

THE GOVERNING BODY FOR ALMA PRIMARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON
WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2013

GOVERNORS

*Noa Bladon
*Deborah Brooks
*Emma Davies
*Treina Fabre
Adam Goldin
*Natalie Grazin (Joint Chair)
*Michelle Jacobs
*Matt Plen
*Laura Sherling
*David Steadman (Joint Chair)
*Andrew Sutcliffe

HEADTEACHER GOVERNOR

*Marc Shoffren

NON-VOTING OBSERVER

Martin Blain

*denotes member present

IN ATTENDANCE

Rebecca Doctors, School Business Manager
Keith Golding, Clerk

PART I

13/01 **WELCOME**

David Steadman took the chair and welcomed everyone, including the two newly elected Parent Governors Emma Davies and Laura Sherling, to the first clerked meeting of the autumn term and under Jewish tradition a special blessing was said to mark the occasion.

13/02 **A MOMENT OF LEARNING**

Andrew Sutcliffe led a discussion on the knowledge-skills debate in education and referred to the work of Carl Rogers, a humanistic psychologist who considered that for a person to "grow", they needed an appropriate environment regarding learning and its facilitation. It was noted that in the current educational system the philosophy of "discovery learning" had major weaknesses - although it engaged children, it did not give all children the best learning outcomes - and consideration was given to how a balance could be achieved to obtain the highest quality of teaching.

13/03 **ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Adam Goldin.

Apologies were also received and accepted from Martin Blain, Non–Voting Observer.

13/04 **DECLARATION OF ANY DIRECT OR INDIRECT PERSONAL INTEREST**

Matt Plen arrived at this point

After enquiry the only people present to declare a direct or indirect personal interest (including but not limited to personal financial interest), in the undertakings of the meeting were Emma Davies, who had carried out paid first aide training before her appointment as Governor, and Marc Shoffren and Rebecca Doctors, who were paid employees of the School.

Treina Fabre arrived at this point and confirmed no conflicts of interest

The Clerk took the Chair for the next item

13/05 **APPOINTMENT OF JOINT CHAIRS**

Nominations were invited, and two were received and seconded for the appointment of joint chairs. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously, by a show of hands, that Natalie Grazin and David Steadman be appointed as Joint Chairs for the Academic Year 2013/14.

David Steadman resumed the Chair

13/06 **RATIFICATION OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR APPLYING CHAIR'S CASTING VOTE**

NOTED that Alma Primary had currently adopted a co-chair system, where the role was shared, and the Governing Body did not therefore currently have a vice chair. Following from this it was necessary to define how the co-chair role worked, particularly with reference to Article 118 regarding the chair's casting vote in the School's Articles of Association.

RESOLVED that the co-chair role would work as follows:

(a) the two co-chairs to take turns in chairing Governing Body meetings, and at each meeting the designated chair to act as if he/she was the sole chair, with a casting vote if needed;

(b) each co-chair to take responsibility for overseeing two of the four main committees , and in any other aspect of governance any reference to chair is taken to refer to both co-chairs acting jointly.

13/07 **PART I MINUTES**

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2013 were **CONFIRMED**, initialled and signed.

13/08 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Arising from the Minutes :

4. Headteacher's Report : It was noted that:

(i) the Headteacher reported that the School had withdrawn from a Partnership for Jewish Schools (PaJes) event in September as it had not been considered a best use of resources;

(ii) as agreed at the last meeting, the Headteacher had circulated a list of things needed of the Governors with his report;

(iii) arrangements regarding management of organisational risks would be considered under the Part II agenda for this meeting.

5. Finance Report and Budget : It was noted that the actions identified in the minutes had been undertaken, and annual approval of the budget for 2013/14 was on the agenda for this meeting.

9. Dates of Future GB and Committee Meetings 2013-2014 : It was noted that:

(i) the School did now invite all Governors to all meetings via outlook calendar invitations as well as list;

(ii) a rota had been implemented for Governors to provide food for Governor meetings in pairs.

