

Brookland Infant and Junior Schools - Full Governing Body
Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 19 May 2026 at the School

LA GOVERNOR

Lucy Tobin

STAFF GOVERNOR

*Jenny Catley

PARENT GOVERNORS

*Samantha Jayasekera-Heffer (Infant)
Vacancy (Junior)

CO-OPTED GOVERNORS (12)

Gabi Symons- (Junior Teacher)
*Gillian Delany (Infant Teacher)
*Farnoush Bikdeli (Junior Support)
Michael Farhi
*James Clare (Vice Chair)
*Lisa Weinbrenn
*Laura Pincus (Chair)
Nick Astaire
*Jeff Harris
*Judith Bernstein
*David Lee
*Daniella Jackson

HEADTEACHERS

*Brenda McCafferty (Infant Headteacher)
*Jenny Aylen (Junior Headteacher)

NON-VOTING OBSERVERS

*Amy Hurst (Infant DHT)- zoom
*Cara Christie (Junior DHT)

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

*Karen Gubbay
*Kate Blumhof

26/34 **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

26/35 **Declaration of Pecuniary Interests**

No pecuniary interests were declared.

26/36 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Gabi Symons, Michael Farhi, Lucy Tobin and Nick Astaire.

26/37 **Part I Minutes of the Meeting Held on 10 March 2026**

Part I of the minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2026, circulated prior to the meeting, were received and noted by Governors subject to the following amendments:

- the spelling of "Blumhof" was corrected to use one "f"
- "Language Day" was amended to "International Mother Tongue Language Day".
- P3, correction to the capital letter for Uniform and Complaints Policy

Subject to these amendments, the minutes were approved as an accurate record.

26/38 **Matters Arising**

It was confirmed that the Entrust document had now been completed.

Jeff Harris confirmed that he continued to work through the outstanding personnel policies.

A discussion followed on the visibility of Governors within the school and their role as ambassadors, as referenced in the School Development Plan. It was recognised that Governors already attend a range of school events, but that there were opportunities to increase their visibility and engagement with pupils and parents in a more structured way. Governors agreed that this role should extend beyond fundraising and considered how this might be developed in practice.

It was agreed that this would be explored further by the Strategy Committee.

Action: Chair

26/39 Headteachers' Reports

Infant Headteacher Report

Copies of the IHT report and supporting documents, circulated prior to the meeting, were received and noted by Governors.

The IHT reported that the school had continued to experience a high level of pupil movement throughout the year, with a notable number of leavers and new admissions. While many families were relocating abroad or moving to other areas, this level of mobility had created a significant administrative burden and required considerable effort to settle new pupils.

Despite this, the school remained popular, with continued interest from prospective parents and regular school tours, including recent interest from families relocating internationally.

The IHT confirmed that the school continued to perform well, with pupils making good progress and attendance remaining strong. Persistent absence in Year 2 was currently very low- only 3 children.

Enrichment activities remained a positive feature of school life, and initiatives such as "Big Me Day" were highlighted as examples of well-planned provision for pupils.

Two members of the senior leadership team had now received Designated Safeguarding Officer training, and safeguarding information for staff will be refreshed and made more visible across the school environment. Governors also noted that changes to pupil premium eligibility linked to universal credit were anticipated, although further detail on implementation and funding was still awaited.

Premises issues were ongoing, including concerns around potential system leaks, and investigations were due to take place over the half term. This was ultimately having an impact on school expenditure.

Following a Governor question, the IHT provided clarification on safeguarding arrangements, including Operation Encompass. This provides schools with notification where police have attended incidents involving families with school-aged children. It was confirmed that this information was used sensitively to support pupils and families where appropriate.

Governors discussed the safeguarding section of the report, specifically the requirement to ensure full compliance with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)*. In response to a question regarding areas not yet complete, the IHT clarified that there were no compliance concerns and that the outstanding elements related solely to the completion of training courses, which were in progress.

The Governing Body also considered progress against the School Development Plan. While most areas were progressing well, some activities, including lunchtime provision, were impacted by staffing pressures and the impact of some challenging children.

The Governing Body reviewed the Governors' section of the SDP and considered how progress should be rated. It was noted that Governors had undertaken a range of training, including curriculum-focused sessions, and continued to develop their roles through link Governor responsibilities. Governors discussed the importance of determining an appropriate RAG rating and identifying any further actions required. It was suggested that updates on curriculum and other areas could be shared more regularly through link governor activity, rather than relying solely on formal reports. It was agreed that this element should be rated as green.

