

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 8 May 2025 at 17.00 hours

Those Present: Kate Claydon (KC - headteacher), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), James Tulley (JT – Co-Chair), Jim Henderson (JH – Co-Chair), Joyti Stach (JS), Lisa Goodman (LG – ‘virtual’), Lisa Logan (LL), Phil Howard (PH) and Tim Shutler (TS – Vice Chair).

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

Quorum: 9 out of 11 governors present – meeting was quorate.

1. Apologies for Absence.

- 1.1. Emma Gibson (EG) and Joanna McCrae (JMC) had sent their apologies for absence which were accepted.

2. Review and approval of new co-opted governor appointments

- 2.1. The Co-Chair (JH) drew governors’ attention to the applications made by Kirsty Walker (KW) and Harriet Russell (HR) for two co-opted governor vacancies on the board. The Co-Chair (JH) stated that he, JT and KC had met and interviewed both KW and HR; and asked the FBG to review and approve their appointments – the FBG agreed to this recommendation unanimously.
- 2.2. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that KW and HR’s appointments would take effect from the date of this meeting, i.e. 8 May 2025; for four year terms of office.
- 2.3. The Co-Chair (JT) recommended that, for future appointments, more governors be involved in the process; also that the board would seek to identify and encourage candidates with lived experience of Special Educational Needs and socio-economic / low-income experience very useful.
- 2.4. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that there remained a parent governor and additional co-opted governor vacancies; also that there was discussion around EG continuing as the local authority (LA) nominated governor. The Co-Chair (JH) welcomed LL’s offer to help with the parent governor application process.

3. **Urgent business** – None.

4. **Declarations of interest** – None.

5. Minutes

5.1. The minutes of the meeting of 20 March 2025 were agreed by governors as a true record; and signed by the Co-Chair (JT).

6. Matters Arising

- Submission of school PAN appeal to OSA – The Co-Chair (JH) noted that this item was on the present agenda for discussion.
- Amendment of the school pay policy – done; SHx added that this policy had been posted on the school's internal internet.
- Amendment of school complaints and online safeguarding policies – done.

7. Headteacher report

School Improvement Plan

- 7.1. Governors asked about recruitment for surveys and focus groups. KC stated that this was done over a wide range; e.g. surveys going out to families had elicited 16 responses so far. With regard to focus groups, KC informed governors that there would be a whole staff meeting on 12 May, to discuss outcomes and running sessions depending on responses. KC confirmed that students' focus groups were in place already and discussed at assemblies.
- 7.2. Governors asked about amendments to the changes put in place in September 2024. KC confirmed that the school were working on these at the moment; there would be no surprises.

Trans Inclusion

- 7.3. Governors asked about any impact discerned on the school, following the recent Supreme Court ruling. KC reported that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had discussed this matter and noted that there were processes already in place to provide support. KC added that these would be worked through; on the basis of further information being received, which was awaited.
- 7.4. Governors asked if there had been any incidents, either amongst students or third parties and families. KC reported that there had not been any.

Summer School

- 7.5. Governors asked about access to Holiday Activity Funding (HAF). SHx reported that the HAF facility had been explored and found to be a complicated process. SHx explained that families had to pre-register, qualify for Free School Meals (FSMs) and the HAF only paid a fixed amount (specifically for healthy eating activities) – overall, the HAF scheme presented a significant number of restrictions.
- 7.6. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about staffing for the summer school. SHx commented that staff were happy to work on this project; the school needed

twenty in order to manage a full capacity and programme of activities. SHx added that staff had been asked to register their interest; the rate presently offered per day was £150 (although interest was being gauged on the possibility of offering a lower figure of £100, to reduce costs).

- 7.7. Governors asked which figure had been budgeted for. SHx confirmed that it was the higher one of £150; and commented that it was possible not enough staff would volunteer at the lower figure of £100. Governors recommended that the offered rate be kept at £150 to increase the likelihood of achieving full staffing

Quality of Education (QoE)

- 7.8. Governors asked about Year 11 examination attendance. PH commented that behaviour had been good; also Years 7 and 8 last week for the mathematics challenge. BH added that Year 11 students in the past week had taken the process on board. BH acknowledged that there had been some absences; this was not encouraged, the school wanted these students present in classrooms with their teachers.
- 7.9. Governors asked when study leave was permitted. BH stated that this would start after half term. EE added that there had been 78% Year 11 attendance on 8 May; a message had been sent out to emphasise that students needed to be in school.
- 7.10. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the Challenge Partners visit and students' purpose. BH stated that this represented the start of the school's work it was doing; the SIP would redefine the question of purpose. In this context, BH raised the issue of transitioning to Sixth Form college (discussed at a meeting last week) and the support provided by the school to students beyond Blatchington Mill.
- 7.11. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that the process of defining purpose for students was an ambition for the new academic year; and recommended having a measurement system in place to check if this had happened. BH stated that the school was talking to students, to look at soft skills, participation in groups and behaviour.
- 7.12. Governors asked about the timetable and options process, with regard to the move from catering. BH confirmed that this move of seventy students had been managed and completed; all had been absorbed into other classes.
- 7.13. The Co-Chair (JH) asked about the students sitting the Religious Education (RE) paper. BH explained that this was a specific short course to be delivered in 70 hours; half of a full GCSE but nevertheless accredited.
- 7.14. Governors asked about English and Mathematics. BH explained this had been managed by reducing the time other subjects were receiving and adjusting the number of periods for Years 10 and 11.
- 7.15. Governors noted that they had paid a formal visit to the school on 28 April, with a focus on English and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL). JS drew attention to the consistency seen across the classes, the positive engagement by Year 11 students and Year 7 form time; also the general air of calm in the school.

