

**Meeting of Full Governing Board
11th May 2026
4.30pm in School Library**

MINUTES

Governors:	Mick Baker, Sarah Bakhtiari (Chair), Alice Duvernois, Matt Elliott, Eleanor Fagan, Emma Hill, Matt Hillier, Matt Nott, Eugenie Teasley, Jessica Verdugo
Officers:	Clare Doran (Clerk)
School:	Sara Bailey (SB), Loretta Lloyd (LL)

	<u>Agenda item</u>
1	Introduction a) Welcome The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Matt Elliott, who had been appointed as the new parent governor. The Chair also advised that Alice Killip had stepped down from the board of governors due to work and study commitments and wanted to thank Alice for her commitment to the board and wish her every success in the future. b) Apologies for absence Apologies for absence received from Neal Young and Rob Bradshaw. All other members present. c) Declarations of interest There were no declarations of interest in relation to agenda items.
2	Last Meeting Dated 16th March 2026 a) Approval of Minutes The Full Governing Board reviewed and approved 9 pages of minutes from the meeting held on 16th March 2026. The Chair signed the minutes as confirmation of their accuracy. b) Actions and Matters Arising Not Included Elsewhere on Agenda Actions arising were either complete, in progress or on the agenda for future meetings.
3	Presentation on Attendance Loretta Lloyd highlighted the following key points: - The attendance breakdown showed that, with the exception of EHCP students in Year 7, the school was below national attendance figures across all measures. - Overall attendance was currently 89.8%, which was 2.2 percentage points below the national average of 92%, while persistent absence stood at 26.5%, compared with the national average of 21.5%. - When compared with last year, there were some signs of improvement at the start of the year, however, attendance figures had since fallen below last year's weekly figures and, when compared with national attendance data, the school continued to track lower across the year to date. - Under the new Ofsted framework, the school was no longer able to refer to regional context.

Although Brighton and Hove were currently ranked 150th out of 153 local authorities nationally, only national attendance data would be considered.

- Behaviour and attendance were now grouped together under the Ofsted framework. This meant that if attendance data fell below the national average, the school could receive a rating of 'needs attention' for both attendance and behaviour. Although this approach had been challenged, it remained in place and had already been observed during inspections at other local schools.
- The Department for Education had introduced minimum attendance targets. For Dorothy Stringer, the target was 89.6% for 2025/26, which was 0.4 percentage points higher than the school's 2024/25 figure of 89.2%
- Current attendance stood at 89.8%, meaning the school was presently exceeding the target. However, attendance data was tracking lower than at the same point last year, and therefore it could not be assumed that the school would finish the academic year at 89.8%.
- It was explained that changes to attendance recording arrangements, including the removal of pre-June study leave for Year 11 students and the correction of Year 10 work experience coding, are estimated to increase reported attendance by approximately 0.6 percentage points. Governors noted this information when reviewing attendance data.
- General communication with parents around attendance was planned to increase through inclusion in newsletters and email communications.
- It was explained that the most common reasons for absence continued to be illness and unknown absence. The school was reviewing patterns of absence, particularly amongst disadvantaged students and those with SEND, and was working to promote attendance through clear communication with families, including the use of NHS guidance on when students should remain at home. The categorisation of some absence reasons, including those relating to fatigue, was also under review to ensure consistency and accuracy in attendance reporting.

Governors discussed the complexity of recording and analysing absence reasons where underlying factors, including SEND-related needs, may contribute to non-attendance. It was noted that current Department for Education absence codes did not allow for this level of distinction. The school would continue to address individual cases through attendance, pastoral and curriculum teams, while exploring opportunities, including the potential use of AI-assisted analysis of qualitative information, to identify broader attendance trends and underlying causes.

Governors agreed there would be value in separating FSM and SEND student data in future attendance analysis, noting that whilst there was overlap, only 25% of FSM students were also SEND.

- A trial was underway to hold return to school meetings with students followed by parent meetings, when the occasions of illness reached a certain threshold, regardless of overall attendance. Approximately 45% of students involved in the trial reported that they were not in fact ill but had other concerns, such as assessment anxiety or worries about homework not completed.
- The Mentoring Programme had not yet shown any measurable improvement in attendance outcomes and therefore, following DfE advice, the programme would target students with less complex needs, as this was expected to have the greatest impact on data outcomes (those in the 80 - 95% bracket). It was acknowledged that persistent absence remained 5% higher than the national average, meaning more complex cases still required support. These students

	would instead be supported individually by the school's pastoral team. Other actions to address attendance were being trialled including one hour per day of dedicated attendance time for each pastoral manager; immediate rewards for persistently absent students who were improving and increased awareness of student anxiety around assessments. Governors discussed the importance of communication with parents and recognised that improving attendance required partnership between school and home. It was acknowledged that parents were often working hard to support attendance. AGREED – this year's target would remain at 0.4% as set by the Department for Education. For 2026/27, this would increase to a minimum 0.6%, with the caveat that this would be reviewed once full-year data had been received. Consideration would also be given to individual attendance targets for specific groups. ACTION – the leadership team to review which strategies were having the greatest impact, both for students with higher attendance (80–95%) and those who were persistently absent. AGREED – Emma Hill and Alice Duvernois (both parent governors) to provide assistance to Loretta Lloyd on attendance, with a particular focus on parental engagement.
4	Chair's Update The Chair advised that the Business Group had recently discussed whether a separate HR Committee should be established. The Chair advised that the school currently operated a Full Governing Body structure with the Business Group sitting alongside it, rather than a committee based structured. Consideration was given to volunteer capacity and governor workload in terms of creating a subcommittee structure, but also to whether the current reporting arrangements provided sufficient oversight. Governors agreed that the potential use of working groups to address specific issues, alongside the current structure of link governors across different areas, provided flexibility without increasing governance burden. AGREED - the current structure would remain with HR matters being incorporated within the remit of the Business Group and reported back to the Full Governing Board.
5	Head's Report/Update The Head reported the following key points: - Year 11 students had begun their GCSE exams. - Staffing changes immediately before the examination period included the departure of the Exams Officer but a current member of staff with previous experience had taken over the role ensuring continuity for the students during the exam period. - A new Data Officer had been appointed and was expected to start after half term. - Staffing levels were currently tight as an average of 4 colleagues were out each week for Dolawen, together with some long term illness and general cover which impacted the supply budget, although it was hoped staffing pressures may ease after half term. - Considerable successes in the sports department; under 13 girls netball champions; under 14 girls football champions; under 14 boys reached the semi-finals of the national rugby league