Governor Hub usage was also discussed. It was noted that the platform was well used and provided a central location for documentation, and this was also rated as green. However, Governors agreed that training materials and resources should be further developed through the platform, including the addition of summaries to improve accessibility and understanding. It was also noted that additional Governors may need to undertake safer recruitment training.

It was agreed that these areas would be considered further by the Strategy Committee.

Governors also reviewed the school's approach to fundraising and agreed that this remained a high priority. The contribution of Lucy Tobin was recognised, particularly in relation to fundraising activity and the wider ambassadorial role of governors. This element was also agreed to be rated as green

Karen Gubbay arrived at the meeting.

The Governing Body thanked the IHT for the report.

SEN Report

Governors discussed the increase in referrals and the implications for workload and capacity. The IHT confirmed that arrangements were in place to manage this, including enabling the Inclusion Leader to work from home where appropriate to allow for uninterrupted time. It was noted that workload was managed flexibly, with priorities adjusted where necessary. If the level of demand became too great, there was scope to reallocate responsibilities, including reducing classroom cover commitments.

In response to a question regarding the forthcoming change in the staffing arrangement with responsibility for SEND, the IHT confirmed that a comprehensive handover was being planned. Clare Stevens, who already holds an inclusion leadership role, would be taking over the position. A structured transition had been arranged, including attendance at key school events, participation in relevant meetings, and dedicated time to work alongside the outgoing inclusion leader. In addition, the outgoing inclusion leader was preparing a detailed monthly overview of responsibilities to support continuity.

Governors were advised that the school was planning a formal opportunity to recognise the contribution of the departing inclusion leader, including a breakfast and assembly. Governors were invited to attend, and it was noted that Karen Gubbay would arrange to meet Clare.

The Governing Body also noted the Barnet Education Learning Service (BELS) guidance, with areas such as pupil wellbeing and English as an Additional Language falling within the wider scope of SEN provision. It was agreed that these/questioning should be incorporated into link Governor visits to strengthen oversight and ensure that key lines of enquiry were consistently explored.

Junior Headteacher Report

Copies of the JHT report circulated prior to the meeting, were received and noted by Governors. The JHT reported on continued progress across the school, with a particular focus on inclusion, belonging and pupil wellbeing. External review activity from the LNI- Claire Syms had highlighted the strength of the school's approach, with positive feedback received from engagement with pupils and staff. Claire Syms was thanked for all her support so far.

Leadership development also remained a priority, with staff undertaking professional qualifications and stepping into higher-level roles to support school capacity. The JHT reported that Paul Whitcombe had been working with the school to provide individual coaching and support to the senior leadership team, including aligning practice with Ofsted expectations and language. It was also reported that the Deputy Headteacher had successfully completed the NPQH qualification, and the Governing Body congratulated her on this achievement. Three staff members are currently undertaking Higher Level Teaching Assistant qualifications.

SATs had been successfully delivered, and Governors thanked staff for their calm and effective management of the process, including appropriate arrangements for pupils requiring additional support- different access arrangements at different times. Judith Bernstien and Lisa Weinbrenn were also thanked for their support.

Following a Governor question, the JHT noted that both schools had been accepted onto a trauma-informed schools programme, which would begin in September. This would support a more consistent, whole-school approach to behaviour and relationships, particularly in response to pupils' lived experiences. Staff would be trained by Educational Psychologists with some funding attached would allow the release of staff for this training. It was noted that Clare Stevens had already received this training at her previous school.

It was clarified that this approach did not relate solely to extreme trauma but rather to a broader understanding of adverse experiences and their impact on behaviour.

Further initiatives included partnerships with external organisations, careers activities, and continued development of teaching and learning approaches. An example of this was the BACPAC programme, a Barnet-based training initiative for parents of children with autism.

Following a Governor question, the JHT also explained the "three key words" approach used within teaching and learning. This approach focuses each lesson around three key terms to support clarity and understanding of learning objectives. It was further noted that pre-teaching is used to support pupils who may struggle to access learning, ensuring that they are familiar with key vocabulary in advance of lessons.

The JHT noted that 61% of pupils had English as an Additional Language.

Governors noted the school's participation in a UCL research partnership focused on connecting children with nature through gardening and growing activities. In response to a question on sustainability, it was confirmed that gardening would form part of future curriculum planning, and subject links would reflect this.

Governors also received an update on Careers Week, which included a programme of external speakers. These included professionals from a range of sectors who spoke to pupils about their roles and how they contribute to their communities. The programme was supported through external connections.

In discussion of the School Development Plan, Governors noted that the school website had not yet been rated green. It was explained that improvements were planned, particularly in relation to the SEN section and branding, and that this work would be taken forward in the next term.

