

THE GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON
Wednesday 7 February 2018

Present:

Ilan Jacobs (Joint Chair and chairing this meeting)	Ed Lewin
Deborah Brooks	Emma Viner
David Steadman	Jean Linsky
Andrew Sutcliffe	Sammy Rosehill
Katie Abrams	Sophie Fenton
	David Grunwald
	Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

In attendance:

Colin Grazin - Clerk to the Governors

PART I

25/1 WELCOME AND LEARNING

Ilan took the Chair. He explained that the earlier starting time of 6:30 PM was adopted on a trial basis so as to allow greater depth of discussion by Governors. In the absence of Alistair, there was no formal learning session but Marc spoke in some detail about two female role models, one a professor and now a specialist in astronomy, and the other who worked in electronics and particularly with children, which were part of this term's curriculum, and an attempt to balance male role models in current culture. This influence was particularly important in the context that Prof Deborah Lipsdadt, PhD was to perform the school dedication ceremony.

25/2 ACCEPTANCE/NON-ACCEPTANCE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Natalie Grazin, Alistair Falk and Rina Wolfson

25/3 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 Viner, Deborah Brooks, Ed Lewin, David Grunwald, David Steadman, and Sophie Fenton.
- c) David Grunwald's wife is a member of staff at the school.
- d) Jean Linsky noted that she signed cheques on behalf of a Jewish community which used the school building.
- e) Sophie Fenton is employed by Jewish Teachers Training Partnership which accredits the School Direct Training Programme and indirectly receives funds from Alma Primary.
- f) Marc Shoffren noted that the school now employs his father-in-law.

25/4 RATIFICATION OF CHANGES IN THE GOVERNING BODY, COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIRING OF COMMITTEES

These changes were set out at page 20 of the Winter Term Report to the Governing Body prepared for this meeting (the Report). In short, Jude Williams had resigned because of outside pressures; Sophie has been elected as a parent Governor and has already joined the Learning Committee; Rina has been elected as a parent Governor and has joined the Children Committee; David Grunwald will become Chair of the Finance and Operations Committee; Ilan will step down as Chair but remain a member of the Finance and Operations Committee; Deborah has been appointed Chair of the Learning Committee; Natalie Grazin will leave the Finance and Operations Committee; David Steadman will join the Finance and Operations Committee but will also remain on the Children Committee; and Alistair will move to the People Committee. Jean Linsky has joined the Learning Committee and Katie Abrams has joined Children Committee.

Jonny Goldstone has stepped down as a volunteer (non-Governor) member of the Finance and Operations Committee.

The Governing Body formally approved and ratified those changes to the Governing Body and its various Committees which are set out in detail at pages 20 and 21 of the Report.

25/5 PART 1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2017

No amendments were proposed or agreed to those minutes, which were formerly approved.

In addition, the Governing Body formally approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2017 which meeting itself approved the annual report and accounts of Alma Primary.

25/6 MATTERS ARISING FROM PART 1 OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 NOVEMBER 2017 AND THE MEETING ON 11 DECEMBER 2017

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Ilan however brought certain matters to the attention of the Governors.

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.

Ilan emphasised a number of issues from the Actions Log. Andrew is now the Safeguarding Governor. There is no formal Health and Safety Governor, but Emma Davies has agreed to continue to undertake that responsibility, in a volunteer, non-Governor capacity.

These school's new Admissions Policy had been circulated for consultation and has now been sent to the Local Authority.

Action The staff leaver process discussed in the last GB meeting has yet to be reviewed again by the People Committee **but will be discussed at its next meeting.**

25/7 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON ANASHIM-PEOPLE

Ed presented a report on behalf of this Committee. In line with the stated intention of this meeting to focus on strategic issues, he introduced the draft new Conflict of Interest policy which had recently been written. This required approval from the full GB. The existence of the policy was not to suggest any wrongdoing at the school but was an important tool to ensure that the good reputation of the school was maintained and to set out clear

procedures for staff and governors to follow. It was there to protect all members of the staff team and the GB. These matters had previously been dealt with, in part, in other policies but it was felt that this should now be a separate stand-alone policy because of the importance of this issue and to provide greater clarity. There were four principal aims of the policy

1. To identify particular or potential conflicts;
2. To prevent such conflicts occurring in the first place;
3. To record any such conflicts;
4. To disclose any conflicts that might have arisen.

It was a fairly short policy but the Committee welcomed discussion. A Governor enquired whether the existing policies might need to be amended in the light of this new policy and cross-referencing would therefore be carried out.