13/09 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF REGISTER OF BUSINESS INTERESTS**

All Governors present completed and returned the pro forma, which would be kept in the School Office for audit purposes. With regard to the absent Governor, the Headteacher confirmed that he would liaise with Adam Goldin regarding the completion and return of his declaration.

Action: Headteacher

13/10 **REPORT OF THE HEADTEACHER**

The Headteacher's report, copies of which had been previously circulated, was noted.

Arising from the report:

(i) the Headteacher advised that approximately 30 applications for places had so far been received for next year. Last year parents could apply for a place at Alma Primary as well as to six other Barnet Schools. This year for 2014 entry people who applied had to choose Alma as one of their six preferences and therefore parents were having to take a definite decision this year;

(ii) the School had received a mock Section 5 inspection, and the person conducting it had been accompanied by a member of the DfE's due diligence team.

The inspector had been very positive about what she had seen. She would set out her findings in her report, but overall she indicated that she had been very impressed;

(iii) in response to a query from a Governor regarding the current 98.3% attendance rate the School had achieved, the Headteacher confirmed that it was an extremely good achievement and Ofsted usually started to take notice when attendance levels dropped below 93%;

(iii) with regard to teaching and learning, a Governor queried whether the assessment process was ongoing. The Headteacher confirmed that in the first term a full baseline had been established and the School was now undertaking an ongoing "development matters" approach using Scholarpack as the School's main assessment and tracking tool. The Limmudim - Learning Committee in the Spring Term would be examining the results of this process;

(iv) A Governor queried whether the data was used to identify children who needed intervention. The Headteacher replied that most of the children were doing well, but the data had identified a few children where certain types of intervention were appropriate;

(v) next term there would be an in-depth Governing Body workshop on assessment and the Scholarpack management information system, together with the new Ofsted framework;

(vi) a key challenge for next term for the School and the Governing Body would be developing the School's own Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage (KS) 1 curriculum which not only reflected the national curriculum but also the founding vision of the School, and how it applied standards as well as the Jewish areas of learning it wanted to bring in;

(vii) another key challenge would be linking with wider groups in the local community such as the Christian or Hindu communities and the Headteacher confirmed that he had recently met with the Rector of St Barnabas Church to explore this further;

(viii) a Governor queried whether there would be a more disciplinary approach regarding the teaching of KS2 or whether the thematic approach would continue. In response, the Headteacher stated that if anything there would be a more thematic approach in KS2;

(ix) a Governor queried if it was normal to appoint a Deputy Headteacher in the second year of a School being created. The Headteacher replied that he could not say what was "normal" under these circumstances. The School had advertised for an Assistant Headteacher but did not receive suitably qualified applicants. However he confirmed that it was part of the overall staffing

strategy to fill this post and the recruitment process would be recommenced at the start of next term;

(x) the Headteacher advised that following problems with the School's roof, the landlord had arranged its replacement during the half term break .He had subsequently approached the School requesting a contribution to the cost, and this would be considered by the K'safim - Finance Committee with a view to reaching an amicable resolution.

13/11 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF GOVERNING BODY TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COMMITTEE STRUCTURE, MEMBERSHIP & TERMS OF REFERENCE**

RECEIVED a list of the terms of reference for the Governing Body and each of the Committees, and the Committee structure and membership, copies of which had been circulated prior to this meeting.

NOTED that:

(i) the terms of reference had been considered and signed off by the respective Committees;

(ii) the terms of reference of all Committees needed to be amended to show that the committees were responsible for reviewing all policies and risks relevant to their area covered and reporting back to the Governing Body;

(iii) as it would involve a change in the Articles of Association, it should be recommended to the next meeting of the Trust Governors that the terms of reference for the Governing Body be amended as follows:

- The proposal to appoint up to four Co-opted Governors (limit not currently stated in the Articles)
- The democratic process for appointing up to two Staff Governors and up to four Parent Governors needed to be clarified
- It needed to be made clear that the Headteacher Governor was an ex-officio position and therefore should not be counted as one of the Staff Governor appointments

(iv) the quorum for Governing Body meetings stated in the terms of reference needed to be amended to conform with Articles 114 and 116 in the Articles of Association.

