
- **Oracy homework** — weekly oracy homework is sent home specifically to facilitate family discussion and "strengthen parental involvement" in their child's communication development.
- **Voice 21 parental engagement** — when the Federation joins Voice 21 in September 2026, parents will be formally informed and invited to support oracy at home; a parent workshop model is under consideration.
- **Pupil survey as a proxy** — a December 2025 pupil survey captured children's views on belonging, safety, and school values; this feeds governor understanding of school culture but is not a direct parent voice mechanism.
- **Ofsted 2023 parent feedback** — the last inspection noted parents are "very positive" and praise the nurturing environment; the school self-evaluates this area as strong standard.

**Note:** The source documents provided do not include a dedicated parent engagement policy, newsletter schedule, or parent survey results for 2025-26. A fuller answer on parental voice mechanisms would require the Communications Policy or any parent survey instrument — those are not in the current source set.

#### Evidence:

- Target: 100% of PPG parents supported to attend consultations; SFW involvement with families. [[PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Review...](#)]
- PPG families proactively contacted ahead of events; all trips funded. [[PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Review...](#)]
- Weekly oracy homework designed to strengthen parental involvement. [P&C Minutes 25th February 2026.docx]
- Voice 21 joining September 2026 — parents to be informed and invited to support at home. [P&C Minutes 25th February 2026.docx]
- Ofsted 2023: parents "very positive"; school self-evaluation: strong standard. [[Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...](#)]

 Open: PPG plan 2025 to 2026 Reviewed Dec 2025.pdf

Open: P&C Minutes 25th February 2026.docx

Open: Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy.docx

#### TIM'S QUESTION

How do the governors consider the workload of the staff

#### ANSWER FOR TIM · SONNET (BALANCED)

Governors engage with staff workload through both formal oversight structures and direct evidence-gathering, not just passive receipt of HT reports.

- **SLT actively minimises meeting load** — the SEF states meetings are minimal and any staff concerns are addressed quickly by SLT; governors have visibility of this through the appraisal system, which includes a wellbeing component.
- **Staff survey as a formal evidence stream** — a staff survey was conducted in June 2025; governors receive the results and use them to assess whether workload is manageable; a wellbeing check-in was offered in December 2025 as a follow-up mechanism.
- **Governors review CPD investment termly** — governors scrutinise CPD delivery each term, which gives an indirect line of sight on workload: excessive or poorly targeted CPD is itself a workload burden, so this check is dual-purpose.
- **Workload impact assessed before new initiatives** — the stress risk assessment guidance (adopted policy) requires that the workload impact of each new initiative is considered before it is introduced, and that PPA time is reliable and can be completed offsite; governors are responsible for ensuring these controls are in place.
- **NGA framework challenge** — the NGA conference guidance asks governors to be able to name three steps taken over the last two years to reduce workload burden on senior/middle leaders and teachers, and to explain how they know what staff think about work-life balance — signalling this is an active scrutiny question, not a passive one.
- **Employee Assistance Programme** — the school buys into the EAP (PPC Worldwide), providing confidential counselling; governors are aware of

this provision and it is referenced in the stress management policy as a key control.

#### Evidence:

- "Staff workload/wellbeing is a key focus for SLT, meetings are minimal and any concerns that staff have are addressed quickly resolved by SLT. (staff survey June 25) Well-being check in offered Dec 25." [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- "Governors review the CPD delivered at the termly to ensure leaders invest in the professional development of staff." [\[ð Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy...\]](#)
- "Consideration of the workload impact of each new initiative before it is introduced." [\[ð Managing work related stress...\]](#)
- NGA question: "Write down three steps that governors have taken over the last two years to reduce the burden of workload." [\[NGA EastofEngland2019conference.pdf\]](#)
- EAP (PPC Worldwide) available; school has option to buy in. [\[ð Managing work related stress...\]](#)

 Open: Victoria SEF March 26 - Copy.docx

 Open: Managing work related stress guidance 2025.docx

 Open: NGA East\_of\_England\_2019\_conference.pdf

Ask an Ofsted inspection question...