

**THE GOVERNING BODY FOR ALMA PRIMARY**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON**  
**WEDNESDAY 16 JULY 2014**

**In attendance:**

Deborah Brooks  
Martin Blain  
Emma Davies  
Natalie Grazin (Joint Chair)  
Michelle Jacobs  
Matt Plen  
Laura Sherling  
Andrew Sutcliffe  
Marc Shoffren

**Apologies:**

Noa Bladon  
David Steadman (Joint Chair)  
Adam Goldin

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Rebecca Doctors, School Business Manager  
Keith Golding, Clerk

**PART I**

14/23 **WELCOME**

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

14/24 **A MOMENT OF LEARNING**

Matt Plen led a discussion on the merits of the different methods of teaching, drawing on modern ideas about critical thinking in teaching and learning in primary schools and comparing this to the tradition of debate between Rabbis in the traditional method of Jewish learning in pairs (chevruta).

14/25 **ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from David Steadman, Adam Goldin, and Noa Bladon. Congratulations to Noa were recorded regarding the birth of her daughter.

It was noted that Treina Fabre had resigned as a member of the Governing Body due to work commitments. The Governing Body expressed their thanks to Treina for her hard work as a Governor.

14/26 **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.

14/27 **PART I MINUTES**

The Part I Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2014 were **CONFIRMED**, initialled and signed.

14/28 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Arising from the Minutes:

14/04 Declaration of Any Direct or Indirect Personal Interest: The Headteacher confirmed that in line with the decision taken at the last Governing Body meeting, the Register of Business Interests signed by Governors had been placed on the School website.

14/17 Future Committee Meetings – Chairs Reports: It was noted that the Committee Chairs had submitted their reports to the Joint Chairs of the Governing Body by the deadline agreed to ensure they were included with the agenda papers for this meeting.

14/29 **REPORT OF THE HEADTEACHER**

The Headteacher's report and School Development Plan, copies of which had been previously circulated, were noted.

Arising from the report:

Summary of Achievements

It was noted that:

(i) Alma's children had made, and continue to make, very good progress in a range of measures. Both achievement at the year end in Reception, as measured by the EYFS GLD measures, and also progress during Reception were considered and interrogated by Governors. The GLD figures position the School above both the national and Barnet averages for 2013.

(iii) The School's parental survey and staff feedback survey had both given very positive responses;

(iv) External evaluation of the School's work had been overwhelmingly positive, including moderation of the Reception class's work by external advisers including Barnet Partnership for School Improvement and also other appropriate benchmarked schools;

(v) The School had been successful in the recruitment of staff for 2014 and had four new members of staff, as well as a new shinshinit (Israeli gap year student to teach Hebrew as a MFL) joining in September 2014;

(v) The School had one of the highest levels of applications, in the whole of Barnet, amongst faith schools for 2014 places;

(vi) Current levels of expenditure were well within budget and a raft of policies had been created;

(vii) A majority of objectives on the School Development Plan had been achieved, a self-evaluation had been completed and an appropriate governance risk register established;

(viii) An effective and well-organised governance structure, had been established, including the Governing Body's four main committees plus marcomms, safeguarding, health and safety, site and now a fund-raising group. A highly energised parents committee in the Alma Parents Alliance had also been established.

#### Challenges for the Coming Year

It was noted that the key challenges facing the School over the coming year were as follows:

(i) Developing the new site including achieving planning consent;

(ii) Further developing outstanding teaching and learning;

(iii) Induction of new staff, children and families and transition of current class to Year 1;

(iv) Transition on current site to two classes including setting up new classroom;

(v) Continued development of the school's broad and balanced curriculum, organisational infrastructure and management systems.

#### Progress and Attainment - Reception Class Levels of Development: Summer 2014

The Governors spent a considerable amount of time considering in detail the children's attainment data within the Headteacher's report. It was noted that:

(i) Children in the Reception class had made good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) profile; a majority of the class were judged to have reached the expected goals across the 17 Foundation Stage areas and many had reached the exceeded level;

(ii) Three levels of development were defined at this stage, with "emerging", "expected" and "exceeded". Nationally 60.3% had met the expected level compared to 65% in Barnet and 73.3% of Alma's pupils;

(iii) With regard to Alma's GLD results in writing, it was noted the higher numbers of children were assessed as emerging or expected and fewer as exceeding than in other areas. The school will be developing strategies to address this in 2014-15;

(iv) Scrutinising the data, a Governor queried whether progress in writing had been evenly spread across the ability range and asked the Head teacher for assurance that teaching is stretching for children of all abilities. The Head teacher explained that pupils at Alma who had achieved an emerging score for writing had still made good progress. The cohort was above the national average and the School would be teaching at a level that ensured they were stretched using a broad and balanced curriculum. The Head explained that the school will be working on strategies to improve writing progress in 2014-15, ensuring that all children will be stretched during the year to make progress. Governors asked to be updated on the specific developments in the teaching of writing.

