

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 27 November 2025 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Joyti Stach (JS), Phil Howard (PH), James Tulley (JT – Chair), Kirsty Walker (KW – ‘virtual’), Harriet Russell (HR) and Paul Edwards (PE).

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

Quorum: 8 out of 15 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence.

1.1. Joanna McCrae (JMc) Lisa Goodman (LG), Lisa Logan (LL), Tim Shutler (TS – Vice Chair) and Emma Gibson (EG) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Appointments

2.1. The Chair informed the FBG of PE’s election as a parent governor, who had started his four year term of office with effect from 8 October 2025. The Chair added that he had contacted the other two candidates in this election – Stuart Diamond (SD) and Oliver Urpi (OU) – with a view to drawing on their experience to the benefit of the school and board.

2.2. The Chair informed the FBG of the local authority (LA) panel’s decision of 14 November 2025 to nominate Andrew Fozard (AF) as its candidate for governor on the board; in succession to EG who stepped down with effect from the date of this meeting, i.e. 27 November 2025. The Chair noted the FBG’s unanimous approval of the appointment of AF as the LA nominated governor; to begin a four year term of office with effect from 27 November 2025.

2.3. The Chair recalled Jim Henderson’s decision to step down as a co-opted governor, with effect from 22 October 2025, on the expiry of his four year term of office; and noted the proposal that he become an associate member for a four year term of office (to draw on his OfSTED expertise), with effect from 27 November 2025 – the FBG agreed unanimously to this appointment.

2.4. The Chair noted EG’s decision to step down as the LA nominated governor, with effect from 27 November 2025; and noted the proposal that she become an associate member for a four year term of office (to draw on her

safeguarding, child protection and children at risk expertise), with effect from 27 November 2025 – the FBG agreed unanimously to this appointment.

2.5. The Chair noted the agreement of JS and JT (as support) to take on the statutory link roles of safeguarding and child protection; of KW as Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) link; of JT and HR as careers link; and of PE, HR and TS to become members of the pay panel.

3. Urgent business

3.1. KC informed governors that she had attended the Association of School College Leaders (ASCL) on 26 November; at which the subject of OfSTED inspections had been discussed. KC stated that OfSTED was now up to date with its schedule and would resume inspections from 1 December 2025. KC reported that, for Blatchington Mill, this meant a possible date of February 2026 for the school's next inspection, if a four year gap was applied; but in reality, the call could come very soon.

3.2. KC explained that the usual procedure would be for the school to receive a call on a Monday, for the inspection to take place on the following Tuesday and Wednesday. KC noted that two other secondary schools in Brighton & Hove were due to be inspected before Blatchington Mill, but there was no guarantee inspections would be carried out in this order.

3.3. KC stated that the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) had been uploaded to the governor area of the drive, which would be used as a basis for discussions and preparations. KC stated that OfSTED had introduced a shift in inspections, from curriculum to inclusion, also leadership would be a key issue – this pointed to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and extended SLT being fully engaged with the process. KC felt that the school was ready for its next OfSTED inspection.

3.4. The Chair commented that governance was embedded in the school's leadership and should demonstrate understanding of the strategic direction and statutory obligations of Blatchington Mill. The Chair recommended putting together a folder of necessary documentation, to include FBG minutes, committee terms of reference, organisation charts, structures and visit programmes.

3.5. The Chair stated that he would be discussing the relevant issues through with two other governors, to include compiling a governance impact document. The Chair recommended consideration of putting together a set of governor 'bios' for the website; and checking governors' training record.

3.6. The Chair asked if climate strategy was being discussed in the school. SHx confirmed that work on a climate strategy was being done with teachers. The Chair recommended that at some stage doing another skills audit exercise be considered; to follow up the board review that had been done recently. The Chair also referred to having a statement on behaviour, to include a high level board view on the school's approach and a broad range of principles.

