

Brookland Infant and Junior Schools
Minutes of the meeting held at Brookland Infant and Junior Schools on Tuesday 13 May
2025 at 6pm

LA GOVERNOR

*Lucy Tobin

STAFF GOVERNOR

*Jenny Catley

PARENT GOVERNORS

*Samantha Jayasekera-Heffer (Infant)

*Kate Blumhof (Junior)

CO-OPTED GOVERNORS (12)

*Gabi Symons- (Junior Teacher)

*Aimee Lipton (Infant Teacher)

*Farnoush Bikdeli (Junior Support)

*Michael Farhi

James Clare (Vice Chair)

*Lisa Weinbrenn

*Laura Pincus (Chair)

*Nick Astaire- online?

*Jeff Harris (Infant parent)

*Judith Bernstein

*David Lee

*Daniella Jackson

HEADTEACHERS

*Brenda McCafferty (Infant Headteacher)

*Jenny Aylen (Junior Headteacher)

NON-VOTING OBSERVERS

Amy Hurst (Infant DHT)

*Cara Christie (Junior DHT)

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

*Sapna Shah

Clare Rosen

PART I

25/35 Welcome

All Governors were welcomed to the meeting.

25/36 Acceptance/ non-acceptance of apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted on behalf of James Clare, Clare Rosen and Amy Hurst. It was noted that with Clare Rosen stepping down at the end of July, a new wellbeing Governor was necessary. Michael Farhi had also expressed that he was considering stepping down soon.

25/37 Declaration of pecuniary interests

No Governor present declared a pecuniary interest in the business to be discussed.

25/38 Part I minutes of the meetings held on 11 March 2025

Part I of the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2025, circulated prior to the meeting, were received and noted by Governors subject to the following amendments:

It was clarified that there was no added sugar (only fruit based) in the school desserts and that was one reason why recipes were going to be shared with parents.

It was noted that a date for a link safeguarding meeting was set for 16 June at 9.30am in the Junior school. A date needed to be set for the Infant school.

It was noted that Safer recruitment training would be discussed at the Personnel committee meeting. The HTs confirmed that the policy had been updated accordingly.

25/39 Matters arising

Attention was drawn to the blurb for Karen Gubbay, that the Chair had uploaded onto Governor Hub. She had worked closely with the previous SEN Governor.

Following a show of hands, Governors **AGREED** to appoint Karen Gubbay as an Associate Member from 31 August 2025. It was agreed that she would visit the July meeting as a non-voting observer

25/40 Headteachers' reports

Infant Headteacher

Governor attention was drawn to the IHT report and supporting documents, circulated prior to the meeting. The IHT provided an overview noting that the term had been very busy, noting that Amy Hurst was still absent, although it was hoped that there would be an update by the end of the week. Appreciation was expressed for the staff, who had taken on extra responsibilities and stepped up admirably. Despite the additional pressures, there had been no negative impact on the learning of the children. Governors wished Amy Hurst a speedy recovery.

Following a Governor question, the IHT explained that there had been significant movement regarding pupil numbers due to several vacancies, but overall, the children were doing well. For Reception next year, 88 places had been offered. It was noted that some children with EHCPs were coming through different routes. There had been a few offer refusals, so a second round of offers would be made. Currently, there was a waiting list of 12 children, meaning the school could potentially be full if all accepted.

A question was raised about comparisons with previous years' figures. It was explained that fewer families had named the school as a preference between ranks 1 and 6, but the school had still managed to make 90 offers. This trend was consistent with other schools, as some nearby schools had reduced their intake numbers.

Following a Governor question regarding Nursery to Reception conversion, the IHT explained that there were three fewer children this year going from nursery to reception, with one going to a faith school and two going to other schools where siblings already attended. The School did not have sibling spaces available currently for those siblings.

In response to a question about the SEN report and the higher-than-national representation of SEND at the school, it was explained that this was due to a mixture of reasons. Staff and the SENCo had been improving in identifying SEND earlier, and teachers were encouraged to have earlier conversations to initiate referrals promptly.

Regarding the high number of EAL students, it was clarified that the school had a higher proportion compared to the national average. This did not necessarily mean lower achievement, as some EAL students performed very well. However, the high number of EAL students meant that the EHCP and SEN numbers would be higher as well.

A question about national EHCP eligibility for Pupil Premium (PP) students was raised. It was noted that at the school this was lower, which was for no specific reasons. PP eligibility depended on family income and was not always correlated with SEND. Different learning barriers could overlap, with some students facing multiple challenges.

Concerning the parent questionnaire, one respondent had disagreed that concerns were dealt with in a timely manner. The IHT was surprised by this as Alison was known to respond promptly to parents. The SENCO was very busy managing referrals and meetings, but ensured thoroughness to avoid return queries.

On parent survey comments suggesting that all staff should have autism training and CPD, it was clarified that all staff already received training, which was incorporated within their professional development. It was uncertain whether the “don’t know” responses came from one individual or multiple parents, which the IHT planned to review. Last year’s surveys were available on the website for comparison.

Regarding food vouchers and their issuance, the IHT reported no issues at the school, but Barnet had not issued any vouchers at Easter and was waiting to inform the school when the next round would be available.

