

**GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY  
MINUTES OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING  
HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 7PM**

Present:

Ilan Jacobs (Chair)

Jonathan Levy

Louise Lewis (via Zoom)

David Grunwald

Katie Abrams

James Burns

Yvonne Baron

Francesca Mindell

Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

Vicky Shafran

Ella Rose-Jacobs

In attendance:

Claudia Maresca, Clerk, London Governance (Via Zoom)

Becky Wetton, Maths Lead (via Zoom)

## MINUTES

### PART I

*Questions were answered by the Headteacher, unless otherwise noted.*

**1. Welcome**

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting at 19.13 and welcomed governors to the first Governing Body of the school year.

**2. Acceptance/non-acceptance of apologies for absence**

2.1 Apologies were received and accepted from 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**

3.1 No declarations were made and no changes to the register of interests were declared. It was flagged that Rebecca had sent round this year's Register of Interest forms to be completed. The auditors would be coming in, so these needed to be completed.

JB and ERJ stated they had not received theirs, so these would be re-circulated to them. **ACTION.**

**4. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting (21 June 2023) – Part I and Part II**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 Parts I and II were approved by governors and the action log was updated accordingly.

## 5. Governing Body updates

### 5.1 End of Chairs Term:

The Chair informed governors that the recruitment pack was ready to go and asked for all governors to support in sharing the information and for them to think about their contacts and networks.

**ACTION.** The website would be updated with information about the position, alongside the Governors page.

### 5.2 Appointment of Vice Chair:

The Chair endorsed JB who had put himself forward. The Chair reminded governors that this was due to have been discussed at the 21 June 2023 meeting, but events overtook them. The Chair also reminded governors that JB will step up to Chair as an interim measure.

**Governors voted unanimously to approve JB as the Vice Chair.**

The Chair also noted that governors needed to re-appoint Chairs of two of the committees:

- 1) Learning and Children's Committee – KA and LL. **Governors voted unanimously to approve the re-appointments.**
- 2) Finance and Operations Committee (FOP) – VS and JB. **Governors voted unanimously to approve the re-appointments.**

### 5.3 Resignations:

Adam Zellick has resigned as a Governor as he no longer had children at the school and felt that it would not be appropriate to continue as a parent governor.

### 5.4 Parent & Staff Governor Election:

The Chair noted that both the pack and process were ready for the parent and staff governor elections. The Chair asked governors to forward on the forthcoming email with a link to the parent governor pack to any potential candidates. **ACTION.**

The Chair stated that they plan to run the parent governor process and have a potential candidate before the December GB meeting in order for them to be appointed with a view to possibly attending that meeting and picking up from January 2024.

The Chair told governors that with regards to the staff governor vacancy, staff have been made aware of elections at a recent staff briefing and there had been some interest from an LSA. JB would follow this up. **ACTION.**

**Q:** Was there any professional development related to being a staff governor?

**A:** No, but it was seen as good experience.

## 6. Leadership Report

- 6.1 The Headteacher stated that they would not go through the report but would highlight some sections. They noted that they had tried to give governors a flavour of how mixed both the summer and this term had been. There had been lots of preparation for Machaneh Alma and then the school had its Ofsted inspection in the penultimate week of the Summer term.

Some incredible experiences were noted with our children last year, such as winning the National Pokeman football tournament and an impressive set of SATs results.

Having been requested In August by the DfE to investigate the issue of RAAC on site, the Head did so and confirmed that no RAAC was present.

The Headteacher highlighted that during the last month since the events in Israel of 7 October 2023 the staff had tried to make the school a place of hope and security for our children. We felt a mixture of pride at what we were doing whilst dealing with pain and anguish felt by the school community.

There was one formal complaint which is in the middle of resolving and one complaint from a local resident on which ERJ gave some advice with thanks to be noted.

