

## Simon Marks Jewish Primary School

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body held at the school and via Teams on 8 December 2025 at 6:00pm

### Members

	Category	Attendance
Howard Pallis (HP)	Local Authority Governor	Present
Gulcan Asdoyuran (GA)	Headteacher	Present
Jonathan Freedland (JF)	Foundation Governor	Present on line
Austen Garth (AG)	Foundation Governor	Present
Lauren Buck (LB)	Foundation Governor	Apologies for absence accepted
Eve Pearl (EP)	Foundation Governor	Present on line
Rael Gamsu (RG)	Foundation Governor	Present on line
Zachary Jacobs (ZJ)	Staff Governor	Apologies for absence accepted
Eddie Marshbaum (EM)	Parent Governor	Present
Duval Middleton (DM)	Parent Governor	Present
Rachel Burns (RB)	Associate Governor	Apologies for absence accepted
Robin DasGupta (RDG)	Associate Governor	Present
Syed Gilani (SG)	Associate Governor	Apologies for absence accepted
Michael Clayden (MC)	Acting Clerk to the governors	Present

### 1 Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 HP welcomed EM as new parent governor to the meeting and said he had already been instrumental in raising nearly £13K in donations for the new infant play structure.
- 1.2 GA reported that Hackney had withdrawn their clerking service to schools. A direct approach had been made to the former Hackney clerk but continuing was not practical for him. HP said the role was an important one, not only maintaining the governing body records but advising the governing body on procedure and the expectations of governors in terms of Ofsted etc. HP reported that MC had agreed to act as clerk for the time being. Options for future arrangements would be reviewed including continuing this arrangement and considering commercially available options.
- 1.3 HP stepped down from Chairing the meeting

### 2 Election of Chair

- 2.1 HP was proposed and seconded. There being no other nominations,
- 2.2 **Resolved** that HP be re-elected as chair of governors for the academic year 2025-26.
- 2.3 HP reassumed the chairing of the meeting

### 3 Election of Vice Chair

- 3.1 After discussion and in the light of the recently appointed governors and absences from the meeting,
- 3.2 **Resolved** that the election of Vice Chair be deferred to the next meeting

### 4 Approval of statutory information

- 4.1 A report had been circulated.
- 4.2 In relation to priorities for the coming year the head pointed out the new OFSTED framework and that the Hackney Inspector who was the School's

Improvement Partner (SIP) was a qualified OFSTED inspector. Some schools had been inspected under the new framework. The school would be discussing the new framework with the SIP and undertaking self-evaluation. Relevant feedback and training would be given to governors.

- 4.3 HP stressed the importance of governors undertaking on-going training relevant areas of governorship and the opportunities for induction training for new governors. He drew attention to the regularly circulated programmes of training from Hackney and from PAJES, which the school subscribed to. The school had audited governors training needs in the past and he encouraged governors to let the school know of particular needs.
- 4.4 The Head reported that the school's policies as set out on the school website had been reviewed and covered current statutory obligations. Only minor amendments to dates and personnel had been necessary.
- 4.5 MC reported that the finance procedures manual had been reviewed by the Finance, staffing and premises committee. Only minor changes were needed to update it from the previous year.
- 4.6 MC reported that governors had been asked to update their record of pecuniary interests. A summary, based changes as necessary from the returns made, would be posted on the school's website.
- 4.7 **Resolved** to reapprove:
- the school policies as listed on the school's website
  - the financial procedures manual, including the scheme of financial delegation and the disaster recovery plan.
  - the revised list of pecuniary interests

## 5 **Review of Committees, memberships and link governors**

- 5.1 A listing of current committees, memberships and link governors had been circulated. It was noted that EP's links included SEND including the ARP and that EM would be a member of both Finance, Staffing and Premises and Teaching and Learning Committees. HP proposed that, although the Press and Publicity Committee was not currently active, it should be retained.
- 5.2 In answer to a question HP said that the filling of the two Foundation governor vacancies was under consideration, but it was difficult.
- 5.3 **Resolved** that the committees, memberships and link governors, as amended, be approved.

## 6 **Apologies for absence**

- 6.1 Apologies for absence were received and approved from LB, ZJ and RB.

## 7 **Minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2025**

The non-confidential and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2025 were **agreed** and signed. It was noted that governing body minutes were not posted on the school website until approved and, therefore, the published minutes were a term behind.

## 8 Matters Arising

	Issue	Action by
	From minutes of 4 June 2025	
4	The appeal on the school's bids for the national Conditions Improvement Fund (CIF) had not been successful. Both bids, for fire safety and electrical renewal and for Heating system renewal were being resubmitted for the 2026-27 programme. Companies had been at the school to tender for the bids for the new submissions, and the best quotations had been challenged with the school's consultants regarding value for money and competitiveness against other bids. The quotations totalled £2.2m compared to £2m last year. The school had reviewed the funding implications of this and was satisfied that the increased sums of the school's 10% contributions would be affordable in 2026-27 if both bids were approved. This was essential to submission of the bids although the likelihood was that not both bids would be approved in one year.	GA/MC
4	The teaching of Ivrit was raised. The Head said the recruitment to Jewish studies and Ivrit posts was extremely hard as there were virtually no qualified candidates. The person recruited to Ivrit was an actor with Israeli secondary teaching experience. He was popular and engaging for the children and he was being intensively coached to support his teaching development in his new role.	GA

