

THE GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON
Wednesday 1 November 2017

Present:

Natalie Grazin (Joint Chair)	Jude Williams
David Steadman	Laura Scherling
Andrew Sutcliffe (Joint Chair and chairing this meeting)	Jean Linsky
Katie Abrams	Emma Davies
Alistair Falk	Sammy Rosehill
Emma Goldstone	Ilan Jacobs
	Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

In attendance:

Colin Grazin - Clerk to the Governors

PART I

24/1 WELCOME AND LEARNING

Andrew took the Chair. There being five new Governors present at the meeting, he asked all present to introduce themselves and then welcomed everyone to the learning session, led by Emma Davies on the subject "Philosophy for Children", which entailed considering the range of possible questions arising from looking at a globe.

24/2 ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Deborah Brooks and Ed Lewin.

24/3 DECLARATION OF ANY DIRECT OR INDIRECT PERSONAL INTEREST (INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY PERSONAL FINANCIAL INTEREST)

After enquiry and explanation by the Chair, 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 Sammy Rosehill.
- b) Governors with children attending the school: Emma Davies, Deborah Brooks, Natalie Grazin, Ed Lewin, David Grunwald, Laura Sherling, David Steadman, Emma Davies.
- 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) Jean Linsky noted that she signed cheques on behalf of a Jewish community which used the school building.

Forms were circulated by the Headteacher for all Governors who had held the role in the previous academic year to:

1. Declare paid employment and any trusteeships or directorships with other organisations.
2. Declare any business and pecuniary interests of close relatives.

3. Declare themselves fit and proper people according to the DfE's Governance Handbook.

24/4 ELECTION OF GOVERNING BODY CO-CHAIRS FOR 2017/18

Natalie took the chair for this item. She proposed that Andrew would continue as a Co-chair. She intended to stand down at the end of term and Ilan had agreed to stand as a Co-chair in her place. A vote took place and **the GB unanimously agreed to this proposal.**

24/5 ELECTION OF NEW COMMITTEE CHAIRS FOR 2017/18

It was proposed and unanimously agreed, on separate votes, that the following persons would act as Chairs or Acting Chair of the relevant Committees:

- Ilan will remain as Chair of the Operations Committee until a successor can be appointed.
- Laura will act up as Chair of the Learning Committee until Deborah Brooks returns to the Governing Body.
- Emma Goldstone will be the Chair of the Children's Committee.
- Ed Lewin will be the Chair of the People Committee.

24/6 PART 1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2017

No amendments were proposed or agreed to those minutes

24/7 MATTERS ARISING FROM PART 1 OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JULY 2017

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

An Actions Log had been prepared in consequence of those minutes. A copy of that Actions Log is now on the school Sharefile and that document indicates whether in each case the particular action has been completed or whether it remains open at the date of this meeting.

In relation to item 12 of the Actions Log, Safeguarding Training, the importance of all Governors having online safeguarding training was emphasised, save those who had received it as part of their work in some other school. The Clerk to the Governors will email all Governors again to confirm they have obtained a Safeguarding Training Certificate and will also set up a training register. This Safeguarding matter will be reviewed at the informal GB meeting dealing with MAT issues.

24/8 REPORT FROM SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON TIFUL - OPERATIONS AND FINANCE

HeadTeachers' report

Marc emphasised a number of issues

- The School's overall financial position was good. Income was up, to 102% of budget, and expenditure was 100% of budget. In consequence, the actual deficit for 2016/17 was some £11,500 against the expected £24,300. The budget for 2017/18 has been prepared on a breakeven basis and the actual financial position will be clear by next February.
- Full details of the variances were set out in the report. There had been some difficulty in obtaining insurance payments in respect of staff absences caused by illness.
- The direct debit system for Quality Contributions was now working well.

- EFA requirements for financial reporting were demanding for a school of this size but both relevant reports had been lodged on time.
- The arrangement with the new caterer, Caterlink, was working well. Although there have been some complaints from parents, the staff are satisfied with all aspects of the catering provision.
- Plans are being worked on for the playground using money received from fundraising activities. The budget for playground work is between £35,000 and £60,000 and is agreed with the contractors as a realistic figure. The school proposes to follow a phased process for greater flexibility. The financial position is good because of earlier funding.
- The playground is however overlooked by new housing presently in the course of construction. Alma Primary was not able to object or comment to this development because it was not on site when the planning application was made. **It was agreed** that an approach would be made to the local Barnet Councillor and/or to the developer to see whether steps could be taken to mitigate this problem.
- A substantial potential donor, who visited the school in its early days has been in contact and there is some optimism that he may make a substantial donation to the school in the future.

