

**THE GOVERNING BODY FOR ALMA PRIMARY**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON**  
**WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL 2014**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Rebecca Doctors, School Business Manager  
Keith Golding, Clerk

**PART I**

14/01 **WELCOME**

Natalie Grazin took the chair and welcomed everyone to the spring term meeting.

14/02 **A MOMENT OF LEARNING**

David Steadman led a discussion on the theme of Pesach.

14/03 **ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were accepted from Treina Fabre who was currently abroad.

Apologies for lateness were also received from Martin Blain.

14/04 **DECLARATION OF ANY DIRECT OR INDIRECT PERSONAL INTEREST**

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 Marc Shoffren and Rebecca Doctors, who were paid employees of the School. It was also noted that the School had received a freedom of information request for details of any conflicts of interest that had been declared by Governors. Following from this it was

**AGREED** that the Register of Business Interests signed by Governors should be placed on the School website for public scrutiny.

*Action: Headteacher*

14/05 **PART I MINUTES**

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2013 were **CONFIRMED**, initialled and signed.

14/06 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Arising from the Minutes :

13/11 Annual Review of Governing Body Terms of Reference and Committee Structure, Membership and Terms of Reference : It was noted that:

- (i) the Headteacher reported that he had completed the actions identified;
- (ii) as agreed at the last meeting, the details of the Associate Members for the Committees proposed were on the agenda for this meeting (minute item 14/11 below refers).

13/13 Governing Body Improvement - Attendance at Training : It was noted that it had been agreed at the last meeting that the Chair of the Tafkidim - Staffing Committee would be responsible for a termly report on Governor Training. Following from this, Deborah Brooks had prepared a report setting out details of training courses attended by Governors during the Spring Term, copies of which were circulated at the meeting and noted.

14/07 **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 the School had organised its first off-site visit when a small group of Reception children had been taken to a local care home, having first planted flowers and decorated pots to take with them, for the festivals of Tu Bishvat and Purim. They had been very well received and it had helped the children to understand that they were part of a wider community;

(ii) the School's 2013 roll had remained stable since September at 30 children. Applications for 2014 closed in January, and Barnet would shortly be advising parents of the allocation of places. In total the School received 144 applications including 115 with Supplementary application forms, and 29 without;

(iii) the School's attendance levels were currently at 97.47% which was a good level locally and nationally. Of the absences so far this year, 2.41% were authorised absences, which were mainly accounted for by illness. A very small amount (0.12%) were classed as unauthorised absences, whereby children had been withdrawn from school by their families, for personal reasons, which the School was not able to authorise;

(iv) with regard to Reception transition, the School had invited the Heads from pre-school settings to visit the site in February. Colleagues from Gan Alon (New North London Synagogue), Finchley Reform Synagogue Nursery, Yavneh Nursery (Woodside Park United) and Yeladenu Pre-School (Muswell Hill Synagogue) all toured the school and took part in a helpful discussion regarding further links and future transition. The Headteacher from Alonim (Sha'arei Tzedek Synagogue) would be visiting separately, as she had been unable to attend on the same date.

(v) In the spring term the School continued to offer breakfast club and after school care for three days. It had also been able to run three lunchtime clubs (which 21 children had taken up), drama and music, art and PE. In addition to these the School was intending to offer an additional 'active Ivrit' club during the summer term;

(vi) the School had now appointed Jade Lee to be the Assistant Head, responsible for Foundation and Key Stage 1, who would join Alma in September. She was presently at Lavender school and the School would notify parents once Jade's current Head had been able to inform parents there;

(vii) the performance management cycle for staff had started later than expected this year. The School was only now approaching the mid-point of the cycle and it would be reviewing each staff member's targets following the Spring/Pesah break. This would inform any pay progression for current staff in the autumn term;

(viii) Governors had a responsibility to hear pay appeals and the Headteacher had written to the Governance team in Barnet to see if they could provide training in this area, as suggested by the NAHT. The Headteacher was awaiting a reply and would notify the staffing committee if they were able to provide this training;

(ix) the School had maintained a high level of professional development. In addition to the full INSET programme this term it had held a joint INSET on phonics with colleagues from Eden and Sacks-Morasha at Alma. It also arranged a joint session for staff from other free schools, utilising Barnet expertise to improve understanding of financial management for schools. The School also continued to utilise Barnet Partnership for School Improvement (BPSI) to access a range of professional development and consultancy services.



(x) the School had run three off-site visits this term. On Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March it had taken the Reception class to see a performance of Red Riding Hood at the Little Angel Theatre. It had also taken two groups of children to visit residents of Dell Field Court, a residential care home in Finchley. In addition, the School was pleased to welcome local MP Mike Freer on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014. Mike had spoken to the children about working at Westminster and saw the learning they had been doing relating to road safety.

