

**GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM ON**  
**MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2022**

**Present:**

Ilan Jacobs (Chair and chairing this meeting)	Katie Abrams
James Burns	Yvonne Baron
Stuart Diamond	Emma Davies
Louise Lewis	Jonathan Levy
Francesca Mindell	Vicky Shafran
Adam Zellick	Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

Also in attendance:

Rebecca Doctors – School Business Manager  
Jake Lew – Landau Baker, Auditors  
John Twomey – Sessional Clerk

**Part 1**

**1. WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed all attendees. The meeting had been changed to a Zoom meeting due to adverse weather conditions.

**2. ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from David Grunwald and Ed Lewin.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF ANY DIRECT OR INDIRECT PERSONAL INTEREST (INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY PERSONAL FINANCIAL INTEREST); CONFIRMATION OF ANY CHANGES TO REGISTER OF BUSINESS INTERESTS AND RELATED PARTIES**

No changes were declared by any Governor.

**4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF 2 NOVEMBER 2022 GB:**

- 4a. Alma GB, draft minutes of Part I, for approval, 02-Nov-2022**
- 4b. Alma GB, draft minutes of Part II, for approval, 02-Nov-2022**

The minutes of the meeting were approved with one amendment to Part 2.

The Actions List was also reviewed as follows:

ITEM NO.	ACTION	ASSIGNED TO
7	The process on exit interviews is being reviewed.	Chair/Head
7	Link governor roles will be discussed at this meeting under item 7(b).	Chair
7	The Ofsted evening session for Governors has been scheduled for the new year.	Chair
8	The Governing Body's thanks have been passed to staff in regard to the Pikuach inspection.	Head
12	The SDP now includes the fundraising issues faced by the school.	SLT
13	The policies list has been updated. It will be discussed at this meeting under item 8.	Committee Chairs
13	Policies will be discussed at this meeting under item 8.	Head

## **5. PRESENTATION OF ALMA PRIMARY STATUTORY ACCOUNTS, 2021/22**

*[VS acted as Chair for agenda items 5 & 6.]*

Governors were given a presentation on the school's statutory accounts for 2021/22 by Jake Lew from Landau Baker auditors.

The audit had substantively tested the major funding sources, including the GAG (general annual grant), Quality Contributions and Gift Aid, as well as the major expenses, most notably, payroll. Lesser items were tested on a sample basis. A number of employee payroll records were also tested. Journal scrutiny was done to test for fraud. Overall, the audit was a high level review rather than a universal examination.

A materiality factor of 1.5 % was applied.

Pension liabilities were considered. The school has two defined benefit pension schemes, the Teachers Pension Scheme for teachers and the Local Government Pension Scheme for support staff. It is meeting its contribution commitments.

Staff costs have risen. These constitute 83% of core funding, which is at the upper end of academies. In JL's experience, most schools are spending between 78% and 83%. The ESFA would like this to be at 75% but in his opinion this is unrealistic. The Headteacher added that recruitment costs had risen because some vacancies had had to be filled via agencies.

There was a small cash deficit for the year, £10,000 approximately. Free reserves are £269,000.

The audit found that the finance systems and controls are robust. Costs are well managed. The audit report was unqualified.

JL thanked MS and RD for all their assistance with the audit. This was echoed by Governors.

A Governor asked if there was anything in the accounts that was noticeably positive or negative compared with other schools. JL responded that Quality Contributions appeared to be key for the school. It's desirable that the school maximises its ancillary income.

The Headteacher paid thanks to Marion Escobar for her input as internal scrutineer. She's retiring from the role at the end of this year after giving many years of excellent service.

JL and RD left the meeting at 8:01 PM.

## **6. APPROVAL OF ALMA PRIMARY STATUTORY ACCOUNTS AND TRUSTEES REPORT, 2021/22**

Governors approved the Accounts and the Trustees Report. They will be signed and filed and then put up on the school's website.

VS agreed to lead on the Accounts and Trustee Report next year.

## **7. GOVERNANCE ITEMS:**

**- (7a) Head Teacher's Appraisal Panel – for approval**

**- (7b) Link Governor Roles – for review**

**- 7c) Potential new Governor, Ella Rose and Staff Governor Vacancy**

**- 7 (d) Governor farewell and appreciation**

**7a. Head Teacher's Appraisal Panel:** APPROVED - JB, VS, IJ and LL were delegated to as a pool of governors from which a Panel can be convened.

**7b. Link governor roles:** a schedule of possible Link Roles was sent to Governors with the meeting papers. Governors volunteered to assume Link Roles as follows:

- JL: APA liaison, Maths and Science.
- YB: EYFS and Music
- VS: SEND and Wellbeing
- FS: English and Wellbeing
- SD: Sports and OPAL. Facilities could be added to the list of Link Roles as well and he would be happy to assume it.

The Chair encouraged Governors to take up any remaining roles on the Schedule.

