

Brookland Infant and Junior Schools
Minutes of the meeting held at Brookland Infant and Junior Schools on Thursday 25
September 2025 at 6pm

LA GOVERNOR

*Lucy Tobin

PARENT GOVERNORS

*Samantha Jayasekera-Heffer (Infant)

*Kate Blumhof (Junior)

HEADTEACHERS

*Brenda McCafferty (Infant Headteacher)

*Jenny Aylen (Junior Headteacher)

NON-VOTING OBSERVERS

Amy Hurst (Infant DHT)

*Cara Christie (Junior DHT)

STAFF GOVERNOR

*Jenny Catley

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

*Jeff Harris

Judith Bernstein

*David Lee

*Daniella Jackson

ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Sapna Shah

*Karen Gubbay

PART I

25/53 **Welcome**

All Governors were welcomed to the meeting.

25/54 **Acceptance/ non-acceptance of apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted on behalf of Amy Hurst, Nick Astaire, Judith Bernstein and Sapna Shah.

25/55 **Governor appointments** (New/Re appointments)

It was noted that Aimee Lipton's term of office was due to end in November. She would be stepping down and so a replacement would need to be sought. She was thanked for all her contributions.

25/56 **Annual Register of Business Interests 2025-26**

Governors were reminded to complete this on GH, if not already done so.

25/57 **Declaration of pecuniary interests**

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

25/58 **Governor review of KCSIE**

Governors were reminded to complete this on GH, if not already done so.

25/59 **Governor Code of Conduct**

Governors confirmed that this had been read and agreed on GH.

25/60 **Governor Allowances Policy**

The Chair reminded governors of this policy and if anyone wanted to make use of it to speak to her.

25/61 **Part I minutes of the meetings held on 13 May 2025 and 9 July 2025**

Part I minutes from the meeting held on 13 May had not been uploaded onto GH prior to the meeting. Governors were asked to send any comments by the end of the following week.

Part I of the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2025, circulated prior to the meeting, were received and noted by Governors. They were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

25/62 **Matters arising**

There was a typo from *sonar* to *solar* panels.

25/63 **Annual Review of Committee Structure, Membership & Terms of Reference** –

Governor attention was drawn to the current committee structure. The Chair agreed to check with SS regarding responsibilities for Computing and with JB regarding Wellbeing.

Karen Gubbay confirmed she would lead on SEN. She also agreed to attend committee meetings when she could.

David Lee has come off Premises and Lisa has come off curriculum.

It was agreed that during the first meeting of each committee, the Terms of Reference (TOR) for that committee would be reviewed and the outcomes shared with the Chair

Action: Committee Chairs

JC arrived at the meeting at 6.40pm

25/64 **Appointment of Chair**

Nominations for the position of Chair were welcomed at the meeting. Governors considered the one nomination received on behalf of Laura Pincus.

Following a show of hands, Governor **RE-APPOINTED** Laura Pincus for the 2025-26 academic year or until their successor was appointed.

25/65 **Appointment of Vice Chair**

Nominations for the position of Vice Chair were welcomed at the meeting. Governors considered the one nomination received on behalf of James Clare.

Following a show of hands, Governor **RE- APPOINTED** James Clare for the 2025-26 academic year or until his successor was appointed.

25/66 **Approval of residential trips**

Infant Residential – Moat Mount (30 June – 3 July):

It was confirmed that the Infant residential trip to Moat Mount would take place from 30 June to 3 July, following the same format as previous years. The classes would attend on a staggered basis and take part in a range of activities, including team-building exercises.

A show of hands was conducted, and all members **APPROVED** the trip.

It was noted that last year, three to four children did not attend. Some pupils chose not to stay overnight and returned home in the evening, rejoining the group the following day. It was acknowledged that different options would continue to be available for those who may not wish to stay overnight.

Junior Residential – PGL Osmington Bay (7–10 June):

The Junior residential trip to PGL Osmington Bay was confirmed to be scheduled from 7 to 10 June. A meeting with parents was scheduled to be held in the coming weeks.

Following a show of hands, Governors **APPROVED** the trip.

It was noted that Lisa Weinbrenn would continue to review the risk assessments for both residential trips.

Last year, approximately five pupils did not attend, some of whom were new to the year group. They had planned activities together in London.

