

ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting Held on 27 March 2019 at 6.00pm

Apologies received:

Boris Telyatnikov

LB Camden

Parent

Flora Cornish
Shanti Fricker
Rifca Le Dieu
Vicky Starmer
Christophe Frèrebeau

Staff

Kate Frood, Head teacher
Rosie Thomson

Co-opted

Jennifer Allan – Chair of Governors
Tim Peake
Matthew Lawrence
Mark Pemberton

Associate members

Sally Hill
Natalie Stevenson

Also present:

Tania Voaden, Clerk
Vicky Green, School Business Manager.

1.00 There were no declarations of interest.

2.1 Correction of January minutes.

Item 4.00 Flora Cornish had sent apologies to the meeting and had expressed her concerns and comments around covenants via email.

2.2 Actions:

Rollover action 5 – Impact statements added to the website. Done.

Item 3.7 – Governors complete the Governors' Safeguarding Training. Done.

Item 4 - Chair to communicate school priorities in Easter newsletter. Done.

Item 4 – Research options for setting up covenants scheme. Done.

Item 5.2 -Josh Franks to write up results of staff interviews and share with staff.

The Chair informed Governors that Josh Franks had stepped down as a governor due to family relocation. **Rollover action** – Shanti Fricker will ask Josh Franks for results and share. Done– no response from Josh and so Rifca has done and letter gone to staff.

The Chair advised that there should be a replacement for Josh Franks and suggested that the school sought someone who worked within education as they provided valuable insight.

Item 6.11 New Early Years policy added to the website. Done.

3.00 Special Item Presentation on Complaints for Governors

The Head welcomed Owen Rees, Schools Information and Governance Consultant. Over the previous year, Governors had discussed and reviewed the school's management of discontent amongst some parents about a challenging child. Governors had requested more information and support on their role in complaints management.

Owen Rees delivered a presentation to the Governors and summary points included:

- Anyone can make a complaint about a school and they do not need to be a parent of a current pupil.
- All schools require a complaints procedure.
- The duty of establishing procedures for complaints lies with the Governing Body. Camden are issuing an updated model Complaints Policy in May 2019.
- Clarity on the difference between a 'complaint' – a state of dissatisfaction about action taken or lack of action and a 'concern' – a worry or doubt over an issue.
- Whilst there is not a set limit of time in which to lodge a complaint after an incident, three months is acceptable time frame. Whilst most complaints are in writing, they can also be verbal.
- The decision by the school in response to the complainant must be lawful, reasonable and proportionate.
- The DFE recommends a two-stage process – In stage 1 the complaint is heard by the headteacher, or by a suitably skilled governor if the complaint is about the headteacher. This does not need to be the Chair of governors, but the Chair should assign a governor, advisedly someone with experience of education, law, HR or governance.
- Stage 1 should clarify what happened, who was involved, and that the complainant is asked at the earliest stage what they think might resolve the issue. Those involved should be interviewed and a formal written response provided. Judgement should be made on whether to uphold the complaint at this stage.
- Stage 2 is an appeal before a Governing Body committee to review the process and the substance of the complaint. Governors should not be told the content of the complaint prior to the meeting. The aim of the Governing Body is reconciliation and to put right things that may have gone wrong.
- If a hearing is held it should be informal and with only the two relevant parties. Camden advise against witnesses being present. A decision should be shared in writing within 15 days and can be escalated to the DFE to act as ombudsman if the complainant was not satisfied.
- Owen Rees clarified what can't be complained about – detail in presentation.
- The presentation also detailed management of serial and persistent complaints.
- The Governance Handbook has re-emphasised the importance of listening and responding to parents' views and using surveys as key evidence.
- The Governing Body should be able to demonstrate the methods used to seek the views of parents and feedback how parental views have influenced their decision-making.
- Governors discussed how they take feedback from parents and provide response. Some feedback was given to Governors attending a recent parents' evening. There was discussion that no response was given as the comments of a couple of parents did not represent a trend at this stage,
- Details of the role of the individual Governor with regard to complaints are outlined in the National Governors Association Code of Conduct available in the Governor hub.
ACTION – TV to share presentation slides and code of conduct. Done.

Governors thanked Owen Rees for his presentation and then had some discussion around points raised. Parent Governors were reminded that as the most likely contacts for parental

concerns, they should in the first instance simply listen to the concern and refer parents to the Head to discuss further.