**7c. Potential new Governor, Ella Rose:** the Chair advised that Ella had visited the school on Mitzvah Day. She seemed very interested in the possibility of becoming a governor. Her CV shows a wide range of experience.

Governors agreed that an informal interview process with a few governors would be a sensible next step.

A Governor queried if public law principles might affect the recruitment process as she was a sitting Labour councillor. AZ thought not but an interview process was appropriate.

A Governor cautioned from previous personal experience in another country as a councillor and governor that, from time to time, there may be council-related items on the GB agenda e.g. planning matters that may cause a conflict of interest.

**Staff Governor Vacancy:** the staff governor vacancy was also discussed. The Chair and Headteacher had been encouraging staff take up the role without success. BPSI (Barnet Partnership for School Improvement) had previously suggested that candidates should not come from the SLT. However, it had proved difficult to encourage interest among non-SLT staff. Governors considered how applications might be incentivised but there didn't appear to be an easy answer. The rule against SLT candidates may have to be relaxed in order to ensure that there is a serving Staff Governor.

**7d. Governor Farewell:** ED was retiring as a Governor. The Chair paid warm tribute to her many years of service, first as foundation governor, then as a parent governor and finally as a Co-opted governor over a period of 10 years. Her tenure had spanned the school's entire existence. Her various roles had covered a wide range of school activity. Further tributes were paid in regard to her role as Chair of the Curriculum Committee and as an active member of the parents association. She has generously agreed to remain a member of the Learning and Children's Committee.

## **8. POLICIES**

### **- (8a) Policy Schedule**

### **- (8b) Alma Admissions Policy**

### **- (8c) Equality Information, Objectives and Policy**

### **- (8d) Alma Data Protection Policy**

- **8a. Policy Schedule:** the school's schedule of policies had been reviewed as there had been a number of inaccuracies in the previous schedule. Five policies from the statutory policies list are due for annual review. Committee Chairs will be asked to include them in the agendas for their next meetings so that review by the governing body can proceed at the Spring term meeting.
- **8b. Admissions Policy:** this was noted by Governors. There have been a number of revisions including an updated appeals procedure and a reduction in the number of months of a child's enrolment in formal Jewish education (either at nursery or pre-school having a Jewish character) to 4 months in the 12 months before the closing date for admissions. The policy has now gone out to consultation. This will run until the end of January. It is expected that the policy can then be ratified by Governors at the Spring term meeting.

- **8c. Equalities Policy:** The Headteacher advised that old policy had been comprehensively revised with helpful input from the Barnet Equalities team. A Governor challenged as to how the school would manage and monitor any new procedures that it develops under the new policy. A Governor also challenged that there should be a defined protocol for how to respond to an incident. The Headteacher agreed and advised that the school would be building its capacity to do this. Governors APPROVED the policy. It was also acknowledged that the policy may merit further discussion in the coming months as well.
- **8d. Data Protection Policy:** this had been comprehensively revised. JB, who had led on it, was thanked for his input. Governors APPROVED the policy.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- **9a. Meeting documentation:** a Governor advised that there was often a lot of documentation to be considered at meetings and it was desirable that papers are available as early as possible. This enables Governors to make time in their schedules to study them. The Chair acknowledged the point and advised that renewed efforts would be made.
- **9b. Staff meal:** a Governor suggested, as a gesture of gratitude to staff, that the GB would support the end of year staff meal by paying for the dessert course. Governors supported the suggestion.
- **9c. Learning journey meetings on Zoom:** a Parent Governor mentioned that this has now gone out to consultation with parents again. He wished Governors to be aware that the issue has always generated a lot of parental interest and discussion and that individual parents had brought it to his attention from time to time.
- **9d. Communication with parents:** a Governor commended the extra efforts that the school has made in its communication with parents.
- **9e. MATs Update:** a Governor asked if there was any update on this issue. The Chair responded that there wasn't apart from the fact the government has now dropped the obligation on schools to join MATs by 2030. It's not clear how things will develop. However, it remains a valid issue and can be added to the agenda for the next meeting. It might also be worth setting up a project group to examine the option.
- **9f. Parking:** a Governor mentioned that new sets of double yellow lines were now in place near the school and that this was likely to affect parents' parking.

Part 1 of the meeting closed at 9:20 pm.

## **10. PART 2**

It was resolved that, because of its nature, the further business to be transacted would be treated as confidential and not for publication.

### ACTIONS LIST

ITEM NO.	ACTION	ASSIGNED TO
8a	Include any statutory policies that are due for review in the agendas for the next committee meetings so that ratification by the governing body can proceed at the Spring term meeting.	Committee Chairs
9a	Ensure GB papers are distributed a week before GB meetings	Chair and HT
9b	Send contributions to the end of year staff event to the Chair.	All Governors
9e	Add the option of joining a MAT as an agenda item at a future GB meeting.	Chair