25/67 Headteachers' reports

Infant Headteacher

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

A Governor raised a comment regarding the current low pupil numbers and asked whether there was a plan in place to promote the school. It was noted that school tours had resumed, and staff were making every effort to promote the school whenever possible. The Governor also highlighted that some schools were using social media platforms such as Facebook to showcase their strengths and suggested that similar open communication channels were implemented at the school. The IHT welcomed this idea and agreed to explore it further.

The IHT reported that pupil numbers were particularly low in Reception and Year 2, with no waiting lists for either year group. Year 1 was currently full. It was also noted that, as of the following day, the borough would no longer be making offers to applicants from within Barnet, which would likely contribute to lower numbers.

Despite this, the current situation was said to benefit pupils, as staff were able to spend more time with each child. However, it was acknowledged that the situation would have a significant negative impact on school funding, as the school was already operating at a deficit.

Following a Governor question, the IHT noted that many of the families who did not take up places had opted for private education instead.

A Governor enquired as to when the more difficult questions around pupil numbers and funding might arise. The IHT responded that this had not yet become an issue, as the current total stood at 76 pupils, similar to the previous year, and Year 1 had since grown to 90 pupils. It was agreed that the school should not cap incoming numbers at 60.

It was noted that there had been a loss of pupils in Year 2, although these were largely due to valid reasons such as relocation abroad or affordability issues linked to working from home. The school's reputation remained strong, but the local demographics had shifted and there were simply fewer children in the area. It was noted that the Nursery currently had a waiting list, with parents hoping to start in January.

Governors discussed ways in which the school could continue to promote itself to prospective families.

An issue was raised regarding the installation of solar panels. The JHT had recently emailed Mr Wilkinson about the matter. It was noted that the solar panels needed to be installed alongside the heat pump, as the pump would otherwise be prohibitively expensive to run without the additional energy source.

A question was raised regarding the number of young carers in the school. It was confirmed that the number was high; however, the cohort was also large. The definition included children impacted by siblings with EHCPs or other family circumstances, broadening the group of identified young carers.

A question was asked regarding a recent allegation against a staff member. The IHT clarified that a parent had raised concerns about a staff member's behaviour, which was perceived as inappropriate. The IHT had contacted the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), who confirmed that their involvement was not necessary. The IHT confirmed that she had conducted an internal investigation, and the parent was satisfied with the outcome. In September, all staff were reminded to be mindful of their behaviour, particularly with younger children, and how actions might be interpreted.

The current percentage of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in Year 2 was reported at 7.3%, with only 82 pupils in the year group. This represented a high proportion.

KG noted that she would submit some follow-up questions regarding this matter. These would be focused on transition processes and the way SEN records were handled when pupils moved from the Infant to Junior school. For example, if a pupil in the Junior school applied for an EHCP, it was clarified that the records began from Year 3, rather than continuing from earlier years. This was out of the school's control.

The IHT confirmed that, if there was a view that a child would need an EHCP, the school would aim to submit the necessary paperwork before the summer break to support a smooth transition into Year 3. There were also conversations with parents about whether some children might benefit from staying in the current nursery setting for another year.

It was explained that the school was required to complete two assessment cycles before submitting an application, and while some previous evidence could be referenced, any new application must include current work, interventions, and a detailed costing plan from the new phase.

A question was raised about the school's tracking of intervention impact. The IHT acknowledged that while some tracking was in place, more could be done. This area was already identified as a target in the School Development Plan (SDP).

Governors thanked the SENCo for her report.

Last year's end of year data showed that there were 84 pupils in Reception, 50 of whom were identified as having English as an Additional Language (EAL). It was noted that children often

developed language skills over time, and while some may not meet the Good Level of Development (GLD) benchmark immediately, they often showed significant progress within two years.

A question was raised about whether the school differentiated between types of EAL learners—specifically, those new to English and those who were bilingual. The IHT responded that the number of pupils new to English had increased in recent years. Additionally, some pupils were not consistently exposed to one dominant language, which presented further challenges.

JH left the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

A follow-up question asked whether having such a high percentage of EAL pupils impacted teaching approaches. The IHT confirmed that it did, but not always in a negative way. The school made extensive use of visuals, which benefited all pupils, and also sent home resources for parents. Makaton was also used in some cases.

Another question asked whether the SENCO was responsible for EAL. The IHT confirmed that in the Infant school, the SENCO oversaw EAL provision, but in the Junior school, responsibilities were divided differently.

