



# MIDDLE STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL INTERIM EXECUTIVE BOARD



<b>Name</b>	<b>MIDDLE STREET PRIMARY SCHOOL INTERIM EXECUTIVE BOARD</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Thursday 15 January 2026</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>09.30 – 11.00</b>
<b>Venue</b>	<b>Madeira Room, Brighton Town Hall</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Anne Allison (AA), IEB Chair Ashley Seymour-Williams (ASW) Shelley Baker (SB) Rachel Kershaw (RK) Executive Headteacher Kate Vallance (KV) Wafa Paton (WP) Louise Hoten (LHO)</b>
<b>Attending</b>	<b>Gaynor Newnham (GN) Clerk</b>
<b>Apologies</b>	
<b>Link to Papers</b>	

## CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

No.	Item	Action		
<b>1 Welcome</b>				
1.1	<p><b>Welcome, apologies and introductions.</b> AA opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending, explaining that the current situation necessitated this meeting. The current concerns were shared and discussed at a meeting with the local authority on Monday 12 January.</p>			
1.2	<p><b>Review Agenda</b> The IEB agreed to focus on agenda item 3.3.</p>			
<b>2 Standing items</b>				
2.1	<p><b>Declaration of Business Interests</b></p>			
2.2	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b> Approval of Minutes and review of actions was deferred to the next meeting.</p>			
<b>3 Strategic Priorities</b>				
3.1	<p>The future viability of the school: Review of risks identified in December 2025 <u>Update on number on roll/numbers on waiting lists for alternative places.</u> The Executive Head reported that parents have started to withdraw their children from MSPS due to the incorrect rumour circulating that closure of the school has been planned. Six children have left this week, and more families are known to be looking at other schools. Year 3 has been most affected and there are currently 138 children on roll, though 6 more are known to be leaving. 42 children have left the school since the start of the academic year. There is a sense that parents feel the IEB has not been communicating, and are unhappy about the lack of clarity regarding the substantive headteacher. The reducing roll is also impacting income, as the uptake of out of hours care has reduced. The IEB requested a breakdown of pupil numbers, which were reported as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Year Group</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Number of pupils</td> </tr> </table>	Year Group	Number of pupils	
Year Group	Number of pupils			

Reception	16
Y1	24
Y2	17
Y3	13
Y4	25
Y5	12
Y6	28
Total	138

Q: Where are they moving to?

A: Mainly other local schools, and a few are moving out of the city.

#### Current first preferences for September 2026

There are currently three first preferences for September, two second preferences and twelve third preferences. The second and third preferences are likely to be placed in their most preferred destinations, due to this being a low birth-rate year. The deadline for applications is today (15<sup>th</sup> January). One of the first preferences is a sibling of a family known to be looking elsewhere.

This increases the IEB's concerns about the future financial stability of the school.

#### Staffing update

The EHT reported that:

- SENCO is leaving at February half term.
- Two new teachers are settling well.
- Morale is low due to the number of leavers.
- A member of staff has an interview tomorrow, their contract ends at MS in April.

The IEB noted that the departure of the SENCO is operationally difficult due to the significantly high numbers of pupils with SEND. The EHT could be named SENCO, as she is qualified and experienced, and help could be sought from the partnership.

The EHT also reported that the Budget Outturn shows the deficit has reduced to £425k, which is positive. This is mainly due to savings on staffing. It was confirmed, in response to a question, that this figure does not reflect the recent migration of pupils.

A member of the IEB asked if the LA would support with staffing costs if any new appointments could be made and was informed that they would not have the resources to do this.

#### Quality of education

Concerns about the consistency of teaching due to high levels of staff absence had been raised at the previous IEB meeting in December. Members of the IEB commented that a high-quality education cannot therefore be guaranteed.

#### Community confidence/reputation of the school

This is currently very difficult due to the circulating rumours that the school is closing, together with the daily departure of pupils and of pupils visiting other schools.

The IEB reflected upon whether they could have done more to reassure staff and parents, and members made the following points:

- A member of the IEB met staff, to listen to concerns and answer questions.
- A financial plan had only just been agreed due to the rapidly changing picture with regard to staffing, pupil numbers and leadership.
- Ongoing HR processes are confidential.

#### Recommendation from the Chair of the IEB

The plan to preserve MSPS proposed by the working party and agreed by the full IEB on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025 was dependent on there being an intake of 15 pupils EYFS pupil each year and no significant losses in other year groups.

The IEB discussed the school's financial viability and agreed that:

- accurate financial modelling is needed.
- The current leadership has managed to improve the finances, but pupil numbers are a significant concern.
- The school could balance in 5 years, were it not for the huge deficit.
- To balance in 2030, current numbers would need to be maintained and a PAN of 15 would be needed.
- Most staff are on the Upper Pay Scale.
- A potential intake of two children into reception makes the finances a significant concern.
- MSPS is no longer financially viable.

