

ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting on 23 March 2022

In attendance:

Apologies

Boris Telyatnikov
Sei-Kee Maturine

Parent

Gonzalo Coello de
Portugal
Charlie Condou
Christophe
Frèrebeau
Nanouche Umeadi

Staff

Sally Hill - Co-Head
Natalie Stevenson - Co-Head
Lacey Cousins – staff governor

Co-opted

Jennifer Allan – Chair of
Governors
Shanti Fricker
Tim Peake

LA Governor

Jack Tinley

Also present:

Tania Voaden, Clerk
Vicky Green Business Manager
Hannah Blausten - Governor at West Hampstead Primary School

Matters arising

1.1 The Chair welcomed new LA Governor Jack Tinley and introductions were made.

1.2 No corrections of meeting minutes dated 9 February 2022

1.3 Actions from February 2022 minutes

Item 2.9 Teaching and Learning Policy. Action of the Co-Heads to further develop through the Summer Term and share with the Curriculum Committee - **roll over**.

Item 3.00 Shed Talk on comprehension. Scheduled for June, but a date clash meant postponement – **roll over** and secure a new date.

Item 4.1 Keep it EP - establish a working party - **done** and feeding back to FGB at the meeting.

Item 5.2 Charlie Condou to share therapeutic support contacts with Sally Hill - **roll over**.

Other completed actions marked as 'done' in February minutes.

2.00 Introduction to the work of the Education Endowment Fund (EEF)

Hannah Blausten, a new Governor at West Hampstead Primary School, had asked to join the meeting to observe governance. Hannah works for the EEF and Governors asked her to talk about the work of the EEF. Hannah Blausten explained that the EEF is an independent charity with the mission of closing the disadvantage gap.

In summary she explained the following -

- The EEF has an £125 million endowment to identify what works in education through an evidence-based approach.
- They are running 150 trials in educational research - funding evaluations of findings.
- The key focus is to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.
- EEF has a synthesis approach of bringing together and summarising the best available evidence of what works in education.
- Their Teaching and Learning Toolkit is used in 70% schools.
- The EEF looks beyond the UK for research, in particular to the US.
- The EEF works to support schools and the education sector to use evidence effectively, and develop an evidence-informed process.
- They work with the DFE as an independent body eg. quality assuring NPQs.
- .
- Sally Hill noted that their work was very valuable and that the school draws from their research.
- Rosie Thompson commended the toolkit and said that student teachers find it particularly helpful.
- Gonzalo Coello De Portugal asked whether Eleanor Palmer worked with EEF on trials and Hannah Blausten replied that it did not, but that there is one lead research school per area and for London and South East that is the Charles Dickens School. NS confirmed that Eleanor Palmer regularly uses EEF research to inform school development decisions.

The Chair thanked Hannah Blausten for her insight into the work of the EEF and offered to meet again if Hannah would find it helpful.

3.00 Co-Heads' Report

3.1 Within their report the Co-Heads had referenced discussion at the heads' consultative meeting about the direction of travel regarding academies. At the meeting Sally Hill added that a new education white paper was due, and that it was anticipated that this would include an expectation that all schools should become academies and join with others in a trust. Jon Abbey, MD of Camden Learning, had talked at the consultative meeting about schools forging meaningful partnerships, with these developing to be more than links between schools, but eventually becoming part of a trust. Natalie Stevenson said that EP needed to consider carefully the implications for the school and pupils and especially to understand the intentions of Camden local authority and Camden Learning: particularly if Camden Learning intended to develop plans to form a trust for its community schools.

3.2 Gonzalo Coello De Portugal challenged what the implications were of becoming part of an academy chain. The Chair responded that the school would become part of a larger organisation along with other schools. The academy chain and its governing board (the "Trust") would have the governance of the school. Any 'governing' body at school level would have an advisory function and be a representative forum for parents. It would not have overall responsibility as currently for e.g. setting the ethos of the school, holding the head teachers to account, setting the budget or recruiting the head teacher. Gonzalo Coello De Portugal asked whether there could be a Camden trust, and the Chair replied that in the past local authorities had not been allowed to form trusts, but there was some speculation that this white paper may provide a wider scope. Natalie Stevenson said that as a headteacher the key concern was the loss of autonomy for the school. All schools within an academy chain typically operate with the same approach (e.g. on curriculum and

pedagogy), and whilst there were pros and cons in this, she felt that school would be reluctant to relinquish operational control.

