Carden Primary and Nursery School - FGB Minutes

Meeting Type	**Full Governing Body**	
Date:	Wednesday 8th July 2026 – 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 Sam Baker Lisa Bryant	Nigel McCutcheon Esther Garibay (joined remotely) Gill Brooks Rachel Weller
Clerk	Zoë Heaton	
Guests	Paul Harrington (DHT)	
Apologies	Carl Pittaway	

Acronyms which may be included in minutes	
BM	Business Manager
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
ECT	Early Careers Teacher
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
FGB	Full Governing Board
HT	Head Teacher
NA	National Average
PP	Pupil Premium
SDP	School Development Plan
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENDCO	Special educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator
SG	Safeguarding
SPA	Schools Partnership Advisor
SPP	Sports Pupil Premium
SLT	Senior Leadership Team

Item	**AGENDA ITEM**
1	**Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest –** The Chair welcomed attendees and introduced the agenda. Apologies were received and accepted from Carl Pittaway. Esther Garibay joined remotely via Teams. No new declarations of interest were raised.
2	**Minutes of Previous Meeting and Action Updates –** The minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2026 were approved without amendments. There were no matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda.

	Outstanding actions from the previous FGB minutes: **[ACTION – HT to check parent survey results against other B&H schools to see if Carden was one of the highest, in view of using to promote the school on website] – Carried over.** ACTION: Governors to email HT if they wish to attend LWs and / or Pathways events in the summer term - Completed ACTION - Chair to email TS and HB separately to thank them personally from the governors for their valuable input during the Ofsted inspection - Completed ACTION: GB to write up a response to the white paper and circulate to FGB – Completed (see item 7.)
3	**GB business and membership:** SB decision to step down at the end of his current 4-year term of office. SB told governors he had enjoyed his tenure. Governors thanked him for his contribution over the many years. **[ACTION - SB to write testimonial to encourage governors to join]** Dates for 2026–27 governor meetings were agreed. NM told governors he would be away for September and therefore be unable to join the SG training, FGB meeting or H&S walk. All governors were invited to the staff safeguarding training session at Carden on Tuesday 1st September 2026 from 3:30pm to 4:30pm. **[ACTION - DHT (PH) to carry out individual SG session for NM and GB at date to be agreed]**
4	**Head Teacher's Report:** 4.1 HT Report, 5.2 SDP – Spring and 5.3 SDP – Summer The HT introduced her report and invited questions. As relatively recent, the HT had decided to include Ofsted comments for the time being. **Admissions** There were similar class numbers since last report. Are there more children leaving than starting? – It looks that way now, but by the Autumn term it will balance out almost exactly. Is it worth knowing why children are leaving? – Yes, most were due to moving and only one left as they were unhappy and felt they were being targeting by another child. However, this situation was complicated with both families involved being close.

Staffing

- Four teachers were leaving at the end of the year. Two from fixed-term contracts, One part-time PE teacher and one phonics support staff member for retirement.
- Site manager FW was also due to retire at the end of the summer.
- The HT presented the staff allocation plan for next year to the governors.
- Absence / Illness – One staff member was on phased return and reduced hours.

Governors discussed the impact of the impending absence of the site manager next year. It was understood that he would not initially be replaced and options would include employing a cleaner for some hours during the school day and a site manager from another school to cover legal aspects.

Do you know if this plan has been done in other schools successfully? – Maybe not long-term, but as a temporary measure, up to 1-2 years to varying degrees of success. However, as quite a significant short-term saving it is worth managing and trying different options.

How will H&S incidents be managed? – The site manger handled the legal aspects such as weekly fire drill, legionella and asbestos concerns, so potentially a caretaker from another school could be employed to do the COSH register and deal with other legal aspects 1 day per week. If there are building issues, contractors such as plumbers and electricians will be brought in. This can be costed and evaluated going forward.

It was acknowledged that this would most likely not be a permanent solution and that careful planning in advance would be advised. It was agreed that H&S walks with governors would now most likely take place with the HT or BM. It was noted Carden was also not replacing teachers and support staff who are more front facing and work directly with the children.

What will happen to the Caretaker's house? – It will remain empty and utilities still paid for. However, if the trial period without a caretaker goes well, a conversation with the LA about its use will happen further down the line.

The governors emphasised the long service to the school FW has made and confirmed that there was a collection and acknowledgement being made. Governors were invited to add to the card and / or collection.

[ACTION - The Chair to write a leaving message to FW (Site Manager)]

Safeguarding

- The safeguarding caseload continued to hold most families on Early Help and CiN plans rather than Child Protection. There were approximately another twenty vulnerable families known of and supported in school without external agency support.
- The Vice Chair had carried out a SG visit to the school yesterday and asked lots of questions and had a good discussion with the DSL (PH).

Achievement

- Combined attainment scores table was provided. Governors sought clarification on 'At teacher target' data. It was acknowledged that Writing was an area where children

had not hit their TT the most. This was a focus in assessment, discussion and transition conversations.

