

ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting Held on Wednesday 8th July 2015 at 6.00pm

Chair of Governors

Alice Barling Gasson

LB Camden

Boris Telyatnikov

Mark Pemberton

Parent

Julia Hollis, Vice Chair

Kirsten Walton

Shanti Fricker

Vicky Starmer

Mark Peters

Staff

Kate Frood, Headteacher

Nancy Cumming

Community

Jennifer Allan

Tim Peake

Associate members

Fiona Crean

Natalie Stevenson

Also present:

Tania Voaden, Clerk

1.00 There were no declarations of interest.

2.00 Minutes of Previous Meeting held on Wednesday 20 May 2015

2.1 Corrections

Minutes were reviewed and no corrections were made.

2.2 Matters Arising

Items 3.2 Governor support at Parents' Evening actioned.

Item 4.3 The Head and Chair had challenged the admissions process with regard to social and medical admissions.

Item 4.12 Pupil Premium added to future attendance reporting.

Item 6.2 Bullying added to safeguarding discussions within committee so that any incidents could be reviewed by Governors. The Chair noted that she is also often in the committee meetings.

3.00 CHAIR'S REPORT – the document 'Chair's Report July 2015' was shared prior to the meeting.

3.1 The Chair shared thank you cards from staff in appreciation of the Gift Cards awarded to all staff in recognition of their Teaching School contributions.

3.2 The Chair thanked Governors for their time, commitment and support of the school this year and Julia Hollis thanked the Chair for her contribution.

3.3 The Chair welcomed comments on her letter to parents which would be distributed with the regular Thursday newsletter. Julia Hollis commended her on the letter.

3.4 Parent Questionnaire

There had been 70 responses covering 78 children which equated to a response rate of 1/3 of families. A good spread of year groups were represented.

Mark Peters had summarised a report for governors which was tabled at the meeting. The report showed responses to all questions in a table of the median and interquartile ranges. It also highlighted some key questions and detailed all the written comments.

Mark Peter highlighted the responses to 'the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour' as having ¼ as disagreeing, strongly disagreeing or not knowing. The Head said that issues were not addressed publically and that generally she met with the children concerned in her office. This gave them a chance to speak openly to her about what had happened and for her talk it over fully with them.

Kirsten Walton said that children did not want to peer 'snitch' so didn't always tell when there was a problem. There wasn't always transparency for the child to see how matters had been addressed, for the less assertive child they can feel caught in the crossfire of an incident.

Shanti Fricker suggested this is covered as part of PSHE.

The Chair suggested that any ideas on how best to resolve were pooled and taken to committee to discuss.

The Governors reviewed that parental comments and noted the many positive comments about the commitment of school staff and the sense of a strong community.

4.0 HEAD'S REPORT

The document 'Head's Report 8 July 2015' had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. This included summary evaluations of SDP Actions 2014-15 and draft thoughts on 2015-16 Action Plans.

Performance Data

The Head drew attention to the provisional performance data included in her report.

4.1 Foundation Stage

The Head noted that more children had done better this year than in the previous year. 77% of pupils 'achieved expected levels' across all assessment areas, an increase on 64% in the prior year. The Head is confident that the result will exceed both local and national averages.

4.2 Year 1 Phonics Check

80% of children achieved the pass mark of 32, an improvement on the 67% in the previous year.

6 children “failed” the test, including a child with visual impairment and the other 5 all with clearly identified SEN needs. They will continue to receive support and will be retested in six months.

4.3 Key Stage 1 Data

The Head referenced the tables in her report summarising the reading, writing and maths results for Key Stage 1

Attention was drawn to the table showing the secure average at level 2B and above, noting the dip in results for girls, most notably in maths. This will be a focus for Natalie Stevenson as these girls transition into Year 3.

The Chair noted the lower % of children achieving Level 3 in writing in comparison to reading and maths. The governors then discussed the focus on writing and thoughts on why the Level 3s were more elusive. The Head stated that writing really takes off when children become fluent readers. Natalie Stevenson said that writing can take longer to 'bear fruit'.

4.4 Key Stage 2 Data

The results were not included in the Head's report as they were published on 7th July; the Head tabled the results at the meeting.

The Head clarified that what the levels meant:

- 4 for achieving expected standards
- 5 for exceeding expected standards
- 6 for exceptional

Overall the results were very strong and had exceeded the expectations.

The Head commented that in maths the threshold for Level 4 were down to 45% from 48% and this helped two children in particular. However, she did not believe however that the children at this level were fully secure.

The Head noted that the results exceeded expectations in particular in reading, where several children with predicted at Level 4s achieved Level 5.

The Level 6 reading pass mark was significantly up and no child in the school achieved Level 6 which was disappointing.

Reading marks were most at variance with the teacher assessments.

Mark Peters challenged whether the higher than anticipated results reflected grade deflations, Natalie Stevenson countered that it was a result of strong teaching.