Report from Committee

Ilan presented the report on behalf of the Committee. They had looked at the various financial documents to be submitted to the EFA and approved them.

He reported on the Tax Tribunal decision allowing schools to claim Gift Aid on QCs, resulting in a 20% uplift on QC receipts in the past and in the future. Money had been held up to now in an escrow account but could now be released and spent in due course. Various items of capital expenditure had been identified. There was a risk that parents however were reducing their QC's as a result of the Tribunal decision.

There were no questions to Ilan on his report but a Governor asked who was now acting as the Health and Safety Governor and who was acting as the Safeguarding Governor. **It was agreed** that the school must have both such appointments in place and accordingly the Co-Chairs will take appropriate action to appoint to these positions.

24/9 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON LIMMUDIM/LEARNING

Report from Headteacher

Marc highlighted a number of issues from his written report:

- He referred to the various data within the report. He was pleased with the quality of that data. The levels in the various tables reflected what the teachers believed the children should be able to do.
- 80% of children in reception achieved a GLD (good level of development) in comparison to 71% nationally. This was the same level as 2016 and Alma is therefore in the top quintile of Barnet schools.
- 97% of children in year 1 achieved the expected level in the phonics check, again substantially above Barnet and national levels. This was the highest level in the school in any one year/subject.
- 75% of children in year 2 achieved the expected level in phonics.
- The attainment levels for Key Stage 1 assessments in 2017 was high both at the expected level, and for the children working at greater depth, in reading and writing, but less significant for maths, and the teaching staff were looking at why that was the case. The number of children exceeding the expected level posed a

challenge for the school. This was more of an issue for the school than the relatively low number of children who were below the expected level.

- Attainment during the summer term reflected good progress during the academic year. A detailed table was presented to the meeting. Governors asked for greater clarity as to the meaning of the table and suggested that such information should be provided in narrative form in the future.
- In answer to a Governor, Marc confirmed that there was a moderation exercise in place with other schools, so that expected levels were not decided only within the school.
- One of the ongoing problems was the relatively small size of the school. It was difficult therefore to draw proper conclusions with only thirty children per year.
- The school has introduced music lessons from an independent provider to work alongside class teachers. This had been welcomed by the children.

The Governing Body thanked Marc and the school staff for the level of the results produced to the meeting and relating to the children's progress. The GB appreciated those results and were impressed by them.

A Governor enquired as to what the GB should understand from this data. Marc explained the specific requirements on primary schools for data collection. A Governor enquired whether this could be made simpler. Marc indicated that the data was an overview of how the school-children actually worked. He wished to emphasise a number of key facts from the data:

- The number of children exceeding the required standard is very large in year 2. That amounts to a challenge for the school.
- Alma is moving children on at a reasonable pace because the number of children at expected level is consistent.
- The moderation process is satisfactory.
- The school now has its own levels at each age group in place of prescribed levels, which are no longer used.
- This makes life much more difficult because the school still has to show progress. Applying the moderation process, Alma is happy that its standards are higher than other schools.
- It is difficult to draw proper conclusions from KS1 results when there are only thirty children in each class.

A Governor asked whether data of this nature could be put into a narrative format to make it easier to understand. Was this something that could be looked at by the Learning Committee?

It was agreed that the Learning Committee would consider how this data could be put into narrative for the next GB meeting.

Report from Committee

Laura reported on behalf of the Committee. It had held a long discussion about the data. The Committee was satisfied that every child is making progress. She highlighted Item 5 of her report dealing with progress of all the children, whether they were achieving the expected result or not.

The school is now using the "No-nonsense Spelling" scheme as part of a focus on spelling and handwriting. A baseline spelling test will be introduced and children will be tested on progress against that at a later date.

The Committee had been concerned that the current status of home learning was too complex with insufficient structure and was confusing to parents.

It was agreed that the Learning Committee would revisit this issue at its next meeting.

A Governor enquired about spelling tests being sent home for homework.

It was agreed that the Learning Committee would consider this issue at its next meeting.

It was agreed that the Learning Committee would look at the issue of Gifted and Talented Children at its next meeting.