4. Declarations of interest – None.

5. Minutes

5.1. The minutes of the meeting of 2 October 2025 were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Chair.

6. Matters Arising –

- Breakdown of groups (gender, FSMs, BRM, SEND) attending the summer school – done – information now included in the headteacher's report.
- Governor contact with colleagues at other schools with ALPs – to be done.
- Completion of GDPR template for FBG November meeting – to be done.
- Presentation of SEN policy to next FBG meeting for review and approval - done

7. Headteacher Governors' report

Headteacher

Attendance

7.1. Governors asked about the latest attendance figure; KC stated that this was 90.46% and agreed that 89% was achievable. EE added that, post Covid, the school's main focus was on students that did not attend school at all; capacity and resources to tackle this issue would be increased to target these students and improve attendance across the school.

7.2. Governors noted that, despite being able to present a positive story, the school was below average. EE explained that this was in comparison to the national figure.

Suspensions

7.3. Governors asked if the number of suspensions impacted on attendance. KC commented that the school was mainly 'green' on this point, but recognised Blatchington Mill monitors this issue and had put measures in place.

7.4. Governors asked about figures dipping in the autumn term. EE believed this was because of illnesses being more commonplace at this time; the school was considering more ways to increase the number of staff working with the school attendance officer.

7.5. Governors asked about the current number of suspensions. EE commented that the school had a robust system in place; repeat suspension numbers were small. The Chair noted that governors would be able to explain to OfSTED what was done by the school in this regard and how.

7.6. Governors asked about the numbers of autistic children across the school. KC agreed to check these numbers and explained the apparent increase in that there were more diagnoses being carried out.

Staff well-being

7.7. KC reported that a staff survey was done once a year; members of staff had different ideas on what well-being meant; there were no hard and fast

qualitative well-being measures in place. KC believed that staff well-being was good; staff absences were low which were a good indication. SHx added there was a sense of staff feeling well supported and the school being kind; these however were difficult to quantify.

Parental complaints

7.8. Governors asked about the sharing of information with them by the school about complaints. KC recalled that an overall report had been presented to governors in the summer; the school was presently working on a new spreadsheet setting out different categories of complaint. KC added that the Year offices dealt with a large number of complaints, with a small number being escalated to her for consideration.

7.9. Governors asked what was categorised as a complaint. KC stated that this was a question of logging them initially as 'concerns'; but if necessary, re-categorising them as formal complaints. The Chair noted that, as part of the formal complaint process, those which resulted in recommendations for future action being made were also separately logged. The Chair suggested that the school trial a scheme whereby at the end of term, key themes were identified.

Family tours

7.10. Governors asked about the comparison with previous years of tours. KC stated that two had been carried out last year, with the frequency of tours now occurring as being once a term. KC added that this allowed parents to see the school in action; this opportunity was promoted in the weekly school email and open to all families.

Summer school

7.11. Governors asked about the different groups of students' access to summer school. KC agreed it would be useful to consider the take up by the various groups of the summer school and trips; and produced a level of granular detail on this subject (information included in her report to the FBG).

Quality of Education

7.12. KW reported on the proceedings of the recent Quality of Education Committee (QoEC) meeting of 19 November. KW stated that consideration would be given on the format and taking work forward strategically, to achieve the most beneficial use of time. KW commented that it had been interesting to go over BH's report, which demonstrated a lot of positive QoE activity in the school.

7.13. BH stated that he would be reviewing the future schedule of the QoEC with TS (the new chair), linking this with the academic calendar; to assist governors' challenge and critical friend role.

7.14. Governors asked about student use of the library. BH confirmed that a register was kept up on a daily basis and so the school knew who was using the library and for how long. BH added that a strategic plan was being discussed, with the student leadership.

7.15. Governors asked if this register including details of particular student groups using the library. BH stated that the homework group took place in the library from Monday to Thursday.

7.16. The Chair welcomed PE's offer of membership of the QoEC; also that HR would meet with Alexis Crawford (AC) and BH to talk about careers.

