

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 2 October 2025 at 17.00 hours**

**Those Present:** Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Jim Henderson (JH – Co-Chair), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Lisa Goodman (LG), Joyti Stach (JS), Phil Howard (PH), James Tulley (JT– Chair), Lisa Logan (LL), Tim Shutler (TS – Vice Chair), Kirsty Walker (KW), Harriet Russell (HR) and Emma Gibson (EG).

**In attendance:** Sarah Hextall (SHx – school business manager), Brandon Hughes (BH - deputy headteacher), Lizzie Edmed (EE – deputy headteacher) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

**Quorum:** 12 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. **Election of Chair and Vice Chair** – DH noted the nominations of JT as Chair and LL & TS as co-vice chairs; and the unanimous approval of the FBG to these appointments.
2. **Apologies for Absence.**
  - 2.1. Joanna McCrae (JMc) had sent her apologies for absence which were accepted.
3. **Urgent business** – None.
4. **Declarations of interest** – None.
5. **Minutes**
  - 5.1. The minutes of the meeting of 3 July 2025 were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.
6. **Matters Arising** – none.
7. **Governing Board Code of Conduct 2025-2026**
  - 7.1. The Chair noted the unanimous approval of the FBG to adopt this document, which was based on a National Governance Association (NGA) 2025 template.
8. **Headteacher Governors' report**

*Headteacher*

  - 8.1. Governors asked when the next OfSTED inspection might take place. KC believed that, in theory, this could be from 1 December 2025 onwards. KC

added that the last inspection had taken place in February 2022, which meant the school could expect the next one would take place sometime in the current academic year.

- 8.2. Governors asked about a breakdown of groups who had attended the summer school. KC stated that this was presently not available, but would ask for this to be done. Governors commented that, if there was a gap, there would be a communication point to consider, in terms of how to reach out to such groups to encourage attendance and participation in an initiative such as the summer school.
- 8.3. Governors asked about any impact in the school, caused as a result of 'raise a flag' protests. KC reported that there had been no incidents since the beginning of term; however the local authority (LA) had contacted schools about dealing with tensions on the flags issue. KC stated that she had spoken to staff about such societal tension issues on 29 September and requested vigilance.
- 8.4. Governors asked about school development planning and specifically the area of high prior attainers. KC explained that the school development plan (SDP) was being worked on; a look would be taken on high prior attainers in the sense of considering curriculum targets and ambitions for these students. Governors commented that for some reason it could be difficult to engage with these students. BH stated that this issue could be further explored, using presentations given to governors on student aspirations.
- 8.5. The Chair asked if students within the current cohorts had been identified as having the capability of doing well. KC stated that regrettably data on such a point was not available (and therefore the school was missing this analysis) for students in either last Year 11 or the present Year 11 cohorts. KC added that, as nationally KS2 SATs were not taken by these year groups during the covid pandemic, comparative data was not available.
- 8.6. Governors asked how the SDP was being embedded. KC stated that, at the recent INSET session, the SDP had been re-shared with staff and threaded through different school activities. KC added that subject leaders were working on department development plans; also a different approach of having an overview was being adopted.
- 8.7. The Chair recommended that the FBG reference the SDP much more, to be more aware and accepting decisions made. The Chair noted that structure and strategy had been a key focus last year; this year would be culture.
- 8.8. Governors asked if it would be possible to see if parents were looking at and consulting the SDP, on the school website. KC agreed to check and see if this could be monitored in some way.
- 8.9. The Chair paid tribute to the recent parents open evening which had been a really good experience, reflected by the excellent feedback.

#### *Quality of Education*

- 8.10. Governors asked about the high percentage of Pupil Premium (PP) students not achieving 4+ in English and Mathematics. BH provided detailed statistics on the numbers of students involved and acknowledged that this percentage (57%) was high. BH explained that there were contextual issues to

take account of; e.g. some students had been absent and some Education, Health & Care (EHC) plan students had not taken examinations.