	competition; other students representing Sussex across other sports, such as tennis. • Year 11 exam results were expected to slightly drop from last year but still expected to be strong, with 76 expected to get 4+ (compared with 80 in 2025) and 52 expected to get 5+ (compared with 62 last year). Attainment 8 is lower (estimated at +0.49), due to not all students sitting the exams. • Student roll numbers remained broadly in line with expectations. The school aimed to maintain PAN (330) due to budget implications linked to student numbers. Year 7 admissions remain below target currently, although appeals and reallocations were still underway. • A further positive legionella reading had been identified within the sports hall area, attributed to low water usage and the calorifiers not operating at full capacity. Plans were in place to remove the existing tanks during the half-term break and replace them with smaller units more appropriate to current demand. As a precautionary measure, only cold water was currently available in that area, with hand sanitiser also provided. The PFI provider was leading the project and Governors were advised that appropriate pressure would be applied to ensure the work was completed during the half-term period, minimising any potential disruption to examinations. • Governors were updated on recent staffing changes. The Exams Officer would be leaving the school to pursue a new career opportunity, and the Head of Year 8 would be leaving after many years of service to take up a role within specialist education. Recruitment for the Head of Year 8 position was underway. • Governors noted a number of recent appointments, including the retention of a member of staff within the Drama department, the appointment of a new Data Officer and the appointment of a new SENCO from the Connected Hub. In recognition of the increasing demand for SEND provision and the size of the school, it had also been agreed to appoint an additional Deputy SENCO to further strengthen capacity and support. • Governors were advised that timetable planning continued to take account of a significant proportion of staff working part-time. The school sought to balance staff working patterns with the delivery of a broad and coherent curriculum for students. • Safeguarding data was tracked termly and positive news was that the number of child on child bullying cases had gone down each half term. • In terms of budget, the school was able to carry forward approximately £650k into the current financial year. Planned expenditure included £100k for the changing room adaptations, £30k for the lockdown alarm, £70k which was allocated to the legal costs for the ski trip and £20k contingency for potential restructuring costs linked to future falling roll numbers across the city.
6	Business Group a) Meeting of 27th April 2026 Notes from the meeting were included in the pack for information only. b) Budget Monitoring Report The outturn for March was included in the pack with notes for information only. c) Final Budget for Approval The Business Manager advised that the Business Group had reviewed the budget since it had last come to the FGB. At the Business Group meeting it had been updated, for example NJC support staff pay uplift had increased to 3.3% (was 2.75%), which was the Department for Education offer,

	although unions had not yet accepted. Subsequent to the Business Group meeting, the budget had also been adjusted to reflect the position of a deputy SENCO from September 2026. An additional £25,000 had also been allocated to the School Development Fund, ring fenced for Inclusion. Finally, the role of RESET room supervisor has been extended for an additional year. Positive news that the budget balances for the next 3 years, though it needed to be acknowledged that it was difficult to know about funding with any certainty, particularly across years 2 and 3. The Head informed Governors that the school had been successful in its application to join a three-year programme delivered by The Difference, an educational charity focused on inclusion, attendance and student outcomes. The school was one of ten schools selected nationally to participate. The programme was due to launch on 23 June and would be communicated to staff and parents in due course. Governors noted that participation would provide access to significant professional development and specialist expertise over the three-year period, supporting the school's ongoing work to strengthen inclusive practice and further improve attendance. The Head advised that all secondary schools across Brighton and Hove were going smart phone free from September, with some intending to allow brick phones only, however whilst he agreed that the school needed to be smart phone free, this would be done through the current use of Yondr pouches as this was proven to be working and was enforceable, whereas it was felt enforcing the policy of brick phones only was not. ACTION – the final budget was approved and signed by the Chair of Governors.
7	Governance a) Roles and Responsibilities Emma Hill agreed to be the Link Governor for SEND Provision and progress and Matt Elliott agreed to be the Link Governor for Literacy: English & Library. b) Vice Chair AGREEMENT - Eugenie Teasley was appointed as Vice Chair, with her role to formally start on 11 May 2026. c) Strategy Day Proposed Dates The Chair advised that there would be a planned strategy day in September, with training provided by a current Ofsted inspector, who had provisionally offered availability on 17 or 18 September. Governors discussed combining training with opportunities for governors to spend time with their linked departments/areas while onsite during the school day. ACTION – Clerk to seek consensus on the date, which most Governors can attend, and to prepare a draft schedule for the day. d) Training Log Emma Hill recommend that all Governors completed the NGA training on SEND, particularly as the school were currently reviewing attendance which was impacted particularly for those with SEND.

8	Any Other Business No other business was raised.

Signed by Chair of Govenors: Sarah Bakhtiari

Dated: 13/07/2026