Carden Primary and Nursery School - FGB Minutes

Meeting Type	Full Governing Body	
Date:	Thursday 27th November 2025 – 5pm	
Location	*Carden Primary School – in person*	
Quorum:	For decisions to be binding at least one half of current governors are required. The meeting was quorate throughout.	
Governors Present:	Laura Sibley (HT) Alistair McNair (Chair) Linda Newman (Vice Chair) Gill Brooks Lisa Bryant	Esther Garibay Nigel McCutcheon Rachel Weller
Clerk	Zoë Heaton	
Guests	Paul Harrington (DHT), Tamara Spring (SENCO)	
Apologies	Sam Baker, Carl Pittaway	

Acronyms which may be included in minutes	
BHISS	Brighton & Hove Inclusion Support Service
DHT	Deputy Head Teacher
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
EALTS	English as an additional Language & Traveller Service
EHCP	Educational HealthCare Plan
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
HT	Headteacher
KYSV	Know Your School Visit
NA	National Average
PP	Pupil Premium
PTA	Parent / Teacher Association
SCR	Single Central Record
SDP	School Development Plan
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SG	Safeguarding
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SPA	Schools Partnership Advisor

Item	Summary of Discussion
1	The Chair welcomed governors and all introduced themselves. Governors accepted apologies and there were no declarations of interest in the agenda.
2	The previous FGM Minutes (24/09/25) were circulated to governors prior to the meeting. The minutes were checked for errors and agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair. There were no matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda. Actions from the previous FGB minutes were discussed and considered: ACTION: Governors who had undertaken SG training elsewhere to ensure evidence of this is received by PH (DSL) or the Clerk asap – Completed ACTION: Governors who had not undertaken the annual SG training to contact PH to arrange a mutually convenient time for SG training to take place - Completed

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Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent

	ACTION: Clerk and Chair or Vice-Chair to organise skills audit monitoring meeting to identify gaps later this term – Completed. It was confirmed that the Vice Chair had a list of the gaps and that the Clerk and Vice Chair would email individual governors with relevant training opportunities. ACTION: PH to put together a learning walk timetable to share with governors and to provide opportunities for governor visits – Completed and visits carried out. ACTION: Clerk to send Governors Christmas shows and fair dates – Completed. Governors commented that they had enjoyed the fireworks event and it was discussed whether this could be an extra opportunity for promoting the school. It was already understood to be an excellent community event with the school at its centre and the HT confirmed she took the chance to talk to all families, current and new, arriving and leaving the event.
3	**SEND Report** (previously circulated to governors) The SENCO (TS) presented her report and answered governors' questions. It was agreed the report was comprehensive and an excellent synthesis of the SEN picture across the school including a useful table with breakdown of SEN needs and provision. Would it be useful to include those children who are on a potential SEN diagnosis pathway? – Yes, we could, however it would have to be added manually as these are not included on the Arbor system. Moreover, we do not always know how the diagnosis will go. Believe some of these children are already reflected in the table as it includes those in progress to EHCP. What is the definition of vision impairment? – When a specialist medical team are involved in treatment. Could the report include an individual case study which would demonstrate the impact of the SENCO and school approach i.e. 'what went well and why'? – Yes, this could potentially be included in the end of year annual report separately to this report as this goes on website. **[ACTION - SENCO to consider inclusion of individual case study in end of year annual SEN report.]** Noted the attendance pattern for SEN children seemed quite positive? - Yes, it was better than this time last year. This has been achieved with many different approaches. What is your perspective on the school's overall picture and biggest challenges having been one year in the post of SENCO? - The main picture is one of a wide range and complexity of needs at Carden and working out how best to implement support. Happily, we have a very skilled support staff who have fed back very positively on the change to the support staff team approach this term. The SENCO went on to outline three main goals including a change to the model in how offer additional support to children on the SEND register with each year group having a team of adults providing support. These staff were accessing training through BHISS to develop skills in meeting range of needs in their year group. The changes had been well communicated to all parents and disseminated at a SEND meeting. Subsequently a questionnaire was carried out and responses shared in regards to new approach.

