

THE GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON
Wednesday 13 February 2019

Present:

Deborah Brooks (Vice Chair and chairing this meeting)	Emma Davies
Ilan Jacobs (Co-Chair)	Jean Linsky
David Steadman	Sammy Rosehill (Assistant Headteacher)
Andrew Sutcliffe (Co-Chair)	Sophie Fenton
	Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

In attendance:

Colin Grazin - Clerk to the Governors

PART I

28/1 WELCOME AND LEARNING

The Governors congratulated Deborah on her chairing a GB meeting for the first time. David Steadman gave a short presentation, looking variously at the news over the last few weeks, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp 74 years ago, the lack of mutual understanding and how those issues might relate to the school, with particular reference to guarding against selection bias. We should ensure that the ethos of the school was such that all children were welcome and that we took every possible step to guard against discrimination.

Deborah thanked David for this message. A short discussion ensued. The Head and Assistant Head (AHT) reported on the work being done throughout the staff team on diversity and the possibility of respectful disagreement. A Governor said that they had noticed a recent step-change in the culture of the school.

28/2 ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Ed Lewin, Alistair Falk, David Grunwald and Rina Wolfson.

28/3 DECLARATION OF ANY DIRECT OR INDIRECT PERSONAL INTEREST (INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY PERSONAL FINANCIAL INTEREST)

After enquiry and explanation by the Chair, the following people declared a direct or indirect personal interest (including but not limited to personal financial interest), in the undertakings of the meeting:

- a) Paid employees of the School: Marc Shoffren and Sammy Rosehill.
- b) Governors with children attending the school: Deborah Brooks, Emma Davies, Ed Lewin, David Grunwald, David Steadman, and Sophie Fenton.
- c) David Grunwald's wife is a member of staff at the school.
- d) Jean Linsky noted that she signed cheques on behalf of a Jewish community which used the school building.

- e) Sophie Fenton is employed by Jewish Teachers Training Partnership which accredits the School Direct Training Programme and indirectly receives funds from Alma Primary.
- f) Marc Shoffren noted that the school now employs his father-in-law
- g) Emma Davies runs a first aid course at the school, for which she is paid, and has two children at the school.

Action: The Clerk will ascertain whether there is a necessity to provide this information at each meeting

28/4 PART 1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2018

No amendments were proposed or agreed to those minutes, which were formerly approved.

28/5 MATTERS ARISING FROM PART 1 OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 31 OCTOBER 2018

Those individual Governors responsible for the various action points contained in those minutes confirmed that each of those actions had been completed prior to this meeting. There were no other matters arising from the minutes.

28/6 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON ANASHIM-PEOPLE

The Head highlighted a number of issues from his report. Following the late resignation of an Assistant Head last year, steps had been taken to recruit a replacement. After a competitive application process, Vered Rose-Simons was appointed to the permanent role of Assistant Head.

It has however been difficult to appoint a replacement for her teaching role, during the autumn term. Approaches had been made through various agencies, but a newly qualified teacher had now been appointed and would work with Year 3 children. Attempts to recruit a Year 6 teacher for next year were ongoing.

The Head referred the GB to the INSET and CPD data contained in his report. In addition to that information, the school had access to Barnet benchmarking data, which showed that Alma was one of the top four schools in the borough, per capita, for CPD expenditure. The SLT had a deep commitment to development of the staff of the school. Staff Absence Data was contained within the report. Absence levels for autumn 2018 were higher than the comparable period in 2017, but in line with those for autumn 2016. A Governor challenged whether the level of CPD within the school had a positive impact on classroom activities and therefore on the children, and how the school can be sure of this. In response, the Head reported that there had been a greater level of observations and more drop-ins to classes. He was committed to monitoring the impact of the CPD work. Teachers attending external courses were encouraged to provide feedback but there remained a need to do more work on specific issues which concerned the staff body. It was school policy to use supervision to follow up issues raised on internal and external courses.

The Head did not believe there was an issue with staff absence but due to the small size of the school and the number of staff similarly small, data was skewed by any individual lengthy absence. It was difficult therefore to establish a proper pattern. He believed staff absences rates were similar to those in comparable schools.

Alma had conducted a light-touch staff survey, primarily in relation to staff well-being, and had held a staff breakfast for staff to discuss the issues raised with the Head. There had been positive feedback since then.

