

Minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting of Brookland School, held on 24 January 2024 at 5pm at the School

LA GOVERNOR

Vacancy

PARENT GOVERNORS

*Samantha Jayasekera-Heffer (Infant)

*Kate Blumhof (Junior)

HEADTEACHERS

*Brenda McCafferty (Infant Headteacher)

*Jenny Aylen (Junior Headteacher)

NON-VOTING OBSERVERS

*Amy Simpson (Infant DHT)

*Cara Christie (Junior DHT)

STAFF GOVERNOR

*Jenny Catley

CO-OPTED GOVERNORS (12)

*Gabi Symons (Junior Teacher)

*Aimee Epstein (Infant Teacher)

Farnoush Bikdeli (Junior Support)

Michael Farhi

*James Clare

Lisa Weinbrenn

*Laura Pincus (Chair)

Nick Astaire

*Jeff Harris (Infant parent)

*Judith Bernstein

David Lee

*Daniella Jackson

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Carol Frankl

Sapna Shah

*Clare Rosen

PART I

24/1 Welcome

All Governors were welcomed to the meeting. They thanked staff for the Curriculum Tea.

24/2 Acceptance/ non-acceptance of apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted on behalf of Sapna Shah, Nick Astaire, Michael Farhi, Lisa Weinbrenn, Carol Frankl, David Lee and Farnoush Bikdeli.

24/3 Declaration of pecuniary interests

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

24/4 Part I minutes of the meetings held on 3 October 2023 and 14 November 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate recording of the meeting. The Chair signed the minutes.

A correction was made to confirm that apologies were received from Gabi Symons.

The Chair had also uploaded the minutes from the session on 14 November which focused on safeguarding and curriculum. The former discussed the approach to safeguarding and training as well as some of the new responsibilities that staff now have. The latter was about curriculum threads and progression with both schools using vocabulary in a more joined up way and more

explicitly. It was suggested that Governors ask staff about this progression when doing their Link Visits.

24/5 **Matters arising**

The Chair was actioned with completing the Governor skills audit.

The JHT confirmed that she had circulated the Equalities Action plan.

24/6 **Governor roles**

The Chair provided an update of the changes:

- Sapna Shah had stepped down from the role of LA Governor and would become an Associate Member. She would remain on the Finance committee.
- Replacements would therefore need to be sort for the PP and Maths Link Governor
- Kate Blumhoff agreed to be part of the HT appraisal committee

This left a LA Governor vacancy. The Chair noted that she had spoken with a potential candidate – Lucy Tobin who the Governors had discussed previously and was part of the LA Governor list.

Following a show of hands, Governors **APPROVED** this appointment for the four-year term ending on 23 January 2027.

Following a show of hands, Governors **APPROVED** the appointment of Daniella Jackson to the Co-Opted Governor vacancy for a four-year period ending on 23 January 2027.

It was noted that Carol Frankl would be stepping down from her Associate Member role from July. If anyone knows of someone interested in taking on the role, they were asked to contact the Chair.

It was noted that Marcelle Jennings had stepped down from her role. Governors **APPROVED** the formal appointment of Gabi Symons to the Co-opted Governor (Teacher) for a four-year term ending on 23 January 2027. Marcelle Jennings was thanked for all her contributions and continued work at the School.

24/7 **Headteachers' reports and supporting documents**

Infant Headteacher

Governor attention was drawn to the IHT report and supporting documents, uploaded onto Governor Hub before the meeting.

A Governor noted the lower numbers in Reception and asked what plans were in place to mitigate against this. The IHT noted that this was a trend being seen across the country at the moment mainly due to low birth rates. She added that some schools in inner London were having to close because of this. She noted that the School continued to host a number of tours with additional ones also in the pipeline. Garden Suburb school would be capping their numbers at 60 so it was thought that the School may receive some of that overflow next academic year.

It was noted that 245 parents had mentioned Brookland as a choice, this could range between options 1 and 6. This was lower than previous years. There were also families who would select the School and private schools and their choices could not be seen until later in the year.

A discussion ensued amongst Governors regarding attendance and sickness rates and whether the School promoted still bringing children into School if they had a cough for example. The IHT explained that the School had just sent out letters to all those with attendance below 90% and regularly sends out NHS guidance in the weekly newsletter about when to keep children home/when to send them to school. She noted that the letters did have an impact and once attendance improved the family also received a recognition and thank you letter. If the attendance did not improve, the family would be contacted by the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

Following a Governor question, the IHT explained that the key in the report explained the Age Related Expectations (ARE) for the different groups and what each acronym meant.

A Governor asked whether the 3-5% for Greater depth was expected. The IHT explained that staff were far more cautious when setting baseline figures. At pupil progress meetings, pupils were reviewed with those particularly at the cusp, identified for additional challenge etc.

A Governor questioned whether the figure of zero for SEND pupils in Nursery was correct. The IHT confirmed this noting that there were still a number of children who were being monitored before making the decision if they were going to be receiving SEN support. There was more early identification now although it took a significant amount of time to gather the necessary evidence before the school could potentially go for an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).

