

THE GOVERNING BODY FOR ALMA PRIMARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON
MONDAY 11 APRIL 2016

Governors in attendance:

David Steadman (Joint Chair)
Natalie Grazin (Joint Chair)
David Grunwald
Andrew Sutcliffe
Laura Sherling
Edward Lewin
Ilan Jacobs
Tabitha Sumberg
Deborah Brooks
Martin Blain
Adam Goldin
Michelle Jacobs
Hiten Jethwa
Noa Bladon
Emma Davis
Richard Cornelius
Niki Jackson
Marc Shoffren

Observers:

Rebecca Doctors, School Business Manager
Debbie Fine, Clerk

PART I

19/1 WELCOME AND LEARNING

Natalie Grazin took the chair and welcomed everyone. Martin Blain led a learning session. Michelle Jacobs volunteered to lead the learning session at the July Board meeting.

A particular welcome was extended to Councillor Richard Cornelius and to Niki Jackson as this was their first formal meeting as Governors.

ACTION – DS to prepare and circulate a list showing which Governor will lead the learning slot at each meeting.

19/2 ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES

There were no absences at the meeting and hence no apologies.

19/3 DECLARATION OF ANY DIRECT OR INDIRECT PERSONAL INTEREST (INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY PERSONAL FINANCIAL INTEREST)

After enquiry, the following people declared a direct or indirect personal interest (including but not limited to personal financial interest), in the undertakings of the meeting:

- a) Paid employees of the School: Marc Shoffren and Rebecca Doctors;

- b) Governors with children attending the school: Emma Davis, Michelle Jacobs, Martin Blain, Deborah Brooks, Tabitha Sumberg, Natalie Grazin, Ed Lewin, David Grunwald, Laura Sherling, David Steadman
- c) David Grunwald declared that his wife Talia is now a paid employee of the school, working as a Learning Support Assisatnt.
- d) Tabitha Sumberg's husband has made films for the school
- e) Emma Davis runs first aid courses for the school

19/4 PART 1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2015

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting, with one exception: Andrew Sutcliffe is incorrectly listed as a parent of children in the school. It was agreed to amend these and this having been done, Governors approved the minutes.

ACTION – MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2015 TO BE AMENDED TO RECTIFY THIS ERROR.

19/5 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

It was agreed to handle all Matters Arising within substantive agenda items.

19/6 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON LIMMUDIM/LEARNING

Report from Headteacher

The Head took the Governors through his report on Limmudim/Learning that had been circulated to all of the Governors prior to the meeting; and Deborah Brooks, Co-Chair of Learning/Limmudim Committee, took the Governors through the report of the Committee's work.

Key developments this term included improvements in the approach to Home Learning, preparation for the first and new end of KS1 assessments (Year 2 SATS), writing strategy; and sports provision.

Deborah advised that in the coming term, the Committee will be focusing one meeting going forward on Jewish Studies and another on examining progress and attainment data.

Governors asked the following questions:

To the Headteacher: how he and his teaching staff are feeling about the forthcoming SATs. The Headteacher responded that it was very hard to prepare the children "blind" i.e. with very little information available about the tests in advance. There are also differences between the curriculum of the tests and the way that subjects such as maths are taught at Alma (and most primary schools). He went on to tell the Board that he and his staff are working hard to avoid panicking the children. The aim is to ensure that the children are not stressed out by the tests but that they have the opportunity to show their skills.

19/7 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON YELADIM-CHILDREN

Report from Headteacher

The Head took the Governors through his report on Yeladim/Children that had been circulated to all of the Governors prior to the meeting.

a) *Recruitment for Reception Class of 2016*

The Head told the Board that there had been 186 applications made to the school. There were 19 sibling places allocated + 1 place allocated to a founding Governor's child, leaving 10 places to be filled.

The Head took the Board through the composition of the applications. He highlighted that 28 of the 186 applications were proximity only; 3 applications were from special categories; there were 3 sets of twins; and there was a huge diversity in synagogue membership.

b) *Pupil Premium*

The Head took the Governors through the continuing low Pupil Premium figures.

c) *Special Educational Needs*

The Head told the Governors that Andrew Sutcliffe, the governor responsible for SEN, had visited the school to meet with the school's SEN lead, Jackie Engelberg, and review provision for children with SEN.

d) *Safeguarding and Security*

The Head explained that the staff had attended Prevent Training as part of the Government's strategy to prevent radicalization.

Action – Head to arrange safeguarding training for all governors, especially those new to the GB.

The Head reported that there had been a meeting identifying security areas to work on. He confirmed that any previous concerns raised by the Security Committee had been addressed. Further to this, CST had sent the school feedback on the School's invacuation procedure.

e) *Extended School Activities*

The Head told the Governors that the School now has an extensive range of activities at lunchtime and after school. He said that the Learning Committee are going to review the financial structure of the activities.

