

**THE GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON**  
**MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2016**

**Present:**

Natalie Grazin (Joint Chair and chairing this meeting)	Martin Blain
David Steadman (Joint Chair)	Hiten Jethwa
David Grunwald	Noa Bladon
Andrew Sutcliffe	Emma Davies
Laura Sherling	Niki Jackson
Edward Lewin	Sami Rosehill
Tabitha Sumberg	Adam Goldin
Deborah Brooks	Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

In attendance:

Colin Grazin - Acting Clerk to the Governors

**PART I**

**21/1 WELCOME AND LEARNING**

Natalie Grazin took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the learning session, led by Tabatha Sumberg, on the theme of kindness.

**21/2 ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Ilan Jacobs, Michelle Jacobs and Richard Cornelius.

**21/3 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 Sami Rosehill
- b) Governors with children attending the school: Emma Davies, Martin Blain, Deborah Brooks, Tabitha Sumberg, Natalie Grazin, Ed Lewin, David Grunwald, Laura Sherling, David Steadman
- c) David Grunwald's wife is a member of staff at the school.
- d) Emma Davies noted that she runs first aid courses for the school, but that this is done on a pro bono basis with the money saved to be used as a donation to the school building fund
- e) Tabatha Sumberg's husband undertakes occasional paid work for the school when commissioned to make short films

**21/4 ANNUAL ELECTION OF THE JOINT CHAIRS OF GOVERNORS**

David Steadman took over the Chair. He proposed that Natalie and Andrew be elected Joint Chairs for the period December 2016 to December 2017. **This proposal was seconded and then unanimously agreed.** Andrew was welcomed by Natalie to his first year as Joint Chair.

**21/5 ANNUAL ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Natalie asked the GB to approve to the recommended nominations of for the Chairs of the four GB Sub-Committees. It was **proposed and unanimously agreed** that the following

now act as Chairs of the relevant Committees for the period December 2016-December 2017:

Laura Sherling	Co-Chair Learning Committee (re-elected)
Nicki Jackson	Co-Chair Learning Committee (newly elected)
Ilan Jacobs	Operations Committee (newly elected)
Hiten Jethwa	Children Committee (newly elected)
Ed Lewin	People Committee (newly elected)

Natalie thanked those Governors, namely Noa Bladon and Michelle Jacobs, who were stepping down as Committee Chairs after 3 years of great leadership and extremely hard work. Thanks were also offered to Deborah Brooks, who is stepping aside from chairing a committee for a year while she is on maternity leave. Nicki, Ilan and Ed were thanked for stepping up as Committee Chairs.

## **21/6 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP OF GOVERNING BODY**

### **Co-option of a Staff Governor**

**21.6.1** Sami had been elected by staff but must now be formally co-opted by the GB. It was **proposed seconded , and unanimously agreed** that Sami be a member of the GB

### **Resignation of Governors**

**21/6.2** It was agreed this matter be left to the Joint Chairs report later on the agenda

## **21/7 PART 1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD JULY 2016**

Tabitha pointed out that there was no reference to her husband's part-time work school under the register of interests. Subject to that point being amended, It was agreed that there were no inaccuracies in the minutes which were **formally approved**.

## **21/8 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

All actions were noted either to be completed or in hand with the exception of the following:

- **Parent-School Contract.** Further work required to be carried out on the proposed "Parent-School Contract". **Action.** Children's Committee
- **London Living Wage. Action:** For joint consideration by Operations and People committees.

## **21/9 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON LIMMUDIM/LEARNING**

### **Report from Headteacher**

The Head took the Governors through the Limmudim/Learning section of his report. He noted that he and his staff have worked extremely hard over the last two terms, dealing with the move from East Finchley and ensuring the new site was properly finished. As expected, there had been less capacity to focus on school improvement during this period and there was some evidence that there had been consequences for teaching and learning as a result of this additional workload and the move.

In answer to detailed questions from the GB on this matter, MS said the children were now back in a proper rhythm and he was seeing good signs of improvement in teaching and learning across the school. However, there is a great deal of work to do.