- Having hoped to announce results verbally at the meeting, the HT told governors that KS2 results were delayed. BM and HT due to get results right at the end of term and would work last minute to get them published.
- Good progress was seen in Phonics.
- Although Maths was the Ofsted focus for improvement, governors were assured that Writing was also an area being addressed internally.

[ACTION – HT to add SEND children data into the table as well as the PP children already represented.]

Attendance and Behaviour

- Attendance was noted as marginally improved since last year, with 92% maintained until the last term. Poorer attendance was in part due to recent hot weather, some of which was authorised during 'heatwave'.
- The HT clarified the attendance threshold percentages for persistently and severely absent. (Severely: under 90% / Persistently: under 80%)

In terms of the children being educated offsite, how was this going and was it a long-term situation? – The point of the provision was that a tutor bridge the gap back into school. However, how well this works depends on the child and family and how they want to do this, as well as the impact being age-related. It is often put in place when they don't feel the child can manage in the school setting with what can be offered and want to try and find an alternative. It also has high cost implications on the school budget.

Who is doing the tutoring? – It is done privately but the school has to pay. Carden did offer staff who could do it, but was not what the family wanted.

Personal Development and Wellbeing

- The chair commented that this was deemed a notable strength for Carden and also that the Big Camp was a very positive and successful event.

Early Years in Schools

How are numbers for Carden nursery? – More than anticipated taking 30hrs, which is better than the previous year. There are 11 staying in Nursery into next year with at least 6 more starting in September. All those ready to start Year Reception in September are moving up but a smaller number than last year overall.

Will there be any more advertising and marketing pushes? – Yes there will be Open days for new parents in the Autumn term. And, also intend to do a video tour to go on the website.

Leadership and Governance

- Governors to feedback from the pupil voice walks in Item 7.

5	**School organisation strategy and federation proposals by B&H Council** – update **Nursery:** • The HT told governors that Carden was considering expanding nursery provision to include two-year-olds, prompted by early years team engagement and potential DfE funding for building works. • There was currently no local provision for two-year-olds, so this could fill a gap in the area and create a new pathway into Carden. • Two private providers had expressed interest in running the provision, but Carden also needed to consider whether it would prefer to operate it themselves. • A bid would need to be developed and costed, including construction requirements and possible features such as a private entrance and buzzer. • The HT suggested a small governor working group to research cost effectiveness and construction elements (for example NM and LN). • Another positive would be the opportunity it would present for early start Carden ethos and phonics teaching. **[ACTION – Formation of a 'Nursery expansion' governor working group to be agreed.]** **Federation strategy:** • Carden has had limited direction from Brighton & Hove, so was exploring a locally led federation or collaboration with Patcham High and local primary schools. • The proposed partnership would formalise existing links rather than significantly change current practice, such as existing use of the swimming pool and shared work with nearby schools. • Potential benefits included stronger local identity, free advertising, shared efficiencies, and closer alignment on issues such as attendance and smartphone-free approaches. • Governors agreed to move forward and attend a meeting with chairs and headteachers before the October half term to test whether the schools want to proceed. • Carden wanted to protect its own identity and maintain other existing partnerships, including city-centre collaboration, joint moderation, and PE events. • There was a concern that not joining the federation could leave Carden isolated, while joining could help present local schools as aligned and equally successful. • Patcham Infants may also be involved, and there was reference to discussions with the Junior school and a possible connection with the new headteacher at another Infants.
6	**Sports Pupil Premium Report** – update provided in advance of the meeting. • The vice chair had spoken to the BM about the change in SPP funding which had occurred in-year and was therefore difficult to account for. She informed governors that the funding would stop in December and was to date unsure of what would replace it.

	How is the cost and maintenance of the Carden swimming pool going? – It is always a little problematic, but there has not been anything too expensive. If maintenance costs go above 2K the pool would have to close as it would not no longer be cost effective. • Some discussion was had about using the pool as an asset for hire to other partnership schools, playgroups or the LA. At times this has been proposed but never come to anything concrete. Unfortunately the pool was not big enough for children over Y3 and also swimming is not statutory before KS2. Could the swimming pool be renovated under the potential new Nursery construction plan as part of the provision? – Possibly, but most likely seen as not needed as much as toilets and a kitchen. However, it might be possible to use this renovation to change the pool room into an extra nursery room instead. **[ACTION – CJ (PE Lead) and BM to do the final overview of the SPP funding expenditure to be published on the website at the end of the month]**
7	**Summary Feedback from committees and link governors 7**.1 CLA mins 10/06/26 and Committee chairs and link governors provided feedback from recent activities. **Educational performance** – CLA • Chair provided brief feedback in absence of CLA chair. • Minutes provided to all governors prior to meeting. • Combined data was up or stable across the whole school since the Autumn Term. • PH had provided an excellent and thorough curriculum report. **SEND governor feedback** (GB) (response to SEND reform consultation – update / action plan **LA SEND reform briefing** GB reported that the LA SEND reform plan had not yet been seen in full. The briefing referred to a three-year roadmap linked to the White Paper response. The SEND application has been resubmitted and an outcome is expected in September. • The plan was described as high level, with particular interest in access to specialists such as occupational therapists and specialist teachers. • The proposal suggested around 40 days of support per year for primary schools, although workforce capacity was identified as a key issue. • The LA was exploring wider health and social care routes to identify available support. • £1.75 million must be spent by March 2027. Further funding is expected to continue in years two and three. • The Nest application, first submitted some time ago, would be resubmitted. GB confirmed she would be happy to write in support again if needed. Governors noted that approval would be very positive.