Due to a full agenda, committee Chairs were asked to assume that minutes had been reviewed by Governors and to summarise in brief.

4.00 RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT

Minutes dated 7 March 2019 and the school's draft budget were shared in advance of the meeting.

The committee meeting had not been quorate. Members completed a site inspection and discussed premises priorities. Tim Peake reported that the school awaits quotes through Camden for repairs.



5.00 PPC COMMITTEE REPORT

Minutes dated 13 March 2019 were shared in advance of the meeting.

There was a brief summary of the outcome of Playground Study in minutes. This will be followed up with children at the Big School Meeting.

It was agreed that the school should create a Mental Health Governor role and during the meeting it was agreed that Flora Cornish would act as the Governor advocate for this.

6.00 CURRICULUM COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes dated 6 March 2019 were shared in advance of the meeting.

Boris Telyatnikov and Natalie Stevenson had completed monitoring of maths high attainers in Year 6. Rosie Thomson talked about the growth mindset of the children and the separation of this group from the class. Boris Telyatnikov stressed that the monitoring was not a streaming tool and that there was no intention to move to this model; it would only be deployed as needed, principally in the run up to SATs.

Boris, with the headteacher and the school's SIP, Marion Hunter, had also met children to talk about science. In spite of the Lab being used throughout the week, there was not the perception that science knowledge was growing and improving. The Head talked about looking at accountability and consistency of lessons. She said that this had been a discussion at the most recent staff meeting. Year groups all had science based topics in the Summer Term and science would be a focus in assemblies. The School Improvement Partner Marion Hunter would also be looking at science in her next visit too (9 July). There was discussion amongst Governors about how to continue to promote science including encouraging parents through newsletters to research and explore science learning at home.

The Head reported that the Primary Literacy Co-ordinator from Camden, Tracy Goldblat, had visited recently. Amongst her findings it was noted that in upper Juniors, with a high number of children with dyslexia, there could be a significant drop of around 20% in writing results and thus in our combined figure; the percentage of children reaching expected levels in reading, writing and maths. This drop could trigger an Ofsted inspection.

The committee had also discussed whether to separate the children with dyslexia from the class to enable them to gain support in having questions read to them. They had agreed to do this for the current Year 6 and keep assessing the issue going forward.

7.00 STAFFING COMMITTEE REPORT

Minutes dated 15 March 2019 were shared in advance of the meeting.

The committee had been focussed on the budget and plans for restructure. There would not be a replacement for the part-time Year 1 teacher who was leaving, and the support staff model would be restructured. There are ten pupils with EHCPs (Education Health Care

Plans), but one Year 6 child with an EHCP leaving and none incoming in September. With on-costs, the cost to the school of each Teaching Assistant is £23k. With fewer children with EHCPs, increases in pensions, pay increases and reduced income due to deprivation, it was no longer sustainable to retain as many Teaching Assistants.

Governors had discussed the process for restructuring, the first step of which would be requests for voluntary redundancy. If three people did not volunteer then the next step would be asking staff to re-interview for their positions.

4.00 Head's Report

The Heads report dated 27 March 2019 was shared in advance of the meeting. Due to the full content of the meeting, the Head asked for comments only from Governors rather than a full review. The focus of the discussion would be on finance and fundraising.

4.1 Staffing

The budget was predicated on the current support staff structure. The Head summarised the previous discussions around staff restructure and informed Governors about the steps and timeline for this. In the event that no one volunteered for voluntary redundancy, the Head asked for non-parent Governor volunteers to attend a potential interview day on 7 June. She also requested Governors to volunteer to attend a possible hearing date later on 21 June.

4.2 Every five years the school is required to review its 'determination' about collective worship. Since 2009 the school has special dispensation by SACRE (the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) to lift Christian worship in assembly to reflect the nature of the school community and values. Christianity is taught alongside other faiths to give an understanding of festivals and beliefs, but teaching is about the faith not through it. Last reviewed in 2014, the Head sought the views of Governors on this and would invite parental opinion before SACRE attended to observe an assembly in April. Governors gave support for the renewal of this determination.

4.3 Curriculum Development.

The Head referenced her report with regard to the secure knowledge of science. In addition to the plans already shared, she informed Governors that from September the school would be working with UCL and STEM undergraduates would be coming into school to mentor children. Each undergraduate would act as a mentor to two children, with a focus on encouraging some quieter girls in science.