24/10 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON YELADIM-CHILDREN

Report from Headteacher

Marc highlighted a number of issues from his report:

- The school now has its full complement of children, two children who left at the end of last year having been replaced. In addition, the reception class is now full and the new children have settled in well, following a more lengthy and staggered entry process than last year.
- The school takes Special Educational Needs very seriously and spends a lot of time and money on it. There is still however a lot of work to do. Sammy Rosehill has now taken on the role of SENCo and is being assisted by other specialist staff, so that there is a total of four staff supporting the learning needs of the relevant children. In addition to interventions, specialist equipment has been provided, as set out in the report.
- A priority this term has been Mental Health and Well-Being and in particular the issue of female role models. This has been much appreciated by parents and Marc referred to the appendices to his report.
- Alma is the only Jewish school working closely with Stonewall and Keshet on gender issues.
- One safeguarding issue had been raised, resulting in a meeting with the relevant family and it continues to be monitored.
- There had been no exclusions, complaints or incidents in the summer term.
- There had been a reduction in the number of children attending the breakfast club and there would be a consultation on its viability.
- Attendance levels were satisfactory. The attendance level for the summer term was 97.46%, of which authorised absences was 2.12%. Comparable figures for 2015 summer term were 96.36% and 2.92%.

Report from Committee

Emma Goldstone as Chair of the Committee reported.

The Committee had reviewed the school's admissions policy. The revised policy had been agreed by her Committee. It was intended that it would now go to public consultation. Emma clarified that only minor changes had been made from the previous policy namely

- The establishment of a priority place for children receiving pupil premium.
- The priority place for children with "social and medical" need will no longer be offered, because they are covered under other categories of need.

It was noted that the full GB had not seen the revised admissions policy and the Clerk advised that the new policy should be sent to each Governor individually before the formal consultation commenced. Each Governor would be asked to signify his/her consent.

It was agreed that Marc would circulate that new policy, highlighting the changes, and that each Governor would, if so minded, so consent.

24/11 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON ANASHIM-PEOPLE

Marc highlighted a number of issues from his report:

- All staff who left in the summer of 2017 have now been replaced with either permanent or temporary cover.
- Despite apparent high numbers of staff absences, Marc was satisfied that staff are both physically and mentally well and well looked-after.
- INSET days have looked at aspects of the curriculum but in addition the sessions have focused on active learning in all lessons, female role models and issues relating to inclusion. A detailed table of INSET activity was presented to the GB.
- Staff had identified that, although teaching was of a good standard, it was necessary to ensure that all lessons contain active learning. It had been noted that children were more passive than was desired, potentially reducing the impact of learning.
- There has been a schoolwide focus on developing familiarity and understanding of positive female role models, with a view to supporting children to believe in themselves, to be familiar with strong female role models, challenge the language used by some children and adults, and ensure that all staff are using positive language. There has been positive feedback from parents on this issue following a parents' evening.

Report from Committee

In the absence of Ed, Natalie reported on behalf of the Committee.

The Committee had introduced and finalised a new staffing structure document, showing detailed management of all staff.

It had considered the impact of staff vacancies, with particular reference to staff absence data, the SDP and staff well-being. The committee had looked at CPD, to attempt to measure the impact of CPD in the classroom and with individual members of staff. It also considered the Performance Management process and was looking at potential changes to the grading for staff and greater clarity for individual staff members.

The Committee had discussed whether and how far, within any Performance Management Review, the data as to children's progress should be any part of the appropriate criteria. The Committee was of the view that, although that data is important, if the school was satisfied that an individual teacher had done all possible, that data should not be included as criteria.

Following the discussion about exit interviews at the last GB meeting, the Committee had considered the introduction of a new exit interview protocol. There remained the concerns about potential references influencing the approach taken by staff leaving

the school, particularly if the reference was given by a former line manager. The People Committee, having considered this matter, suggested the following process:

- Any staff member leaving the school should receive an email from the Chair of Governors to the effect that the GB was sorry that person was leaving the school.
- That person should be asked whether he/she wished to raise any issues in relation to the school and/or the departure and to reply by email.
- Any departing teacher would be offered the option of an interview with a Governor if he/she so wished
- This process was preferable because staff might find it easier to reply by email or speak to a Governor than raise matters in person with the Headteacher or an Assistant Headteacher.
- Such a process should benefit both the school as a whole and each individual departing teacher.

