

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 3 July 2025 at 17.00 hours

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

In attendance: Sarah Hextall (SHx – school business manager) and David Harvey (DH – clerk).

Quorum: 12 out of 13 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence.

1.1. Lisa Goodman (LG) sent her apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Welcome and introduction

2.1. The Co-Chair (JT) welcomed KW and HR to the meeting, noting that it was their first session as newly appointed co-opted governors to the board.

3. Urgent business – None.

4. Declarations of interest – None.

5. Minutes

5.1. The minutes of the meeting of 8 May 2025 were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Co-Chair (JT).

6. Matters Arising

- Notification to Governor Support and the school office of the two new co-opted governor appointments – done.
- Collation of direct quotes and statements from governors, following school visit – done.
- Change of 11 September to 2 October for first FBG of the new academic year – done.

BELMAS conference

The Co-Chair (JT) drew attention to the school hosting 22 visitors from the US, Australia, Japan and South Africa on 4 July, attending as part of the BELMAS (British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society)

Conference, taking place in Brighton over 5 and 6 July. The Co-Chair (JT) welcomed the school undertaking this showcase invitation, which might attract positive media coverage and increase Blatchington Mill's profile.

Board structure and roles

The Co-Chair (JT) also informed governors that he would be attending a National Governance Association (NGA) conference shortly; and asked the FBG to consider in long term issues such as the board structure and individual roles therein.

Governor stepping down notification

The Co-Chair (JH) informed governors of his plan to step down from the board at the conclusion of his four year term of office (21 October 2025); and his intention to attend the finance committee meeting of 29 September and FBG of 2 October 2025. The Co-Chair (JH) expressed appreciation for his positive experience of serving on the board over the last four years and commented that the school was in a secure place.

The Co-Chair (JT) thanked JH for all his hard work and valued contribution on behalf of the school and board. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that JH had offered to continue his contact with the school in some capacity, which might include becoming an associate member. With the next OfSTED inspection in mind, the Co-Chair (JT) considered that JH's insights into requirements and aspects of the new framework would have considerable worth.

Governance in the new academic year

The Co-Chair (JT) stated that the first FBG of the new academic year on 2 October would consider such issues as governor link roles, committee membership, areas focus, responsibilities and direction. The Co-Chair (JT) added that work was needed on transparency and communications with families and the local community. The Co-Chair (JT) recommended this include refreshing the website and compilation of a termly headteacher and FBG newsletter (signed off by governors, headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)).

7. School Budget

Budget

- 7.1. The Co-Chair (JT) provided the background to this agenda item, noting that the financial ground had recently shifted in the last few months; the school was now, as a result, expecting to post a deficit.
- 7.2. SHx recalled that the 2025-2026 school budget had been set and submitted to the local authority (LA) by the required deadline of 31 May; with a surplus of £26K. SHx noted that at one stage during this draft budget's preparation, it had been in deficit; the final balanced version was realistic and ambitious.
- 7.3. SHx informed governors that, since submission, the government had made its announcement on the teachers' pay award. SHx stated that an increase of 2.8% for teachers and National Joint Council (NJC) staff had been budgeted for; however the government had decided this should be 4% and 3.2% respectively (the one for the NJC was not yet confirmed). SHx notified that the government would be funding some of the difference; but the overall impact on the budget, in terms of the core school budget grant, meant a deficit of £150K

was now forecast – a combination of the pay awards and National Insurance (NI) increase (£100K for pay awards and £50K for NI).

- 7.4. SHx recalled that, as the school had originally submitted a balanced budget, Blatchington Mill had not had to apply for a licensed deficit. SHx stated that, as a result, Blatchington Mill would not be under the same financial scrutiny as other schools in deficit. Nevertheless, SHx acknowledged that it would be a challenge for the school to claw back this deficit; even though it would be following government guidance on e.g. schemes of delegation, to tighten up on and minimise expenditure.
- 7.5. Governors asked about the percentage of staffing against the overall budget. SHx stated that this was presently 80%.
- 7.6. Governors asked if this situation applied to all schools in Brighton and Hove. SHx confirmed this was the case and stated that the situation was a major concern for the LA; who had asked for outturn forecasts from schools by the end of the present term.
- 7.7. The Co-Chair (JT) asked about the monthly report requirement and the calibre of the LA's scrutiny. SHx confirmed this requirement was new and commented that, in terms of scrutiny, the school enjoyed a good and positive relationship with the LA's finance department.
- 7.8. Governors noted that the LA would be able to take a first look at the pay award impact across all schools, once it was in receipt of these monthly reports.