The HT and SENCO set up a meeting for parents to feedback and discuss and address any concerns. The meeting was not well attended but one parent was there representing other SEN parents. The feedback was largely positive with some concerns regarding which staff member was with their child and their and level of their knowledge. Some comments were left anonymously, so difficult to address.

A nurture class was developed (The Nest) as an inclusion intervention space to promote emotional and mental well-being of which the impact would be monitored and reviewed at end of term. The SENCO had recently submitted an expression of interest to the LA for funding to develop this space which was sadly not successful in the first instance, but would be on their list and hopefully happen at a later stage in the year.

She acknowledged that SEND provision was an ongoing challenge.

Do you agree that the big picture shows there are a growing number of children with SEN and with higher needs but without this being matched by level of funding? - Yes, but this is reflected both locally and nationally. Feel like we are making changes and putting in place what we can in terms of provision and doing the best we can with resources available.

The SENCO emphasised that the recent change in support staff approach was initiated to make the most of available funds as have had to think creatively, but also that there were real benefits to the new structure, both for the support staff and the children, providing variety and training for the staff and building resilience and flexibility in the children.

Governors discussed budget deficit for SEND provision in schools more generally.

A parent governor suggested some more transparency in terms of detailing available support staff in specific year groups might be appreciated by parents and provide reassurance that staff were being matched appropriately and proportionally to level of provision needed. She cited example of similar numbers of staff in Year 3 and Year 5 despite higher number of children with needs in Year 5. The SENCO clarified that staff allocation did reflect need and that those staff in Year 3 were part-time only.

The Vice Chair felt it was important to recognise and understand that parents of SEND children had often had to fight hard to access provision and therefore understandable they voiced their questions and concerns more strongly than other parents on occasion. The SENCO felt this was taken into account and that she worked hard to communicate with, and reassure parents on a daily basis.

Would parents ever be asked to help pay towards SEN support? - No, not at present, although some donations are occasionally given and contribute to the school's fund. Some other schools, especially secondary, do ask for an enrichment contribution and this suggestion could perhaps be revisited in the next academic year.

[ACTION – HT to consider introduction of 'enrichment contribution' from parents for next academic year]

TS was thanked for her report and left the meeting.

4	**Pupil Premium Report** – (Strategy Statement Report from RM (PP Lead) previously circulated to governors)

	In the absence of the PP lead the HT invited questions concerning the PP report. She explained that this was a new-format strategy report following B&H changes to strategy in PP. It had been devised from an example report provided by the SPA. Did the HT feel there was enough in detail of breakdown of expenditure withing each topic in the report? - Extra detail was not required in the report. In terms of disadvantaged students, has there been a positive progression in this cohort? – Yes, there has been a lot of focus on them and attendance is up. Are we closing the gap? - The gap is certainly not increasing and would hold up well comparatively to other schools. The HT felt it was true that the more that was put in to this cohort the better the school does as a whole. She confirmed that recent target meetings showed data looking a lot more positive and EYFS in particular. How can the school demonstrate evidence of progress? – Unfortunately, the official data only allows for achievement data, but progress data is held and analysed internally and is disseminated verbally to governors and will also be in the HT's report in the FGB Spring term meeting. Are some PP funds applied to whole school approach rather than targeted? - Yes, both TS, AW, LS and RM attended 'mitigated advantage' training and a lot is about not taking PP children aside and treating separately but that other children should be included. In this way the whole group is benefitted and lifted. The vice chair agreed it was important not to identify individual pupils as 'disadvantaged', therefore that this approach was wholly justified at Carden, especially as there were so many proportionally. Is there a Venn diagram showing both registers of SEN and PP children and therefore where they overlap? – Yes, there are both cohorts recorded in columns and this information can be provided. **[ACTION - HT to produce table to show both numbers of PP and SEN children and their convergence in the HT report.]** Is there a formula, whereby the funding is increased each year in line with inflation? – Yes, think this happens nationally. It is currently about 5K per PP pupil and 3K for disadvantaged. There are also other categories like 'looked-after' children. Does Carden have one of the highest levels of PP? – Yes, Carden is in the top third of schools. It is a high percentage (37%) for a relatively small school. Governors passed on thanks to RM for the PP report.
5	**HEADTEACHER REPORT:** HT report and SDPs had been circulated to governors in advance. The HT went through the new report headings and invited questions.