- 8.11. BH acknowledged that attendance was a big issue; for Year 11 PP attendance was 85.6% compared to 90.3% for the whole cohort. BH provided further detailed statistics, e.g. on numbers receiving support. BH confirmed that the school had identified who these students were and taken action, e.g. pastoral teams were in contact with them; an objective was for them to reach 90% attendance.
- 8.12. BH stated that, in terms of gaps, the school knew it had to tackle the issue of a sense of belonging. BH stated that this would be handled in planning for tuition in English and Mathematics; teachers had identified the particular students for attention in this regard; also heads of department.
- 8.13. Governors asked about dealing with resistance, with regard to setting or swapping students. BH acknowledged that this had increased, with broken social contacts stemming from the pandemic years. BH believed this came down to a question of communications, to be tackled by spending time talking to families. BH added that this only applied to the few subjects where students still sat tiered exams of Foundation or Higher.
- 8.14. Governors asked about the inclusion of looking at progression and books, during their official visits to the school. BH considered that a book look could be organised and stated that the next visit programme had been scheduled for 20 to 22 October 2025. BH believed that this was the best way to learn about the school, when governors could meet heads of department and other team members.
- 8.15. BH spoke about student work policies, which were at the early stage of implementation; it would be possible to see how these would take shape. The Chair commented that this was valuable, for governors to see this element of planning.
- 8.16. Governors asked about use of the term 'structured talk'. BH explained this idea related to a focus on literacy in the previous academic year, to look at the words students needed to know; this year the exercise would be about saying words and speaking. BH stated that structured talk would be introduced using grammatical structure; full participation would be expected across the Year groups.
- 8.17. Governors asked if pupils would be taught to talk like e.g. a mathematician. BH stated that the pupils would be instructed in how to speak in a particular subject area and be aware of the differences in approach on e.g. between mathematics and geography.
- 8.18. Governors asked about the 'reading leaders' programme. BH stated that this related to taking out high prior attaining students from form time, to do reading once a week. BH considered this to be a great opportunity for them to build up their CVs, creating a sense of belonging; the impact on students would be assessed later.

*Behaviour and attendance*

- 8.19. Governors asked about the school's policy on dealing with illnesses, e.g. seasonal colds. EE stated that information about colds had been received much more positively this time; this approach would be adopted as the norm.
- 8.20. Governors asked how detentions were communicated to homes. EE explained that this was done by email or telephone, for the school to deal with ongoing concerns. EE added that the school had recently seen a significant improvement in attendance at detentions. Governors asked about behaviour. EE stated that this was a mix of lateness, restore & repair. Governors commented that it was good to see the positive impact and nature of detentions. EE hoped to see an improvement in homework completion rates. The Chair commented that attendance was one of the FBG's key areas of focus.
- 8.21. Governors asked if it would be possible to visit the alternative learning provision (ALP). EE welcomed the idea of a governors visit and asked that this be done after a few weeks, which would allow the ALP to settle. EE added that the atmosphere in the ALP since the beginning of term was wonderful, there had been a clear boost to students' confidence in the first week; there was an enrichment background culture established.
- 8.22. Governors asked if Blatchington Mill was sending any students to other schools yet. EE stated that this had not yet been done; there was a desire to ensure the school had managed its own provision right first, placing students outside would happen in due course.
- 8.23. Governors asked if students interacted. EE stated that they had the opportunity to do this at break times, but chose not to do so. The Chair recommended looking at the possibility of governors making contact with their colleagues in other schools with ALPs.

*Pastoral.*

- 8.24. Governors asked about participation in activities week. KC acknowledged that attendance had been lower for this week; the school would look at this issue and other activities weeks, it wanted parents and pupils to better understand its value. KC commented that there was work to do to identify barriers, e.g. to take payments in instalments. KC stated that conversations would be held with parents and pupils about obstacles and barriers to participation, in order to work out how to overcome them.
- 8.25. The Chair recommended considering the idea of setting up working groups on access to education; to give families the opportunity to come into the school which would help build relationships.
- 8.26. The Chair asked if the school was aware of any concerns with regard to families being impacted by the activities of loan sharks. KC stated that the school did not have access to this kind of information. SHx added that the school picked up this type of information in the canteen; in terms of students not being able to pay for meals and others paying for them.
- 8.27. Governors asked about pupil voice in relation to activities week. KC confirmed that this information had been collected and nothing out of the ordinary had been raised. KC added that some of the activities run would be changed, in response to student voice.

- 8.28. The Chair recommended that members of the student leadership be invited to present to the FBG. KC commented that this could be done for the FBG meeting on 27 November. The Chair suggested this be managed by organising a separate and different style of meeting. KC recommended governors attend a student council meeting. The Chair believed it would be of benefit for governors to meet the same students some two or three years later, to see how they had developed and reflect on their views of governance.