Action People Committee to look at this specific issue.

Following discussion, on an issue raised by a Governor, as to whether it was proper to include reference to “close friend”, given the difficulties of accurately defining such a term, it was agreed that the draft policy would be amended to omit such reference. Nonetheless it was agreed that Governors and staff should use their own judgement on this issue to ensure no conflict arose. It was always preferable to disclose in a “grey area”, if a particular person was in any doubt.

Subject to the amendment above, **the Conflict of Interest Policy was approved and ratified** by the Governing Body. The approved document, as amended following that discussion, is now on Sharefile.

Marc focused on the training of staff. There were always two issues to consider

1. Is formal training outside the school the most effective use of time?
2. Is that training financially worthwhile?

He referred to the INSET table at page 15 of the Report. Most of the training was carried out in-house but the school also worked with the Barnet Partnership, which training was provided free of charge. The school also obtained limited time with Barnet’s outsourced School’s Improvement Service. He raised the issue as to whether the school could use the expertise of members of the GB to help with staff training. Most CPD work was carried out at 3:45 PM after school.

A Governor who is also an experienced teacher suggested that in-house training was always better because teachers give each other ideas. Another Governor, who is also a teacher, emphasised the importance of teachers in the same department talking to each other. A lengthy discussion took place between Governors as to their various views and experience of providing training in INSET days and in after-school settings. Marc specifically referred to courses on behaviour outside the classroom. Other Governors contributed their own experience in CPD external courses in other fields, including TED talks. It was agreed that some of these courses are expensive but could be worthwhile and valuable. The school could think about how the content of training courses could be cascaded.

Ilan drew the attention of the GB to the very low absence rate for members of staff for the Autumn term (see Table 5 of the Report) and congratulated Marc on that achievement

Action Marc and Sammy will look at the various suggestions made during this discussion and seek to incorporate them as appropriate within the school’s training sessions.

25/8 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON LIMMUDIM/LEARNING

In line with the new approach to GB meetings, Deborah focused on the specific issue of active learning. Marc explained that children should not just listen in lessons but should be part of the process. Children do not always understand issues if not actively involved, and active learning is a more effective way to help them properly absorb ideas. Sammy

provided an example of a “Child Centred Approach” whereby the spotlight is placed on the children, who are given the opportunity to run sections of lessons and get involved in lesson planning. She provided examples of how active learning helped to make education exciting. The intention was always to give children more to do than just listen.

A Governor suggested this approach might be difficult for new inexperienced teachers. Marc understood and accepted that was the case. A Governor with outside experience of measuring educational attainment was of the opinion that children’s progress could be measured more accurately if such methods were used.

In answer to another Governor who was concerned that these methods might be difficult for lesser-skilled children, Sammy said the school differentiated and dealt appropriately with such children. The important issue was to provide challenge at the suitable level.

In the course of a long discussion, the Governors exchanged their respective experience as to how these matters are best dealt with. Deborah indicated there would be a school visit by one or more of her members of her Committee to review active learning. Marc summarised the discussion by saying that there was a clear differentiation between the children but the challenge was to help all of the children at the appropriate level. The real skill was to energise the children. Some teachers had the skill to allow the child to become the teacher. Alma’s School Improvement Partner reviews Active Learning on a number of her visits and will report on progress. In addition, individual members of the SLT went into the classroom on occasions, on short visits, to support the staff.

Marc then explained the data contained within a document at page 23 of the Report entitled “OFSTED Inspection Data”, but which was not actually an OFSTED document. Such data had to be submitted to OFSTED for all schools. The assessments within the document were moderated by other teachers and the DfE was then advised of that data. It was also submitted to the London Borough of Barnet who carry out a comparison with other schools in the Borough. Many of the charts showed that Alma was in the top 10% where a high figure was appropriate, e.g. writing, and in the lowest 10% where a low figure was appropriate, e.g. absence.

A Governor enquired as to how it could be known if this data is accurate. Marc referred to Headteachers from other schools attending and observing Alma and discussing these various areas of work, including, in particular, children working at greater depth in maths. Marc summarised the data by saying there were no real concerns. As always, the percentages must be treated with caution, given the very small numbers of children in each year group. He was pleased that so many children had exceeded expected levels. The objective was to ensure that all children were stretched, where necessary, and support the teachers accordingly. A Governor enquired whether a comparison between years one and two had been carried out. Marc said that would be done in the next two terms. The school is looking to identify the particular needs of specific children and provide intervention where necessary.