Governors commented that the new format with the Ofsted headings was reassuring and easier to understand.

Admissions – Numbers stable with 8 new pupils started this week.

Staffing – Stable. Minimal staff absence positive, especially for this time of year.

Governors highlighted the positive responses from staff survey on the support staff approach as being very positive in terms of their engagement and feeling part of a team.

Inclusion – Expected Standard.
The HT emphasised that Ofsted would want to see a spread progress with both celebration of success and acknowledgement of challenges.

Governors expressed some confusion about inconsistencies between the tables provided (SEND and HT's) making it difficult to understand and compare attendance and results. The HT agreed these should be aligned going forward.

[ACTION: HT to resolve inconsistencies between data provided in the two reports (SEND and HT)]

The HT also highlighted that phonics results would not be attained due to high levels of SEN in Year Reception, particularly 4 pupils and that not all would be on track to obtain ARE. It was understood that inclusion of these pupils skewed data, but that important to recognise progress being made. With Ofsted's focus on inclusion was agreed important for governors to understand the context of results data and that indicators showed high number of disadvantaged, FSM, EHCP, SEN all above LA and National Averages.

Curriculum and Teaching – Expected Standard.
CLA to report in more detail later in the year.

Achievement – Needs Attention. Lower than NA

The HT told governors that this was a big focus for the school and that internal data for all pupils would be available in the new year. She encouraged governors to attend pathways meetings, especially Y6, Y1 and YR, which take place with each year group to focus on data. This would increase understanding of how targets are set and decisions about intervention strategy.

[ACTION: PH to send timetable of the forthcoming Pathways meetings to Governors]
[ACTION: Governors to contact SLT if they wish to attend any Pathways meetings]

It was notable and useful for governors to be aware that both Reading and Writing were in line with LA without SEN and traveller community pupils being included in the data, and that Science was above NA.

Have you implemented more SATS-type testing in KS2 as discussed previously? – Yes, we are now doing testing in all Year Groups which will be added to data. We have also introduced a preparation 'SATs week' for Year 6. However, do not want to do too much to overwhelm the pupils.

The DHT highlighted that helpful, SATS-like resources were now in place and implemented by the new Maths Lead across school and governors agreed it was helpful to introduce the right type of questions.

Assessment week next week would provide consolidation in every subject with results in time for potential Ofsted visit in the New Year. Acknowledged not looking for hard data in foundation subjects but more emphasis on assessment.

Do you feel the focus on Greater Depth is moving in right direction? – Yes, streaming was applied to identify and DHT (PH) carried out a greater depth in writing group which produced higher results.

Attendance and Behaviour – Expected Standard. 93.37%.

What is the National Average for whole school attendance? – 94.5%. Carden is 39th out of 48th , so in the lower end. And, although important to keep in context, it is something we are working on in measures such as the Nest and different approaches to get children into school and goes in tandem with the aspiration of inclusion. However, emotional refusal and persistence absence are a nationwide issue.

Personal Development and Wellbeing – Strong Standard
Pleased with wide-range of clubs offered and positive results from the family survey.

Early Years in Schools – Expected Standard
Felt changes made positive impact and improved predicted end of year attainment. The SPA feedback was positive about teaching and the EYFS lead. The nursery environment was identified as a strength. Teacher (LB) commended for her positive impact.

How did the prospective parent show rounds go? - Significantly increased numbers of new parents attended compared to last year. And, although many still had preconceived ideas about Carden compared to other schools, the atmosphere and feedback felt very positive. SLT all did show rounds with groups and found honesty about the state of the building but asking parents to look inside the classrooms and talk to the children worked well. The Year 6 pupils supporting the tours, especially, were a credit to the school.