#### *Staffing*

- 8.29. KC confirmed that the school had made some very good appointments that were working out well, e.g. in the mathematics department. The Chair added that he had attended the INSET day which had been a worthwhile experience; the keynote presentations had been impressive.

### **9. Budget**

- 9.1. SHx stated that there was a sense of positivity in the school about the budget; a surplus of £168K had been calculated – matched against an original estimate of £22K. SHx explained that the £168K figure included provision for the All Weather Pitches (AWPs) sinking fund.
- 9.2. SHx stated that, in the first iteration of the three year budget, Year one had had a deficit of £200K forecast. SHx commented that if this had happened, the school would have been obliged to ask the LA for a licensed deficit. SHx explained that this would have meant the school losing control to the LA and direct input by the FBG; it was felt therefore very important to balance the budget.
- 9.3. SHx acknowledged that in parts the budget was very ambitious, but this approach was now paying off. SHx explained that PP income had increased, as well as EHCP top ups being received. SHx added that the school was constantly reviewing opportunities to achieve staffing costs savings; also ALP payments had been reduced as well as pastoral projects. SHx warned however that the school was waiting on information from the LA about pay progression policy; depending on how this turned out, there might be a budgetary impact.
- 9.4. Governors noted that in the last FBG minutes a deficit of £150K had been forecast; but since then a government grant had been received – it was good to learn that a surplus had now been achieved. SHx added that supply and agency costs had been reduced massively. The Chair noted that cost savings had been achieved without impacting negatively on students' experiences.
- 9.5. Governors noted that the LA now required monthly outturn returns; the last one had been submitted in July and another due shortly. SHx confirmed that one had been submitted for August, the next was due in two weeks. Governors asked if the LA had provided the school with any feedback. SHx stated the LA had commented that information supplied was in line with expectations; all their questions had been answered.
- 9.6. Governors asked how Blatchington Mill appeared financially in comparison to other schools. SHx stated that 30 out of 55 schools in Brighton and Hove were in deficit; the LA were expecting an overall deficit of £5.8M to manage.

- 9.7. Governors commented that it was possible the LA might ask Blatchington Mill to share information about good practice with other schools. If this happened, it would impact on the school's partnership relations and collaboration arrangements.
- 9.8. Governors asked how far down internally budget responsibility went in the school. KC confirmed that information on how tightly managed the budget had to be had been shared with all staff, e.g. cover for trips. KC stated that, nevertheless, the school could still consider requested absences positively e.g. for compassionate reasons.

## **10. OfSTED framework**

- 10.1. JH drew attention to his OfSTED preparation work, specifically an overview document of what was coming up, with regard to the changes set out in the new framework. JH highlighted the overview in the new framework, which set out the judgement headlines for students of achieve, belong and thrive, a real alignment.
- 10.2. JH stated that in terms of logistics, the new OfSTED framework would come into effect in November 2025. JH noted that some schools had volunteered to be inspected early, which would happen between 10 November and 1 December 2025. JH estimated that Blatchington Mill could possibly be inspected in the weeks beginning 1 December or 8 December 2025. JH recommended, in view of this, that the school be ready to respond.
- 10.3. JH stated that OfSTED would now only do full inspections and not short ones anymore. JH noted that a senior member of staff would be nominated to work with OfSTED on the process to be adopted. JH stated that a report card would be published after moderation of decisions; there would be no overarching judgement – each section would be reported on separately. JH explained that the various different areas would be judged against five standards.
- 10.4. KC confirmed that the senior leadership team (SLT) had had the new framework to look at and had started work on evaluating what stage the school was at; the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) would be a key part of this process.
- 10.5. JH stated that, from a governance point of view, there would be an increased focus on well-being and workload management; also on vulnerable students. JH explained that threads on these themes went through the different judgment categories. JH stated that evidence drawn from the school website including the self audit review and minutes would be an important part of the inspection. JH concluded by pointing to the useful links of the inspection toolkit, OfSTED team operating guide and Key/Governor Hub guidance.
- 10.6. Governors noted that the new framework, although comprehensive, was complicated – a move to make it more digestible for parents would be welcome and advisable. The Chair noted that both the inspection and report would be based on evidence; governors would have to provide detail in this part of the process.
- 10.7. Governors asked the school staff how they felt about the new OfSTED framework. KC believed it to amount to high stakes and would be challenging;

nevertheless she was confident the SLT would be prepared. BH considered that removal of the deep dive element was a good development.