- 7.16. The Co-Chair (JT) noted governors' feedback on this visit had been consistent and positive. The Co-Chair (JT) recommended that the FBG's messaging should reflect this positive impression and asked for governors to supply direct quotes and statements. The Co-Chair (JH) agreed to collate this material. KC added that she would summarise changes, collating data and evidence strands; and include governors in this exercise.
- 7.17. Governors asked about transition and admissions to Blatchington Mill. KC stated that the school were aware of the initial allocation by the LA of first, second and third choices; but not if parents had appealed anywhere else. KC added that the school was not quite full for September, but the picture was very positive.

Behaviour and Attendance

- 7.18. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that there had been a significant reduction in late marks. EE believed that this was time to keep up the momentum, drawing attention to having had numerous days already with zero late attendance. EE commented that the school was making good progress and had made a point of thanking staff for their efforts in this regard.
- 7.19. Governors asked about the Adaptive Learning Provision (ALP) planning and any budget impact. EE stated that the ALP was fully funded by the LA, which was an ongoing commitment. EE added that the ALP had a neutral effect on the budget, with some positive aspects.
- 7.20. Governors asked about 'guest' students' school uniforms. EE stated that they were loaned uniforms so as not to stand out; they were also allowed to use the canteen under supervision.
- 7.21. KC asked if governors were content for the school to move forward with the ALP, noting that the LA were keen to improve its commitment. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the FBG's approval of the school's engagement with the ALP process.
- 7.22. Governors asked how long 'guest' students were in Blatchington Mill. EE stated that this amounted to a termly placement, with a move arranged back to their home schools.
- 7.23. Governors asked if these 'guest' students had difficulties in making journeys to the school. EE stated that managing these journeys was part of the ALP process.
- 7.24. The Co-Chair (JT) asked if the LA had a communication strategy in place for the ALP process. EE commented that it was a question at the moment of building momentum and engagement by other schools.

Pastoral

- 7.25. Governors asked about the Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) award and a breakdown of completion within groups. KC confirmed that Marcus Bennison (MB – Assistant Headteacher) had agreed to provide this information to the next meeting of the governors' Pastoral Committee.
- 7.26. Governors asked about non-completion by students of the DoE award. KC stated that this was partly to do with staff capacity; this had been increased

recently. KC added that the school would be looking at the barriers to completion.

- 7.27. Governors asked about student leadership representation. KC explained that the school had focussed on putting structures in place; more senior student applications had been received this year.
- 7.28. The Co-Chair (JT) asked if there was input from students helping to shape these senior roles. EE confirmed that this consultation had been done last year and continued in the present one.
- 7.29. Governors asked about support for families to participate in Activities Week. KC confirmed that this was in place, also that work was being done on building in feedback.

8. School budget

Budget

- 8.1. SHx recalled that she had submitted the school's multi-year summary to the Finance Committee at its meeting of 28 April 2025; this had shown Year 1 with a deficit. SHx stated that, following discussion of this document, she had undertaken further work to identify areas of challenges and targets for income; resulting in the production of a revised budget document showing a surplus of £25K.
- 8.2. SHx stated that, as a result of Year 1 now showing this surplus, the school was now not obliged to request a licensed deficit from the LA. SHx added that, nevertheless, the budget would have to be scrutinised and monitored very carefully over the forthcoming year.
- 8.3. SHx emphasised that this was an ambitious budget and there would be challenges on expenditure, e.g. on infrastructure and facilities. SHx stressed however that there would be no cuts to curriculum costs; but equally no increase for inflation had been budgeted for in curriculum areas.
- 8.4. Governors asked about allowing for a teaching staff pay increase. SHx confirmed this was included, at 2.8% The Co-Chair (JH) asked what would happen if this figure increased to 4%. SHx acknowledged this would be difficult to manage.
- 8.5. Governors noted that the carry forward figure last year had been forecast as a surplus of £116K; which actually turned out to be a surplus of £492K. SHx confirmed these figures, but pointed out that the latter one had included a number of ring-fenced items; i.e. funds that could not be drawn on for general expenditure purposes.
- 8.6. Governors asked about supply and agency costs. SHx confirmed that these (and those for cover supervisors) had been reviewed; action taken had been to reduce these costs by appointing two new cover supervisors. SHx added that this had had the effect of the school entering the end of the year being in a better position than originally budgeted for.
- 8.7. The Co-Chair (JH) asked what Published Admission Number (PAN) figure had been used in the budget. SHx confirmed that the budget assumed the school would have a PAN of 330; also a pay award of 2% for the next two years and 1.5% increase on all other costs.