Regarding phonics and the phonics re-check, it was noted that only a few pupils faced difficulties, and the school had a clear understanding of the reasons in each case.

The IHT was thanked for her report and supporting documents.

Junior Headteacher

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

The JHT noted that the school's strong results were not solely due to data and outcomes but stemmed from a whole-school culture and ethos that supported high aspirations among pupils.

The continuity of staffing was reported as a positive development, with no changes to the teaching staff team this year. Following a Governor question, the IHT explained that one Early Career Teacher (ECT) was continuing into their second year, and two members of staff were completing a PGCE through the apprenticeship route. These individuals would move into their ECT years upon completion. It was confirmed that the school had been able to utilise some of the apprenticeship levy to support this training.

Following a Governor question, the JHT noted that nine pupils had left from the Year 3 cohort. There was no single reason for these departures. Three of the children had initially joined the school while on waiting lists for schools closer to home; once spaces became available, they accepted those places. Other families had moved out of the catchment area, out of the borough, or overseas. A few families moved to be closer to secondary schools to support transitions, while two families had chosen to move their children to private schools to avoid the pressures of the 11+ process. The school had received several thank-you messages and positive feedback from departing families. It was also acknowledged that pupil movement can vary significantly between different cohorts.

With the proportion of pupils eligible for Pupil Premium now at 18%, lower than in previous years, a question was raised about the school's confidence in identifying all eligible families.

The JHT explained that the school continued to buy into a Free School Meals (FSM) checking service annually, and the welfare officer had extensive experience in supporting families to

establish eligibility. It was noted that even when families did not qualify for funding, the need for support remained—particularly in the Infant school.

Following a Governor question, the JHT explained that the Pupil Premium report, available on the school website, detailed provision, impact, and the profile of pupil needs. She added that the Year 6 Easter Booster sessions and before/after school tuition were identified as having the biggest measurable impact—although they also represented the largest expenditure. It was anticipated that fewer children would need to attend homework club this year, allowing the school to reduce staffing costs in that area.

A question was raised about the sustainability of the school's current wellbeing provision, particularly given the end of Pupil Premium funding for some aspects. The JHT confirmed that it was no longer employing Kimberley but was compensating for this by training an additional ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) staff member to carry out mentoring.

The existing wellbeing provision was described as excellent value for money and beneficial to the whole school and its community. It was noted that while the threshold of need had been higher in some previous years, early intervention continued to be crucial for enabling pupils and families to thrive. Counselling was also available for some parents through the school, and the use of the pods had enabled counselling services to be delivered more effectively.

A question was asked about the lessons learned from one racist incident and one serious behaviour incident. The SLT confirmed that all incidents of racism, serious behaviour, or bullying were carefully recorded and analysed. Interventions were tailored to individual pupil and family needs and could include broader responses at class or school level. These might take the form of newsletters, assemblies, staff training, or changes to school structure. It was emphasised that such incidents were rare, individual, and personal in nature, and further details could not be shared in order to maintain confidentiality.

A Governor noted that Persistent absence among FSM pupils had increased to 17.5%, compared to the overall school average of 11.6%. The JHT confirmed that FSM attendance was closely monitored and a priority in pupil progress meetings. It was also a key focus for the welfare officer, safeguarding team, and wider staff. Training had recently been completed on the new DfE analysis portal, which would be used to identify common factors affecting group attendance.

The school also planned to formalise staff training on Emotion-Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Each case of persistent absence was addressed individually, with input from staff, families, and, where necessary, the Attendance Support Team Officer (ASTO), in line with the 2025 DfE guidelines. When asked whether persistent absence correlated with lower SATs results, it was noted that there was no consistent trend, but the new DfE portal might provide further insights.

A concern was raised regarding the morale of the Parent Association, citing a perceived lack of volunteers and low parental engagement. The JHT responded that the recent PA AGM had seen the highest attendance on record, and the PA currently had a strong and established core team. The Deputy Headteacher and office staff were actively involved in supporting and encouraging PA work. Teachers also attended PA events to show support. The school remained open to further suggestions on how to increase parental involvement.

A suggestion was made to hold a PA appreciation event. It was noted that a recent appreciation event in the Infant school had poor attendance. However, there had been encouraging signs of greater interest at the most recent AGM.

25/68 **SDP overview/agreement**

A question was raised about when the gardening and sustainability work would be incorporated into the curriculum. The JHT confirmed that it would be integrated primarily within the Science curriculum, with one unit per year group each academic year.

