

GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON

WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 2023

Present:

Ilan Jacobs (Chair and chairing this meeting)
James Burns
Louise Lewis
Adam Zellick

Katie Abrams
Yvonne Baron
Jonathan Levy
Francesca Mindell (via Zoom)
Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

Also in attendance:

John Twomey – Sessional Clerk

The meeting began at 7:15 PM.

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed all attendees.

2. ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Stuart Diamond, David Grunwald, Ed Lewin and Vicky Shafran.

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 12 DECEMBER 2022 GB:

4a. Alma GB, draft minutes of Part I, for approval, 12-Dec-2022

4b. Alma GB, draft minutes of Part II, for approval, 12-Dec-2022

The minutes of Part I and Part II of the meeting were approved.

As a matter arising, it was noted that the papers for this meeting had been sent a week in advance.

5. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

5a. Appointment of New Governor

5b. Link Governor Visit Reports

5a. New Governor

As agreed at the last Governing Body meeting, YB and AZ had met with the prospective governor, Ella Rose. Both had found her to be a positive candidate. She had presented well. She has lots of relevant experience. She is well disposed to the school and is keen to contribute. She understands the responsibilities of the governorship role and is aware of the potential conflicts of interest that might arise by virtue of being a serving Barnet Councillor. She also understands that the role will involve a substantial time commitment. Therefore, her candidacy was recommended.

Her appointment as a Co-Opted Governor was approved unanimously*.

5b. Link Governor Reports

The Link Governor Meeting Reports on Maths, Safeguarding and Inclusion & Wellbeing that had been sent to Governors with the meeting papers were formally noted. A number of other Link Governor meetings are presently being organised. Reports will follow in due course.

6. Subject Deep Dive:

6a. Inclusion

6b. Early Years Foundation Stage

6a. Inclusion

A comprehensive report on Inclusion at the school had been prepared by Elena Ttofis, the school's Inclusion Leader, and sent to Governors with the meeting papers. The report covered the following areas:

- What is meant by inclusion
- The different relevant learner categories
- The main areas of focus for the Inclusion Team
- How the school identifies children with SEN
- How the school supports children with SEN, including the intervention methods and strategies used
- How the school liaises with relevant external agencies e.g. educational psychologists
- The Inclusion challenges that the school faces

Elena introduced herself to Governors and gave a brief summary of her report. As Governors had read the report it was not necessary to revisit it in detail. Elena spoke of the SEN challenges faced by the school. There was a wide range of needs to be met. The school has 8 children with EHCPs and a further 3 are pending. The government funding allocated for children with EHCPs is not enough to meet the assessed need and this creates pressure on school resources. This is a dilemma common to all schools.

**Non-co-opted Governors only were eligible to vote.*

Elena answered questions from Governors as follows:

Q: How many children are SEN without having an EHCP?

A: 20.

Q: Does the school ever advise parents to apply for an EHCP themselves albeit with the support of the school as they generally are expected to provide less evidence?

A: No, parents are not asked to initiate EHCP applications. However, they will sometimes present the school with external evidence of need that they have commissioned themselves e.g. a private educational psychologist (EP) report.

Q: Are private EP reports recognised?

A: The school does take cognisance of them. They are, however, not recognised at primary level by the London Borough of Barnet. It's preferable for parents to get the EP to engage with the school in the course of preparing any report.

There can also be an issue with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) referrals. These are difficult to secure as they are not accepted unless 10 weeks of observation have taken place and the parents have participated in a parent group.

Q: How does the school measure outcomes and progress?

A: In various ways. Programmes can be used that incorporate assessments at their beginning and end. Classroom assessments and observations are also used. There may be group work too e.g. Nurture Group.

Q: Is there a pattern of increased need in Early Years?

A: It is unusual to apply for an EHCP in that age group. However, there is one application underway presently.

6b. Early Years Foundation Stage

A comprehensive report on the Early Years Foundation Stage at the school had been prepared by Vered Rose Simmons, the school's EYFS Leader and Assistant Head, and sent to Governors with the meeting papers. The report covered the following areas:

- Summary of current cohort
- The changes to the framework for EYFS introduced in 2021, including the 7 areas of learning and development
- The school's GLD (Good Level of Development) data from 2016-17 to 2021-2022
- The school's Early Years Foundation Stage Assessments for 2022

Vered introduced herself to Governors and gave a brief summary of her report. As Governors had read the report it was not necessary to revisit it in detail.

Vered answered questions from Governors as follows:

Q: Why has there been a downturn in GLD?

A: For two reasons. Firstly, Covid limited development opportunities for children. Secondly, the framework has changed and this has resulted in differences in measurement. There is a similar pattern across all schools.

Q: Are children with ECHPs able to access Early Years support, where relevant?