Andrew reported on behalf of the Committee. The focus had been on the issues set out in the Committee Chair's written report. The GB was requested to approve two papers, if possible.

The GB considered the proposed review of the Professional Development Policy. The changes, relating primarily to part-time staff, were summarised in the written report and were intended to widen the range of the policy, rather than amend it. The **Governing Body formally approved** the changes to the policy.

The People Committee also requested approval of two changes to the Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy. That had been considered by Helen Elliott, an external adviser, and the proposed changes took account of her views:

- the current recruitment policy is to obtain two references. Where a second reference was not available, for whatever reason, the school would now proceed to carry out a risk assessment and if a low level of risk was decided then, after documenting the process of risk assessment, the appointment could proceed. These amendments, suggested by Helen Elliott, were included in the revised policy.
- Recruitment policy is governed by the KCSE procedure. Where teachers and other staff were recruited from overseas, there were unlikely to be difficulties if the absences had been for short periods, because it was unlikely that offences had been committed abroad. Helen Elliott suggested a potential variation of the policy as, if a person had repeatedly gone aboard, that was a risk of potentially dubious conduct. In those circumstances a candidate might be asked to visit the appropriate consulate or obtain confirmation of a clean record from a foreign police force.

A final written version of these policies, including the Helen Elliott amendments, will now be prepared and will be circulated by email to the GB for final approval.

Action. The revised policies should be circulated to GB by the Head/Committee Chair for final approval and then published on the school website.

Governors raised recent or potential changes to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act. **The GB agreed** to wait for the opinion of external advisers before taking any action on that matter. **Action:** The Clerk agreed to investigate.

28/7 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON YELADIM-CHILDREN

The Head drew attention to certain matters from his report. There has been good progress in relation to safeguarding. A full check under Section 128 Education and Skills Act 2008 had been carried out and no issues arose as a result of that check.

It is intended to have a safeguarding governing check in March and the need for all Governors to have up-to-date safeguarding training will be reviewed at the same time

Action. There will be a formal review of the date when Governors last had full safeguarding training and a further review as to what more if any training will be required to be carried out

Action The Clerk will write to all Governors to enquire when they last had formal safeguarding training and report to the Chair.

Barnet have now provided information on applicants for admission to the school. There had been 149 applications, of whom 118 had completed Supplementary Information Forms. It could not however be assumed that all of those who did not complete the forms were not Jewish. The admissions panel was considering applications made under the social and medical conditions proviso. The number of applications was back to level of two years earlier. **Action.** The Children's Committee would consider whether there was any trend in numbers applying for admission to the school.

The Head reported that Rachel Clark (the school's Inclusion Leader) had continued to do very good work and he referred to the graphs on page 10 of the School Evaluation Report. He was satisfied that good progress was being made by the vast majority of children, but SEND levels were below expectation in a small number of cases. A Governor queried whether, because there was only a small number of children who struggled with writing and maths, whether it was therefore possible to draw any conclusions. The Head told Governors, in response, that the school held Pupil Progress meetings. Staff talked to all children in the classes. Where there were children with concerns, the school policy was to talk about those in detail. Staff had been sent on relevant courses to improve this area. The need for "Catch Up" interventions had been identified and these are presently being tested.

Action The SEND Governor is due to attend a meeting at the school in the near future and will investigate the impact of recent interventions.

The Head had looked at the data for the Pupil Premium children. Although this issue has not been considered by the Learning Committee, the Children's Committee will consider it at its next meeting and members of the Learning Committee will be asked to attend. However, as before, there are a very small number of children involved, so that it is difficult therefore to draw formal conclusions.

Action Children's Committee to review Pupil Premium data and invite Learning Committee to attend.

There had been no exclusions issues and the level of attendance was good and did not raise any issues.

There was a racist incident involving behaviour in the classroom, which has been recorded appropriately. It has been discussed with the relevant parents and the matter closed.

Outdoor Play and Learning was a very important point of focus. There remained issues in relation to children playing football in the playground.

Children had been encouraged to engage in projects outside school, including, in particular Tu B'Shvat. External school activities had continued in accordance with the written report. Marc was particularly pleased that Alma was one of only two schools which fielded a mixed football team in a recent school tournament.

