**Homerton Early Years Centre**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Tuesday 5th December 2017 at 7.00pm at Homerton Early Years Centre**

**Present**

Rinchen Ato, Kay Blayney (from 7.35pm), Sophie Bryce, Kate Daenke, Roger Lilley (from 7.30pm),

Julia Margretts, Ken Ong, Mick Patel, Alex Pearson, Mitali Peckham and Sue Smith

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

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|  |  | **Action** |
| **1.** | **Welcome and Apologies for Absence** |  |
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|  | Everyone welcomed Rinchen Ato to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Ross Sargent and Shelly Thake. |  |
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| **2.** | **Declarations of Interest** |  |
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|  | There were no declarations of interest. |  |
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| **3.** | **Minutes of 21st September 2017** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 21st September 2017 were approved as a correct record. |  |
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| **4.** | **Matters Arising from the Minutes of 21st September 2017** |  |
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| **a)** | **Governor training** – Julia, Alex and Gwyneth were seeking to arrange a short training session on the Ofsted framework and Ofsted expectations of Governors at the start of the next Governing Body meeting on 8th February 2018. The session would address issues raised by Ofsted during Homerton’s last inspection. Possible facilitators for the session included a local authority Education adviser or Kay Dimelow, the recently retired Head of Huntingdon Nursery. | **Julia/Alex/**  **Gwyneth** |
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| **b)** | **Communication with parents** – Alex reported that parents now received a weekly e-mail bulletin in addition to the longer half-termly newsletter. The bulletin appeared to be working well, especially to remind parents of dates and to request particular resources for current projects. |  |
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| **c)** | **Interpretation of nursery school data** – Marisol had not been able to help with the interpretation and visual presentation of nursery school data. However, through the recent Keeping in Touch visit, it had been arranged for a local authority adviser to meet Alex and Mitali to help with this. She would be coming to Homerton the following week. |  |
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| **d)** | **Banner** – No arrangements had yet been confirmed for displaying a banner advertising Homerton’s ‘excellent’ status and the availability of places. However, Governors noted that the nursery would be full from January and suggested that it might no longer be needed. |  |
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| **5.** | **Governor Appointment** |  |
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|  | Governors were reminded that a parent governor election had been run at the beginning of term. No candidates had come forward at that time, but Rinchen Ato had since volunteered. It was agreed unanimously |  |
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|  | To appoint Rinchen Ato as a parent governor. |  |
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|  | Julia led Governors in welcoming Rinchen to the Governing Body. Rinchen noted that she would not be able to attend some evening meetings, because of childcare commitments, or could sometimes arrive late. Governors noted that her contributions would nonetheless be valuable. Julia reminded Governors that the Governors’ expenses policy included babysitting fees to enable Governors to attend meetings. |  |
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| **6.** | **Committee Membership** |  |
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|  | Governors reviewed Committee membership in the context of Rinchen’s appointment. It was agreed unanimously |  |
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|  | To appoint Rinchen Ato to the Resources Committee. |  |
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| **7.** | **Dates of Committee Meetings for 2017/18** |  |
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|  | Governors received an updated schedule of Committee meeting dates for 2017/18. It was confirmed that all Governing Body meetings would start at 7.00pm. |  |
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| **8.** | **Governors’ Attendance at Training Events** |  |
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|  | Governors were asked to let Gwyneth know of training events they had attended. Julia encouraged new Governors to attend the induction session run by the County Council. She also agreed to discuss mentoring with Rinchen. | **Julia/**  **Rinchen** |
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| **9.** | **Headteacher’s Report** |  |
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|  | Alex briefed Governors on the following issues: |  |
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| **a)** | **Pupil numbers** – There were currently 78 children in the nursery and 47 in the Nest. The nursery was forecast to be full in January with all classes at 24, with the exception of South. Options for South including capping at 20, using the two members of staff currently in the room; or employing an additional teaching assistant and increasing the number of places to 24. All other classes had three members of staff. |  |
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|  | Governors noted that Homerton received £1,000 per child per term, so if all four extra places in South were filled for both the spring and summer terms, this would bring in an additional £8,000, just about achieving breakeven. If any places were vacant, a loss would result. Governors noted that it was stretching for staff to run South with only two people and whilst some of the new children joining in January were already known to Homerton, others were not and hence their possible levels of need were not known either. Governors also noted that in the spring term the two teacher trainees currently at Homerton would be on placements elsewhere, reducing flexibility of staff cover options. |  |