- 8.8. The Co-Chair (JT) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this budget, taking into account that Years 2 and 3 were not a finished deal due to future uncertainties.
- 8.9. Governors asked about refuse clearance costs. SHx stated that the government portal was being used to secure a new contract, which meant it had gone through an approval process. SHx stated that a new contract would cost £30K annually (£56K at the moment) and asked for delegation of authority to the Finance Committee for formal approval of the contract selection decision.
- 8.10. The Co-Chair (JH) noted the FBG's unanimous approval of this proposed refuse collection contract tendering process.

9. Published Admissions Number (PAN)

- 9.1. The Co-Chair (JT) recalled that the school had had discussions with the LA about its proposal for the school to reduce its PAN from 330 to 300. The Co-Chair (JT) reported that, at the most recent meeting with the LA, the situation had not changed. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that the school would therefore go ahead with submission of a formal appeal to the Schools' Adjudicator on 9 May 2025.
- 9.2. The Co-Chair (JT) stated that, although nothing new had emerged from this latest meeting with the LA, it had still been a worthwhile exercise. The Co-Chair (JT) reported that there had been senior LA officials present to hear the school's presentation of its excellent progress and academic successes (supported with evidence, e.g. the Challenge Partners report).
- 9.3. The Co-Chair (JT) reported that the LA had been complimentary about the work of the school's leadership; its record of efforts made on diversity, equity and inclusion. The Co-Chair (JT) noted that the LA had listened carefully to the school's case made about the negative financial impact of a PAN reduction; also acknowledging the progress made on improving its finances (e.g. the School resource management adviser (SRMA) report assessment).
- 9.4. The Co-Chair (JT) acknowledged that the meeting had concluded without identifying any next steps to take. The Co-Chair (JT) added that the school remained committed to working with other schools, e.g. collaborating and sharing resources; and that all arguments made previously about retaining its current PAN remained valid.
- 9.5. TS informed governors that he had drafted a first version of an appeal in March, which had now been updated to take account of latest developments. TS believed that the Adjudicator would work from the presumption of the school retaining its existing PAN; on the basis of the school's main case of it being faced with a detrimental impact on the quality of education if a reduction to the PAN was accepted. TS recalled that this subject had been discussed fully and comprehensively in the Finance Committee. TS added that Blatchington Mill was one of several schools objecting to similar LA PAN proposals; Blatchington Mill was not the sole objector.
- 9.6. The Co-Chair (JT) commented that the LA would not be surprised by the school taking this action of submitting an appeal; and believed this would not impact negatively on its relationship with the LA. The Co-Chair (JH) noted that

the FBG had already indicated its agreement for the school to challenge the LA's PAN reduction proposal; submitting an appeal was the next step. Governors indicated their strong support of this action.

- 9.7. The Co-Chair (JT) reiterated the formal appeal letter would be submitted on 9 May; the LA would be informed; KC to discuss with the SLT on 12 May; and a message circulated to parents and carers shortly afterwards. KC added that she would be writing to her headteacher colleagues individually as well.
- 9.8. Governors asked about the timeline for progress of the appeal. TS described this as a quasi-judicial process; the school might have to field additional questions; Blatchington Mill's case had been presented in a very factual manner; there was no anticipation of complex queries being raised. TS estimated the school receiving a decision by July.

10. Safeguarding

- 10.1. KC reported that Lee Evans (LE – assistant headteacher) was working on the safeguarding audit; she was content with the work done so far on this exercise.

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

12. **Governor training** – None reported.

13. Governors meetings dates list 2025-2026

- 13.1. KC reported that work was being done on the school calendar, e.g. setting dates for parents' evenings, so confirmation of the governors' list was not yet possible.
- 13.2. The Co-Chair (JH) noted KC's request to change the proposed date of 11 September 2025 for the first FBG to be 2 October 2025; and agreed this could be done. The Co-Chair (JH) also agreed that agreement on all the other dates set out in this draft could be agreed at the next meeting of the FBG.

14. Any Other Business

- 1.1. The Co-Chair (JT) reported that he had complained to the LA (in consultation with the Hove Park Chair of Governors) about it not informing governors beforehand at a recent meeting, about its Hove Park Valley campus closure decision.

Actions

Notification to Governor Support and the school office of the two new co-opted governor appointments – DH

Collation of direct quotes and statements from governors, following school visit – JH

Change of 11 September to 2 October for first FBG of the new academic year - DH

Next meeting – Thursday 3 July 2025 - Budget

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...