With regards to roll, thanks to a huge amount of work by the Senior Administrator, Alma had 12 new children enrolled between July and September. A proportion of these children are Israeli, which presents an EAL challenge, which the school has experience of dealing with. The Headteacher reiterated that the biggest challenge was still spaces in reception. Apart from reception, all classes apart from two were full. If Israeli children applied, they would need to be Y4 or Y5.

**Q:** Was this unique to Alma?

**A:** No

**Q:** Are the new families in the school here for good?

**A:** We had been working with PaJes and the government, but the answer was we did not know. A lot would depend on what happens.

**Q:** A Governor challenged that taking in new children where the school is overstretched may have a negative impact on children's learning and on class teachers and the Head and how was the school mitigating this.

**A:** We had looked at the potential affect on other students, it was a huge learning opportunity and lots of positive influences, but yes there were students that needed extra support and it did change the dynamics of a cohort.

**Q:** Did Barnet have funding available?

**A:** It did for Ukraine and potentially now for Gaza and Israel.

The Headteacher highlighted that the Ofsted report reflected the positive work carried out by Alma.

With regards to Inclusion (p15 of the report), at the end of last week there were nine children with ECHPs, with an additional placement by Barnet and the school has had formal notification that two more would be sent to us. This would bring the total number to 11-12, which in a one form entry school was a large amount.

**Q:** Did they come with funding?

**A:** The government give us a nominal £6k, which does not cover the cost of an LSA. The reality was that Alma had to fund the gap between what the government provided and what it takes to ensure we provided a high standard education for these children. It was a huge financial burden on the school as well as challenging for teachers.

**Q:** Were we affected more than other schools?

**A:** We had 40 children who require additional support of some sort due to SEN, including the ECHP children – so that is roughly 20% of roll.

**Governors requested a deep dive on this issue. ACTION:** for the spring term.

The Headteacher noted that the Ofsted Parent’s Survey was broadly very good. There were a few things that we would be looking at, however most parents were very supportive of the school.

<b>8.</b>	<b>Summer Term Data – This was addressed prior to agenda item 7 to provide context</b>
8.1	<p>The Headteacher stated that this data had been through the L&amp;C committee, so he would just give a broad overview.</p> <p>The first page shows the EYF stage profile and was an assessment that teachers did on children at the end of reception. At the start of the year a baseline assessment, and at the end of the year they were tested on their ability in various different areas. 80% met the expected standard, which was above both Barnet and National level.</p> <p>Pg 2 details Phonics data. 83.3% of our children met the expectation of the phonics check at Y1 and 100% in Y2.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Were the Y2 children being tested at Y1 standard? <b>A:</b> Yes there was only a Y1 test, so if any children did not pass they would re-take the same test.</p> <p>The Headteacher highlighted that the school could have done better at the end of KS2 in the phonics check. There were a variety of factors for this, some of it was to do with cohorts and some with what occurred in school in the spring term. This particular test was no longer being used by the government going forward.</p> <p>The Maths results at KS1 were 20% below Barnet for working at expectations, which was an area that needed attention. The Maths lead would be telling governors what they were doing to address this in the next item.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> With regards to pupil progress meetings was there any correlation with the assessment result? <b>Q:</b> Was it poor preparation for the test? If the test had uncovered a standard, were you replacing it with a test to assess? <b>A:</b> We had end of term assessments in English and Maths and the other subjects were done twice a year. Our internal assessments did not align with the results. Teachers at the time were dealing with other issues and did not spend sufficient time preparing students for the test – the children had 5 seconds to complete each question on the test which proved challenging. We were looking now at doing time practices.</p> <p>The Headteacher highlighted that KS2 data was overwhelmingly positive with one exception -Maths Greater Depth. Only 20% of our children got the GD as opposed to 34.2% in Barnet. The children were not able to demonstrate advanced mathematical skills sufficiently. The new Y6 teacher and the Maths lead were looking at what needed to be done to improve this going forward.</p>

