

ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting Held on 22 March 2017 at 6.00pm

Apologies received:

Tim Peake
Boris Telyatnikov

LB Camden

Parent

Julia Hollis, Vice Chair
Kirsten Walton
Shanti Fricker
Vicky Starmer

Staff

Kate Frood, Head teacher
Rosie Thomson

Co-opted

Jennifer Allan
Matthew Lawrence
Mark Peters
Mark Pemberton

Associate members

Fiona Crean

Also present:

Tania Voaden, Clerk

1.00 There were no declarations of interest.

2.00 Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 25 January 2017.

2.1 Corrections

No corrections of minutes.

2.2 Actions

- **ACTION** Clerk to resend advocate list to governors. Done
- **ACTION** Head to share ISOS report. Done
- **ACTION** Clerk to share list of acronyms with new Governor Matthew Lawrence. Done.
- **ACTION** Proposed term dates sent to Governors to review. Done.

Rollover reminders -

- **ACTION** Resources Committee to revisit modelling covenants.
- **ACTION** To add school dinners to the PPC agenda. Vicky Starmer joined schools dinners and will discuss with committee.
- **ACTION** PPC Committee to review Mental Health Policy. KF and PPC committee to add school summary page to front of Camden policy.

3.00 SPECIAL ITEM – How does Eleanor Palmer work to improve teaching and learning?

The Head shared a presentation on improving teaching and learning at the school. Challenge Partners had commended the school on its rigorous determination to maintain and improve what it does. The Head asked Governors for their thoughts on this. Discussion involved developing ideas locally, learning on the job with experienced peers and a thorough and valuable performance review process.

The Head said that Challenge Partners challenged the school rigorously on the levels of trust placed in teachers. The outcome of the ensuing discussions was that this trust was a key feature of outstanding provision.

The Head said that the school didn't use 'off the peg' methods or suddenly switch to the new popular ideas, though of course these were always reviewed. There was not endless monitoring or telling teachers what to do. She referenced ideas from Daniel Pink in his book 'Drive' that progress and success is driven by ideas and creativity and it's effective to give individuals a sense of purpose, master and autonomy over their work. Giving teachers this autonomy gives and intrinsic motivation. The Head also referenced ideas from Patrick Lencioni on employment misery being caused by anonymity, irrelevance and a sense of immeasurement.

The Head then talked about her slide on what the school does to improve teaching and learning which included the following points:

- School improvement is a process not an event.
- There is a constant dialogue and feedback on what people do and think.
- The children are the focus for everyone.
- Engagement- everyone has a part to play and a shared responsibility.
- Teachers have ownership.
- Senior Leadership team try things out and lead by example.
- Using data intelligently but not oppressed by the data.

Fiona Crean said that the staff talked a lot about improvement. Rosie Thomson said that staff responded quickly in changing things that did not work.

Matthew Lawrence challenged how the school achieves a balance between trust and assessment. Mark Peters stated that the use of evidence was critical and analysis of data would enable the school to clearly see what does and doesn't add value. He said that experience alone cannot determine how things are done and that evidence was the starting point. Resources such as The Sutton Trust Toolkit guided schools on how to use data to improve attainment. The Head and Rosie Thomson talked about how the staff had clear expectations and that as a single-form entry school with a small team it was easy to monitor and see what was and wasn't working in terms of teaching and learning.

The Head said that the school could better capture evidence of success and improve on the clarity of the SDP. Mark Peters challenged whether the school was clear on what success is and that all staff have this same vision. The Head responded that the main driver to measure success was reaching expected levels. Matthew Lawrence talked about reviewing the SDP framework with a clear mission statement that included goals with outputs and outcomes that all contribute towards the goals. Measurement of success should sit within this framework. He also talked about enforcing the culture and working with behavioural change, areas that are harder to measure. The need to ensure that everyone understands that they are working towards the same goals.

Vicky Starmer asked about how the children's opinions fed into this. The Head talked about how the teachers use conferencing with children.

The Head shared The Impact Statements used in Kentish Town Primary School and asked for feedback from Governors.