Turning to the progress and attainment data, MS took the GB through the various tables included in his report including the KS1 Assessment results. The headlines are:

% expected standard reading	% expected standard writing	% expected standard maths	% expected standard science
87%	67%	73%	90%

There was a lot of learning to be taken from the 2016 experience, which was particularly challenging. Not only did the SATS occur during the period in which the school was very focused on the site development and move, but the system was completely new nationally, and additionally, each local authority took a different approach. Barnet has been communicating with schools about how their approach for 2017 and Alma is working to prepare for the second year of the new assessment process.

There had been no exclusions or incidents requiring reports.

### **Jewish Learning**

Assessment in Jewish learning and Ivrit are now priorities to be addressed and considered further during the spring term.

### **Report from Chairs of Learning/Limmudim Committee**

Deborah Brooks, Joint Chair of the Limmudim Committee, reported on the progress of the Committee's work. There had been three formal meetings this term. The Committee has identified four priorities for the year, namely:

- Writing
- Differentiation
- Jewish Learning and Ivrit
- Curriculum Development

The Learning Committee had held long conversations about the progress and attainment data from the end of the summer term 2016, particularly with reference to writing and the requirements of the new KS1 assessment requirements. The committee had agreed with MS that there would be close Governor involvement in scrutinising improvement in writing during the coming term, including Governor involvement in book reviews.

Differentiation is a priority that was identified by Ofsted and remains critical. The Committee had revised the INSET plan to deal with this matter.

Nicki reported on Jewish learning and Ivrit. She was very positive, having observed the children as vibrant and enjoying the lessons. There are however new staff in the team who need development and opportunities to grow and achieve the same level of teaching that other Alma teachers have attained. There had been discussions with MS about how this could be carried out and those discussions would continue.

### **Questions and Discussion**

A Governor asked for a detailed definition of Differentiation as a concept within the school. Deborah explained that it is a teaching strategy that goes towards recognising that there is a range of attainment of different children, so the approach of teachers is to spread the level of teaching rather than going towards the middle or average child.

## **21/10 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON YELADIM-CHILDREN**

### **Report from Headteacher**

The Head took the Governors through the Yeladim/Children section of his report. There had been a substantial change to the Reception staggered entry approach this year. With hindsight, it was now clear that staggered entry to Reception had occurred too quickly and had caused problems. For the future, there needed to be a middle ground between the 2015 (too long) and 2016 (too short) approaches.

MS highlighted the SEN aspect of his report and the new role of the new Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA), who is responsible for providing “interventions” to support specific children with their learning and/or social skills. She has a very full timetable, supporting 37 children across the school at present, with the supervision of the Assistant Heads.

MS referred to the Safeguarding and Security aspect of his report. There had been teething problems on the move to the new site but all systems were now working properly. CST did an unannounced monitoring and were happy with what they saw. They will do a further visit to monitor the drop-off arrangements.

The attendance figures are broadly positive. A small number of requests for leave exceeding authorised limits have been refused but non-attendance overall is low. Lateness is low. A Governor with experience in other schools challenged any suggestion that there are attendance problems, commenting that levels of non-attendance at Alma are remarkably low.

### **Report from Committee**

Hiten reported as the new Chair of the Children’s Committee. There had been a strong start to the school year. They had considered and avoided potential safeguarding problems arising from the change of site. There had been two formal meetings this term. The **2018 Admissions Policy** was now to be reviewed and go out to consultation. The **Deferred Entry Policy** was now in place. There would be a review of the **SEN Policy** in the coming term.

All Governors would be asked to take part in safeguarding training, which will either be face to face or online.

### **Questions and Discussion**

In answer to a question, MS said that the role of the HLTA is to ensure that children were fully stretched and that the provision covered both gifted and talented children as well as children with special needs.

**ACTION: All Governors will be asked to attend Safeguarding Training**

## **20/8 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON ANASHIM-PEOPLE**

### **Report from Headteacher**

The Head took the Governors through the Anashim/People section of his report.

The detailed results of the 2016 **Staff Survey** had been considered by the School Leadership Team and the People Committee. A further 2017 staff survey would be carried out in the Spring term and an action plan would be put in place to address issues arising.