## 9 Headteacher's Report

9.1 A report had been circulated.

9.2 GA went through the report briefly. She said there was much pressure for placements at the Alternative Resource Provision – Autism unit- (ARP) from Hackney but also other adjoining boroughs. The school had been able to choose the most suitable placement for the last place out of the current 12. The head was raising with Hackney and discussing with the Senior leadership team (SLT) the possibility of offering to increase places to 18 by creating a "midpoint class" more like a mainstream class for older children preparing for transition to secondary. This could be set up in an unused downstairs classroom. This was possible because of the work done in the unit to prepare children for introduction to a mainstream setting. There was a lack of suitable provision for secondary aged pupils. The midpoint arrangement would free up provision for younger children including some in the early years in Simon Marks who would be better served currently not in a mainstream setting.

9.3 GA noted that one of the pupils she hoped to admit was from the Haredi community and she hoped this would create positive links with the community

9.4 GA said that the local authority had recognised the work done by the school in three years to prepare some children for being integrated into a mainstream setting. She said she was continuing to press the proposal to the Council for the development of a large offsite autism annexe for the school, using one of

the Council's disused buildings, which would give much more flexibility for such arrangements. HP commented that the local authority should support development of increased in borough special needs provision both to meet local need and to reduce the high transport and other costs of placements elsewhere.

- 9.5 The school was also under significant pressure to admit children with EHCPs to mainstream classes. The proportion of the total roll, including the ARP provision, was nearly 40%. There were discussions between schools and the local authority about a fair access policy to seek to spread SEN admissions more equitably between schools.
- 9.6 In answer to questions, the head said that she did not think that proportion of Special educational needs (SEN) children adversely affected other recruitment nor impacted significantly on results. She doubted when prospective parents visited the school that they could tell which were SEN children and which were not. The school's management strategies provided added support for SEN children and trained staff to use of teaching and learning strategies to unblock neuro-diverse problems and use meta-cognition and verbal and non-verbal reasoning. In consequence standards were high for SEN and other children. She said the approach was pioneering probably across the UK. However, despite successes in tests and SATs beyond national and local averages, with SEN children outperforming others in some cases, the school was at the beginning of a journey to develop these strategies to fruition.
- 9.7 HP commented that the impact of the ARP as a proportion of overall numbers would be less if the main school roll continued the trend of the early years where numbers were higher than in the middle of the school. GA said, however, that regional birth rates and the cost of family housing remained serious problems and all local authorities were engaged in closing schools and reducing admissions.
- 9.8 Governors noted that the school currently had no children who were subject to child protection nor other safeguarding issues, no homeless families, nor fostered or adopted children.
- 9.9 GA reported recruitment of a two-term year 6 teacher to replace the current teacher who had married and had moved far from the school. The new teacher had already visited and worked the children and had a warm relationship with them. SLT would be providing additional support to the class for literacy and numeracy.
- 9.10 GA reported that the recruitment trained quality to Jewish studies and Ivrit posts was extremely difficult – a matter noted for all Jewish schools during the Chief Rabbi's review. It had proved impossible to replace Rabbi Goldmeier with a new appointee. He had agreed to maintain a few hours of remote advisory support and Ms Daines, from early years, who was both a good teacher and experienced in delivering Jewish studies elsewhere, had been released part time from early years to cover needs. This was far from ideal as she was missed in early years and it meant SLT and a high-level teaching assistant had to cover early years in her absence. The situation was under review for next year. In the meantime, because of the added SEN and roll

demands, another teaching assistant would be added to early years from January.

- 9.11 A governor asked if moving the early years into the main building had been considered. GA said that she had specifically moved the reception class to be integrated externally with the nursery as a early years unit in the specialist building which have been renovated in the past few years for the purpose.
- 9.12 In answer to a question about widespread problem of Jewish studies and Ivrit staff across London, GA said during the Chief Rabbi's review discussion she had specifically suggested that donors be found to sponsor trainees with a scheme linked to LSJS and to a teaching university to develop teachers comparable to other UK trained teachers. However, even if this idea was taken up it would be some years before it produced teachers to ameliorate the current dearth.
- 9.13 The circulated report gave details of he schools work with Rabbi Citron and the school had visited his synagogue and hoped to link with others too.
- 9.14 The governors noted the continuing teacher training links. The school had also indicated to Hackney proposed school clusters arrangements that it was willing to offer SEN training for teachers.
- 9.15 GA said the recently finished infants play structure was overwhelmed with pupil interest and they had been given extra time to play there whilst it was still a novelty.
- 9.16 GA reported teaching was good or better throughout with some classes outstanding all the time. Adaptive teaching strategies were in place so every child could access the same learning intention,
- 9.17 The year 4 phonics outcomes were low at 64% but this is because of the number of ARP students in the year group. Excluding these the results were around 95% for the rest. The school maintains both the overall and non-ARP results to inform prospective parents as well as monitoring and planning.
- 9.18 The new Ofsted framework was in place. Although the head was no longer an Ofsted inspector, the school's new School Improvement Partner, Calvin Henry was. And would feedback to the school on the operation of the framework and assist the school in self-evaluation. The adoption of adaptive teaching was an exceptional feature of the school

9.19 The headteacher's report was **received**

## **10 Teaching and Learning Committee**

10.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2025 had been circulated.