Staffing

- 7.9. KC provided details of recent interviewing and recruitment activities, with appointments made. KC commented that the candidates had been of a good calibre and was pleased with the appointment decisions made.

Health and Safety

- 7.10. SHx confirmed that the school health & safety committee had met on 2 July; work covered included the start on the emergency continuity plan, discussion of HS2 reports.
- 7.11. Governors asked about the increase of HS2 reports. SHx believed that use of the temporary classrooms was a factor; incident patterns had been tracked; also there was a case of increased reporting.

8. Published Admissions Number (PAN) Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) school submission

- 8.1. TS recalled that, as a result of an LA consultation at the start of the year, a proposal had been put forward to reduce the school's PAN of 330 to 300 pupils for the new academic year of 2025-2026. TS stated that the FBG had discussed this proposal and decided to submit an objection and appeal to the OSA, along with six other parties. TS understood that the OSA would deal with all seven appeals as one application. TS commented that there was a presumption that the OSA would agree with the school's objection; and it would therefore not have to accept the PAN reduction.
- 8.2. Governors asked what would happen to the decision making process given this delay, originally set to take effect in September 2026. KC believed this

would be a challenge for the LA to resolve on admissions generally in Brighton and Hove; but there was no news yet on what would happen.

8.3. Governors noted that, although a number of other schools in Brighton and Hove would be adversely affected by the LA's proposal; the FBG's primary responsibility was to protect the interests of Blatchington Mill.

8.4. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that there were other factors in play with regard to this issue, including the falling birth rate in Brighton and Hove and the availability of affordable homes.

9. Headteacher report

Local Landscape

9.1. Governors asked about the viability of the Alternative Learning Provision (ALP). KC stated that there would be three set up in Brighton and Hove; and there was a hope over time that across the city enough places would be provided. KC expressed confidence that the school could participate with its own students to start with.

9.2. Governors asked about the LA's funding plans. SHx stated that the LA would be funding 15 places.

School Improvement Plan (SIP)

9.3. Governors asked about informing families about the SIP. KC stated that an overview of the SIP had gone out to families.

Complaints analysis

9.4. Governors asked about a recent parents survey. KC noted that there had been 36 responses (out of a possible 1,600) to a recent survey conducted by the school. KC added that engagement and communications with families would be a focus of work in the new academic year.

9.5. KC agreed that a good perception of the school was important for parents; part of this would involve using edulink and a newsletter that drew on Instagram. KC noted that a lot of stories went on Facebook, a number of which expressed negative views which were tricky to deal with; there was a need to have a whole school approach.

9.6. KC emphasised that students were regularly informed throughout the year about behaviour requirements and the impact on being able to attend events such as the prom. KC regretted that, despite these warnings, students still did not meet the requirements in e.g. low attendance and would not improve their records in this regard and not consider the consequences.

9.7. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that the school had promoted a clear message in this regard; namely that the student had to improve behaviour according to him or herself, rather than in comparison to others. The Co-Chair (JT) believed that such a pupil had an opportunity to show improvement; some had chosen not to take this path.

Anti-Racist Conference

9.8. The Co-Chair (JT) informed governors that he had attended the Brighton & Hove anti-racist education conference – 'Shifting Cultures' – on 20 June and

found it to have been a worthwhile experience; and highlighted the importance of KC attending this event.

- 9.9. Governors added that a headteacher presentation had made an observation about the year when there had been no GCSEs or A levels but the award of teachers' assessments instead. Governors stated that this presentation had pointed out there had been a difference or gap nationally between Black & Racially Minoritised (BRM) and white students for predicted grades; for the former it had been receiving lower, the latter higher. Governors noted that this had opened a discussion on unconscious bias.
- 9.10. KC stated that the school no longer had a system of predicted grades in place. KC added that the issue of unconscious bias was one being looked at by the Blatchington Mill Anti-Racist Community (BARC) and would be by the Quality of Education Committee.