The school had said goodbye to two of its qualified teachers at the end of last year as well as bringing in new staff to support the additional class, including the HLTA, Ivrit teacher and additional support staff as well as new class teachers. There is an important piece of ongoing work to fully induct all these staff into how Alma does things and ensuring consistent practice.

MS and Rachel have started to work together on systems to monitor staff absences, including comparing it with other schools.

**CPD** has continued effectively throughout the term. There is now more capacity for teachers to be absent from school to attend courses. 13 courses had been attended in total. There was also to be an increase in the INSET program.

### **Report from Committee**

Ed Lewin as Chairman of the Committee reported. There had been two formal Committee meetings. The agreed priorities of the Committee were those set out in his report, namely:

- Skills/performance
- Staff engagement
- Sustainability of the staffing structure

There had been a review of the INSET program and the questions in the forthcoming staff survey. It is intended that there will be an open forum with staff led by Ed to hear staff feedback.

Next term, the Committee will look at pay scales. Given the size of the school, there is now a need for a formal pay scale. Staff will be told about this during the Spring term so that staff so that understand what is happening. The Committee will also look at the Pay Policy next term.

The Committee noted the absence of any HR specialist expertise amongst its numbers following the resignation of Leesa Mather.

The Pay Review Committee, which is a sub-committee of the People Committee, met last week to undertake pay reviews for all staff.

### **Questions and Discussion**

In answer to a Governor, MS confirmed there had been exit meetings with staff who had left, namely Amber and Laura. Action had been taken in consultation with the People committee to address the useful feedback that came up through those meetings. In future, exit interviews will be undertaken by Assistant Heads as a matter of course if staff leave.

In answer to a further question, MS said that pay scales would be based upon Barnet pay scales. The challenge will be for people who are already at the top of the range for their role but there is support from the People committee to manage this change smoothly.

**ACTION: All Governors to advise if they know someone appropriate with HR specialism to replace Leesa Mather on the People Committee.**

## **21/12 REPORT FROM SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON K'SAFIM-FINANCE**

### **Report on behalf of the School Business Manager**

The school's financial position was generally considered to be good. The Governors were referred to the detailed report for variances against budget.

The accounts had now been completed. The Finance Committee had adopted new processes with more formal due diligence, whereby a representative of the school Auditors attended the Finance Committee and went through the accounts in detail. The Committee obtained very useful and detailed answers to its questions of the Auditors.

The Committee were concerned to note the pension liability issue. That had increased from some £9,000 to some £76,000, although the final figure may not be quite so high.

This term's regular visit by the internal auditor picked up on a number of issues that need to be dealt with by Rebecca of which the Operations Committee are aware.

The HR issue was again highlighted. An external HR service is being used at present and is very good, but the school needs its own in-house and free-to-access expertise.

### **Report from Committee**

Tabitha reported on the Operations Committee's work, in the absence of Ilan Jacobs, its chair. She reported that the Committee had spent considerable time on the budget. The running costs of the new building are substantial. A reforecast budget for 2016-17 will be done in February after the pay review and when the running costs of the new building are clearer.

Daryl Kaye (a committee member) has agreed to take up the lead role for tendering processes and he will be supporting the various tendering processes due to occur this year.

There is potential to raise more money through the use of school facilities for outside events, particularly the use of school hall and kitchen outside school days/hours. A policy for Community Use is under development so that external hire can begin once the site is fully completed.

Quality contribution levels are currently lower than predicted for this stage of the year. As the QCs make up a significant proportion of the budgeted income, the school will have difficulty in running with the current standards of provision if the overall sum received does not increase significantly. Analysis suggests that many parents simply have not got round to paying, but do so when contacted to ask if they want to give. The Operations Committee is working with the SBM on our processes to make giving easier for parents who want to do so. This is a priority issue for the Spring term for the committee. The GB should acknowledge that this is a high-risk item in terms of overall risk management

**ACTION – The Operations Committee will continue to focus on bringing in QCs as a priority in bring term 2017. It will also continue to consider the best way to make and follow up requests for Quality Contributions, while ensuring it remains clear that they are voluntary donations.**

The new School Travel Plan has been well implemented and is proving effective. However, we need to remember that the school only has 4 of its 7 potential classes so we are not complacent.