The Committee Chair presented the report of her Committee. It had reviewed two policies, namely

- Admissions Policy. This has been amended and now needed to be approved by the Governing Body. The change was set out in detail in the report. The change will allow applications by siblings of children in the school at the time of the application to be made even if the older sibling will no longer be a pupil at Alma when the younger sibling starts. The previous policy did not give preference to such applications. Paragraph 3.13 of the admissions policy will be amended by the removal of the words "will still do." This Policy has been reconsidered after appropriate consultation. The Governing Body was asked to take part in a formal vote on this proposal.

The Governing Body unanimously **approved and agreed** this amendment to the admissions policy

- Walking Home Policy. There had been no existing policy, but there had been requests from various parents to allow older children to walk home and there was now a formal policy to that effect.

It was agreed that Andrew Sutcliffe will attend the next meeting of the Children's Committee to discuss Pupil Premium.

The Head told the GB that it had to approve spending on sports and on Pupil Premium. These matters are reported on the Alma website.

Action Pupil Premium and Sports spending issues will be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

28/8 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON TIFUL - OPERATIONS AND FINANCE

The overall financial position of the school was good. Full details of that are set out in the written report. The shortfall on Quality Contributions is now improving.

Auditors, who visited the school in November, found three minor issues. Those have been resolved and all relevant reports have now been submitted EFSA, on time.

ESFA have maintained their claim for a clawback for payments made in the preceding year. No further action is possible to resist that claim.

The direct debit system for the collection of Quality Contributions is not presently being used by sufficient parents and action is needed to increase usage. However, it is believed that it will have long-term benefits.

A new uniform provider has been found, following problems with the earlier provider. The cost of uniforms will increase slightly, but there would be benefits to the school because it will not have to hold stock or deal with administration.

Staff Training on GDPR has continued. The report to the committee was that the school was now GDPR compliant. DPO Services has been appointed as Data Protection Officer and has carried out certain training. The Vice Chair thanked all of the staff for the work they had done on this issue and emphasised the need for continuous training to ensure compliance.

There were some minor site issues which were being resolved, particularly water ingress. The GB considered the figures for receipt of Quality Contributions which are set out in the written report. Although there is a considerable difference between QCs actually received and the budget figure, the intervention of the Chair of Governors by personally contacting a substantial number of parents is improving the position substantially.

A Governor enquired challenged the Head as to whether the staffing structure was in line with potential income of the school. He was concerned that, in the prior academic year, the school had paid more than had been expected. Marc indicated that the school worked on a four-year budget program and that there could be a problem in the fourth year. Notwithstanding a wish to balance the budget, it would be very difficult to make changes to it.

The GB considered its responsibility to ensure that the income received by the school balanced its expenditure and whether individual members of the GB had sufficient information. The Chair explained the new process that will be undertaken to comply with the need for Chairs and Governors to have more regular review of the School's management accounts. **Decision:** Governors approved the new process for meeting the enhanced financial scrutiny requirements, set out in the Academies' Financial Handbook 2018

28/9 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON LIMMUDIM/LEARNING

The Head focused on certain items from his written report, with particular reference to the strengths, concerns, and actions being taken to address those issues.

Preparation for an OFSTED inspection continued. The inspection would not be based upon internal data. Inspectors would wish to look at the school books, rather than graphs and data. Most of the inspection would focus on teaching and learning, rather than box-ticking.

Changes in the OFSTED framework were ongoing. However, if the inspection took place in June, that would be under the current framework, but the school would prepare for an inspection under either the current or the future framework. The Head focused on the three growth areas set out in the written report. He had good evidence of improvement in all growth areas.

Action: There will be an OFSTED preparation meeting in the near future for Governors. The school is continuing to work with PAJES on Ivrit and Jewish Learning and the current review should be completed by Alastair Falk by the end of this term. The report will be brought to the GB after it has been considered by the Jewish Learning and Ivrit sub-committee.

A Governor challenged whether the relevant curriculum was correct to meet the school's vision in the area of Ivrit and Jewish Learning. The review should cover this question.

A Governor enquired whether there were plans to provide Siddurim (Jewish prayer books), to children when they left the school, as occurred elsewhere. That issue would be referred to the Jewish Learning sub-committee, to reflect upon it. **Action:** Jewish Learning sub-committee to place the issue of providing Siddurim to the children.

[The clerk left the meeting at this stage. Ilan Jacobs took over minutes]

Committee Chair talked through the recent BPSI visit to the school which looked at the many aspects of the school. One of the team's observations was that the school's social ethos and vision came across stronger than the educational vision.