A Governor suggested that the GB would obtain greater understanding of this data if it was put into narrative form, rather than the mere raw data in tabular form. Ilan also supported the suggestion of a narrative.

Action. It was agreed that the Learning Committee should seek to explain this data in terms that were clearer to non-teachers and non-experts by providing a narrative for the next report to GB.

The GB congratulated the teaching staff and the school on the attainment of the children at KS1, including in particular that the school was in the top 10% of schools in the writing section.

25/9 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON YELADIM-CHILDREN

Andrew reported to the GB on his visit to the school in his role as Safeguarding Governor. A Governor enquired whether at each meeting, the Committee received reports of any safeguarding incidents. Governors were concerned whether the Committee were informed of any and all incidents the previous term, subject to appropriate anonymity protections, and how proactive they were in examining the data. Emma, as Chair of the Committee, said that her Committee looked at trends. A detailed discussion followed between Governors as to striking the balance between confidentiality, on the one hand, and the responsibility of Governors, on the other. Governors wished to know whether high-level data was provided to the Children's Committee.

A Governor suggested that the GB should know what has occurred in terms of safeguarding issues but Marc said the school was dealing with very sensitive data so that he was concerned to give no more information than was absolutely necessary

Action. Andrew undertook to look at this in more detail on his next visit to the school and discuss with Marc and Emma whether there is any need to review the current process. This would be presented as an outcome at the next GB meeting.

Marc chose to focus on extended school activities, details of which appeared on page 11 of the Report. Overall, these activities were reasonably successful. Lunchtime clubs will become more challenging as the school became bigger and there were more children, as there will be less space available for these activities. The real challenge was the Breakfast Club. Currently, there were no more than seven children signed up in total and an average attendance of around four. The question was whether this was a viable number. Marc pointed out, in answer to a Governor, that the club was very important for certain families but the Governors needed to make a decision in due course as to how far it should be subsidised. Marc believed it was not viable to increase the charge to parents. It was suggested this issue should be looked at by the Finance and Operations Committee. A Governor pointed out that the Breakfast Club was good for social inclusion and, if it was not provided, it would put off certain parents at the admissions stage. Marc summarised the discussion by saying it was usual for schools to subsidise this activity. A Governor reported on the experience of another school which his child attended. Another Governor reported on his experience when prices had been increased – children did not leave in consequence. Suggestions were made that this issue could be included in the Parent Survey, as part of some consultation

Action. It was agreed that the Finance and Operations Committee should consider this issue generally and report back to the GB, it being the apparent view of the GB that there was no fixed view that the school should subsidise this activity. It was also suggested the issue be looked at on an annual basis. It was reported that this would not be a particular problem in September 2018 because of the number of siblings coming into the school.

25/10 REPORT FROM SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER AND COMMITTEE CHAIR ON TIFUL - OPERATIONS AND FINANCE

Ilan focused on financial information. He queried whether the GB as a whole had sufficient information on the accounts properly to carry out their role and responsibility as Governors. He referred to the Governance Handbook and the triple responsibility of members of the GB as Governors, Directors and Trustees.

One Governor said she would like to see more information, because the Governors were called upon to make financial decisions and needed the relevant data. Another Governor was happy with the level of data already provided. There appeared to be a consensus that the GB was happy with the level of data already

provided but suggested that headline financial information could be provided at each meeting.

Action. The Finance and Operations Committee will look at this entire issue at its next meeting

A Governor enquired whether more information should be provided on QC income. David G responded that information was available each month and would be looked at by the Finance and Operations Committee at each meeting.

Marc reported an issue with HSBC provision of a facility for Direct Debits for QCs, which Finance and Operations Committee will explore.

There will be a need for the school to be up-to-date on the new GDPR Data Protection requirements and the Clerk was asked to and agreed to attend any relevant course.