The IEB discussed key considerations when looking at a possible school closure :

- **Pupil numbers:** The school is currently at 64% of capacity, and likely to drop lower, as the IEB cannot give any assurance about leadership. Parents sending children into school wearing the uniform of their next school has not helped morale or encouraged confidence in the school. The EHT has been informed that group tours at other schools are planned by MSPS parents. The community is no longer the strength that it was previously.
- **How MSPS serves the community;** it was noted that very few pupils are local. There are 6 children in postcode BN1, for the 2026 intake, rising to 12 by 2028.
- **The availability of places elsewhere:** It was confirmed, in response to a question, that there are spaces in other schools. A member asked if the LA would support local families having to move schools, and it was explained that this will be a multi-team process. MSPS is the second school closure for some, due to previous closures.
- **Leadership Capacity:** It was noted that there is currently capable governance and senior leadership, but the lack of SENCO and other leaders may be an issue. SLT will be reduced to three people from March. The IEB recognised the positive work done by the executive head and head of school; some outgoing parents have been very positive about the leaders and stated that they wish they had joined earlier.
- **Performance:** Outcomes have been strong overall, though phonics dipped in 2025. The Y6 team is strong and the Y6 children have experienced strong teaching throughout their time at MSPS. Some very strong teachers have left the school in recent years. There are current concerns about the quality of provision.

The IEB agreed all key areas are a significant concern and impact on the viability of the school.

The Chair raised the proposal that due to this information the LA should launch a consultation on closure of MSPS.

The IEB voted and unanimously agreed to support making the recommendation to the LA to launch a consultation on closure of MSPS, while also agreeing that this is a

	<p>regrettable decision and not why they joined the IEB, whose remit was to support the school. All members recognised that this was the correct, but painful, decision, especially after the positive decision made in December. They regretted that the agreed plan could not be shared, due to the lack of clarity around the financial situation, partly due to the burden of funding two headteachers. It was noted that recent social media activity/anxiety has had negative impact and has been a significant factor in the decision-making process.</p> <p>Year 6 considerations – RK felt that the year 6 cohort have remained a strong, cohesive group, no pupils had left this class, and she felt that families would like the children to remain at MSPS to complete their final year. It was confirmed that, if closure was the outcome following consultation, MSPS would stay open until the end of the summer. It would not be viable to try to keep the Y6 class together in another school. The Y6 children will be supported to ensure they have a positive experience.</p> <p>The IEB agreed that staff and parental wellbeing will need to be managed, as well as the wellbeing of the EHT and Head of School.</p> <p>The IEB recorded its gratitude to RK for the leadership and expertise that allowed it to formulate a plan and regretted that this plan will not now be implemented, due to the pupil losses.</p> <p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inform RB at the LA of the IEB decision (ASW ‘phone, AA email)</b></li> <li>• <b>Check whether a member of the IEB should attend school the day after the staff meeting.</b></li> <li>• <b>Add ‘discussion of information sessions for parents’ to the next agenda.</b></li> <li>• <b>Draft a letter to parents to be sent after / alongside the LA letter about consultation.</b></li> </ul>	<p>3.1.1</p> <p>3.1.2</p> <p>3.1.3</p> <p>3.1.4</p>												
<b>Compliance and Policies</b>														
4.1	N/A													
<b>5 Forward Planning</b>														
5.2	<b>Agenda Items for Next Meeting:</b> IEB Dates for April to July 2026													
5.3	<p><b>Next Meeting:</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="204 1462 1362 1637"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Time</th> <th>Location</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Monday 26<sup>th</sup> January</td> <td>10-11</td> <td>Online</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February</td> <td>10 – 1</td> <td>St Margaret’s, Rottingdean</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March</td> <td>10 – 1</td> <td>MSPS</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Date	Time	Location	Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> January	10-11	Online	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> February	10 – 1	St Margaret’s, Rottingdean	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	10 – 1	MSPS	
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**There being no further business, the meeting closed 11.00.**

**Summary of actions:**

No	Action	By whom	By when
3.1.1	Inform RB at the LA of the IEB decision (ASW ‘phone, AA email)	ASW / AA	15/01/2026
3.1.2	Check whether a member of the IEB should attend school the day after the staff meeting.	AA	19/01/2026
3.1.3	Add ‘discussion of information sessions for parents’ to the next agenda.	GN	16/01/2026

3.1.4	Draft a letter to parents to be sent after / alongside the LA letter about consultation	RK	16/01/2026
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Attendance Register:	07.07.25 1-4pm	22.09.25 1-4pm	20.10.25 12-3pm	24.11.25 10-1pm	16.12.25 1-4pm
Location:	Middle Street	The Hive	Varndean	Middle Street	The Hive
Anne Allison	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Shelley Baker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rachel Burstow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Louise Hoten	✓	✓		✓	✓
Rachel Kershaw	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wafa Paton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ashley Seymour-Williams	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kate Vallance	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>In attendance:</b>					
Rob Cooper Head Teacher	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lynn Hill SBM, Varndean	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Sarah Stokes Clerk	✓				
Gaynor Newnham Clerk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Andy Richbell Interim Executive Head		✓	✓	n/a	✓
Sue Pollock – in lieu of LHO	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	✓
					✓
					✓
					✓
					✓