## **11. Office of School Adjudicators (OSA) Published Admission Numbers (PAN) decision**

- 11.1. TS recalled that this time last year, discussions by the school with the LA on the PAN issue had begun. TS explained that this revolved around the LA proposal to reduce Blatchington Mill's PAN from 330 to 300 pupils. TS stated that the school had challenged this proposal and submitted a case in February 2025. TS believed that the OSA had now considered the cases submitted by all the (six) parties.
- 11.2. TS noted that this proposal, if implemented, would have a big impact on the budget. TS thought it reasonable to hold a positive assumption that the OSA would deliver a decision in favour of the school; which might come at the end of October. TS undertook to inform governors when this issued; made more complicated because of the involvement of other parties submitting cases.
- 11.3. The Chair noted that, in any case, the school had made the strongest possible case to the OSA the first time around. The Chair stated that, in practical terms, a lot of families across Brighton and Hove were experiencing a lot of confusion over how preferences would be allocated, how they fitted together (there were also mistakes in the LA's guidance); and therefore taking different approaches in making applications.

## **12. Safeguarding**

- 12.1. KC reported that all staff had completed the appropriate safeguarding training; and drew attention to a list of governors yet to finish this task.

## **13. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance**

- 13.1. KC stated that a template for the FBG meeting of 27 November 2025 would be done, to contain a high level summary. SHx added that this would include brief details of numbers of Subject Access Requests (SAR) and Freedom of Information (Fol) requests.

## **14. Committees' membership for 2025-2026 (Finance, Pastoral, Quality of Education and Panels).**

- 14.1. The Chair noted the following memberships:-

### *Finance Committee*

JT, PH (Chair), JMa, JMc & LL

### *Quality of Education Committee*

JMc, KW, JT & TS

### *Pastoral Committee*

HR, JS, EG, LG & LL

### *Headteacher Performance and Appraisal Panel*

LL, JT, JH & TS

### *Health & Safety (School) Committee*

TS as link governor

14.2. The Chair noted the following link governor roles:-

*Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion* – JT, JMc & JS.

*Health & Safety* – TS

*Special Educational Needs & Disabilities* – KW

*Child Protection & Safeguarding / Children in Care* – EG

*Educationally disadvantaged children* – JS

*Careers* – HR

*Digital* – TS

*Training* – JMa

*Sustainability* – JT & LL

*School Financial Value Standard (SFVS)* – Finance Committee member volunteer.

## **15. School policies**

*Child protection & safeguarding policy*

15.1. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the Child protection & safeguarding policy.

*SEN policy*

1.1. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that this would be presented to the next meeting of the FBG's to review and approve.

*Code of Conduct & Capability policies*

1.2. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the Code of Conduct & Capability policies

*Pay policy*

1.3. KC informed the FBG that this was still outstanding, as the school was waiting for a final version from the LA; who were still considering a Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) issue.

*Scheme of Delegation*

1.4. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of the Scheme of Delegation.

## **16. Governor training**

16.1. The Chair asked governors to look at and undertake training courses on offer in the NGA, Governor Hub, webinars and BEEM.



16.2. LL reported having completed Headteacher Appraisal training; and HR the first Governor Induction component training.

### **17. Clerk update**

1.5. DH drew attention to recently updated training provided by Governor Support in the LA, called 'Leading Governance' and intended for Chairs and Vice Chairs, of boards and committees.

### **18. Any Other Business**

18.1. The Chair drew attention to JH's intention to step down from the board on expiry of his term of office on 21 October 2025; and thanked him on behalf of the board for his tremendous contribution and provision of great wisdom and advice.

18.2. JH thanked the Chair for this expression of appreciation and stated that he would be carrying on his work for the school on the new OfSTED framework and remain a friend of Blatchington Mill. JH noted that he had seen a significant transformation in the last four years of strengthening and coherence in the school; JH felt he was leaving the school in strong and capable hands.

### **Actions**

- Breakdown of groups (gender, FSMs, BRM, SEND) attending the summer school – KC
- Governor contact with colleagues at other schools with ALPs – all
- Completion of GDPR template for FBG November meeting – SHx
- Presentation of SEN policy to next FBG meeting for review and approval - all

**Next meeting** – Tuesday 27 November 2025   Exam data (full picture)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...