Following a Governor question, the IHT explained that Widget helped to make visual resources including timetables etc for children who required that additional support. Clicker was another resource available to further support students with scaffolding in writing. This was particularly useful for children with SEN and EAL. The staff had also had training on it and the Inclusion Leader was partaking in a new course that she would then share with staff more widely.

The IHT added that some children with EAL were new to English and it was difficult to identify whether the challenges were due to language or wider SEND needs.

A Governor noted the one suspension that had taken place. The IHT explained that this was due to a number of serious behavioural incidents where a member of staff was injured. She assured the Governors that all procedures had been followed with the necessary communication with the parents, Chair and relevant people at Barnet. The child was doing well since returning with a reintegration plan in place as well as other strategies.

It was noted that data would be reviewed and analysed in February and again at the end of the academic year.

The IHT was thanked for her updates.

Junior Headteacher

Governor attention was drawn to the JHT report and supporting documents, uploaded onto Governor Hub before the meeting.

Following a Governor question, the JHT explained that the *Brookland Teacher Toolkit* was an ongoing kit that comprised of all the resources and tactics used across the School that were bespoke to its teaching and learning approach.

She added that staff appraisals were also based on choosing particular elements of that toolkit and working on how this would be developed and built upon as well as the skill set needed. The toolkit was also helping to encourage more sharing of ideas, collaborative learning and best practice, bringing that into lessons. It was currently in the form of a live PowerPoint document. It was also very specific about the pedagogy used in the School and helped staff to reflect on their

own teaching and practice. The JHT added that they had shared their toolkit threads with other schools and other HTs and this had been useful too.

A Governor asked for clarity on what a working wall involved. The JHT explained that this was most strongly used in English and Maths with display boards in the classroom related to the current focus of learning. Children were encouraged to add information for example useful vocabulary on to it. For English it also tended to be used for story mapping. The approach helped the children to be more independent too.

Following a Governor question, the JHT explained that scaffolding was for children who found certain things more challenging. It was an approach to enable them to understand the lesson better with a framework in place which included questioning and templates for example.

A Governor asked what impact adding attendance and punctuality into the School newsletter had made. The JHT explained that it helped to keep it high profile. It was also added to the wall in the dining hall which the children were very interested by. In addition to this, there were reward assemblies and it was having an impact on the collective feeling of wanting to be in school on time.

The JHT added that they were using a different approach to letters for children whose attendance was under 90% (as compared to recent years). This year there were a lower number of Persistent Absentees so they had included in the newsletter that they would be informing parents to let them know that the attendance was below 90% with letters/phone calls then made later on. This allowed the School to have greater flexibility to respond to the different cohorts.

She added that the EWO visited the School every term to review and discuss the data with actions put in place accordingly. The focus was more about keeping children safe in education with the importance of these individual conversations noted.

Governors discussed, in the context of attendance and illness how the School maintained that balance between good attendance and protecting others from infection. The HTs explained measures such as ensuring that the School was as clean as possible with a continued emphasis on washing hands whilst maintaining expected attendance for coughs/colds in line with national guidance. The JHT highlighted the importance of dealing with this on a case-by-case basis with different and catered conversations for more vulnerable pupils or family members. The School was largely bound by government guidelines and could only lean on that in the wider communications.

A Governor pointed to the SEND report and the high number of children with EHCPs. The JHT added that the School were also in the process for applying for four more. She added that figures were not as high as they had been previously with 22 the previous year and 17 at present.

She added that it was slightly more manageable with the SENCO also working half a day more now. They were working hard to continue to support students with different needs, noting the increased focus on autism and ADHD the previous year. They were also identifying wellbeing around SEN support too, with mentoring and counselling for example.

A Governor questioned whether the funding for counselling was continuing. The JHT explained that this was via a supervision programme for trainee counsellors which the school funded and the BASE programme was separate. The School had been awarded funding from a charity called Beyond of £11,000 to support young carers in School with a learning mentor provided through BASE. That was however just for this year. The charity had also offered a workshop for improving mental health using sound baths

A Governor questioned whether there was anything further Governors could do to get more support from the LA in terms of Occupational Health and Speech & Learning therapists. The IHT noted that the School did have a therapist at the moment but encouraged parents to make contact with the LA to keep this high profiled.

Governors commended the provisional SATs data. It was noted that Bryony was also completing the Writing moderation course that the previous DHT used to do.

A Governor noted that there seemed to be a downward trend in terms of Writing across the country noting that a lot of homework had moved online since the pandemic. She asked if the School were concerned about this. The DHT explained that the School continued to do a lot of work on the golden sentence model as a way of cementing sentence level skills. There was also balance with homework that needed to be maintained in terms of also teaching technology skills, supporting resources available for pupils and parents through the online homework portals and teacher workload. The importance of reading and the time spent on this was also highlighted. The School had a lot of after school writing tuition.

The JHT was thanked for her updates.