Action – Children's Committee to add discussion on financial structure of extended school activities to future agenda

The Head reported that the Breakfast Club figures continue to be very low, and is now loss making. He advised that the school will need to look at this very carefully if the situation continues. Governors noted the tension between losing school money on wrap around care and the school's commitment to support working parents. A Governor asked if the Head believed that there would be a better uptake of the Breakfast Club once the school is at the permanent site. The Head responded that he believed the uptake would be higher next year as the current site is easier to fit into parents' commute.

The Head reported that the After School provision is not suffering from the same issues.

f) *Attendance*

The Head reported that attendance levels had dropped a small amount, but are still sound. He explained that a small number of pupils had suffered prolonged absences from school due to illness. In a small school this has a huge effect on the attendance figures.

The Head advised that there had been a few spikes of unauthorised absences. He said that Barnet Council are going to do a review of attendance and absences in schools in the area, focusing particularly on absence due to medical appointments.

The Head reported that lateness levels (classed as arrival after 8.40am) had gone down.

Another Governor praised the Head and his teaching staff for the high levels of attendance.

Report from Children/Yeladim Committee

Michelle Jacobs, the Chair for the Children/Yeladim Committee took the Governors through the Committee's work. She said the Committee had met twice this term, reviewing five policies including the admissions policy. The Committee had examined their risks for the Risk Register and determined that the previous risks still apply.

There was one safeguarding incident reported, that occurred on the school bus. There was inappropriate language used by the escort on the bus. Michelle told the Governors that the Head had acted immediately to resolve the issue- going straight to the local authority to instigate an investigation. No police action was taken. The Head had also asked for a replacement escort, although the bus provider has not yet been able to make that change and so close attention is being paid through staff to the experience of children on the bus.

Michelle said that the Committee had also discussed the "Contract for Learning" document and how it should be communicated to parents. A Governor asked what the contract is. The Head explained that it is an agreement between the school and parents about how the pupils are expected to behave and what learning leads to the best outcomes. Discussions are ongoing about this and how it relates to the full set of expectations that the school has of parents e.g. Quality Contributions, home learning support, etc.

Michelle ended by saying the priorities for next term are the appeals panel and the discussion on whether a pupil premium place ought to be a part of the admissions policy.

A Governor asked if there was any concern about a lack of diversity amongst the pupils, as a result of the high number of siblings impacting on admissions. Michelle responded that this is true, although compared to other Jewish schools, Alma is very diverse. She explained that the structure of the policy means that the school is not just for Jewish children, and the hope is that in the future there would be more non-Jewish pupils attending. She said the Committee spend a lot of time discussing how to attract more non-Jewish pupils.

This led to a general discussion amongst the Board about diversity. The Chair told the Board that there will be a discussion at the Informal Meeting in June about changing the admissions policy, including ways to bring greater diversity.

Action – Informal governing board meeting agenda for June to include discussion on ways (if any) admission policy could be changed to facilitate greater diversity

Another Governor asked the Head if the school knows how many families put Alma as their first choice school. The Head confirmed the school does know how many, but not the

identities. The Governor asked if it would be possible to track this data year on year. The Chair responded that the Children's Committee will be going through the data from the past 2 years.

Action – Children's Committee to track and analyse trends in applications including % first preferences

19/8 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON ANASHIM-PEOPLE

Report from Headteacher

The Head took the Governors through his report on Anashim/People that had been circulated to all of the Governors prior to the meeting.

a) Staffing and Volunteer update

The Head took the Governors through the staff movements set out in his report.

b) Continuing Professional Development

The Head took the Governors through the range of internal and external courses that had been undertaken by the staff.

Report from Committee

Hiten Jethwa, the Chair for the Anashim Committee took the Governors through the Committee's work. He told the governors that the Committee met once during the term. He explained that the Committee had reviewed the recruitment policy and pay policy.

A Governor asked if there is anything the school can do to actively encourage male teachers to apply. Hiten replied that it is a common issue for all primary schools - there is a shortage of male teachers nationally at primary school level. He told the GB that there have been no male applicants for the last 2 roles that have been advertised. It is not possible to prioritise based on gender, even if there were applicants. The Headteacher however agreed that despite that it is good to have some male staff and teachers around the school and there are an increasing number of men within school life e.g. as instrumental music teachers, PE teachers, etc. The Head also explained that the school's main priority is to recruit the best teachers. He expressed hope that as the school's reputation grows, there will be a natural increase in diversity of applicants for positions.

19/9 REPORT FROM SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON K'SAFIM-FINANCE

Report from Rebecca Doctors

a) Finance Update

Rebecca Doctors took the Governors through the figures set out in her report. She confirmed that the accounts had been submitted and that all new governors had been duly registered at Companies House.

Report from Committee

Noa Bladon, the Chair for the K'safim Committee took the Governors through the Committee's work and findings of their 2 meetings.