Were there any particular trends in what the parents were interested in, such as outdoor learning? – Parents liked the diversity, swimming pool and space. They also were focussed of having happy children. Carden does suffer from kerb appeal but word of mouth and PTA messaging counteract that well. Parents also responded well to how the school is zoned by careful management.

SLT felt the tours had gone well overall and hoped this would translate into places for next year.

Governors agreed the children themselves were an asset when visitors came into the school, experiencing for themselves engaged and communicative students and an impressive student council. It was also felt that Carden events such as the fair generate a very positive, family feel. Governors were especially encouraged to attend the Year 6 leaving assembly.

Leadership and Governance – Strong Standard
The Chair reported that autumn term monitoring had taken place:
Assessment showed work was mostly consistent through Year groups and that Carden's checklist of non-negotiables was adhered to.

The SPA completed her KYSV and shared concerns on writing, marking and the reception environment. Steps were in hand. There had been Staff meetings on marking policy and

feedback expectations with a 2-week deadline. Environment issue was actioned and no longer an area of concern.

The HT thanked governors for their visits, attending school drop ins, book looks and link governors meeting staff. She also thanked GB for writing supporting statement for intervention space funding.

[ACTION: Governors to email HT if wish to attend Learning Walks next term in January and February.]

6 **Finance** – All relevant papers were previously circulated to the governors.

Pay Policy 25/26 –
The D&R Chair introduced the new pay policy for governor's approval. It was noted, as at the previous FGB, that the main change was that teachers would automatically receive increments unless on capability, in which case it would be referred to the governors pay committee. The Clerk confirmed the policy was uploaded onto the national college for approval.

All governors read and approved the Pay Policy 25/26

Audited accounts for School Fund –
They had been audited and the FGB accepted them formally.

Monthly outturn (Oct) (D&R Chair)

- The D&R Chair Reported on the latest outturn, noting the year-end position was expected to be stronger than forecast, with the deficit remaining within approved limits and slightly better than anticipated. Thanks, were extended to staff, particularly NB and LS.
- Medium-term (2–3 year) plans not yet approved; a new budget spreadsheet would be issued next week, with detail to follow at the February D&R meeting.
- The LA had signed off the current year deficit. A new licence agreement would be submitted with the next budget for the new financial year.
- Meeting with the finance link officer delayed due to sickness, not expected before Christmas.
- LA contribution of £18K (voluntary, one-off) received unexpectedly, targeted at schools with high EHCP proportions. Funds would be used effectively.
- Five EHCP applications remained in process but past deadline, meaning funding for this term would not be received. This shortfall was due to staff shortages in the LA SEN team. Governors voiced frustration and queried recovery plan options.
- It was confirmed that schools received only two-thirds of EHCP funding, with the final third to be met by schools themselves.
- Looking ahead: BM and the D&R Chair had trialled figures for next year in a useful exploratory session.
- School Central Record check identified one minor adjustment which was rectified.
- A governor expressed interest in developing financial understanding and would join the Schools Forum. Training opportunities in finance were discussed, with encouragement for governors to attend courses next term, preferably face-to-face.

Governor's Scheme of Delegation
Governors approved the new Governors' Scheme of Delegation policy.

[ACTION: Any outstanding governors to approve newly revised version of Pay Policy and Governors Scheme of Delegation on National College website].

7	**GB business and membership** **Resignation and LA vacancy** – Governors were informed that HW had formally resigned leaving a LA governor vacancy. Vice Chair (LN) told governors she had made an application to governor support to assume this role in consideration of her considerable experience. This would leave the vacancy as a Co-opted governor, which would be more flexible and easier to fill. Governors agreed this was a good approach.