25/11 REPORT FROM HEADTEACHER ON LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE AND JOINT CHAIRS' REPORT

Andrew led the discussion. It had been a very busy time for the school and the key pieces of work were set out in detail in the Report circulated to the Governors

There were two important issues

- 1. Preparation for potential OFSTED inspection.** The GB had already held an informal meeting to advise Governors of the process. The earliest date upon which the inspection could take place was June 2018 but it was more likely to take place with effect from the Autumn Term 2018/19. The school had, however, to be ready by June. There were certain requirements on Governors which OFSTED would look at, in particular visits to the school by Governors on a regular basis. A schedule would therefore be prepared, based upon one visit per term by a member of each Committee. Initially the work of overseeing preparation for the inspection will be led by the Strategy Group (made up of the Head, the Co-Chairs and the Committee Chairs). There may also be a specific OFSTED Preparation Group in due course. It is not intended there should be a mock OFSTED inspection because that would produce too much work for the staff but other teachers will come into the school and look at its processes. Marc was keen not to look in detail at specific issues too far in advance of the actual inspection, to avoid undue pressure on the teachers.
- 2. Potential participation in Multi Academy Trust (MAT)** Governors had already been advised of a meeting at the school on 26 March, which will provide an initial explanation of the MAT scheme. The Governors will, at some stage in the future have to decide what is an appropriate Alma MAT strategy. The meeting will look at what other schools have done and are doing and what options are available to Alma Primary.

Ed suggested this was a very complex issue and that Governors could benefit from some pre-reading before the next meeting.

Action: Marc/Co-Chairs will send a Sharefile link to the Governors for further information about MATs.

Andrew made it clear that at the moment there is no set Alma view or strategy. The only desired outcome is what is best for the school. Ilan commented this is the biggest thing that the GB will do as a body. A Governor asked if examples could be provided from comparable schools and whether those could be circulated to the GB.

Action: Marc/Co-Chairs to circulate information from comparable schools to GB.

Communication with Parents

Marc emphasised the importance of appropriate communication with stakeholders, and particularly with parents. It was important to provide “big picture information” to parents and, to achieve this, an end of term newsletter would be sent to all parents.

Action Members of the GB were asked to provide information to Sammy who had agreed to be editor-in-chief of the newsletter.

Marc also reported on staff well-being. A Working User Group had been set up and feedback from staff received and arrangements to put in place to deal with issues raised by staff members. For example, staff had suggested that more working space was necessary and that had been provided.

Use of the School as a Polling Station

Although the GB had decided against allowing the school to be used, Barnet Council have now insisted, using their statutory powers. However, it would be physically possible to allow use of part of the hall for that purpose whilst keeping the rest of the school open. The intention is to make this a positive experience for the children, recognising the difficulties for parents if the school is closed for one day, without notice. Access to the polling station will be by a separate gate and a security guard will ensure no access into the school proper, so that there is total segregation between the children and the general public using the polling station. Governors believed there might be understandable anxiety on the part of some parents at this arrangement.

Action. Marc will ensure there is proper communication to parents to explain the separation and security arrangements that will be in force on the day.

25/12 SDP & SELF EVALUATION REPORT, INCLUDING RISK REGISTER

Marc invited all Committee Chairs and members of the Committees to look at the relevant sections of the Risk Register and consider aspects of that document which affected the work of their Committee.

Marc explained the various scores at page 17 of the School Evaluation Report, with particular reference to the 9-point scale. That data has been shared with other Headteachers who visit the school and who have been impressed at the nature of the report and how well the school is performing. Those Headteachers are positive that the school is moving in the right direction. They praised the “really hard work” that has gone on.

25/13 REVIEW OF THE DEDICATION PLAN

Ilan reported that a very large amount of work gone into this, led by Natalie as project leader. There would be approximately 100 external guests and 150 parents and children present. The hall will be at full capacity. Appropriate press announcements will be made and the entire event will be video-recorded for future use.

The Governing Body recorded its formal thanks to Natalie, Ilan, Emma Davies and Michelle Jacobs as well as Marc and the staff team for all of their hard work in organising this ceremony.

25/14 REVIEW OF GOVERNOR VISIT SCHEDULE AND GOVERNOR TRAINING

Ilan reminded the Governors that this would be an important aspect of any OFSTED inspection. OFSTED might well ask “*How do you as Governors actually know what you say you know*” and school visits are an important part of the answer to that question. Marc added that they should be carried out in any event and not just for an

OFSTED inspection, so as to enable Governors to understand the school better and challenge the Headteacher if necessary

Action. Accordingly, at each GB meeting, there would be a formal item looking back on GB visits since the last GB meeting and discussing, if this had not occurred, why not.

Action Each Committee Chair should ensure that at least one member of his/her committee undertakes a formal visit to the school within each term. The Committee Chairs should coordinate those visits with the school administration.

Ilan referred to the Training Log which had been circulated. He was concerned that there are a substantial number of gaps in that document. It was compulsory for all Governors to undertake safeguarding training but he believed all had done so from the information available.

25/15 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

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

25/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

25/17 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.