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|  | Following discussion, Governors decided to ask to Alex and Sue to determine whether an additional teaching assistant should be brought in, taking into account the welfare of children and staff as well as financial considerations. | **Alex/Sue** |
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|  | In response to a question, Alex noted that childcare was available on Wednesday afternoons for children taking their two and a half days at the beginning of the week. New staff were currently being settled in, but places would be available and would be an additional source of income for the Centre. |  |
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|  | [Roger arrived at 7.30pm.] |  |
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| **b)** | **Nursery offer for 2018/19** – A paper setting out three options for the nursery offer for 2018/19 had been circulated with the agenda. The options were: |  |
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|  | 1. As at present, one 30-hour class with 24 places; two 15-hour classes of two and a half days with 24 places in each; and one morning 15-hour class with 24 places. This option offered greatest flexibility by parents and was understood |  |
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|  | 1. Two 30-hour classes and one morning class. It was uncertain whether this many 30-hour places would be filled. No requests for 30-hour places had been turned down in September, although about five had been turned down since |  |
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|  | 1. Two 30-hour classes and two two and a half day classes. This option would place great pressure on lunch provision and would also remove any ‘free’ 15-hour option. |  |
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|  | Governors noted that a decision was needed soon to enable admissions for 2018/19 to begin. |  |
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|  | Governors asked whether it might be possible to use spaces across both two and a half day options to create additional 30-hour places. Admissions to the two and a half day sessions could be balanced to maximise the number of additional 30-hour spaces available. It was accepted that this could increase income and might in future be a financial necessity, but a number of reservations were also expressed. Limiting parents’ choices about available sessions could result in some children going elsewhere; and combining two and a half day and 30-hour children would mean a move away from class groups, which were key to Homerton’s success: children bonded closely with their cohort and developed positive group dynamics, supporting PSED goals. |  |
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|  | Following discussion, it was agreed that Alex would survey Nest parents in January to establish what sessions they would be looking for in the nursery. Governors’ inclination was to continue with Option 1 for another year, but it was accepted that business considerations needed to be kept in mind. | **Alex** |
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|  | [Kay arrived at 7.35pm.] |  |
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| **c)** | **Staffing** – The Centre had been affected by staff sickness for two weeks, but the situation was now improving. Alex led Governors in thanking the two teacher trainees for their help in covering absences during this period. Tamsin Fry, a teaching assistant in East Room, would be going on maternity leave shortly. Arrangements had been made for her cover, including the return of two former employees on a part-time basis. |  |
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| **d)** | **Visitors** – PGCE students from the Faculty of Education had visited in November. The six nursery schools in Cambridgeshire were working towards a shared charging policy for visitors. |  |
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| **e)** | **Keeping in Touch (KIT) visit** – The local authority KIT visit had taken place but the report had not yet been received. Feedback during the learning walk had been that the practice observed was ‘outstanding’. Some concern had been expressed about the uncertainty over long-term leadership of the Centre and a question had also been asked about whether Governor training was in hand, as discussed under Minute 4 a) above. Suggestions had been made about how to improve the Centre Development Plan by adding an extra page explaining how things would be done, not just what. The updated version would be brought to Governors in due course. Overall, the visit had been very helpful. The SEF had also been reviewed and suggestions made for its simplification. Kay offered to help with this. | **Alex**  **Alex/Kay** |
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| **f)** | **Contact with MPs –** Daniel Zeichner MP wouldbe visiting Homerton on 6th December 2017, to meet a child who had come runner-up in his Christmas card competition. Governors asked Alex to seek positive coverage for Homerton arising from this visit, possibly in the Cambridge Independent as well as the Cambridge News. One of Daniel Zeichner’s assistants, Antony Carpen, had attended Homerton as a child and might be a useful contact. Heidi Allen MP had been invited to attend the Story Trail on 6th December 2017 but would not be available. | **Alex** |
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| **g)** | **Involving parents** – The parents’ evening and talk on play had gone well. The parents’ social organised by parent governors had been less successful, with only one couple attending. Governors discussed other ways of involving parents, such as more informal daytime gatherings with children as well, at Cheeky Monkeys or in the park in good weather. Meeting after drop-off for coffee might be a possibility, either at Balzano’s or by engaging a coffee van to stop at Homerton on a regular basis. A coffee vendor might be willing to pay Homerton a small pitch fee. Governors also discussed how social media platforms such as Whatsapp could be used to involve parents. Rinchen agreed to work with other Governors and parents to investigate these ideas. | **Rinchen/**  **Alex** |