	<p>The school were proud of the rest of the data, it was only the second year of SATs data, reading and writing were both higher than Barnet and National figures.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Agenda item: Subject Deep Dives: Maths</b></p>
7.1	<p>The Maths lead checked that governors had seen the paper. They wanted to address the concerns that the summer data had revealed. The Chair noted that the headteacher had provided information on the Alma data and there were questions around the maths scores and whether this was a performance issue or testing/preparation issue. Governors had also queried whether we subscribed to TT Rockstars.</p> <p>The Maths lead thanked the Chair and acknowledged that the data did not look great. They noted that with the KS1 data and the Y2 cohort there had been staffing issues from October half term to around February half term before they managed to get consistent cover for the LSA in that group. The HLTA was also off which meant that a lot of planned interventions to catch up and access for children did not happen. The actual class data shows that lower achieving children did make more progress. This was still a concern, and we need to continue working with them this year to ensure they do not fall further behind.</p> <p>The Y4 multiplication paper result was due to lack of preparation. It was only the second year that it had been run and the resources were not as available as they were now. All of the children, including those with specific needs, had to complete the same test. This meant they also had 5 seconds to answer each question, this was not fair to them and was reflected in the scores. This year Alma has used practice websites that emulate the layout of the timetable check and every morning the Y4 team spend time with a small group of children to get them to practice the test and get used to the format.</p> <p>The scores had raised some challenging observations about our approach and plans for upskilling our LSAs and parents. One of the issues was staff who were not sufficiently confident in maths or parents that were taught a long time ago. The way we approach the concept would be to address those issues and enable children to do as well as they can.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Were parents told which timetables would be tested each week and how involved were they?  <b>A:</b> Y1 home learning tasks begin with number bonds and by the time they reach Y2 we were sending home suggestions to practice times tables. We don't teach times tables each week as they were part of the maths learning. The expectation was that they were introduced in lessons and home learning tasks were based around the lesson.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Do you subscribe to TT Rockstars?  <b>A:</b> We did have a subscription however when she took over as Maths lead, she looked at the data to see who was accessing it and when, and found that the uptake was very low. It was very expensive and whilst it was fun, there were free examples that they were encouraging teachers to send out. The headteacher added that as money gets tighter, we have had to review what we buy.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Why don't we put this in as part of our fundraising programme and ask people to pay for 3-year subscription for example?  <b>A:</b> The only worry was we had a £35k target and we can't afford to aim for smaller things.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> We could go to different fundraising bodies and emphasis what we want, they might want to give us more.</p>

	<p><b>A:</b> This would be considered going forward.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Had the Maths lead heard of Atom learning?</p> <p><b>A:</b> No. <b>ACTION:</b> Maths lead to get in touch with FM.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Have you accessed Maths Hub, which was free?</p> <p><b>A:</b> The Maths lead had investigated becoming an ambassador and was aware of the resource and was looking into this.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> If you signed up you could send the TAs</p> <p><b>A:</b> Yes, but the issue would be getting class cover for the TA.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Was there any Maths revision for disadvantaged children?</p> <p><b>A:</b> There was a free tuition programmes from Mathnasium and they were talking to the Y6 teacher to see which children would benefit most from those. There was a big focus on PP children with catch up funding, but this money was no longer available.</p> <p>The Maths lead was looking into getting maths tuition for looked after children and they did run a few Maths intervention groups for PP and disadvantaged children.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Around staff confidence, did you still worry about capacity and confidence in dealing with Maths? How far did you think you had come and what could we do to support you?</p> <p><b>A:</b> We had made a huge amount of progress since last year. We now had a more experienced team and the new Y6 teacher was a maths lead at their previous school. The work we had done over the last year, with training as well as a consultant from Barnet coming into school, has helped and impacted on staff confidence levels.</p> <p>The Chair noted that they would put the Maths lead in touch with FM and YB and confirmed that the school now had three experienced maths teachers which would increase capacity across the school.</p>
9	<p><b>Report Y4 2022-23 update</b> <i>DG recused himself for this section.</i></p> <p>The Headteacher advised that although the Y5 figures were positive, there were a number of challenges facing this class. They have the highest level of ECHP, SEN, PP and EAL children.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Was the class teacher full-time?</p> <p><b>A:</b> Yes, and they had a good team of support, however some challenges were still there. There had been an influx of new children which has had a positive effect, and overall, there seems to be a better atmosphere in the class.</p> <p>We were a trial school for a programme from Israel which was an evidence based coaching programme which we were using with that class as a way to help them.</p> <p>We were ensuring that the class consistently learnt at a high level, making sure that the able children were working at Greater Depth but supporting the children with high needs. This could have an impact on next years SATs results.</p>