Judith Bernstein left at 6.10pm

24/8 **SDPs**

Governor attention was drawn to the SDPs, circulated prior to the meeting. These were covered in the HT report.

24/9 **SEFs**

Governor attention was drawn to the Infant SEF, circulated prior to the meeting. These were covered in the HT report.

A Governor questioned what the *Introduction to Brookland programme* was. The IHT explained that this was something specific to the School which included all the things that the School did before the child actually started School to enable them to be more familiar with it, including home visits for example.

For those students that joined mid year, the IHT met with the parent and student beforehand and gave them a tour of the School and discussed any concerns or support needs that there were. It helped to build those relationships with parents with this also being positively received.

The JHT agreed to circulate the Junior SEF once completed.

Action: JHT

The Junior SEV report from the Learning Network Inspector (LNI) had also been included in the papers. The visit had focused on a deep dive in Writing and the feedback received had been very positive.

24/10 **Staff governors' reports**

The Infant staff Governors highlighted the importance of the growth mindset and how it was being taught to and utilised with the children. The impact of this was already being seen.

It was noted that Infant Subject leaders had worked hard on all their learning sequences.

The Junior School were also applying for the Quality Mark for Geography and Computing. The upcoming Environment and Sustainability week had a strong Geography focus. The LNI was also scheduled to undertake a visit focused on Geography in April.

24/11 **Committee reports**

It was noted that committee meeting dates would be confirmed via Governor Hub.

Finance committee

The chair of the committee provided an overview of the meeting held on 19 January. She noted that whilst there seemed to be additional income being received, costs and expenditure more generally was increasing. Neither schools were running a deficit.

Governors reiterated their commitment to the teaching and learning of children across the schools. The main risk in the infant school was numbers in Reception and in the Juniors, potential costs for roof refurbishments.

Safeguarding committee

An overview of the meeting was provided. This had focused on audits as well as a number of policies.

Curriculum committee

The Chair provided an overview of the meeting held in October 2023. The main focus of the discussion was on learning walks and the scheduling of these. There had been a learning walk completed in November on Geography. The next meeting was scheduled for 29 January and would focus on policies. The learning walk on Computing was scheduled for 18 March.

Personnel committee

The chair of the committee provided an overview of the meeting held in December. The committee had discussed and updated the Pay Policy which would be uploaded when complete. They also talked about staff code of conduct and safer recruitment. There were some discussions around the emotional impact on the safeguarding DSL team in the Junior school and how best to pastorally support staff with this- supervision was being explored.

Strategy committee

The Chair provided an overview of the discussion noting that this had included how to best use the uncerkerd meetings as well the Governor vacancies at that time.

In terms of the questions asked by Governors during visits, it was noted that there were pro formas available and it was best to restrict this to 3-4 key areas to make it more manageable. The Chair agreed to formalise the areas and circulate.

Action: Chair

The meeting also discussed GDPR and risk.

It was suggested that the Schools had an Equalities Link Governor. It was noted that this could be encapsulated within the current PSHE link Governor. SJH agreed to take on this subject link.

Premises committee

The chair of the committee had prepared an update which the Chair relayed to Governors. It was noted that at the meeting held in December, the committee had reviewed and agreed the Health and Safety policy and the current list of risk assessments and procedures within their remit.

They were also getting closer (with thanks to James F) to completing the works needed to get the new heat pump up and running which would of course improve the school's carbon footprint and save a fair bit of money on the heating bills.

The committee also discussed the state of the roof, which was in varying states of disrepair across the whole site. Barnet had been to view it and informed the School via email that after the new financial year in April, the School were at the top of the list for approval for a new roof across the school.

The IHT noted that if this were to go ahead, they had also been given assurance that the works would not be as extensive or disruptive to the children as first thought.

24/12 **Wellbeing**

A Governor noted the introduction of the Parental wellbeing hubs in the Junior school with the parents leading the agenda for each of the sessions. These were based on topics like anxiety for example, with 37 attending this morning's session.

It was suggested that the staff member delivering the session be recorded and this be uploaded onto the School website for other parents to view.

It was noted that the Infants would also benefit from a children's wellbeing pod like those in the Junior school. They continued to work on this.

24/13 **Governor visits**

There had been no Governor visits undertaken yet this term.

24/14 **Chair's correspondence**

There was nothing to report.

24/15 **Governor support and development, and report of the link governor**

The Chair confirmed that a link to the courses had been uploaded onto Governor Hub.

24/16 **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>

it was noted that the report was not yet available on the website.

24/17 **Dates of committee meetings**

- Finance: 8 March
- Safeguarding:
- Curriculum: 29 Jan at 3pm, 30 May at 3pm in person
- Personnel:
- Strategy: 24 Feb 12-1 zoom, 9 May 12-1.30pm
- Premises: TBC
- Mid year review date: JHT 14 June 2024 8:45; IHT 28 June 2024 8:45

24/18 **Dates of governing body meetings**

- Wednesday 13 March 6pm
- Wednesday 15 May 6pm
- Tuesday 2 July (unclerked) 6pm

The meeting closed at 6.40pm