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| **h)** | **Events** –The Story Trail with past and present staff would be taking place on 6th December 2017. A writing workshop led by Helen Bradford and Felicity Higginson had been booked for February. |  |
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| **i)** | **Ofsted publication** –Ofsted had just published its ‘Bold Beginnings’ report, looking at how reading, writing and maths were taught in Reception, the second year of the EYFS, and how well children were prepared in Reception for the transition to Year 1. The report had implications for the first year of the EYFS, as delivered by nursery schools such as Homerton. |  |
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| **j)** | **Funding** –The County Council had confirmed its position on the 30 hours, that provision would continue. The All Party Parliamentary Group was emphasising that funding would come increasingly through the Strategic School Improvement Fund and local Improvement Boards. |  |
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| **k)** | **Teaching School** – The Teaching School had submitted a number of bids, two on literacy, one on SEN, jointly with the local authority, and one on behaviour. Income from successful bids would be shared by the six nursery schools in Cambridgeshire working collaboratively. |  |
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| **l)** | **Centre Development Plan** – The RAG rating had been updated. Progress for most actions was as would be expected at this stage in the year. A focus on Maths would begin next term, together with more work on EAL. |  |
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| **m)** | **Volunteers** - Homerton was benefiting from a good level of volunteering, with help being given for the Forest School, the allotment and at lunchtimes. |  |
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| **n)** | **Monitoring of the 30-hours class** – Mitali updated Governors on recent monitoring of the 30-hours class. Two main issues had been considered, staffing and education. In terms of staffing, four staff were working with the class, only one of whom was full-time. This meant that it was not possible for individual children to have key workers. However, handover arrangements between staff were working well and parents also seemed happy with the system. Mitali had also managed to arrange PPA time with the TAs on a weekly basis, which was working well. |  |
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|  | In terms of education, staff were mindful that the children were spending a long time in the room each week and the impact of this was starting to be felt, in the afternoons especially. Steps were being taken to address this, with a half-hour of garden time for all children being introduced after lunch, followed by some quiet time. Continuous provision in the classroom was being changed more frequently. Alternative locations were being used in the afternoon when possible, such as the Rainbow Room and the Orchard. |  |
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|  | Governors thanked Mitali and the team for coming together from different parts of the Centre and working together effectively to deliver the new offer. |  |
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| **10.** | **Key Issues from Curriculum Committee** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the meetings of the Curriculum Committee held on 16th October 2017 and 20th November 2017 were received. Governors discussed the following points: |  |
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|  | * Kay was thanked for agreeing to become the Committee Chair. Julia was supporting Kay’s induction and would be helping her to plan some visits. | **Julia/Kay** |
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|  | * Sophie had finalised her report on narrative. Photos would be added and it would be circulated in time for the next meeting. | **Sophie** |
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|  | * The Committee was planning to review the distribution of policies with Alex with a view to condensing them where possible. | **Kay/Alex** |
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|  | * Mitali was reviewing the apps available to children on the nursery iPads and was in touch with Julian Grenier with a view to improving them. Once this work was complete, details would be shared with parents. | **Mitali** |
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| **11.** | **Key Issues from the Teaching School** |  |
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|  | Kay reported that the Teaching School had recently received the second phase of its first Ofsted inspection, now that the initial intake of ITT students had started work. Kay and some of the nursery school Heads had had a three-hour meeting with the inspector. There had been a lot of emphasis on the Ofsted ‘Bold Beginnings’ report and on literacy and mathematics in the early years, with the ethos of learning through play seemingly being eroded. The Teaching School had been assessed as ‘good’ but not as ‘outstanding’, possibly because of this issue. |  |
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|  | The Teaching School was increasingly liaising with other local Teaching Schools delivering on primary and secondary education and less with CREC, the School’s initial partner based in Birmingham. |  |
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|  | ITT recruitment for 2018/19 was not going well, with only two applications received to date. Governors noted that close liaison with other local Teaching Schools could help to improve recruitment: CEYTS needed their marketing and reach and the partners would benefit from the CEYTS early years expertise. Ultimately it might be possible for courses to be accredited by local partners or possibly by CEYTS, although achieving this would cost time and money. |  |
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|  | Arising from this discussion, Governors commented that the lack of part-time courses continued to be an obstacle for people wishing to enter teaching. It was suggested that this could be something for the Teaching School to consider. |  |
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| **12.** | **Safeguarding** – no issues to report. |  |