	<p><b>Q:</b> Were you comfortable and happy that behaviour had improved, was there any worry or sense that we might lose further children and were there any plans to check whether parents were happy?</p> <p><b>A:</b> The sense was that parents were happy and confident in the school's ability to educate their children. There was always the possibility of children leaving any class, and we know that parents were aware that some Jewish schools had spaces. Behaviour was broadly in line with our expectations.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Was it worth considering a bespoke behavioural policy for this particular class?</p> <p><b>A:</b> Not at this time, we need to be strategic and not running a reactive school.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Do you feel Y5 were now just as happy as other cohorts, and was morale better?</p> <p><b>A:</b> There were 6 new children in the class, which had changed the dynamic and as a result, morale has changed for the better.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Around governance, what if anything had changed, previously there were gaps, do we feel if those things happened again, we would deal with them differently?</p> <p><b>A:</b> From conversations with both the Chair and Vice Chair and the L&amp;C Committee Chairs, the headteacher felt that governance had got better; we had restructured the L&amp;C committee agendas and instigated changes for the better.</p> <p>A governor commented that they hoped governors had read their report on Y4 2022/3 and felt it provided a thorough overview of what had happened in the class. They highlighted that the teacher had worked well to do everything that needed to be done. Around safeguarding they felt that decisions made were based on the information that was available at the time. There were lessons to be learned and these were highlighted in the paper.</p>
10.	<b>Alma Budget 2023-26: 2023-24 revised budget Oct23</b>
10.1	<p><i>DG returned to the meeting.</i></p> <p>The Chair advised that most of the review of the recent figures had been conducted over email with Governors but he was now formally tabling the paper. From the Chair's perspective the situation had improved, although the numbers were not ideal, and we were still running a deficit. However, there was a balance to be struck between not preserving the good work of the school and Governors' responsibility of running a balanced budget. The numbers relied on us reaching the £35,000 fundraising target which would be challenging.</p> <p>The Headteacher added a caveat to the budget: national agreements for support staff would be released this week and this would have an effect.</p> <p>From the paper, even if Alma hit our target for income, we would have a £40k in year deficit – this would eat into our reserves but would not break the reserves policy – the paper projected that we would take forward £161k reserve. As shown on the chart it did get better in following years due to staff changes and EHCP funding. As agreed at the end of last year we would look at the budget on a year-by-year basis. We had heard from the ESFA who had noted in our figures that we had spent more than we had. The Chair, Vice Chair, Chair of FOP and the headteacher were meeting with them on 30 November 2023.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Was the forward look based on a full cohort of children?</p>