Quality of Education Committee (QoEC)

- 9.11. LL (acting Chair) provided highlights of the QoEC meeting of 18 June, covering the Year 11 projections, careers & work experience and the department improvement plans (DIPs). With regard to the projections, LL stated that these were good, in line with last year; but there were gaps between Special Educational Needs (SEN) and non-SEN students; also Pupil Premium results not as good as desired by the school. LL noted that the admission of Free School Meals (FSMs) students (29% to 30% next year might have an impact on results
- 9.12. LL stated that there were now new rules to follow, with regard to careers and work experience, including periods of engagement (two weeks). LL also pointed to the relationships with local companies being established by the school.
- 9.13. LL noted that, according to the DIPs update, there was progress being achieved across all the departments. LL stated that the new food and design classrooms would be open in September; also that the literacy focus this year was very positive; a reading programme for younger years; and attendance at the school's homework clubs.

Pastoral Committee

- 9.14. TS (Chair) pointed to the key issues discussed at the recent Pastoral Committee meeting of 10 June; the changes in September on punctuality and starting lessons on time – hearing feedback from teachers pointed to the positive impact of these changes, was part of normalising behaviour and had made a difference. TS drew attention to not having Progress 8 scores and the setting up of an internal system on what students should be doing as part of attainment measures
- 9.15. KC stated that Brandon Hughes (BH – deputy headteacher) was looking at Key Stage 3 assessments, to see if these were broadly in line where they should be on attainment.
- 9.16. TS stated that extra-curricular activities were also discussed at the QoEC meeting; e.g. the Duke of Edinburgh scheme; and noted the value of having form tutors knowing what individual students were (and were not) participating.

Governors added that this was part of digging deeper into the data, to find out which groups were not accessing activities.

Health and Safety

- 9.17. Governors asked for more information about the school Health & Safety Committee meeting of 3 July. SHx stated that those present had analysed HS2 data and tracked it, year on year. SHx stated that two site walks had been done, focussing on 'slip and trips' and external walkways; also that the self-evaluation form had been worked through; and the school emergency and business continuity plans.
- 9.18. Governors asked about the facilities damaged by the school fire. SHx stated that the refurbished and repaired ones would be reopening in September; adding that, for the temporary facilities, the school had bought new equipment to be moved to the permanent classrooms.

Data protection

- 9.19. Governors asked about data breaches. SHx provided full details of the ones brought to attention. Governors also asked about the provision of training on Artificial Intelligence (AI). SHx stated that the school would be providing staff training, drawing on a template set out by the 'Key'. SHx added that the school was working on a policy and cover the technical aspects; it would be good to have governors involved in this work. Governors noted that the LA was putting in place arrangements to have an AI working party.

10. Safeguarding

- 10.1. KC stated that no response had yet been received from the LA after receipt of the school's completed safeguarding audit. KC added that nevertheless Lee Evans (LE – assistant headteacher) was taking work forward, including on Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) – putting in summaries and key dates; this would be a year long project.

11. New academic year forward look

- 11.1. KC stated that the SLT were evaluating the three year SIP which would be completed when examination results were published – a presentation would be made in October. Governors recommended a name change for the SIP, to make it the 'School Development Plan' (SDP) instead. The Co-Chair (JT) added that, as part of the focus in September, consideration of the SDP could include discussion of where individual governors could make contributions.
- 11.2. KC highlighted an initiative, 'We Belong @Blatch', of producing special pupils' photographs in small poster form; this would involve the use of display boards, to have in place by September. KC explained this was part of the work to be done on belonging and relationships; the addressing of behaviour issues and unconscious bias.

12. **School policies** – None to review and approve.

13. **Governor training** – The Co-Chair (JT) recommended governors consider LA training in November on finance and data.

14. Governors meetings dates list 2025-2026

14.1. The Co-Chair (JT) noted governors' approval of the latest version of this list for 2025-2026. KC informed governors that there would be an open evening at the school on 18 September; the summer school would take place on 18, 19 and 20 August (governors would be welcome to attend on 18 and 19 August); and an afternoon welcome tea on 4 September for new teaching staff.

15. **Any Other Business** – None.

Actions – None.

Next meeting – Thursday 2 October 2025

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...