*Action: Headteacher*

(v) A Governor asked that the baseline EYFS profile for children entering Reception from now on be included in reports to the Governing Body so that Governors could see the degree of progress achieved throughout the year. The Headteacher said that he and Miss Weldon had developed a new process for recording the Reception children's baseline from September 2014 and so agreed that this will be possible. Governors confirmed that they thought it was sufficient for their needs if the data provided was for literacy and maths rather than all 17 aspects of the EYFS

*Action: Headteacher*

(vi) In response to a query from a Governor, the Headteacher advised that there was no national agreement regarding the level of progress there should be for children in Reception;

(vii) A Governor referred to the curriculum review and asked the Head to outline what its conclusions had been, i.e. what had been identified as working well, what had not worked as well, and what would be changed for the future. The

Headteacher offered to share the Reception Curriculum Review report with all Governors and it was agreed that this would be undertaken via the Learning Committee.

*Action: Headteacher*

#### Parent Survey

It was noted that:

(i) The parental survey revealed an exceedingly positive response, with 20 out of 21 respondents rating the School as good or outstanding on most of the features of the School they were questioned on;

(ii) Two of the statements in the questionnaire were "Staff at Alma nurture and care for my child" and "family members are welcomed to join a range of events at school" achieved the highest positive scores;

(iii) Parents who completed ParentView online had given similarly positive feedback.

iv) Two specific areas for improvement had been identified based on parental responses, namely:

- i) I found the event held in October on 'Supporting Learning' to be helpful
- ii) I understand the approach to learning at Alma and the school's developing curriculum

#### Staff Survey

It was noted that:

(i) The staff feedback had been based on a questionnaire the Headteacher and Deborah Brooks had devised and the results had been considered by the Staffing Committee;

(ii) There had been overwhelmingly positive feedback with the unanimous staff view that children were happy and felt safe at school and that positive behaviour was rewarded. They also all agreed that they were supported at Alma and that they were proud to work at the School;

(iii) Some specific areas for improvement had been identified including greater communication and consultation with staff, which would feed into the new School Development Plan.

The Chair thanked the Headteacher for his detailed report and all the work he and his staff had put in to the development of the School over the past year. She also reminded Governors that they were all invited to the end of year Assembly and staff end of year event.

14/30 **REPORT ON SCHOOL FINANCES**

**RECEIVED** a financial monitoring report on the School's finances covering month 10 of the 2013/14 budget. Rebecca Doctors, School Business Manager gave an oral report at the meeting and it was noted that:

(i) Through the first two terms considerable frustration had been experienced with the accounting software package that had been purchased. A large number of these issues had now been resolved although some problems remained, particularly the lack of responsiveness to DfE requirements for academies;

(ii) The School currently had a higher than expected level of income and its levels of expenditure were well within budget, with the underspend currently totalling £94,000;

(iii) A range of policies had been created to ensure the School met its statutory responsibilities and that the School was protected against a range of potential problems;

(iv) Two VAT claims had been made and the advice from the auditors was that HMRC was particularly busy at the moment but the claims should be processed shortly;

(v) A Gift Aid Scheme was now in place;

(vi) Governors confirmed that they were happy with the level of detail provided, but requested that for the future this be accompanied with a covering summary sheet setting out a narrative/bullet points of the main issues that needed to be noted.

*Action: School Business Manager*

14/31 **REPORT OF JOINT CHAIRS**

**RECEIVED** a report from the Joint Chairs, copies of which had been previously circulated.

**NOTED** that:

(i) The Joint Chairs had agreed plans with the Headteacher for the first elections to select a staff member of the Governing Body, and this would be held in the autumn term. With the arrival of the second year, parent elections would also be held that term for two parent governors;

(ii) A self evaluation process had been finalised through which each member of the Governing Body could reflect on their experience as a Governor. It was also an important mechanism for identifying opportunities to improve Alma's governance.

The self-evaluation would be distributed to Governing Body members by the 22 July and responses from Governors were requested by 1 August. The results of the survey would be shared in the autumn term;

*Action: All Governors*

(iii) A report on Governors' visits was tabled and noted. The Chair emphasised that, with regard to monitoring visits, Governors needed to be clear what the specific purpose of the visit was and to record what they learnt from it in a report to the relevant Sub-Committee;

(iv) The four formal Sub-Committees had recruited very good Committee Members whose specialist knowledge and professional experience (e.g. former headteachers, HR specialists, charity-sector accountants) was an asset to the work of the Committees.