(v) the chart of Committees, subcommittees and additional groups needed to be amended to show that the Exclusions & Discipline Panel came within the Yeladim - Childrens Committee's area of responsibility

(vi) Governors queried whether Committee members who were not Governors would have access to the relevant committee papers in the Governors' Cubby. The Headteacher advised that it could be arranged for non-Governors to have access to folders specific to their Committee membership.

RESOLVED that :-

(a) subject to the amendments given above, the terms of reference for the Governing Body and each of the Committees, and the Committee structure and Governor membership be approved;

Action: Headteacher

(b) the details of Associate Members proposed for the Committees to be considered at the next Governing Body meeting.

Action: Clerk

13/12 **REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

K'safim - Finance Committee: The Chair's termly report on the meeting held on 16 October 2013, copies of which had been previously circulated, was received and noted.

NOTED that:

(i) for the future, the Committee would receive quarterly reports on income/expenditure against budget with commentary to explain any variance above 10%;

(ii) consideration was given to policies that needed to be put in place for the year end accounts;

(iii) work was undertaken on the level of reserve the School wanted to hold as a contingency. This was still a work in progress but the contingency was likely to be approximately £30,000.

Yeladim - Children's Committee: The Chair's termly report on the meetings held on 2 October 2013 and 25 November 2013, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

NOTED that:

(i) the Admissions Policy had been reviewed and was now recommended to the Governing Body for approval (minute item 13/15 below refers);

(ii) in response to a query from a Governor on safeguarding, it was confirmed that volunteers would be added to the list requiring DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks.

Limmudim - Learning Committee: The Chair's termly report of the meeting held on 20 November 2013, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

NOTED that:

(i) the Committee had taken a lead in mapping out agenda items for the year;

(ii) consideration had been given to the role of the Committee in the initial phase of curriculum development, taking into account the ethos of the School and it was noted that this was a work in progress that involved all Committees;

(iii) with regard to observing educational practice in the School, the Committee was working with the Headteacher to map out progress.

Tafkidim - Staffing Committee: The Chair's termly report of the meetings held on 9 October 2013 and 6 November 2013, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

NOTED that:

(i) Alma's Pay and Reward Policy had been reviewed;

(ii) the Committee had agreed the Headteacher's plan for recruitment for 2014-15 and would share a staff structure with the Governing Body in due course.

The Chair thanked the Committee Chairs for their reports and emphasised that a range of School Policies had been written by the Headteacher and these 60-odd policies now needed to be reviewed/scrutinised by the appropriate Committees

AGREED that with regard to future reports and papers to be submitted to the Governing Body for consideration, they should be submitted to the Clerk at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

13/13 **GOVERNING BODY IMPROVEMENT**

Attendance at Training

The Chair circulated at the meeting details of Governor training to date and training that had been booked. It was noted that:

(i) in addition to the mandatory safeguarding training that all Governors had to complete, they were also expected to attend at least one relevant Barnet training course per year and undertake a Governor's visit to the School;

(ii) Governors as a group would be examining the new Ofsted framework and requirements in February 2014.

It was proposed that Governor training became a standing item on the agenda, to note which training Governors had attended and share any relevant learning, and this was **AGREED**. It was also noted that the Chair of the Tafkidim - Staffing Committee would be responsible for reporting on this item.

Action: Deborah Brooks

Self Evaluation of Governing Body Effectiveness

It was noted that under the new Ofsted framework the focus for an inspection now concentrated on four main areas of standards and progress, behaviour and safety, teaching and leadership and management. Schools would be expected to produce evidence of self-evaluation for inspectors, including the Governing Body's assessment of its own effectiveness which would run hand in hand with the School Self Evaluation. It was therefore proposed that all Governors should be involved in completing an online self assessment, and it was **AGREED** that this should be undertaken in the Spring Term 2014.