Jen Allan said that the activity of completing Impact Statements and having them in black and white would prove useful. She said that a lot of schools constantly change methods without bedding down and that ideas floated off. She stressed the importance of introducing new ideas and embedding those that work. Rosie Thomson said that whole class reading was now consistent and embedded.

Mark Pemberton challenged how successes were then recorded and rolled out e.g. in an annual report. The Head said that the school used to produce annual reports, but that they were wordy and rarely referenced. The Head said that methods that did not work were left by the wayside. Mark Pemberton asked how that was recorded.

The Head said that the biggest variable in teaching is the quality of the teacher and that the school valued bright, reflective practitioners. Mark Peters challenged how variability is reduced.

It was agreed that the school could better capture the style in which it improves, to demonstrate how innovation was captured and also what had not been effective. The Head said that she would like to look at the structure of the SDP and weave into Impact Statements.

The Head also highlighted the emerging issues in school of maths in Year 4 and a wider issue of spelling. The school would be giving focus to both these areas.

4.00 HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

The Headteacher's report 23/3/17 was shared with Governors in advance of the meeting.

4.1 Admissions

The Head referenced the Year 6 secondary transfers and highlighted the wide spread of 15 schools to which the children will transition. This year sees the largest number of children moving to independent schools for many years. The Head commented on the harshness of the selection process to the independent schools and how it unsettled many children in the class.

[REDACTED]

The changes to Nursery funding have still not been finalised. Camden have consulted on funding to enable the lowest income families to secure an additional 15 hours. The intention of the school is to offer the 26 places applying the usual admissions criteria and then for the Resources Committee to build the funding model. The committee are unable to work on this until the final funding plans nationally and within Camden are finalised.

4.2 Staffing

The Head informed Governors that Year 3 teacher Lucy Foster would be leaving at the end of the Summer term. A big loss after 5 years, but understandable as she is looking to relocate and settle out of London.

She referenced the return of Nancy Cumming and Natalie Stevenson from maternity leave after Easter.

4.3 Teaching and Learning

The Head stated that the school was pleased with the Challenge Partners report. The Chair asked whether the review was enjoyable. Fiona Crean said that the team were very challenging on the first day but then the feedback was very positive. It was good to hear that they thought the curriculum was empowering and that the teachers were afforded a lot of trust. The Head said that the outcome was very good and it was a chance to articulate what the school does and doesn't do. She praised the wisdom of the lead reviewer who had a long view on pedagogy.

Matthew Lawrence challenged which of the Even Better Ifs (EBIs) the school would look to adopt. The Head responded that there was valuable discussion around Impact Statements and also that the Development Plan needed to be refreshed. The communication of where children were at as they moved through the school could be better communicated e.g. teachers in Juniors should have the Key Stage 1 test outcomes at their fingertips to ensure optimal progression. Fiona Crean said that the review team also highlighted some areas to give thought to, not stating what to do but recommending focus and review.

- **ACTION** Governors to read the Challenge Partners review (if not done so already) - on the Ofsted page on the school website.

4.4 Teaching School

The Head reported that the membership of Challenge Partners hub had grown from 5 as stated in her report to 13. This was very positive and an exciting opportunity to work together, as well as securing more money for the school.

The Head said that she valued Challenge Partners for their ability to deliver sustained deep improvements.

4.5 Finance

The Head stated that the school is working to balance the budget with focus on core cost savings

[REDACTED]. There has been a lot of focus on negotiating the best deals and making savings. A decision to no longer sign up to the School Library Service for example would save £4,000 a year. The Head also noted the importance of an effective and supportive PTA.

The Head stressed the value of Teaching School in delivering income, without which the school would potentially have two less teachers. Fiona Crean highlighted that the income from School Direct would be less in 2017-18 as the DFE had only granted 10 places, in contrast to 20 places in 2016-2017.

4.6 Premises

The Head updated Governors on the ongoing challenges of the Science Lab construction.