#### 14/32 **REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**K'safim - Finance Committee:** The Chair's termly report on the meetings held on 30 April 2014 and 11 June 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, was received and noted.

**NOTED** that:

(i) The following policies had been reviewed, copies of which had been previously circulated, and were now recommended to the Governing Body for ratification :

- Alma Primary Publications Scheme including duties under the Freedom of Information Act
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Expenses and Reimbursement Policy

**RESOLVED** that the policies listed above be ratified.

(ii) The Committee had considered a letter from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) regarding the Governing Body's responsibilities to safeguard public funds. Following from this, a Summary of Financial Management for Governors had been drafted, copies of which had been previously circulated, and it now needed to be approved by the Governing Body.

**RESOLVED** that the Summary of Financial Management for Governors be approved.

**Yeladim - Children's Committee:** The Chair's termly report on the meetings held on 21 May 2014 and 2 July 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

**NOTED** that:

(i) The following policies had been reviewed, copies of which had been previously circulated, and were now recommended to the Governing Body for ratification:

- Inclusion Policy
- Looked After Children Policy
- E-Safety Policy

**RESOLVED** that the policies listed above be ratified.

**Limmudim - Learning Committee**: The Chair's termly report of the meetings held on 14 May 2014 and 18 June 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

**NOTED** that:

(i) The Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education Policy had been reviewed, copies of which had been previously circulated, and was now recommended for ratification by the Governing Body.

**RESOLVED** that the policy listed above be ratified.

(ii) It had been reported to the Committee that all lessons the Headteacher had formally observed had been good or better;

(iii) A Governor queried how reliable the lesson observation assessments were, and asked how they were moderated. In reply, the Headteacher said that moderation had occurred through partnerships with other local schools, the Barnet Education Service and the DfE Education adviser.

**Tafkidim - Staffing Committee**: The Chair's termly report of the meetings held on 7 May 2014 and 25 June 2014, copies of which had been previously circulated, were received and noted.

**NOTED** that:

(i) the following policies had been reviewed, copies of which had been previously circulated, and were now recommended to the Governing Body for ratification:

- Procedures for Allegations of Abuse Against Staff
- Staff Attendance and Absence Policy
- Professional Development Policy
- Redundancy Policy

**RESOLVED** that the policies listed above be ratified.



**RECEIVED** the draft budget for 2014/15, copies of which had been previously circulated.

**NOTED** that:

(i) The Universal Infant Free School Meals grant had been included for the first time;

(ii) The School now received primary sports funding which it did not get the previous year as the funding only applied to children who would be over 5 years of age in October;

(iii) The increase in teaching and support staff costs was as a result of the additional year now coming in;

(iv) With regard to income received from Quality Contributions, it was proposed that this be raised from £1400 to £1425 and that for the future it be raised in line with inflation;

(v) A figure of £1500 in E60 for insurances (non building) needed to be agreed;

(vi) It was anticipated that the total carried forward at 1 September 2014 would be £30,000 which would go into the reserves/contingency fund.

**AGREED** that the budget for 2014/15 be approved including the following:

(a) That the Quality Contribution be raised as set out in (iv) above;

(b) The total included in E60 for insurance costs (non–building) be approved.

#### 14/34 **REVIEW OF THE RISK REGISTER**

**RECEIVED** a draft Governance Risk Register, copies of which had been previously circulated.

**NOTED** that:

(i) The risk scores had been colour coded as either red or green and Governors particularly needed to note those classified as red;

(ii) The register also identified the person responsible for each risk area, and if any Governor wished to query this they should raise the matter with the Joint Chairs or Committee Heads who retained responsibility for ensuring that the register was maintained;

(iii) The risk register would need to be submitted to the School's auditors in the autumn term;

(iv) A Governor queried whether there was duplication within the Register. It was **AGREED** that the four Committee Chairs, as well as the Joint Chairs, would review their particular risk areas to establish whether any within their area could be combined. This review to be completed by Wednesday 23 July 2014.

*Action: Committee Chairs*

14/35 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

14/36 **FUTURE COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

It was noted that Committee Chairs, in liaison with the Headteacher would identify/confirm dates for Committee meetings in the autumn term and notify Governors.

*Action: Committee Chairs*

14/37 **DATES OF FUTURE GOVERNING BODY MEETINGS**

The date and time for the formal autumn term Governing Body meeting was **CONFIRMED** as Wednesday 10 December 2014 at 7.45 pm (clerked).

14/38 **MOTION OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

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