- It was noted that 90% of the high-needs deficit would be written off, which should help reduce financial pressure.
- An inclusion data dashboard analyst would support comparison across schools and help strengthen use of inclusion data.

SEND self-review and action plan

Feedback from the session included reference to the SEND action plan and self-review template created by the council. The template covered key areas including attendance, measuring progress, leadership, and wider inclusion data. The spreadsheet shared in the meeting papers highlighted current activity and would support a more strategic view of objectives, rather than focusing only on operational detail.

TS (SENCO) and GB to use the template to review objectives. Relevant content may also be used in the annual SEND information report due in the autumn.

[ACTION - ZH and HT check where the SEND information report is available on the website]

The HT passed on that TS (SENCO) had expressed that she found GB very supportive and appreciated the governors' interest in SEND. She noted that the level of challenge and support was well balanced.

Governors thanked GB for her detailed feedback and the work she had undertaken. The action plan was considered particularly useful and aligned well with the School Development Plan.

EG commented that it was helpful for teams to see the SEND data and compare the position three years ago with the current picture.

Governors discussed how the action plan could support a more strategic view of whether interventions and individual learning plans are having an impact. They noted that impact can be difficult to measure, but that clearer data and information would help quantify progress and identify what is working well, as well as any continuing challenges.

- Case studies were suggested as a helpful way to show the difference being made for pupils.
- Governors agreed to continue discussing how best to evidence and measure impact.
- Reference was made to a virtual governor training session led by the Head of SEND, Justine Harvey, which had been very useful. It was noted that further support could be sought if needed on how to capture impact effectively.

[ACTION – TS (SENCO) to include Case Study in her SEND report in the Autumn term]

Governor Visits & Training:

Anti-racism conference – EG and PH attended the conference and circulated detailed notes to governors. EG thanked PH for inviting her and recognised his proactive role in this area. Governors noted the importance of continuing this work as pupils progress to secondary school, and of keeping diversity visible across the city.

Safeguarding and budget meetings – LN attended both meetings. The budget was currently forecast to finish just in the green, although the position remained tight and included assumptions about the teachers' pay award, for which final funding was not yet known. LN also checked the Single Central Record and reported that it was complete and accurate.

Chair and vice-chair training workshop – AM and LN attended the workshop. Key points included succession planning, the option for governing boards to appoint two vice-chairs, and the need to focus on recruitment. Governors noted that there would soon be three vacancies on the board.

[ACTION: LN and Clerk to review the skills audit, including cover for health and safety and finance lead roles, and use this to support governor recruitment.]

Health and safety walks – Governors discussed how health and safety walks should be managed while the site manager role is vacant. It was suggested that governors could shadow NM, noting that GB had previously completed this work. Governors agreed that this should be explored further next term, including how resilient the board is when vacancies arise suddenly and whether a local partnership agreement could provide additional support.

Pupil Voice Learning Walks – LN, RW, GB and AM attended pupil voice learning walks and fed back to governors.

- AM, with PH, reported that the five Cs were clearly embedded and that pupils could recall them.
- RW, with HB in Year 1, observed strong cohesion between classes. Pupils were knowledgeable, could name key facts and showed good retention.
- Governors discussed how pupils could be supported to understand their own progress, recognise when they are stuck, and know who to ask for help. It was noted that this is harder for younger pupils but may be supported by comparing work from the beginning and end of the year.
- GB, with RM in Year 4, found the pupil voice powerful. Pupils spoke positively about their learning in Maths and referred enthusiastically to sewing, art, Romans and Big Camp. Governors noted some differences between the two classes in how pupils reflected on the year.

	[ACTION: AM to write up feedback from the pupil voice walk with PH and share it with governors.] **Mixed-age classes training** – LN provided feedback on the mixed-age classes training and related content in relation to the HT's presentation to parents at Carden. • Staff response was positive. LN reported that staff felt well prepared and that the HT had managed the process effectively with the team. • Parent response was also positive. Although some parents had initially been apprehensive, the presentation was considered well pitched, informative and reassuring. Questions were answered clearly, and the parent representative and local councillor both commented positively on how well organised the process had been and how aligned staff appeared. **[ACTION: Chair to send an end-of-year email to staff.]**
8	**Any Other Business -** No additional business was raised by the Chair.

Meeting closed at 6.25pm

The date of the next FGB meeting: 23rd September 2026 – 4.45pm

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

Chair…… Alistair McL ……

Date……23/09/2026……