4.4 Safeguarding

The school awaits the written report back from Camden's Rhian Swain on her safeguarding inspection. There were some useful 'even better ifs', but overall it was a good inspection with Rhian noting that statutory requirements were embedded within an environment of really knowing children and families. The Chair congratulated the school on the positive inspection.

4.4 Finance

The Head summarised the current position as outlined in her report. She noted that there was concern in the borough about the declining birth rate and the impact of this over time. Camden has the second lowest birth rate in the UK.

ACTION The Head to share the Camden report on pupil numbers.

The meeting then focussed on discussions around moving ahead with fundraising and how best to develop and communicate the strategy for doing so.

4.5 Budget discussions included-

- The current position with regard to income from Teaching School, the PTA commitment in giving £25k pa to the school, the Music Fund of £35k and £90k in School Fund.
- Governors questioned if there was a sense of how much would be raised. The prevailing view was that this was unknown until fundraising commenced.
- The Head said that the school had managed money well over time and would continue to manage it well. As a small successful school there was little turnover in teaching staff and there was a cost associated with experienced teachers.
- There needed to be a clear message that the school was spending above its means and therefore needed to 'tighten belts'.
- The school was looking for funds for enrichment as opposed to financing the statutory requirements. The current rich offer of music, art and sport were not statutory.
- With regard to donations, there should be the facility to make one-off donations as well as recurrent ones. Families of Year 6 leavers' should be informed on how to make a donation should they wish to do so.
- The school is hosting a parents' meeting to inform and discuss the school's financial position. The Head wanted to stress that this meeting should not be parents simply passing over suggestions, but getting involved in delivering their proposals.
- Increasing awareness – some parents would be unaware that the school has any financial concerns. Vicky Starmer said that some parents think that the school has a lot of money given the demographic and the apparent good resourcing.
- Vicky Starmer asked whether the school could work with other local schools regarding the funding crisis. The Head said that head teachers talk together about funding regularly. As Camden had historically been so well funded, the shift in funding was now marked, but most schools were working independently on fundraising. There were shared discussion on restructuring etc., but not on sharing funds. The Chair noted that Church schools had their own network. Natalie Stevenson said that all schools were facing a funding issue, but that each was on a different place in the trajectory in this. There was some concern expressed about creating a gap between the school and other schools with a less affluent demographic.
- Concern over possible impact on PTA fundraising.
- Consideration on whether there should be a strategic plan to 'break into' the school's other funds e.g. music.
- Tim Peake said that there needed to be a change of perception around the wealth of the school and that the request for funds were not for adhoc small projects but for real need.
- Christophe Frerebeau asked whether a target should be shared with parents as this incentivises donations.
- The school intend to set up a donation-processing platform to take donations online under a branded link. There should be a clear communication within this of how to make a recurring donation or a one off payment.
- Parental communication must make it clear that the school would not know who had made the donation.
- The PPC committee would review draft communication to parents.
- Discussion around how to communicate the funding need. Matthew Lawrence said that the school should raise the need and then swiftly have a mechanism in place to meet the need. It was better to frame sensitively and then move promptly ahead rather than edging around the subject. There should be a clear setting out of the need backed up by a plan. Presentation was key.
- Vicky Starmer stressed that it should be clear that the funds were not for topping up the state budget for core curriculum and services. The Chair said that the school could not set a budget that did that.

- The Chair summarised that the Governors had agreed that there was a budget deficit that needed to be addressed. There needed to be a communication with parents so that they gained an understanding of the schools current position. Requests for money from parents would be framed with an understanding that the money was for enrichment and not to supplement core funding. The school would look at various channels for donations and a strategy needed to be put in place in time to harvest potential donations from Year 6 leavers in July. The Chair asked Governors to vote to proceed with this plan and they concurred. A further planning meeting date was set on 6pm 24th April.

The Chair suggested that the Resources Committee needed an additional Governor to join. Christophe Frèrebeau agreed to join the committee.

There was no AOB.

The meeting ended at 8:30pm.

ADVOCATES

Boys	Tim Peake and Christophe Frèrebeau
EAL (English as an additional language)	Boris Telyatnikov
Girls	Shanti Fricker
High achievers	Rosie Thomson and Mark Pemberton
LAC (Looked After/ previously Looked After children)	Flora Cornish
Prior lower attainers	VACANCY
Mental Health Advocate	Flora Cornish
Pupil Premium	Vicky Starmer
Summer born	Matthew Lawrence
SEND (special educational needs and disability)	Rifca Le Dieu