8	**Feedback from committees:** (HSW minutes from 24th October 2025 and various Governor visit reports previously circulated)
	
	The HSW Chair summarised the recent HSW committee meeting discussion for the FGB:
	
	• Technical issues encountered at teams meeting were now resolved.
	• Incident: Child caught finger in door hinge; extra guards fitted and replacements ordered.
	• Fire Drill/Assessment: Issues with exits and communication noted. Governors favoured trialling staff WhatsApp group; no-notice drills agreed. HT reported successful trial (evacuation completed in 6m 30s).
	• Contracts/Lettings: Children's Centre vacated; EALTS Service now renting space and included in fire drill procedures.
	• Site Works: Minor repairs completed; Painting underway. Parent volunteer via Amex scheme offered support; timing of inset day or holiday painting to be considered. Unpaid work carrying this out at present.
	• H&S Walks:
	  ○ *June 2025:* KS1 area – minor issues noted (boiler room slats, damp wall, missing sink handle, split finger guard, blocked gutters, clutter/damage in staff room, etc.). *Actions: NM to seek donations for staff room units/chairs FW to update NM on jobs.*
	  ○ *October 2025:* KS1 Hall, Nursery, Reception – urgent issues addressed (log with nails removed, pool chlorination shelf risk, outdated eye washes, poorly equipped nursery first aid kit). *Action: KS to check first aid kits termly (completed).*
	• Attendance: 93.3% (up 1.7%) but below 96% target; three persistent absentees noted.
	• Parents: Food vouchers and food bank support provided.
	• Parent Survey: 96% positive (22 participants). Some responses on bullying noted as not applicable. *Actions: HT to add participant numbers to survey results; selected responses to be published on website.*
	• Staff: Low staff absence indicated improved morale. Empowerment Approach survey showed strong positive feedback; exclusions mainly linked to SEN/autism, EA approach effective.
	• Governor Monitoring: New governor GB welcomed to committee and as new SEND link governor; She had met SENCO and termly catch-ups planned; GB had also joined learning walks. SENCO was preparing £30K bid for inclusion space and GB provided support letter.
	• Government Guidelines on Choking: EYFS framework updated. All lunchtime staff paediatric trained; children seated during snacks; posters displayed; families informed.
	
	The H&S committee chair was thanked by the chair for his clear and comprehensive feedback.
	
	Governor Visits & training (Reports had been previously circulated to governors):

NM: Geography/English visit

Pupils showed evidence of progression, enthusiasm, and enjoyment. Noted need for greater challenge for older pupils and inconsistencies in marking; improvements seen in recent weeks following advisor input and marking meetings. Maths marking policy applied a little inconsistently; picked up by staff and advisor. Peer assessment increasing for older pupils. English work showed strong engagement and consistency; pupils proud of work. Some pupils unclear on Geography as a subject; PH delivered assembly to address this, may need repeating.

RW: RE/History Visit

Reported inconsistencies in RE compared with other subjects. Positive feedback on Y5 history; suggested training to improve diagnostic feedback. Marking codes needed consistent use and ideally visibility in classrooms. Y6 RE taught intensively in one day; immersion strategy noted with pros and cons (progress measurement, fatigue).

LN: Math/History visit and others

LN had carried out a number of visits with feedback from all in her report including Learning environment walk, a meeting with PH, Maths & History book looks, Governor Briefing, Budget/Finance meeting with BM and Central Record check visit undertaken. She also noted that the New Teacher (ER) in Year 5 induction into Carden had gone positively.

GB: Book Looks/SEND

GB found combined pupil voice and book looks helpful but noted scope of trying to do all year groups was too broad; suggested smaller focus next time.

- The Clerk confirmed she maintained a visit attendance and reports list. The governors excellent visit uptake was recognised by SLT.
- A revised IT policy with additional information on cyber safety would be forthcoming.
- The Chair confirmed that the HT appraisal was completed with the SPA. This was a thorough meeting, and goals were set for February.
- It was noted that the SPA worked with a large trust and potential governor Ofsted training opportunities were discussed.
- The DHT highlighted an Anti-racist strategy twilight session scheduled for Monday 12 January, 3.30–5.30pm, and invited governors to attend.

9	There was no business brought forward by the chair.

The meeting finished at 6.45pm

The date of the next FGB meeting: Wednesday 25th March 2026 – 4.30pm

Minutes approved by the full governing board and signed by the chair:

Chair…….

Date……

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