The Head and Chair commended the staff supporting Year 6 'Team 6' for a great set of results.

4.5 Reading tests

The Head explained that the new Ofsted is shaped around reading ability and reiterated that the school has always done a reading test with every child in September and June.

The Head referenced the table in her report showing the results of the latest assessment shown in stanines showing the % of children reading at below and above their chronological ages groups.

The results show that the school fares very favourably against the national %s with a significant number of children achieving stanine 9. The Head said that moving into the top 3 stanines came when children understood the importance of books and had a really strong reading habit. Natalie Stevenson said teachers work hard to introduce books and children in this stanine have aspirations to read.

The Chair challenged what plans were in place for parental engagement and the Head replied that as part of the engagement plan there was an Ampersand workshop taking place the following day in school to support parents with reading. Kirsten Walton asked how parents could be given more opportunity and guidance in reading and suggested a book exchange.

Natalie Stevenson raised the subject of reading stamina: children need to read every day and not give up; they need to talk together about books and build stamina.

Julia Hollis asked whether the school's 'You Choose' reading guide would be updated and the Head affirmed that it would be during the year.

Shanti Fricker agreed that being a reader is key to becoming a better writer and that the challenge of book selection became even harder at secondary school.

4.6 Puma Maths Test

The Head said she had a clear steer from the government about maths expectations and that Puma maths tests had been introduced this year with results outlined in her report. The results were again strong, but she had noted a concern regarding Year 4 with a large 'tail end' of children not meeting expected standards. Kirsten Walton asked whether these tests would continue and the Head confirmed they would stating that repetition provided comparative data and triangulated teacher assessment.

4.7 Admissions

The Head detailed the 2015-16 academic year intake. She informed Governors that Camden had agreed to defer entry for the Summer born child discussed at the previous Governing Body meeting, this child will apply again next year.



Governors then had a discussion regarding class size, currently set at 30 children. Mark Peters said that there is no evidence about the detriment of a class greater than 30. The Head responded that there needed to be a cut-off point and that the principle of the set number at 30 should be adhered to prevent staff exhaustion and turnover. Natalie Stevenson stated that in her experience having taught a class over 30 children it does have an impact on teaching, especially if there are complex needs. Kristen Walton asked where the children would go if the schools were full. The Chair supported the principle of a cut off number and said that class size could however be considered on a case by case basis.

4.8 Safeguarding

The Head and Natalie Stevenson highlighted that some of the Year 6 cohort were very challenging in class at the moment and acknowledged that the anxiety of transition impacted on this. It was necessary for the class to have very structured lessons to manage the behaviour effectively.

4.9 Finance

The Head highlighted from her report that the budget was balanced up to 2108 but without a contingency plan; no capital projects and assuming a Teaching School income of £116,000. The Chair stated that a contingency plan was needed and challenged the outcome if there

was no money from Teaching School. The Head asked Jennifer Allan for her view on the future of Teaching School, Jennifer Allan responded that they would ultimately become self-funding. Boris Telyatnikov noted the decline in Pupil Premium numbers and associated funding.

The Governors then discussed a covenant scheme to support school funding. Tim Peake stated that it had previously been considered but that without specific purpose it did not have legitimacy. Mark Pemberton suggested a funding route through Gift Aid or through charity. Kirsten Walton asked whether match funding may also be a considered.

The Head noted that there was not yet a financial exigency so no immediate action was needed, but to be mindful of planned cuts.

4.10 Summer Works

The Head updated the Governors on the minor summer works, the greater news being that Camden has allowed the school to lead a science block project and funding of £388,000 has been secured to complete this. Tim Peake said the structure would stand where the existing playground shelter was, would have a lightweight frame and small foundations so that there would not be huge building disruption. The next stage was to tender to architects. Governors welcomed this news and suggested that The Francis Crick Institute and the Wellcome Trust are approached for advice in what to include within the block.

4.11 Teaching School

The Head outlined the Teaching School summary from her report and highlighted that the school would not become a SCITT (i.e. running own Teaching School) but have persuaded the Institute of Education to engage the school a specialist partner in teacher training. This involves a greater commitment to support student teachers but brings additional income.

4.12 School Development Plan (SDP)

SDP 2014-15

The Governors reviewed the Development plan 2014-2015.

Challenging the Gap

The goals of meeting Key Stage 2 85% Level 4+ and 50% Level 5+ in all areas had been met. The Head said that the school were not confident in reaching this target at the start of the year and were very pleased to have risen to the challenge.

The goal of achieving 88% in phonics was not met; with 80% achievement. The Head acknowledged that the target was set too high especially in consideration to the cohort.

Overall Governors agreed the goals of the SDP were met or had progressed well.

SDP 2015-16

The Governors reviewed the draft SDP for 2015-2016 which will feed into committee discussions.