13/14 **SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2013-2014**

RECEIVED the School Development Plan (SDP) for Alma Primary, copies of which had been previously circulated.

NOTED that:

- (i) the plan covered the period from August 2013 to August 2014;
- (i) the aim of the SDP was to set out a cycle of actions that reflected a commitment to self-review and improvement by identifying the key focus for improvement for this school year;
- (ii) the SDP was framed by the School's long term strategic aims which embodied the School's core ethos, and provided strategic guidance and direction for the medium and short term development of the School;
- (iii) it also took account of external guidance such as the Ofsted framework;
- (iv) the Headteacher advised that with regard to Section 5 headed "Finance and Fundraising" in the second item covering "Development use of finance software for accounting" the fourth column should be amended to include the following statement "Used to monitor the budget to keep within agreed levels and parameters";
- (v) the Chair asked how the plan would be used as the year progressed. In response, the Headteacher confirmed that the plan was a road map/ongoing working document for the School which identified what it should be bringing to the attention of the Governing Body and its Committees regarding the identification of progress made.

RESOLVED that:

- (a) the School Development Plan be agreed subject to ongoing review by the respective Committees;

(b) the Committee Chairs to each examine the Plan and identify areas their Committees would focus on and advise the Headteacher accordingly.

Action: Committee Chairs

13/15 **ADMISSIONS POLICY FOR 2015 ENTRY**

RECEIVED a draft Admissions Policy for 2015 entry, together with a covering briefing paper, copies of which had been previously circulated.

NOTED that;

(i) under the regulations, admission authorities must determine admission arrangements annually, and following from this the Governing Body needed to agree the admissions policy on an annual basis;

(ii) a full review of the Policy had been undertaken by the Yeladim - Children's Committee, which had taken into account the experience of running the admissions process in 2013;

(iii) following from the above, the policy had been reformatted so that it was made clearer how the School divided its places between open and faith. The way the School would allocate places for multiple birth siblings was now clearly stated;

(iv) the revised draft policy had been subject to a legal check and it had been confirmed that it was now in order for the School to put it out for consultation under the regulations;

(v) in response to a query from a Governor, the Headteacher confirmed that this would not affect 2014 admissions, even if the School site was to become established during that period.

AGREED that:

(a) the draft Admissions Policy for 2015 entry now be submitted for consultation under the appropriate procedures;

(b) any subsequent minor changes to the wording identified as necessary following this process to be agreed by the Joint Chairs on behalf of the Governing Body.

13/16 **ANNUAL APPROVAL OF BUDGET**

RECEIVED details of the School budget for the financial year 2013/14, copies of which had been previously circulated.

NOTED that:

(i) the K'safim-Finance Committee at its meeting on the 16 October 2013 had examined the budget, and had noted that minor changes had been made to it

since Board approval, based on updated information from The Education Funding Agency (EFA) and more information on some expenditure lines;

(ii) the Committee had not yet seen the management accounts;

(iii) revenue had increased by approximately £100 K;

(iv) the expected budget surplus was now £27,500;

(v) having considered the final draft budget in detail, the Committee was recommending its approval by the Governing Body;

(vi) a Governor queried where the School's revenue funds were held and whether they were earning interest. In response, the Headteacher confirmed that they were not earning interest at the moment as there were large sums that needed to be paid out and then claimed back from the DfE. However, this could be considered further by the Finance Committee, if it so wished;

(vii) in response to a question from a Governor, the Headteacher stated that it had now been confirmed that all schools, including free Schools opening in 2013/14 would receive a specific grant for PE.

RESOLVED that the School budget for 2013/14 be ratified.

13/17 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Dates of Governing Body Meetings

The following meeting dates for 2013/14 were **CONFIRMED** as follows:

Autumn Term: Monday 16 December 2013 at 8.00 pm (unclerked)

Spring Term: Wednesday 2 April 2014 at 8.00 pm (clerked)

Summer Term: Wednesday 16 July 2014 at 8.00 pm (clerked)

13/18 **MOTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

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