Marc commented that staff leaving the school will nonetheless be offered an exit interview with an Assistant Headteacher and/or Marc, in parallel the process now proposed by the Committee.

It was agreed that the People Committee will finalise and clarify this process and communicate with staff and governors.

24/12 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER ON LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE AND JOINT CHAIRS' REPORT

Marc highlighted a number of issues from his report:

- Term dates for 2018/19 academic year had now been agreed and were available on the school website and in an appendix to his report.
- Barnet Council had approached the school with a view to using it as a polling station. After discussion amongst senior staff, the proposal had been rejected because the school was already closed on various days. The Council might however have a statutory right to use the school.
- The school is in the process of discussion with potential developers of the school playground and there will be associated fundraising for this work.
- The school website was now past its “sell by” date. It is now four years old and is in need of replacing. The Operations Committee have agreed that funding for a replacement will come from the Gift Aid “windfall”.
- Various teachers have taken more responsibility within the wider staff team, with individual teachers taking on leadership roles for the library, maths, PE and playground.

Report from Co-Chairs of Governors

Ilan reported on behalf of the Co-Chairs. He referred to his written report.

The Co-chairs had identified a need to make contact with the local community in the area of the school.

The school is now in the “zone of preparation” for an OFSTED visit but the inspection itself is not expected until late in the summer term.

Natalie thanked both Emma Davies and Laura Sherling who were stepping down as members of the GB, having been elected four years ago as Parent Governors. She read, and presented to each of Emma and Laura, posters which had been prepared setting out their respective work for the school. Both would however remain involved in the school's governance as committee members. The Governing Body formally appreciated the work done by each of Emma and Laura over the last four years and thanked them for staying on the appropriate committees.

All five new Governors appointed in the summer term 2017 had taken part in the induction process and some had begun to attend committee meetings. The school very much welcomed the support and experience of each of the new Governors and looked forward to working with them.

Following the departure of Laura and Emma, there was a need to elect new Parent Governors from Alma's parent community. An information pack had been prepared and distributed to parents. Following intense interest, there would be a contested election and the results of that election would be announced in the week following this meeting.

Three new members had joined the GB's various committees, namely

- Howard Levene, who had joined the Operations and Finance Committee,
- Alexis Corzberg, who had also joined the Operations and Finance Committee, and
- Ilana Swimer, who had joined the People Committee.

It was unanimously agreed to accept and ratify these changes to committee membership.

Claudia Kendal had stepped down from the Operations and Finance Committee. The School is grateful to her for her service on that Committee.

Following an informal GB meeting, the Co-chairs considered a generic model of a Governors' Code of Conduct. The GB would be asked to adopt that on a formal basis later in this meeting.

The strategy group had agreed to prioritise the Governing in Depth (GiD) roles, a system whereby Governors and members on Committees take responsibility for a particular area of the Committee's work. The various benefits of that approach were set out in the written report. Although the principle of GiD had been agreed in mid-2016, implementation had not yet spread across all Committees. All Committee chairs were asked to allocate GiD roles by the end of the autumn term.

The importance of Governor Visits was stressed and all Governors were asked to visit the school when appropriate. Committee chairs should co-ordinate and encourage individual members to attend as appropriate and to report appropriately to the Clerk to the Governors, who will keep a log of such attendances.

24/13 FORMAL ADOPTION OF 2018/19 TERM DATES

A calendar setting out the opening and closing dates for the school in the academic year 2018/19 was produced to the Governing Body and **unanimously agreed**.

24/14 ADOPTION OF GOVENING BODY CODE OF CONDUCT

It was unanimously agreed that the Governors' Code of Conduct, within folder B, should be approved and adopted.

24/15 SDP & SELF EVALUATION REPORT, INCLUDING RISK REGISTER

It was unanimously agreed that the School Evaluation Report tabled to the meeting should be approved and adopted.

The absence of a Governor nominated as the Safeguarding Governor was noted. There was a necessity for there to be such a Governor. That Governor would have responsibility for the School Safeguarding Policy and ensuring that appropriate information was given to the GB about safeguarding. **It was agreed that** Emma Goldstone will now take on this role in the interim, while a longer term solution is identified.

The Risk Register was now included in the SER. **It was unanimously agreed** that the Risk Register should be approved and adopted.

24/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

24/17 MOTION OF CONFIDENAILTY

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

24/18 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The dates of informal and formal Governors' meetings set out in the agenda for this meeting were confirmed.