Jennifer Allan suggested that in the knowledge that budgets would decrease over the next 4-5 years that this should feed into the SDP with consideration of priorities.

The Head noted that staffing is the biggest share of the budget and that curriculum areas link clearly with people. Unlike other schools Eleanor Palmer has not traditionally had teachers out of class; increasingly with Teaching School this has been necessary.

The Head said the SDP should pick up the threads from the Parent Questionnaire.

Mark Pemberton felt that the draft was missing the opportunity to see where resources fit into key priorities, how premises and finance deliver on key goals. He proposed higher level goals in relation to the SDP.

The Chair stated that with capital spend going down thought should be given to necessary premises works.

- **ACTION** Add SDP 2015-16 to the committee agendas.

5.0 Reconstitution

The Chair reminded Governors that there were statutory requirements to change the constitution of the Governing Body by September 2015. For Eleanor Palmer these were minor changes and notification of the vote had been given in the July meeting. The proposal was that Mark Pemberton transition from Local Authority Governor to become a Co-opted Governor and all Community Governors move to become Co-opted Governors. A vote was taken and passed unanimously.

- **ACTION** The Chair to confirm to Camden that the Governing Body had reconstituted.

6.0 RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT

The Committee minutes dated 18 June 2015 were shared in advance of the meeting.

Tim Peake noted that the meeting had already covered many points from the Resources Committee.

6.1 The Chair commented that with capital spend going down there was a need to consider planned works. Tim Peake responded that there were no major capital projects in the works plan only general classroom maintenance and IT upgrading.

6.2 Mark Pemberton asked whether the science block project will increase costs for example with regard to staffing. The Head said that there were no associated staffing costs. Tim Peake said that there would be some general maintenance costs but that they were considering operating costs in the planning, for instance including a high specification of insulation and a green roof.

7.0 STAFFING COMMITTEE REPORT

Minutes dated 22 June 2015 were shared in advance of the meeting.

7.1 Julia Hollis reported very positive results from the staff survey with an overall improvement on last year. There were significant improvements in response to their views on 'senior leadership listen to my ideas'.

Julia Hollis will write a letter to staff with details of the survey results and to thank them for completing the survey.

7.2 Safeguarding. Julia Hollis confirmed that she had met with Sarah Ewins for the termly safeguarding meeting and would take the minutes to committee prior to sharing at the next Governing Body meeting.

7.3 NQTs

Minutes of the meeting between NQTs Rosie Thomson and Bethany Elliott were shared in advance of the meeting.

Julia Hollis reported that both teachers felt overall the year had been a success.

The work-life balance was a challenge and that the teachers expressed that they needed to work on personal boundaries.

Inevitably report writing was a huge piece of work and meant many late hours. Natalie Stevenson and the Head both said that they encouraged staff to go home and not work late in school.

Fiona Crean said that for reports next year she would model a template with fixed text boxes so that teachers did not feel the need to write too much. By fixing boxes and font she hoped that this would make the report writing more manageable.

7.4 Peer Group monitoring

The notes on peer group monitoring and teaching were shared with governors in advance of the meeting.

Julia Hollis fed back that she and Kirsten Walton had met with Rosie Thomson, Lucy Foster and Nancy Cumming to discuss peer teaching and monitoring. The discussion was positive and made clear that success came through good working partnerships.

The meeting had also discussed Lesson Study, a project run by the Faculty of Education at Cambridge University focusing on maths. The Head explained that the model is three teachers work together, plan a lesson, teach a lesson and observe the lesson. It enables the teachers to drill down into what worked and didn't, to reflect, unpick and determine how to improve. The teachers had fed back that it was a very useful experience which developed their teaching and was of clear benefit to the children.

8.0 PPC COMMITTEE REPORT

The minutes of the meeting 24 June were shared in advance of the meeting.

Vicky Starmer said that the parents group had met, a small group of 9, but that it had been a constructive meeting,

They had agreed that Parent Gym would not be run again but that there would be regular drop in coffee mornings with guest speakers. This would not require parents to commit to a course of sessions, so should have greater appeal.

'Stay and Play; would be introduced in the Autumn term: a chance for parents to stay behind in the classroom after drop off for 30minutes and become involved in interactive learning with their child.

The group will also look at how to create more opportunities for Foundation Stage families to engage with each other.

From the Autumn term homework will change with the introduction of a half termly homework project. Homework Club will continue to run and further discussion will take place on how best to promote.

9.00 Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the June meeting were shared in advance of the meeting.

The Key Stage 2 results had arrived after the committee met so they had not been reviewed at the meeting.

10.00 AOB

The Chair stated that she had received an email regarding the Governor training package form Camden renewal at the cost of £500 per annum. The Governors agreed that this should be renewed.

The next full Governing Body will meet on Wednesday 30th September at 6pm.