[REDACTED]

4.7 Attendance

The headline attendance figures are strong but the Head stated that it was clear from the data in her report that free school meals (FSM) children are absent and late more often than non-FSM children. The Chair asked about issues around term time holidays and the Head responded that instances of this were rare. If there was a pattern amongst FSM pupils, it was of parent-condoned absence.

5.00 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE REPORT

Minutes dated 1 March 2017 were shared in advance of the meeting.

5.1 Fiona Crean reported that committee had had their regular review of pupil premium data. The Head reported that the recent Puma maths data was not strong for the pupil premium children and much thought was being given to how best to support those who were not attaining, struggling to make connections and who did not have strong resilience. The school was trying to use methods that these children may find more fun e.g. quizzes, but Fiona Crean and Rosie Thomson said that some children were struggling with working without the prompting or assistance of an adult.

5.2 Kirsten Walton spoke about a study she had read regarding maths and anxiety and how 'maths stress' is being increasingly recognised. Anxiety affects working-memory resources and she asked what tools could be used to help children work through maths stress. The Head said that working memory was key, as was overlearning, repetition and also a growth mindset.

5.3 Mark Peters challenged the Science Policy agreed at Curriculum Committee and how it contained little about facts, but Science as a tool for understanding the world. Fiona Crean said that the enquiry based nature of science teaching should be reflected in the policy, but that it should be about knowledge gained on the back of exploration.

- **ACTION** Fiona Crean to review policy again and re-present.
- **ACTION** The Computing Policy had been approved and should go onto the website. **DONE.** The Science Policy will be added to the website once the review is complete.

5.5 Fiona Cream reported on the Lesson Study Impact Statement and shared the report. Sally and Fiona were working with teaching assistants in groups of three on five research projects across the school. The rationale including improving practise, developing expertise and relationships. Feedback so far had been positive, but Fiona Crean would report back on conferencing when completed. The Head suggested that Governors acknowledged the work done on this.

6.00 STAFFING COMMITTEE REPORT

Minutes dated 9 March 2017 were tabled at the meeting

6.1 Julia Hollis referenced discussions on staffing structure from the Committee meetings and the need to review the support staff structure and model. The Head talked about the need for a teaching assistant working 1:1 with an SEN child. She said that the whole class team took responsibility for supporting the SEN child but that families often valued the 1:1 relationship with the key worker. Kentish Town School have a large number of teaching assistants working 1:1 with children and the Head had discussed how this was managed with their Head. He had said that it was necessary to have meetings with some parents to give clarity that the teaching assistants were not just for their child. The Head told governors that discussions around support for SEN children would be part of the forthcoming SEN reviews.

7.00 RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT

7.1 Mark Pemberton requested a correction on committee minutes as he had not sent apologies and was present for the meeting.

7.2

7.3 Governors discussed the school's commitment to Camden contracts and potential savings from opting out. The Head noted that we had made a saving at the CLC (Camden Learning Centre) by moving from Gold to Silver level membership.

- **ACTION** Head to review Camden's Governor Service membership and if buying in training sessions is a better option.

8.00 PPC COMMITTEE REPORT

Minutes dated 8 March were shared in advance of the meeting.

Vicky Starmer reported that she'd come into school for a school lunch that day and will report further on findings in response to feedback from the parental survey. Her overall impression was that the children seemed happy with the food and she was impressed by the number of staff eating with the children. She had discussed with Sally Hill the amount of important work that was done with children when sharing these mealtimes.

Vicky Starmer updated Governors on plans for the Summer Fair and the involvement of the Parent Group in this to create an International theme.

The SEN Forum in February had been a productive meeting. Discussion included secondary transfer and how thinking about the transition should take place earlier to help provide parents a clear understanding of the process and options.

- **ACTION** Kate Frod to research a speaker to come and discuss secondary transition with parents of SEN children.

9.00 AOB

9.1 Mark Pemberton drew attention to 21st June as International Make Music Day. The same day as the school's Summer Concert and an opportunity to promote together.

9.2 The Head flagged to Governors that Tufnell Park School was becoming a three form entry school.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm.

POLICIES APPROVED

- **Computing Policy**
- **Eleanor Palmer School Budget 2017-2018 approved.**