3.3 The Chair noted that academy chains vary considerably with some very large ones such as United Learning which has a national presence and many small chains of two to five local schools. Within these models there was a scale of autonomy offered - some are very centrally run, others allowed more discretion. . Asked about funding implications, the Chair explained that in the past schools had received a financial premium from becoming academies as a result of money previously held back by local authorities for their schools being passported to the academy directly. This was no longer the case, given the decline in funding for local authorities generally and greater delegation to schools through the funding formula. Economies of scale could be deployed by academies in a trust e.g. sharing staff, pooling resources and assets Academies are formally granted more curriculum freedom though in practice the great majority follow the National Curriculum. Most secondary schools are now academies and there are increasing numbers of primary schools academising - though still a minority. This would change rapidly if the Church of England and Catholic religious authorities as a whole embraced academisation by forming Diocesan trusts.

3.4 Tim Peake commented that academies reduced local authority power over schools, and that in some instances local authorities were failing to provide a strong educational offer. Academisation had become compulsory for failing schools. Natalie Stevenson said that as Camden was a strong local authority with good and outstanding schools, the impetus to academisation had not previously been strong. Tim Peake noted the diminishing model of local authority schools, and that new schools opening ("free schools") were all academies.

3.5 The Co-Heads said that they were exploring meaningful partnerships. They said that Camden heads were protective over their identities, but recognised the benefits of sharing practice and ideas with a group of inspiring heads and schools. The Co-heads had met with Brookfield and Acland Burghley headteachers, but were simply talking over ideas at this stage.

3.6 Tim Peake commented that with academies deciding how schools were run, individual schools can lose their independence. There was value in joining together with other schools and strength... Natalie Stevenson said that partnerships should not be dictated by simply geography, but by ethos and values. Governors agreed that it was important to remain networked with other schools and to think hard about options, mindful that there was a risk of a possible short timeline for change.

3.7 Curriculum Development. The Co-heads had outlined the training provision in their report. Rosie Thomson noted that staff had appreciated the commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) and that it was provided in a timely way.

3.8 Christophe Frerebeau asked whether the Co-Heads thought the school would be likely to receive the Exceptional Needs Grant referenced in their report. Sally Hill responded that the school was waiting to hear and noted that there was a high level of need. Natalie Stevenson said that having been on a panel she was aware that the discussions would centre around what is an exceptional need and what is an exceptional circumstance.

3.9 Safeguarding - correction to the Co-Head's report to reflect 1 child protection case and 2 'child in need' cases. Nanouche Umeadi commented that she had not seen this detail on safeguarding on the heads' report previously and Natalie Stevenson replied it not been included previously, but would be part of the report hereafter.

3.10 Partnership work. Rosie Thomson commented positively that 4 of the 16 of the current cohort of School Direct student teachers had already secured positions in Camden schools.

4.00 Special item – Draft Budget

Vicky Green presented the draft budget to governors, noting that it remained in draft until the out-turn was determined. The 3 year projections were also shared.

Covered in presentation and subsequent discussion -

- The income was 10% over budgeted - the school took a conservative approach to income.
- Money allocated to the planned SEN pod was shown as £70K in the capital budget and would 'come out' as the project progressed.
- Expenditure was 2% up on the budgeted amount, staff absence having an impact on this.
- There had not been a great deal of expenditure on maintenance and premises as only minor works had taken place.
- The budget assumed that there would be a contribution from the PTA.
- The partnership account held £400K and the school had drawn £25k from this - the agreement being that up to £50k could be drawn in a given year.
- Charlie Condou enquired as to the source of funding for the SEN pod. Sally Hill replied that the school had applied for a grant and had successfully received £50K. A further £20K had been donated by a parent specifically for this purpose.
- The Chair challenged whether the budget enabled the school to continue with current provision and to fulfill intended plans. Vicky Green responded that it did, but that in order to do so the contribution from the PTA had been factored in. This contribution was not typically incorporated into the budget.
- The Chair noted the steady tightening of the budget and Tim Peake agreed that the 3 year outlook was quite unpredictable, and that a large fund was required to cushion the immediate future.
- The budget will be further reviewed in the Resources Committee and the final budget will be presented to governors in the May FGB meeting.