A question was raised regarding the effectiveness of the electronic spelling platform (e.g., EdShed), which had been adopted across the school. The JHT noted that spelling had been identified as an area for review this year, and the school was revisiting how it was taught across year groups. The online spelling tool was seen as valuable, particularly for families where English was not the first language, as it offered flexibility and a range of resources.

The IHT acknowledged that some parents had expressed concerns about screen time. However, it was noted that the activities were intended to be short bursts of learning. She added that previous methods, such as sending spelling lists home on paper, had also shown limited impact.

It was emphasised that the electronic tool was just one strategy among many. For example, mind maps were used in Year 2 for approximately ten minutes at a time.

The Junior School SEN report was commended, with a wide range of initiatives and support in place.

Thanks were given to Daniella for her work on the report.

25/69 **SATs/Exam overview**

Governors commended the positive results. These were on the school website but would not be official until January 2026.

25/70 **Staff Governor reports**

It was noted that these had been included within the HT reports. GS reported positively on recent Insight Days, which had been beneficial in developing the school's SEN provision. As part of this development, the staff participated in a comprehensive knowledge-sharing session, described as a "knowledge dump," covering all areas of SEN expertise. This included effective strategies, identification of barriers to learning, and how those barriers might be overcome.

It was noted that staff were taking increasing ownership of SEN provision, which was seen as a positive cultural shift. It was suggested that this SEN overview and the associated strategies be added to the school website to showcase the school's evolving approach.

GS also shared updates on the new RE curriculum and brought in some supporting books for reference. The first "big question" introduced to pupils was "**What is real?**" Staff observed positive pupil engagement and reported that significant progress had been made in how the content was being pitched and how children were receiving it. In the Early Years (EY) setting, delivering the new curriculum posed some challenges. Staff found it difficult to choose only one religion to compare with Christianity, which created some limitations. As a result, the curriculum was being adapted to better reflect the school's diverse community.

It was noted that the six core RE questions would recur year-on-year, allowing staff to monitor progress and make meaningful comparisons over time.

SJH left meeting at 8.05pm

25/71 **Committee reports** (including risk and safeguarding updates)

Finance committee

There had not yet been a meeting this term to report on.

Safeguarding committee

The committee reviewed the JR Intimate Care Policy and SEN Information Report as well as the INF Intimate Care Policy and the Safeguarding Audit. The committee also discussed a local security risk and early finish on last days of term

Curriculum committee

There had not yet been a meeting this term to report on.

Personnel committee

There had not yet been a meeting this term to report on.

Strategy committee

The committee discussed forthcoming SDPs, risks including staff illness, the heat pump and finances. They also talked about the new SEND governor Karen Gubbay, the governor newsletter and the July unclerked meeting agenda.

Premises committee

There had not yet been a meeting this term to report on.

25/72 Wellbeing

Following a Governor question, the HTs noted that the Wellbeing Charter did not need to be reviewed once signed up to. The IHT added that the school were intending to introduce some sound baths for staff.

25/73 Governor visits

The Chair noted that she was in the process of updating the subject leaders from both schools. Governors were encouraged to complete Governor visits.

25/74 Governor Training

The Chair noted that she had circulated the links for training.

25/75 Chair's correspondence

The Chair had not received any correspondence.

25/76 Report of the Director of Education and Skills

<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/www-home/information-for-schools/school-governors/meetings-and-reports.html>

It was noted that the report was not yet available.

25/77 Dates of committee meetings

- Finance: 14 October, 5 December, 13 January, 6 March, 15 May (12-1.30)
- Safeguarding: 7 October, 8 December, 5 March, 30 June (8.45)
- Curriculum: 10 November, 2 February, 15 June (2.30-3.30)

- Personnel: 7 Nov, 13 Feb, 19 Jun
- Strategy: 10 October, 23 January, 12 June, (12-1)
- Premises: TBC
- HT review- 25 November

25/78 **Dates of governing body meetings**

- Tuesday 18 November 2025 at 6pm (unlcerked)
- Wednesday 28 January 2026, curriculum tea at 3.30pm, meeting at 5pm
- Tuesday 10 March 2026 at 6pm
- Wednesday 3 June 2026 at 6pm
- Wednesday 7 July 2026 at 6pm (unlcerked)

The meeting ended at 8.15pm