(xi) the Reception class had made good progress in phonics learning since starting at Alma. The School was using the letters and sounds scheme to support the teaching of phonics. The scheme was divided into 6 phases, with an expectation that children should complete the 6 phases by Year 2. The majority of children were on Level three and there were no children who had made no progress;

(xii) the School's first cohort of children were also making good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile. Assessment data for the Reception class showed all pupils reaching age related expectations regarding attainment for emerging, developing and secure levels across the 17 foundation stage areas;

(xiii) the Governing Body discussed the importance of data driven methods of assessment. The Headteacher stated that data is critical in order to advance both each individual child's learning and also to evaluate trends across the class, e.g. whether any one group was making more or less progress;

*Martin Blain arrived at this point.*

(xiv) following the repair of the roof during the autumn term, the EFA had said that they are unable to contribute to the cost of repairs. The School had now written to the landlord to offer a contribution to the cost of the new roof

(xv) there were four main challenges facing the school next term. The first was to secure and engage the next cohort of parents, ensuring that they were able to become part of the Alma Primary community. In addition to the work required to secure those who had been offered places, there was also an upcoming challenge for the 2013 Families and those who were already part of the Alma community to 'make room' for those joining the school;

(xvi) the second challenge was to induct a new 'layer' of staff into the school community in September and the school had begun to consider strategies to address this. Once agreed, these measures would part of Alma's induction programme;

(xvii) the third main challenge would be working with contractors, architects and colleagues at the EFA over the coming two terms to organise the building of the new site

(xviii) the fourth challenge was to continually improve teaching and learning, as the heart of Alma must always be the highest standards of teaching and learning. The challenge would be to retain a clear focus on the learning experience for children, against the backdrop of the other challenges;

(xix) in response to a Governor query as to what help the Governors could provide to meet these challenges, the Headteacher stated that their contribution to the development of the new site, interacting with the incoming cohort of children and parents, and assistance with the induction of new staff would be very much appreciated.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for his very thorough report and stated that the Governing Body would also like to record its thanks to Amber Weldon, Reception Teacher, for the contribution she was making to the development of the School.

#### 14/08 GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

It was **NOTED** that:

- (i) Martin Blain had been one of the founding Governors of the School but had stepped down from this role at the point that the school he worked in professionally had opened a Jewish primary school, which might be considered to "compete" with Alma
- (ii) Since then, Martin has taken up a new post as the Headteacher Designate of a new Free School which will be opening in September 2015. He is therefore free to rejoin Alma Primary as a Co-opted Governor. He had also agreed to be the acting Chair of the Finance Committee whilst Noa Bladon was on maternity leave, and to undertake a project management role regarding the on-site works for the new School site.

It was unanimously **AGREED** that Martin Blain be elected as a Co –opted Governor for a four-year period from 2 April 2014 until 1 April 2018.

#### 14/09 FINANCE UPDATE

**RECEIVED** a budget monitoring report covering the six month period September 2013 to February 2014, copies of which were tabled at the meeting.

**NOTED** that:

- (i) on the report, the Master budget column showed the original budget allocated to the various budget codes, and the Reforecast budget column had been prepared after February, based on actual data;

(ii) DfE grant income for EAL pupils, and EFA additional income to cover rates and primary sports funding income had not yet been received and was being chased;

(iii) the budget variance shown of 480% for capital income covering ICT hardware arose because the accountants had assumed there would be income for ICT setup *before* September 2013, rather than during this academic year. When received, it will however go straight out to RM as payment, so this is just an anomaly in the accounting process rather than a budget issue;

(ii) the total revenue expenditure for the six month period was healthy at 40.3%.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher and Rebecca Doctors for the hard work they had put in to this report.

#### 14/10 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**K'safim - Finance Committee**: The Chair's termly report on the meetings held on 29 January 2014 and 26 February 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, was received and noted.

**NOTED** that:

(i) the following policies had been reviewed/approved and previously circulated to Governors:

- Health & Safety Policy
- Charging and Remissions Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Security Policy
- Anti-bribery Policy
- Risk Management Policy

(iii) a Fundraising Committee had been set up and a fundraising strategy was being put in place. Two members, both of whom were parents, had so far been appointed to the Committee.