A broader discussion took place regarding online safeguarding and emerging risks associated with the misuse of pupil images, including the creation of manipulated content. It was noted that the school was seeking further advice from its website provider and would consider whether additional risk assessment or policy development was required.

Governors reflected on the importance of balancing safeguarding with maintaining a strong public-facing identity for the school. It was confirmed that no pupil names are published alongside images, and that pupil voice is primarily captured for internal use and shared externally for example through the newsletters.

The Governing Body thanked the JHT for the report.

SEN report

The SEN report was tabled at the meeting. The Chair suggested that the SENCOs should be given access to Governor Hub in order to upload documentation directly.

Action: Chair

It was noted that any further questions arising from the SEN report could be submitted following the meeting.

The JHT highlighted a significant increase in social worker involvement, with a number of pupils currently supported through external services (12 currently with a social worker). This was placing additional pressure on staff, both in terms of workload and wellbeing, although a strong safeguarding team was in place to provide support.

26/40 Staff Governor Reports

Staff updates had been incorporated within the Headteachers' reports. Governors noted that attainment remained strong overall, although outcomes for the current cohort might be more variable due to increased levels of SEN. It was anticipated that pupil progress would remain good.

26/41 Budget Discussion 2026/27

The Governing Body received a detailed presentation on the 2026/27 budgets for both the Infant and Junior schools.

In relation to the Infant School, Governors noted that the budget remained in a deficit position, primarily as a result of falling pupil numbers, including lower intake in both the main school and nursery provision. This had led to reduced income across several funding streams, while staffing costs remained high due to ongoing operational requirements and support for pupils with additional needs. The projected in-year deficit for 2026/27 was reported to be approximately £147,955.

Governors discussed the wider financial context and noted that many schools across the borough were experiencing similar challenges, with an increasing number operating in deficit.

It was confirmed that the Governing Body was unable to formally ratify the budget at this stage due to the deficit position. The IHT explained that a deficit licence would be required, and that this would necessitate the submission of a three-year recovery plan demonstrating how the school would return to a balanced position. It was noted that if a credible plan could not be demonstrated, external intervention could be required, including oversight at a national level. Work was ongoing to develop a robust three-year plan, based on assumptions including full

pupil capacity and provision for staff pay increases. Opportunities to generate additional income, including fundraising and use of school premises, were being explored.

As part of the discussion, the IHT provided wider context on the financial position across the borough. It was noted that at Quarter 3 in the previous financial year, 40 out of 83 schools in Barnet were operating in deficit, rising to 46 by the end of the year (Quarter 4). It was anticipated that this number would increase further in the current year.

Despite these pressures, it was emphasised that the impact was not immediately visible on a day-to-day basis within the school, as high standards were being maintained through the strength of staff and provision.

Governors also noted the recent Directors' briefing, which outlined early-stage plans for a potential programme of school place reorganisation across the borough. This included a proposed two-year project to assess demand, based on projections for falling birth rates and pupil mobility. It was noted that this represented the beginning of a longer-term approach to reviewing school provision.

Governors discussed the potential for structural changes locally, including any possibility of merging the Infant and Junior schools. It was confirmed that this would be a decision for the Governing Body. Governors noted that, if retained, the school would likely be one of the few remaining settings operating as separate Infant and Junior schools. It was acknowledged that similar discussions had taken place historically, and it was agreed that this may need to be revisited at an appropriate point in the future. It was also noted that the school would be celebrating its 75th anniversary in the next academic year.

For the Junior School, the budget was considered to be in a more stable position. While there were ongoing pressures, particularly in relation to staffing and the need to fund additional support through agency provision, the overall financial outlook was more positive. Recruitment of permanent teaching assistants was underway to reduce reliance on agency staff over time.

Governors noted that income levels were broadly stable, although still dependent on pupil numbers and national funding arrangements. It was also reported that the school's swimming pool provision was broadly self-sustaining, operating at a relatively small net cost once income was taken into account.

The discussion also considered wider trends in the borough, including declining pupil rolls and early discussions regarding school place planning and potential restructuring.

Following a show of hands, Governors **APPROVED** the Junior School budget for 2026/27.

The Infant School budget was noted but could not be formally approved due to the deficit position.

26/42 **Committee Reports**

a. Finance

The Finance Committee report was covered earlier in the meeting under the budget discussion. It was noted that the next Finance Committee meeting date would need to be scheduled.

b. Safeguarding

The Governing Body noted the update from the recent Safeguarding Committee meeting. An update on the Behaviour and Relationships Policy was provided, and Governors had contributed

feedback to inform its development. A number of other policies were also reviewed, including the AI policy.