Pastoral Committee

7.17. JS reported on the Pastoral Committee (PC) meeting of 21 October, drawing attention to the themes discussed of achievement behaviour trackers (systems in place, lessons start, better punctuality); pastoral phone calls; groups access to extracurricular activities; behaviour and attitudes policy overview (staff and families flowchart to be done – JS offered her assistance in this regard); alternative learning provision (going well). On this last point, EE added that she would be able to provide more information about referrals in January 2026, significant progress had been made.

Behaviour and attendance

7.18. EE commented that there was a case of the school celebrating where it had reached; but there was also an acknowledgement of what still needed to be done, to embed practices and challenging students (e.g. independent learning and communication of the purpose of learning). EE added that attendance at detentions had improved.

7.19. The Chair noted the section in the headteacher's report about living the school's values and the examples of successes and asked how these were happening. KC stated that the school would draw on the pastoral calendar.

7.20. Governors asked about seeking the views of senior students. KC stated that a separate meeting with them with the Chair would be held, after they had done their mock examinations.

Health and Safety

7.21. SHx reported that a recent meeting of the school's H&S committee had been held, TS as the link H&S governor had attended, along with representatives from the staff union, child protection and facilities teams. SHx stated that the focus had been on patterns and incidents; also the re-roaming of students to the ground floor. On this last point, SHx confirmed that risk assessments had been done with the Year teams and families.

8. Budget

8.1. SHx reported that the school was looking at posting a £157K surplus for the end of the year; compared to the original forecast of a £23K surplus; the in-year figure was a deficit of approximately £300K. SHx acknowledged that the budgetary picture for next year was a concern. SHx stated that she would be undertaking the next phase of budget planning by the middle of January 2026; to take account of curriculum structure adjustments.

8.2. The Chair asked about the LA's view of the school's budgetary position. SHx stated that the LA had noted the school was in a stronger position; that the in-year deficit was problematic; and the situation might worsen in the next two years.

8.3. Governors asked about Section 106 community infrastructure major developments. SHx stated that the LA had responded in March 2025 and would make a decision on which capital projects to support using the levy; which were likely to go to alternative provisions in Brighton and Hove.

9. Office of School Adjudicators (OSA) Published Admission Numbers (PAN) decision

- 9.1. SHx expressed appreciation to governors for their assistance in logging and managing the school's appeal to the OSA against the LA's PAN proposal. The Chair reported that the LA would carry out a consultation on admissions next year, to include a look at sibling links and catchment areas.
- 9.2. The Chair asked if the school would be oversubscribed for September 2026. KC believed the school was likely to be full and would hear more definite news in March 2026.

10. Safeguarding

- 10.1. The Chair noted that JT and JS would carry out the link governor Single Central Record (SCR) check.

11. School policies

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) policy

- 11.1. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the school's SEND policy.

Governor Expenses policy

- 11.2. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the school's Governor Expenses policy.

Scheme of Delegation

- 11.3. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the school's Scheme of Delegation.

Finance Committee Terms of Reference 2025-2026

- 11.4. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the Finance Committee Terms of Reference 2025-2026

Pastoral Committee Terms of Reference 2025-2026

- 11.5. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the Pastoral Committee Terms of Reference 2025-2026; subject to a change being made to text setting out the number of days' exclusion.

Attendance

- 11.6. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the school's attendance policy.

Behaviour

- 11.7. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of the school's behaviour policy.

12. Governor training

12.1. The Chair asked governors to inform DH of any training courses they had undertaken. JMa reported having done a course on a National Governance Association (NGA) effective financial governance in schools.

13. Department for Education (DfE) guidance

13.1. The Chair drew attention to recent DfE guidance on governance, just issued.

14. Clerk update

14.1. DH drew governors' attention to the government's plan, set out in the autumn budget, to take on responsibility for SEND expenditure in April 2028 (i.e. away from the present arrangement of LAs managing this spend).

15. Any Other Business – None.

Actions –

Notification of governor and associate member appointments and resignations to LA - DH

Next meeting – Thursday 22 January 2026 (Curriculum)

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...