(iv) the 2012-13 accounts had been prepared and submitted to the DfE at the end of December 2013;

(v) the Committee were comfortable with the current accounts and the School was on budget;

(vi) the Health & Safety Committee had been formally established, a chair appointed and it had met for the first time in March 2014;

(ii) All risks relevant to the Committee were currently under review and consequences, rating and actions/controls were being updated;

(v) one of the key priorities for discussion at the next meeting was the Risk Register and reference was made to the recent collapse of a wall at a school in Edinburgh which had led to the death of a pupil as an illustration of the importance of this.

**Yeladim - Children's Committee:** The Chair's termly report on the meetings held on 3 February 2014 and 19 March 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

**NOTED that:**

(i) the following policies had been reviewed/approved and previously circulated to Governors:

Complaints Policy  
Attendance Policy

(ii) the 2015 Admissions Policy had been reviewed following consultation and was an agenda item for the Governing Body meeting (minute item 14/15 below refers);

(iii) the Committee had undertaken a Safeguarding audit, using a template provided by Barnet. 46 out of 61 areas were well covered by existing processes and policies in the school; where there are gaps, there are plans in place to address them.

(iv) a report had been received on the first Committee Governor visit conducted by Andrew Sutcliffe during the last week of the autumn term. The report was on a classroom observation and had outlined the outcome of the visit and any recommended actions.

(v) the Committee had reviewed the Risk Register, and risks, rating and mitigations were agreed. One additional risk had been identified and added to the Register.

**Limmudim - Learning Committee:** The Chair's termly report of the meetings held on 22 January 2014 and 12 March 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

**NOTED that:**

(i) the Curriculum Policy had been reviewed/approved and previously circulated to Governors;

(ii) the Governors Visiting Policy had been considered and was an agenda item for the Governing Body meeting (minute item 14/12 below refers);

(iii) a Jewish studies curriculum map had been established and good progress made. The Governing Body discussed the question of how to share these learning goals with parents

(iv) the School calendar for 2014/15 had been considered and agreed. It includes a full three days for staff professional development at the end of the year. The Committee had supported the view that going below 190 days would not be detrimental to the quality of education or children's progress. In response to a query from a Governor, the Headteacher confirmed that legal advice had been taken and it was in order for Free Schools to go below the 190 days if it so decided;

(v) there had been a discussion as to whether it was appropriate for the Committee to hold the GB monitoring schedule. The Governors agreed that the Schedule was acceptable and should be shared with the Governing Body.

**Tafkidim - Staffing Committee:** The Chair's termly report of the meetings held on 5 February 2014 and 5 March 2015, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

**NOTED** that:

(i) the following policies had been reviewed/approved and previously circulated to Governors:

Allegation and Grievance Policy  
Appraisal and Capability Policy

(ii) the Redundancy Policy had not yet been signed off;

(iii) the Staff Attendance Policy had been reviewed and there were no significant changes. However it could not be approved as the Committee was not quorate.

**AGREED** that the Staff Attendance Policy be ratified, subject to approval by the Staffing Committee at its next meeting.

(iv) the Committee had not yet signed off the risk register but would do so at its next meeting.

The Chair thanked all the Committee Chairs for their detailed reports.

#### 14/11 **APPOINTMENT OF ASSOCIATE MEMBERS**

**RECEIVED** biographies for proposed Associate Members of Governing Body Sub-Committees, copies of which were circulated at the meeting.

**NOTED** that, in response to a query from a Governor it was confirmed that these would be non-voting members positions, and although some Associate Members were parents, no financial conflicts of interest had been identified.

**RESOLVED** that the Associate Members proposed be appointed to sit on the following Committees as non-voting members:



K'safim - Finance Committee: Yonni Lachmann, Marion Israel and Eve Sacks.

Tafkidim - Staffing Committee: Leesa Mather and Hiten Jethwa.

Limmudim - Learning Committee: Jean Shindler and Rachel Skian.

Yeladim - Children's Committee: Jonathan Jonas and Brenda Simmonds.

#### 14/12 **APPROVAL OF POLICY ON GOVERNOR VISITS**

**RECEIVED** a draft Policy on Governor Visits, copies of which had been previously circulated.

**NOTED** that:

(i) the policy had been reviewed by the Limmudim - Learning Committee and brought to the full Governing Body because visits form an essential part of all Governors' monitoring role. It was noted that that, as much as possible, individual staff should not be identified in visit reports;

(ii) reports should contain information to assist decision-making and evaluation by the whole Governing Body e.g. when reviewing the impact of a particular policy

(iii) the Governing Body has agreed that all Governors will visit the School at least once a year so they can get a feel for the School during the day. The Headteacher advised that he was in the process of preparing a Governor visits schedule for the summer term. All Committee Chairs needed to ensure that there were sufficient visits on this schedule that covered their areas of responsibility. The Headteacher emphasised that these visits needed to be organised beforehand, with an agreed agenda and objectives;

(iv) the Headteacher reminded Governors that a variety of activities counted as a School visit, not just classroom observations and he urged them to sign in as Governors when visiting the School as this was an important record of Governor involvement;

(v) finally it was considered whether reports on Governors' monitoring visits should be presented to the Joint Chairs of the Governing Body or the Committee Chairs.