The committee had discussed a specific incident relating to a parent refusing to leave the premises at the end of the school day. Broader contextual safeguarding risks were also considered, including antisemitism in the local area, as well as issues relating to wellbeing, domestic violence and mental health.

c. Curriculum

The Governing Body noted the update from the spring Curriculum Committee meeting. Committee members had reviewed both the Teaching and Learning Policy and the Assessment Policy, and discussed key curriculum changes at a high level.

The next Curriculum Committee meeting was confirmed for 15 June.

d. Personnel

The Governing Body received an update from the Personnel Committee meeting held in March. The main item discussed was the Employment Rights Act 2025, which is being introduced in phases. It was noted that several aspects of the legislation are still being worked through, and further guidance and training will be provided to schools in due course.

The committee had also reviewed a number of outstanding policies and other personnel-related changes.

e. Strategy

The Governing Body noted that the next Strategy Committee meeting would take place on 12 June.

f. Premises

The update from the Premises Committee was noted, with apologies received from Nick Astaire who had been unable to attend. Governors were informed of ongoing issues relating to the heat pump system and suspected leaks.

It was further noted that the next phase of roof works, including works in the kitchen area, was scheduled to take place over the summer period.

26/43 Wellbeing

Judith Bernstein noted that she had met with the SENCo. Training on wellbeing was scheduled to take place on 4 June.

Governors noted the ongoing wellbeing workshops for parents delivered through BICS. These sessions were described as well attended, with very positive feedback, and were making a meaningful difference for a number of families. It was also noted that some parents were specifically targeted for support, and that the sessions provided an opportunity for peer support between parents.

An update was provided on staff wellbeing and absence. The Chair had shared a slide deck outlining a range of approaches to supporting wellbeing, including both practical and non-financial initiatives. Members recognised the importance of this work in the context of recruitment and retention challenges across the teaching profession.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the trauma-informed schools programme could include a focus on staff as well as pupils, although further detail would be provided following the initial engagement with the programme. It was also noted that senior leader mental health training undertaken by the JHT and Simon Greenhouse covered both staff wellbeing and understanding of trauma.

Governors acknowledged the important role of the Headteachers in maintaining oversight of staff wellbeing and ensuring appropriate support was in place. It was confirmed that return-to-work processes following staff absence were implemented and monitored.

Governors asked about the use of staff exit interviews. It was noted that these had been carried out in some cases, although many staff departures had been due to relocation abroad.

In response to a further question, it was confirmed that staff surveys are undertaken every two years.

26/44 Governor visits

Governors noted that a SEND coffee morning was scheduled, which Karen Gubbay would be attending alongside Simon Greenhouse, with Judith Bernstein also invited to attend.

Samantha Jayasekera-Heffer reported on a recent curriculum visit focused on PSHE. This included a review of planned curriculum changes due to be implemented in the autumn term. It was noted that the school had already begun embedding some of these changes into current lessons. A gap analysis had been undertaken to identify key differences and required developments, and consideration had been given to how concepts would be adapted to support pupils with SEN. The visit also included lesson observations.

Karen Gubbay noted that she had also undertaken a SEN visit.

The Chair added that she had also been in liaison with Riaz Khan in relation to the development of the AI policy.

The Governing Body was encouraged to continue undertaking visits during the summer term, including attendance at the upcoming Junior School open evening scheduled for 25 June.

26/45 Governor Training

This had been covered earlier in the agenda.

26/46 Governor Effectiveness Audit

It was noted that this would be discussed in the July FGB meeting.

26/47 Chair's correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

26/48 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>

Governors noted the circulated report and highlighted key updates, including borough-wide developments and the possibility of industrial action in the autumn term.

26/49 Any Other Business

It was noted that two Governors – James Clare and David Lee- would be leaving at the end of the academic year. They thanked them both for their ongoing support and contribution to the FGB and schools as a whole.

It was also noted that recruitment of a new parent governor was underway- this closed on 21 May 2026.

26/50 **Dates of committee meetings**

- a. Finance: TBC
- b. Safeguarding: 30 June (8.45)
- c. Curriculum: 15 June (2.30-3.30)
- d. Personnel: 19 Jun (12-1)
- e. Strategy: 12 June, (12-1)
- f. Premises: TBC
- g. Mid year review
 - i. Infant: 26 June 8:45am
 - ii. Junior: 19 June at 8.45am

26/51 **Dates of governing body meetings**

Wednesday 7 July 2026 at 6pm (unlcerked)

The meeting closed at 8.05pm.