### **Questions and Discussion**

In response to a question, MS said there needs to be some benchmarking work to ascertain financial costs relative to similar schools during the remaining terms of this year.

In response to a question, the Committee noted that it could not make any decision on implementation of the **London Living Wage** until the full cost was known. In the meantime, all full-time employees of the school are paid at LLW rates or more. Contractors are not yet at that level.

### **21/13 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER ON LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE AND JOINT CHAIRS' REPORT**

#### **Report from Headteacher**

MS commented further on the move to Whetstone. It was not normal for a school to move once, let alone twice. We are now back to being a normal school. The school now needs to thrive and not just be in a state of "just coping".

The school is now refocusing on business as usual, particularly the quality of teaching and learning. Two developments are important to note in this regard:

- The school has a new School Improvement Partner, Jenny Rodin, a former Head of another Jewish Barnet primary school
- There are now two Assistant Headteachers. Any one of the three can very effectively lead in the absence of the two others and MS is very much appreciating the additional capacity and support that there is in leading the school

#### **Report from Chair of Committee**

Two of the original Governors are standing down at this meeting: Martin Blain and Adam Goldin. Both were very much thanked – without them, there would not be a school or the Whetstone site.

David Steadman is standing down as Chair but remaining as a Governor. Thanks were also due to David for his extraordinarily hard work and dedication.

Natalie presented posters to Adam, David and Martin and thanked them for their efforts over so many years

#### **21/14 Acceptance of Annual Accounts**

The **Annual Accounts** and the detailed covering letter from the Auditors had been circulated to all Governors before the meeting. There were no questions from the Governing Body on the accounts.

Tabitha proposed, and a Governor seconded, that the Annual Accounts be approved and accepted. The GB unanimously **approved and accepted** the annual accounts for the period ending 31 August 2016

### **21/15 School Development Plan (SDP) and School Evaluation Form (SEF)**

**SDP:** The Governors had previously looked at this plan in draft. It was now in its final form. Two Governors separately proposed and seconded that SDP be approved and accepted. The Governors unanimously **approved and accepted** the plan.

**SEF:** The GB had reviewed an earlier version in November and there is no update to this in the meantime.

**Action:** MS asked that each Committee Chair look at the relevant part of the SEF as part of their committee business during the Spring Term.

### **21/16 School Admissions Policy 2018**

Michelle Jacobs presented the policy and explained the proposed changes. After some final work on this policy, there will then be a six weeks consultation period, followed by consideration again in February 2017.

### **Late Admissions Policy**

Michelle outlined the new policy, which is necessary because of changes in national requirements. The policy proposes that the school will look at requests for late admission on a case-by-case basis. A Governor asked if there was any effect upon the funding of the school by allowing late admission. Mark said there was no real effect because children be caught by a second census. Andrew said this was a very rare circumstance in any event.

The Governing Body unanimously **accepted and adopted** the School Admissions Policy and the Late Admissions Policy and appropriate consultation will now take place.

### **21/17 School Calendar 2017/8**

MS introduced a short discussion on the **School Calendar 2017/2018**. Free Schools have certain freedom over dates. The norm for Local Authority schools is 190 days attendance plus 5 days INSET. Alma wants to do more staff development and MS therefore proposes **and the Governors agreed** that there would be 187 days pupil attendance and eight days INSET in 2017/2018. That compares with 184 attendance days 10 days INSET in 2016/2017. MS believed the school has now got the balance correct. The Governing Body were confident that an extra three days either way will not affect the quality of education children receive. It was advised that communication of the calendar include a message to parents explaining the priority that Alma gives to staff development.

### **21/18 Risk Register**

The **Risk Register**, which had been circulated to all members of the GB, was required to be accepted by the GB. It was proposed, seconded and **unanimously agreed that the Risk Register be accepted**

### **21/19 Dates of Future GB Meetings**

Spring term: 1 February 2017, 7:45pm and 27 March 2017, 7:30pm

### **21/20 Any Other Business**

A question was asked about what had been done to say thank you to the school staff for the work way above and beyond during the summer holiday and in September.

**Action:** Martin and Emma volunteered to look at action to thank staff for all hard work starting the school

### **21/21 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.