**AGREED** that:

(a) The Governors Visits Policy be approved;

(b) Governors' monitoring visit reports should be presented to the relevant Committee Chairs.



14/13 **GOVERNING BODY PERFORMANCE: SELF EVALUATION AND TRAINING**

It was **NOTED** that:

(i) the Joint Chairs would be submitting a report next term regarding the self evaluation of the Governing Body's performance. To assist them in this process, the Joint Chairs would be issuing an online survey for Governors to complete by the end of this term. This would help shape what the Governing Body did in the future;

*Action: Joint Chairs, All Governors*

(ii) in the meantime Deborah Brooks' report setting out who had undertaken training, and the courses they had attended, showed the Governing Body's commitment. Generally the feedback on the courses had been good, but the Headteacher advised that not all the courses available in the Governor Services termly programme were suitable for Alma Governors at this stage in the School's development. He therefore suggested that Governors speak to him first if they were thinking of applying to attend a course to ensure that it was relevant for their immediate needs;

liii) the Chair emphasised that the School had bought into the Governor Services training programme, and the more they used it the better value for money was obtained. The Governing Body was also reminded that the School had bought into the Modern Governor so Governors also had access to this online training.

14/14 **ESTABLISHMENT OF SITE COMMITTEE**

It was **NOTED** that it had previously been agreed that a Site Committee should be established. It was proposed that the membership should be as follows: Marc Shoffren, David Steadman, Adam Goldin, Martin Blain, plus another to be confirmed. This was **AGREED**.

14/15 **APPROVAL OF 2015 ADMISSIONS POLICY**

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

**NOTED** that;

(i) the Children's Committee had considered the policy post consultation, during which two responses had been received. Following from this the Committee had amended the policy as given below;

(ii) now that the School had a permanent site which it expected to move into by September 2015, uncertainty about the site was no longer an issue. The Committee had therefore agreed, after seeking advice from Richard Gold, to change Paragraph 1.6 to the new site at the former Whetstone Police Station.

(iii) the current policy had not outlined how the School would handle any admissions that come in during the school year (in-year admissions) and a new paragraph 6 had been added to clarify this;

(iv) in the final in draft paragraph 3.1.6, use of the word "lottery" had been replaced by "random allocation" when describing what would be done to allocate faith based places. This was in order to better reflect the process now used which utilises a computerised system that randomly generated the whole list from a given range of numbers, instead of individually picking numbers;

(v) the Committee had recommended this final draft of the Policy to the Governing Body for approval.

(vi) the Governing Body discussed the question of whether the 2015 admissions process should use the Moss Hall Grove site or the permanent site as the basis for proximity calculation. Legal advice is that the new site would be a more appropriate basis on which to measure distance criteria.

(vii) It was suggested that as it is not yet clear how the new site will be configured, thought was needed as to how to specify the exact point from which distance will be measured (para 1.6)

**AGREED** that the revised draft Admissions Policy for 2015 entry as recommended by the Children's Committee now approved, subject to any subsequent minor changes to the wording in paragraph 1.6 (regarding the exact point from which distance would be measured) being agreed by David Steadman, Michelle Jacobs and Adam Goldin on behalf of the Governing Body.

Michelle Jacobs was thanked for all the hard work she had put in to this matter.

#### 14/16 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

##### Partnership for Jewish Schools (PaJes) event

The Chair reported that PaJes was holding an event on Monday 19 May 2014 entitled "What are Jewish Schools For?" and a number of very good speakers would be participating. The cost of attending was £20 per person and it was agreed to support attendance to this event.

#### 14/17 **FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS – CHAIRS REPORTS**

It was noted that Committee Chairs would need to submit their reports to the Joint Chairs of the Governing Body by Tuesday 1 July 2014 to ensure that they were included with the agenda papers for the next Governing Body meeting.

*Action: Committee Chairs*



14/18 **DATES OF FUTURE GOVERNING BODY MEETINGS**

The date and time for the summer term meeting was **CONFIRMED** as follows:

Summer Term: Wednesday 16 July 2014 at **7.45 pm** (clerked)

**N.B. this is a change to the previously published start time.**

14/19 **MOTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

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