Action: Chair explained that the new Vision and Ethos Working Group will consider this in their work refreshing the Vision.

Committee Chair talked through the school data in her report, highlighting that some of the school shared data wasn't flattering – in particular year groups, it raised issues regarding assessment or teaching practice. This had led the Committee and School to downgrade the rating for those items on the School Evaluation Report (SER) as the concerns were substantial.

In response to challenges on this data, Head promised more rigorous observations from the leadership team; providing support for certain members of staff; and to make sure certain programmes are being used. The Head explained that school leadership team spend most of their day talking to staff about how to support children's learning and highlighted that it is '*a marathon and not a sprint*'. A Governor raised a concern that the strategies and interventions the school were pursuing may overload staff but on balance Governors felt that it is too early to conclude this based on the data and the Committee will keep this under review.

The Committee Chair outlined how the Committee had looked at interventions and talked to the school inclusion leader about the impact of the interventions that are being conducted.

Regarding data in general, a Governor challenged that as full GB does not see the same level of data as the Committee, does the Committee Chair think that the data is good enough, that school strategies are going to be sufficient and when will she report back that it is providing results? The Committee Chair responded that she is happy that there is enough moderation conducted and that the data is robust. The Committee is happy that lots of different strategies are being tried and that they do come back to continue checking impact for example in relation to writing. The Head said that the school was providing lots of data in the SER. He also highlighted the Fisher Family School Trust (FFS) data that the school received and will be sharing with Governors in the future. **Action:** Chairs and Head to consider how FFS data is to be shared with Governors in future and report back.

A Governor challenged as to when the school would expect to see improvement in this data and the Head stressed patience and Committee Chair explained that it is something they keep close scrutiny of. Committee Chair also invited all governors to attend Learning Committee to participate if they wish to get closer to the scrutiny of the data.

Action: The Committee will also start to look at trends and whether the hurdles that we are setting for progress are the right ones. All Governors to be informed of date of next Learning Committee, should they wish to attend.

28/10 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND CHAIRS OF GOVERNORS

The Head explained the development of the SER and reported on the Leadership and management team who he believed were developing well helping to manage the strengths and weaknesses of the staff.

A Governor challenged the Head on the level of part timers in the school staff and wondered if it created additional work and less consistency for the school. The Head responded that it is a trade off between hiring experienced teachers and their desire to work part time. The AHT said there will there maybe more work to do, the team make sure there is good communication as the handovers are key.

Action: suggest to People committee that they keep level of part time versus full time members of staff under review. can look at

The Head explained that he was continuing to refine the School Development Plan and breaking down the school's priorities was really focusing on:

- Consistency
- Challenge
- Meta cognition
- Developing assessment skill of leaders
- Behaviour
- leadership

The Chair of Governors talked through the recent BPSI Governance review, which Governors will have an opportunity to digest and talk to the reviewer directly in the future.

Action: Hold future session for Governors to directly hear from BPSI Review team.

The Chair of Governors also set out the other actions the GB leadership had been working on including:

- Trustees report completed and sent out
- MS performance management has had time spent on
- Parental engagement – working on improving from both perspectives

28/11 ACCEPTANCE OF ACCOUNTS, SDP & SELF EVALUATION REPORT INCLUDING RISK REGISTER

Decision: The Governors all accepted the SDP, including risk register including the SER, after a brief discussion.

The GB accepted the new suggested process for reviewing the school's management accounts (see earlier report from Operations and Finance Committee). The process will involve:

- Chair receiving monthly management accounts from School Business Manager, who will present them in monthly morning meeting with the Head. Vice Chair and Chair of Operations and Finance Committee also copied in and invited.
- Main Governing Body will receive management accounts in person, once a term, and via correspondence, once a term, making six times a year.
- Operations and Finance Committee will review the accounts once a term (coinciding with the set of accounts reviewed over email by Governors) at Committee meetings and make recommendations to full Governing Body.

A Governor challenged that some governors may need further training or support for this enhanced financial scrutiny and suggested provision of a crib sheet would assist.

Action: Operations and Finance Committee to come up with a crib sheet on the budget to circulate to Governors.

Decision: Governing Body accepted the proposed new process.

The Chair talked through Vision and Ethos Working Group and asked for volunteers to get involved in the work.

Action: All Governors interested in contributing to this project to email the Chair.