Infant and junior school calendars had been included on the Governor Hub.

Junior Headteacher

Governor attention was drawn to the JHT report and supporting documents circulated prior to the meeting.

A question was raised about the peer coaching project and its current progress. It was explained that teachers were paired based on goals and needs, using a coaching approach aligned with the GROW model, on which all had been trained. Activities included team teaching, modelling specific skills, collaborative planning, practicing the use of roles for children, teaching vocabulary, engaging all pupils in lessons, and using visuals to aid memory. The teachers were scheduled to reconvene the following week to share their learning. Following a Governor question, the JHT confirmed that the school had arranged the pairings. For the summer term, a lesson study approach would be undertaken within year groups, focusing on a specific teaching area, trialling it in one class, refining it, and then implementing it in another.

Regarding the “book look” process, these were conducted in the autumn and spring terms with a set focus each time. The recent focus had been on vocabulary and adaptive teaching. Subject leaders reviewed their subject overviews to identify strengths and weaknesses. Handwriting was highlighted as a strength due to a new handwriting scheme. The Maths Hub influenced the variety and quality of maths lessons. Additionally, the development of science glossaries and their integration into pupils’ books was noted. Outcomes from the book looks were used to inform improvements and next year’s School Development Plan (SDP), with toolkits playing an important role.

Attendance had not been as strong as the previous year. JHT noted that Persistent Absence (PA) had decreased last year but increased this year. The attendance figure was lower overall, but as the year progressed, the data would become more meaningful. There had been an issue with “J” codes in Year 6, which accounted for attendance during interviews, tests, and visits to other schools. The IHT confirmed that these codes could now be removed and would not count against attendance, including backdated adjustments. Some children still had low attendance, and there was significant involvement with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). The Arbor system now allowed parents to view their child’s attendance, and follow-ups were conducted individually with parents during pupil progress meetings.

The school maintained a wide-ranging wellbeing offer which helped to support and pre-empt wellbeing needs. This helped the School to mitigate the national increase in children with mental health, behaviour and emotional needs and the waiting list for support through NHS. Individual children’s needs were identified through conversations and support mechanisms. Attendance rewards continued to be effective.

Appreciation was expressed for the numerous positive events taking place and gratitude extended to all staff, with all teachers running clubs, and some going beyond their regular duties.

The school's PE provision was noted for its breadth and depth, having achieved the platinum award.

The pupil survey indicated that 88% of pupils attended a school club. The remaining 12% were monitored and tended to decline club participation due to personal preference or other commitments. The school provided a variety of non-competitive activities, tracked participation, and offered free clubs to those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM).

Regarding the use of "Widgets" for vocabulary, it was explained that this was an IT package generating images for key words, with translation features, and staff had received training on its use.

On next year's SDP focus on RE and Music, the JHT noted that this had not yet been confirmed. The emphasis on individual subjects was a relatively new development. The school was currently reviewing the Primary Science quality mark and did not intend to focus further on Science beyond this

Following a Governor question, the JHT provided an update on the NPQEL course she was attending. She noted that she was enjoying it, with another residential planned for June. The resources and learning were helpful for leadership, allowing her to bring insights back to the school. The course offered a broader perspective on how different school structures operated, considering the advantages and disadvantages of various structures and how our schools fit within that landscape.

A question was asked about pupil book availability for the July FGB meeting. It was confirmed that Governors could have access to review them.

Concerning the pupil survey's "sometimes" responses, a Governor noted that these would not always be positive and should be interpreted with caution. Pupils were consistently described as well-behaved during visits. The DHT noted that the higher proportion of "sometimes" and "don't know" responses came from Year 4, where two children with ADHD were exhibiting challenging behaviours at the time of the survey. Adaptations had since been put in place for these pupils.

On due diligence and equalities, it was noted that the School had previously conducted audits. A recent review of the history unit curriculum, including the representation of Romans in Year 3, was mentioned. While the school controlled the curriculum content and delivery, concerns were raised about the vetting process of a BPSI advisor who led staff training. The JHT committed to passing on information to BPSI, emphasized the importance of proper vetting and explained that BPSI steering group had processes for this.

Following a Governor question, it was noted that training was conducted with MTS staff to manage playground interactions with different children.

Regarding SATs week, it was acknowledged as a significant undertaking. Judith Bernstein and Lisa Weinbrenn had supervised the tests and noted they had been impressed by the smooth operation. Two tests had been completed so far, with pupils remaining calm. The Year 6 team was experienced and well-prepared.

Governors commended the SEV report and the positive nature of its contents.

The JHT reminded Governors of the SDP and SEN documents that were available on the Governor Hub.

25/41 **Staff governors' reports**

It was noted that the Computing insets had been very positive. The Arts week was also scheduled for the following week. Gabi Symons had also had a lesson filmed by UCL as part of their project.

In the Infant school, Governors noted how busy but successful the term had been and echoed the positive morale within the School, with staff going the extra mile. Various events had taken place including the Barent Football Festival, the Dance Festival and the numerous trips that the children had enjoyed.