10.2 The minutes were **received**.

## **11 Finance, Staffing and Premises Committee**

11.1 The draft minutes of the Finance, Staffing and Premises Committee held on 12 November 2025 had been circulated.

11.2 MC reported that the Committee had reviewed the Quarter 2 (6 months) monitoring of the budget and spend and the projected outturn at the end of the year. Since then, the higher projected potential cost of the capital bids for

next year and the need for an additional teaching assistant in early years had become known. However, lower cost than budgeted teaching staff appointments and the voluntary contributions towards the infants play structure should make these affordable by some adjustment in provisions between 2025-6 and 2026-7.

- 11.3 EM asked about progress on the proposal to make the school mobile free.
- 11.4 GA reported that she proposed to have a meeting about the issue with parents with a view to getting them on board with the issue. In answer to questions, the head said that only about 4 children brought mobiles to school. For children that needed them before or after school the school was able to lock them up safely during the day. She said that she planned to raise with children the minimum age for social platforms usage of 14 years old. She said it was the school's intention to develop its children to be safe and "Savvy" in relation to internet usage but aside from the issue of in school use there also had to be concern about excessive use of mobiles outside the school for example to the detriment of sleep and a variety of other activities. These were issues that would benefit from open discussion in a parents' forum and which the school took up with individual parents when problems came to its notice
- 11.5 Parent and other governors indicated that they supported a mobile free policy and that open parental discussion of the issues with mobiles noting the dilemmas for many parents of balancing limiting mobile access and isolating children from the activities of their peers especially as they moved into the secondary age group.

11.6 The minutes and reports were **received**

## **12 Link Governor visits**

- 12.1 EP reported on 3 visits to the school.
- 12.2 She had visited the ARP with ZJ, had seen the differentiated resources and met with the second teacher who had benefited from the intensive in house training. She had seen ARP children in the unit and in mainstream classes. They seemed happy and engaged – it was difficult in mainstream classes to know that children there were from the ARP. She had asked ZJ to provide two case studies or each of a child with complex needs in the unit and a child integrating in the mainstream so that the issues could be further understood.
- 12.3 She had visited on maths and on literacy had done learning walks with RDG particularly looking at children with SEN. She said that it was not easy to spot which children had SEN. She noted that behaviour of children generally was exemplary because the differentiated learning strategies for neurodiversity meant that they were happy and engaged. It was a tribute to the head's strategies and how well she and staff knew the children and worked accordingly.

12.4 **Received.**

## **13 Chair's report**

- 13.1 The Chair reported he had weekly meetings with the head as well as regular email communication on on-going issues, such as those previously

mentioned, on CST (The Community Security Trust – Jewish security charity) and safeguarding. He emphasised again the importance of governors taking up training opportunities.

### **13.2 Received**

### **14 Times table check summary**

14.1 A report had been circulated.

14.2 RDG reported that the test was taken by year 4 except exempted children in the ARP. Those taking the test substantially exceeded the national average score as well as the percentage achieving 100% in the test. Girls, disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children separately, SEN children and EAL and non EAL children separately all exceeded national averages. The performance was due to the maths strategies and inset targeted at this area as well as targeting of pupil premium funding and use of such curriculum resources as TT Rockstars.

14.3 The Governors thanked the staff concerned for their work in achieving these results.

### **14.4 Received**

### **15 The Chief Rabbi's Schools Review**

15.1 A paper had been circulated.

15.2 GA said that the meeting on this had been inspirational. It had accepted the problem of the lack of Ivrit and Jewish Studies teachers but had said what could be done was to reach out more to Jewish organisations. She said that the Chief Rabbi's vision statement would be laminated to be displayed in the school foyer.

15.3 She said Simon Marks had worked with Tribe, Seed and currently Harif who had set up a Judaism focus in the hall where children could have a go at Jewish historical activities. The school was also inviting in Rabbi Bitten to do additional work at the school. She the school was reaching out to northwest London where most of the organisations were based and trying to encourage them to travel to Hackney to work with the school's children

### **15.4 Received**

### **16 Dates of future meetings**

16.1 Spring Term -10 February 2026  
Summer term -9 June 2026

### **16.2 Received**

#### **ACTION**

	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action by</b>
4.7	Revised school policies and revised summary of governors pecuniary interests to be posted on the schools website	GA
5.3	Revised committees, memberships and link governors be posted on the school website	GA
7	School to file signed minutes	GA

	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Action by</b>
11.4	Arrange a parents' meeting about making the school mobile free	GA
15.2	Laminate and display Chief Rabbi's vision	GA
16.1	Note dates of Future meetings	All

Confidential minutes – see separate sheet

The meeting ended at 7:27pm



Signed (Chair):

Date: 17/3/26.