She started by explaining that the Risk Register is still a work in progress. She said that a new template had been created for the revised Risk Management Procedure and would be circulated for every committee to work with.

Noa went on to set out the Committee's discussions around the 10k deficit position against the 2015-16 budget. She said that the reason for this is the decline in parental Quality Contributions, since expenditure within the school is fairly fixed. The Committee had discussed this at length as the contributions are entirely voluntary, but the school budgets for significant expenditure e.g. on books, resources, teaching staff etc, based on the assumption of this income and so the school needs to remind parents about what benefits result from that income. The Head explained that there is another separate issue around HMRC/Gift Aid for voluntary contributions. He said that the discussions with HMRC are being managed by PAJES.

The Chair said that the level and use of Quality Contributions are ethos-related and consequently a Governing Body decision. If the fall in parents paying continues and/or worsens, it may need to be discussed at length again at Governing Body level.

Noa then invited Tabitha Sumberg to update the Board on the School's fundraising. Tabitha told the GB what is in the bank and what has been pledged. She said that by the end of the year, even without further fundraising work, there would be £110,000 in the fund. The target is £218,000.

She said there are ongoing significant conversations taking place that could hopefully lead to naming rights. She asked that a meeting be set up to discuss how the school would attribute naming rights – eg what level of donation/contribution to the school would merit naming rights and /or other forms of recognition.

Action- Tabitha and David Steadman to set up a meeting to discuss naming rights – invite to be sent to all governors so all those interested can attend

The Chair congratulated and thanked the fundraising committee for their excellent work so far.

19/10 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER ON LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE AND JOINT CHAIRS' REPORT

Report from Headteacher

a) School Development and Self Evaluation

The Head told the GB that he had been working on developing the School's leadership team. There has been significant work being done to restructure the format used for the school's Self Evaluation as part of this.

b) Network and Clusters

The Head took the Board through the work with clusters. He told the Governors that the work with the Jewish Schools cluster was active, with the schools already exploring writing comparisons, and moving onto maths. The work with the local Barnet schools network is going similarly well, focusing already on maths, and moving onto writing.

The Head said that there is a challenge for small schools around partnerships. A decision will need to be made about what other schools Alma wishes to work with in future. The Head confirmed that this is a decision requiring significant Board discussion. He reassured the Board that the School would not be losing its independence through closer partnership.

ACTION – Governors to consider potential closer partnership with other schools, and what the scope and remit of any such partnership should be.

Report from Joint Chairs

David Steadman, co-Chair took the Governors through the Joint Chairs Report. The Joint Chairs will be meeting with every Governor over the coming term to evaluate the GB's effectiveness and seek feedback.

He updated the Board about a significant shift for the Committees. He said that the School encourages each pupil to learn one topic "in depth". The Chairs want the Governing Body to reflect the same practice. So, each Committee member will have one area of their Committee's remit to know "in depth". The Chair asked if all the Governors approved this new structure. The Governors confirmed they did. One Governor expressed concern that they did not have sufficient people on their committee to cover all "in depth" areas. The Chair responded that if this proved to be the case, further recruitment would occur to create additional capacity within the Committees.

Action – Each committee to review the draft list of "Governing in Depth" portfolios and decide if it is right for that committee. Secondly, each committee to allocate the "Governing in Depth" roles by end of Summer Term 2016, so that the system can commence in September 2016.

19/11 Revised Terms of Reference

The Chair explained that the revised terms of reference for the 4 committees had taken 9 months to complete. The Governors went through the document and asked various questions. The Chair answered all questions. She then asked for a show of hands to approve/disprove the Revised Terms. The GB approved the revised Terms of Reference.

19/12 Report from Communications Task and Finish group on parental communication (Ed Lewin and Ilan Jacobs)

Ed and Ilan explained that they had been tasked with examining how the school communicated with parents. They told the Board that they had launched an online survey and benchmarked the school against other primary schools (local/not local/Jewish/not Jewish). They reported that Alma's methods of communication (D6/email/Facebook) were quite advanced in comparison to other schools.

The survey revealed overwhelming support from parents. Over 90% of parents reporting the communication as excellent/good, with the frequency and content of communications also being very positively rated.

The communication may get more difficult to sustain as the school grows, but Ed and Ilan said that they were satisfied that appropriate delegation was already taking place. The Head then updated the Board on some minor tweaking that had taken place to the website and the School's Facebook page.

A Governor asked if the school had thought about the timing of emails- eg how much notice the School gives parents of an event taking place. The Head responded that the School tries to give 3 weeks' notice to families. He also told the GB that the School are trying to use Facebook more for communication.

The Chair thanked Ed and Ilan and the Head for their work on this project.

19/13 Update on Risk Management

The Chair confirmed there was no update.

19/14 Any other Business

There was no other business.

19/15 Date of Future GB Meetings

Summer term Informal: 6th June, 7:45pm

Summer term formal meeting, 11th July at 7:30pm

19/16 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.