25/42 **Budget discussion 2025/6**

It was noted that the budget presentation, usually given at this point in the year, had not taken place. This was not due to lack of effort, as considerable work had been undertaken. However, there had been ongoing problems with the accountant provision supplied by Entrust, the shared service provider, which had undergone changes during the year.

The leadership team had reviewed the figures and initially believed they were accurate.

The Q4 outturn and budget had been reviewed the previous week. Both budgets appeared balanced for the current year, but the starting figures seemed incorrect. Schools did not have input into these initial figures, but they appeared inaccurate. Consequently, a pause was placed on deciding next steps, since the Q4 outturn fed directly into the budget for the following year, and if the numbers were wrong, submitting a deficit budget would require a recovery plan.

The school had written to both Entrust and the Local Authority (LA) expressing concerns about the accountancy service and that the revenue figures were not correctly recorded and budget lines lacked explanation.

The previous school accountant would now be returning to assist the School but this would not be until June. The budget submission deadline was at the end of May however the School was uncertain about how to proceed and needed to understand the consequences of a late submission and whether an extension might be permitted. It was noted that it was the infant school's budget that was projected to be in deficit.

Three options were under consideration, each carrying potential consequences from the LA if the budget was submitted late. The IHT noted that she had informed the LA via email about the situation.

Governors were reminded that if a deficit was submitted, the school would need to begin planning how to address this shortfall and submit a recovery plan alongside.

Following a Governor question, it was noted that Entrust service was purchased through a shared service offered by Barnet, and the school was exploring whether any funds could be reclaimed due to the issues encountered.

Following Governor discussion, it was agreed that these were the three options available. Governors would be updated via Governor Hub regarding the next steps.

25/43 **Committee reports** (including risk)

Safeguarding Committee

The chair of the committee provided an update noting that the committee had met this week and reviewed various policies. They also had two safeguarding visits scheduled which would confirm that the schools were compliant, and all necessary safeguarding support was in place.

It was noted that there had been incidents in the nearby areas which the HTs had managed well with parents reassured through newsletters etc. The School had also had a visit from a local police officer to talk to Y6.

A wellbeing survey had also been completed amongst staff. Following a discussion, it was agreed that school should finish earlier on the last day of term, with that being 1.30pm for the children and not before 2pm for staff at the discretion of the HTs. It was agreed that this change would be communicated to staff from the Governors.

Action: Chair

Curriculum committee

The chair noted that a meeting was scheduled for the following week. This would involve discussion on the national interim curriculum review, junior tool kit and admissions statements. The key risks focused around potential political changes.

Personnel committee

The chair noted that a meeting had been held at the end of March and another was scheduled for the following week. The committee would be discussing the ongoing pay policy as guidance from central government was still not clear. The committee would draft a statement to share with Governors.

Strategy committee

A meeting was scheduled for 9 June. They would discuss the agenda for the July FGB meeting.

Premises committee

It was noted that there were a number of ongoing issues. One of these was with the decarbonisation project which required a lot of troubleshooting and another new project lead in the LA. The School continued to face a number of challenges with it.

The School continued discussions with the LA regarding works to other parts of the School roof.

The Chair drew attention to the School estate management standards and agreed to share further information with the committee.

Action: Chair

In terms of the new recycling stipulations, the HTs confirmed that plans were in place and the Schools had budgeted for any necessary changes.

25/44 Wellbeing

It was noted that with Clare Rosen's departure, a new wellbeing Governor was needed. This would be revisited in September.

Clare Rosen was thanked for all her continued work in this area for both staff and students.

25/45 Policies

The Chair noted that she had reviewed the policy list and made updates in red. There were very few policies that required attention. Governors thanked the Chair for all her work on this.

25/46 **Whistleblowing**

There was nothing to report.

25/47 **Governor visits**

Governors were reminded to arrange a visit with their link subject leader as well as attending any relevant events.

Governors were reminded to complete any outstanding visit forms, including the Curriculum Tea and add these to the Governor Hub.

Action: All Governors

Lucy Tobin noted that she was in the process of arranging some assemblies focused on Maths. Farnoush Bikdeli had also completed a talk on MFL and highlighted the great work that the children were doing with their pen pals.

25/48 **Chair's correspondence**

The Chair confirmed that there was nothing further to report.

25/49 **Governor support and development, and report of the link governor**

Governors were reminded of the support and development available through the various portals.

The Chair noted that she had signed up for a course on wellbeing as well as one focused on complaints handling.

25/50 **Report of the Director of Education and Skills** (if available):
<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/wwc-home/information-for-schools/school-governors/meetings-and-reports.html>

The Chair provided an overview of the report noting that the Governance effectiveness audit was due by 25 July. She also noted that there were a number of courses that were coming up as well as a reminder of the new regulations regarding sustainability and climate change.

25/51 **Dates of committee meetings**

- Finance: TBC
- Safeguarding: TBC
- Curriculum: 19 May 2025
- Personnel: 22 May 2025
- Strategy: 9 June 2025
- Premises: TBC

25/52 **Dates of governing body meetings**

- Wednesday 9 July 2025 at 6pm (unlcerked)

The meeting ended at 8pm