	<p><b>A:</b> It was based on the numbers gradually increasing on where we were at the moment.</p> <p>JL gave an update on fundraising and noted it was hard. They were approaching it from two angles: major applications and donors and the parent community.</p>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Alma Primary Composite 2022-23 Calendar</b>
11.1	<p>The Chair noted that we had a duty to sign off in advance the school calendar and stated that it would be useful to have an integrated calendar for governors and the school to share.</p> <p>The key thing was that the number of days was 186 in total. We were finishing on 25 July 2024 which was quite late but was in line with other Jewish schools.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> If 190 days is what the government recommended, did we have enough time to do the things we needed to do?</p> <p><b>A:</b> Yes, we adapt our teaching to make sure we do what we had to do within the timeframe.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> Only 5 INSET days, would that be enough for trainees?</p> <p><b>A:</b> We use our INSET days well, but we could move one of these dates to later in the year.</p> <p><b>The Chair asked governors to approve 186 days. Approved unanimously by governors.</b></p>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Ofsted De-brief</b>
12.1	<p>The Chair wanted to formally congratulate the school and thanked governors who attended. A huge well done is deserved, given that that they arrived in the penultimate week of school.</p> <p>What Ofsted said was good and we received clarity on the vast majority of things that we were doing well. We would imbed in the new SDP points raised by Ofsted.</p> <p><b>Q:</b> For future discussion we were happy we received good but would love outstanding, should we looking as part of the SDP to pinpoint what we can do to get that?</p> <p><b>A:</b> The Chair would take this as a discussion point for future meetings. <b>ACTION.</b></p>
<b>13.</b>	<b>School Development Plan &amp; School Evaluation Report</b>
	<b>For noting:</b>
13.1	To note that governors were regularly updated on how the school was doing and progress it was making.
<b>14.</b>	<b>Risk Register</b>
14.1	The Chair noted that the headteacher had flagged some issues which would need to be done by the committees, and they would remind individual Chairs to keep an eye on these. <b>ACTION.</b>
<b>15.</b>	<b>Israel Situation:</b>
	<p><b>a. Kaytana update</b></p> <p><b>b. Security</b></p> <p><b>c. Places for Israeli children</b></p>
15.1	<p>Kaytana Update: Had been given at the start of the meeting.</p> <p>Security: JB noted we had been looking at security but we had always been conscious of security at the school. After the events of 7 October 2023, we had spoken to the police and CST. We were now drawing up plans to further improve physical and digital security.</p>



	Governors commented that communication to parents on the situation had been clear, and concise and parent groups had been impressed.
	Places for Israeli children: Families that had arrived had been very appreciative and grateful that as a school community we had done something for others.
<b>16.</b>	<b>AOB</b>
16.1	The Chair reminded governors to complete the doodle poll with a view to holding a review session with Deborah Brooks before Christmas.

There being no further business, the Chair closed Part 1 of the meeting at 21.40.

<b>Signed: (Chair)</b>	<b>Date:</b>
------------------------	--------------

#### ACTIONS LOG

ITEM NO.	ACTION	ASSIGNED TO	Status
<b>FGB Meeting of 8 November 2023</b>			
3.1	Forms circulated by Rebecca to be re-sent to JB and ERJ	MS	On-going
5.1	Governors to share with the networks the recruitment pack for the Chair's role.	ALL	On-going
5.4	Governors to share with their network's recruitment details for Parent and Staff election.	ALL	On-going
6.1	Deep dive on issues surrounding EHCP children and funding to be discussed in the spring term.	Clerk	On-going
7.1	Maths Lead and FM to get together to exchange information	BW/FM	On-going
12.1	Chair to ensure ways of reaching Ofsted "Outstanding" were considered in the SDP	Chair/MS	On-going
14.1	Chair to ensure Committee Chairs checked the risk register and actioned accordingly.	Chair	On-going
<b>FGB Meeting of 21 June 2023</b>			
7.10	Add to the website the Pokeman Cup event news and photos.	MS	On-going
7.11	Review link governor roles Given some gaps and given have further changes in GB coming up will review in the New year and see priorities and see who has left and what are the gaps.	Chair/ALL	On-going
<b>FGB Meeting of 22 February 2023</b>			
6a	Liaise with Inclusion Lead, Elena Ttofis, about approaching an educational publisher contact next term for free books for the school. Waiting for feedback -	JB	On-going