A: Yes, continuous provision is being used discreetly. The target is to have children ready for classroom teaching by Year 2.

Q: What are the challenges this year?

A: - Having sufficient time and resources. For example, the Team endeavours to read with each child every week on a one-to-one basis.

- Bridging the expertise gap between the Early Years and the Key Stages with subject leaders.
- Embedding the new Phonics scheme. LSAs need to be trained in this.
- Embedding the new handwriting scheme. This is linked with Phonics.

Governors thanked both staff members for their helpful presentations and commended them on their valuable work.

Governors agreed that the new deep dive format based on a previously submitted written note had worked well. It was noted with satisfaction that both staff members had presented well and would be likely to do so during an inspection.

7. REPORTS – HEADS, CHAIRS, AND QUESTIONS

A comprehensive set of reports, amalgamated into a single document, which dealt with all leadership and management issues, had been sent to Governors with the meeting papers. It was not therefore necessary to revisit them item by item. However, the Head highlighted a number of points and responded to Governor questions, as follows:

- Staffing: the school has faced some staff illness challenges recently with three members of staff signed off on long-term sickness. Certain roles can be difficult to cover e.g. senior leadership team members or HLTA's.
- Enrolment: one child has left the school but two new children have been enrolled.
- Affinity Water: their meter has now been installed. The company will, however, lack relevant data to ground a retrospective claim for charges. This will enable the school to defend a claim.
- Q: Is the cabin in the playground now going ahead?
- A: Last year's estimate is now quite out of date. It is likely to cost substantially more. The school will need to fundraise to make up the difference. It is presently refreshing the quotes.

A Governor advised that it may be possible for the school to qualify for a grant for this and they would be happy to liaise about it.

- CPD: the school is offering a full CPD programme despite funding challenges. Every night this week a training event is being held.
- The school's new Ivrit teacher is working out very well. The school still has a vacancy for the Jewish Learning post.
- Safeguarding continues to be a priority at the school.
- Attendance data: there was a 95% attendance rate for the period from September to February. The school feels this is a little low but it compares favourably with an 87.6% rate in state schools during the same period. Taking account of authorised absences,

which can include essential medical and dental appointments, it's a *de facto* 99% attendance rate.

- Pupil retention: engaging with parents is the best method of maximising pupil retention. The parent coffee mornings meetings are working well. Three have been held so far.
- The various reasons why a child might move from the school have not been formally examined but the option remains to do so.

8. Industrial Action

8a. Review of the NEU strike action on 1 Feb 2023 and Alma response

8b. Discussion of planned NEU strikes in March and decision to delegate the management of the school response

8a. Review of the NEU strike action on 1 Feb 2023 and Alma response

The school assessed its situation prior to the one-day strike. All options were considered. It was concluded that it wasn't feasible to open the school. One weeks' notice to parents was given. The staff who came to school on that day were able to use the time productively.

8b. Discussion of planned NEU strikes in March and decision to delegate the management of the school response

Three further strike days are planned in March. It's thought that fewer staff will support these. Staff are not obliged to disclose whether they will strike or not but have thus far been cooperative in appraising the school of their likely availability.

Governors discussed the planned March strikes and the possibility that the school may have to close or part-close for up to three days. **It was agreed that the decision of close or part- close should be made by the Governing Body.** This may mean convening a governing body meeting at very short notice. Governors agreed that in any decision, the right to alter arrangements will have to be reserved in the event of more staff than anticipated being absent.

9. POLICIES

9a. Policy Schedule

9b. Policies For Information

9c. Policies for Ratification

- **9a. Policy Schedule:** Governors noted the updated Policy Schedule which included future review dates which had been sent with the papers for the meeting.
- **9b. Policies For Information:** Governors noted that the following policies which had been sent with the papers for the meeting, had been recently reviewed:
 - Alma Digital Safety Policy (Jan 23)
 - Alma PSHE and Wellbeing Policy (Jan 23)
 - Alma Safeguarding Policy (Jan 23)

- Alma SEND Policy (Feb 23)
- Alma Whistleblowing Policy (Feb 23)
- Alma Admissions Policy (Feb 23)

- **9c. Policies For Ratification:** Governors APPROVED the following policies which had been sent with the papers for the meeting:
 - Alma ECT Policy
 - Alma Attendance Policy
 - Alma Managing Allegations Against Staff policy
 - Alma Medicines & Medical conditions Policy

10. SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

This item was postponed to a future date for time reasons.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 10:00 pm.

ACTIONS LIST

ITEM NO.	ACTION	ASSIGNED TO
6a	Liaise with Inclusion Lead, Elena Ttofis, about approaching an educational publisher contact next term for free books for the school.	JB
7	Liaise in regard to a possible grant application for the proposed cabin.	MS and YB