4.1 Special item - Keep it EP

Christophe Frerebeau led the discussion on Keep it EP noting that the fundraising campaign had been launched in 2019. He reported that recurrent donations averaged £35 a month from 29 parents. The fund had raised approximately £40,000 for the school.

In discussion -

- The school needed to communicate more effectively about why this fund was so important
- The school needed to present a clear picture of what enrichment at EP looked like and what activities this fund supported.
- Tim Peake noted that so much of the enrichment offer was integral to the curriculum.
- The Chair commented that the enrichment offer supported inclusivity at the school.
- Information about Keep it EP was included in the Reception admission starter packs, but was amongst a lot of other documents and so could be overlooked by new parents..
- Gonzalo Coello de Portugal said that he felt there was a sense of gratitude to the school within the community and that this should be channeled.
- There was discussion around parent gifts to staff at Christmas and end of year and that these were often generous sums of money from a class collection. Governors asked how these gifts were received. The Business Manager reminded the GB that the school kept register of individual gifts over a certain value which staff had to declare.

Action - Lacey Cousins will seek feedback from staff regarding gifts.

- The working party will bring together plans for the relaunch of Keep it EP.

5.00 Staffing Committee

Minutes dated 3/3/22 were shared ahead of the meeting.

5.1 Camden policies on appraisal and pay had been reviewed and approved.

5.2 The committee had discussed the level of need and staff support in Year 2.

6.00 Resources Committee

Minutes dated 9/3/22 were shared ahead of the meeting.

6.00 Review of the SEN pod - Sally Hill and Vicky Green had met with the chosen contractor. Sally Hill noted that the sensory room in Kentish Town school had cost £20K to kit out.

6.1 The meeting referenced in the minutes on Camden's proposed refit project installing air source heat pumps into schools came under discussion. Vicky Green had feedback to the meeting that the intent to decarbonise was good, but that the proposed method would not achieve this aim for several reasons, including the effectiveness being reliant on insulation. Schools by the nature of open doors and windows - especially in light of Covid - were not well insulated spaces. Tim Peake said that the plans had not been thought out and Gonzalo Coello De Portugal commended Vicky Green for her response to Camden at and after the meeting.

7.00 PPC Committee

Minutes dated 9/3/22 shared ahead of the meeting.

The committee agreed to set a date for a SEN parent meeting.

The committee reviewed plans for the CBC Evening.

The Behaviour Policy is under review and will link to the Exclusion Policy and Anti-bullying policy.

8.00 Curriculum Committee

Governor monitoring report 11/3/22 on handwriting was shared ahead of the meeting

8.1 The Chair and Rosie Thomson had conducted a book look and held discussions with children and Stefan Palejowski regarding handwriting, in line with the SDP target and monitoring the new Letter-Join font scheme.

The findings were shared in the monitoring report and discussion arising at the meeting included -

- The report noted the improvement in and consistency in children's handwriting.
- Rosie Thomson commented that children were proud of their improvement.
- Natalie Stevenson commented how empowering it was for the children to see this change.
- For some children, their handwriting was transformed.
- The Chair said that in the book-look, the change and improvement was markedly evident.
- Rosie Thomson said that the support staff had taken real ownership of the scheme.
- Natalie Stevenson noted that the school would still be reviewing touch typing and Lacey Cousins commented that post-Covid there was improved fluency in touch typing.

8.2 Rosie Thomson welcomed questions arising from the last FGB and the presentation on phonics. Rosie Thomson said that the rigor of the new phonics programme and the time spent on it each day did affect the rest of the curriculum and other schools reported similarly. As the programme becomes embedded however the school anticipated that the impact will lessen as it becomes more streamlined. She also commented that the scheme was accelerating reading fluency which brought huge benefits. Rosie Thomson noted that the evidence base for the programme was strong.

9.00 No AOB. The meeting ended at 7:30pm.

Policies approved

- Pay policy - Staffing Committee
- Appraisal policy - Staffing Committee. The meeting ended at 7:30pm.