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| **13.** | **Future of the Children’s Centre** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the meeting of the Children’s Centre Joint Committee held on 8th September 2017 were received. Governors noted that there had also been meetings of the Joint Committee on 11th October 2017 and 29th November 2017. Julia updated Governors on developments relating to the Children’s Centre. |  |
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|  | The County Council had met on 17th October 2017 and had approved the proposals to reduce the number of Children’s Centres in Cambridgeshire. The proposals included the closure of the South Cambridge Children’s Centre at Homerton and Fawcett. |  |
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|  | Since the decision, a number of meetings with the local authority had taken place to consider what future provision there should be locally. The higher levels of need in the Trumpington area were recognised and so a Child and Family Zone would be based at Fawcett. Some services could continue to be delivered from Homerton, including midwifery and ESOL. It was hoped to keep Messy Play going, possibly as a parent-run group. Friday Friends could be turned into a music group. The emphasis would be on activities that children were less likely to do at home. |  |
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|  | Options for accessing charitable funding such as Children in Need and Lottery money were being explored. Charitable status was needed to submit bids to these funds; elsewhere this had been achieved by having a Parent Teacher Association registered as a charity. It was proposed to discuss this possibility with parent governors. Governors accepted this idea, but noted that applications to charities such as Comic Relief could be prescriptive and time-consuming. | **Julia/Alex/**  **Sue/Parent**  **Governors** |
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|  | Governors asked whether there might be an option to generate income to fund groups by hiring out rooms at Homerton to private businesses. Alex noted that this might be an option during the evening, but that there was little space available during the day. |  |
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|  | Local authority funding for the Children’s Centre would continue until April. Staff were ensuring that this would be spent appropriately, for example on blinds and on work to the garden at Fawcett. Funding was also being made available to staff affected by the changes for training to enable them to ‘skill up’ to meet possible new challenges. |  |
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|  | In terms of impact on the rest of the Centre, the Centre’s budget would decrease by £30,000 next year and one office was likely to be vacated. |  |
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|  | Julia confirmed that she would keep Governors up to date as the situation developed. | **Julia** |
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|  | *[This discussion is covered in more detail in the confidential version of the minutes.]* |  |
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| **14.** | **Key Issues from Resources Committee** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the meetings of the Resources Committee held on 10th October 2017 and 13th November 2017 were received. Governors discussed the following issues arising from these meetings: |  |
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| **a)** | **Appointment of a new Head of Centre** – [Alex left the room for this item.] Julia reported that a working group including herself, Alex, Roger and Shelly had been reviewing options for the future leadership of the Centre. She outlined the course of action now proposed. |  |
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|  | Governors agreed that work to implement the changes to the Head of Centre and Assistant Head posts should proceed as proposed. |  |
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|  | *[This discussion is covered in more detail in the confidential version of the minutes.]* |  |
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| **b)** | **Budget monitoring** – Sue presented the budgetary control report for October 2017, noting that: |  |
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|  | * Some adjustments between funds were needed but overall, expenditure was as anticipated for this point in the year |  |
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|  | * A carry forward of £25-30,000 was forecast for the year-end |  |
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|  | * Future years were more uncertain. The Centre would receive £30,000 less next year because of the changes to the Children’s Centre. Homerton had been preparing for this, but it would still make a difference. 2019/20 would be the last year of the additional lump sum and higher hourly rate for maintained nursery schools and some uncertainty had been expressed over the lump sum for 2018/19 |  |
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|  | * Sue and Janet Jallow, the local authority financial adviser, would be meeting in January, but even the situation at the local authority was uncertain following the disbanding of the Schools Finance team. |  |
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|  | Julia noted that the APPG was keen to continue lobbying on the future funding of nursery schools. The Guardian had recently visited Homerton in preparation for an article in the Christmas Education section on the threats faced by nursery schools. |  |
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| **15.** | **Policy Review: Grievance Procedure** |  |
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|  | The proposed Grievance Procedure had been circulated with the agenda. Governors noted that the Procedure was issued and supported by EPM and that there were no changes from the version previously agreed. It was agreed unanimously |  |
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|  | To endorse the Grievance Procedure. |  |
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| **16.** | **Any Other Urgent Matters** |  |
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| **a)** | **E-mail from Felicity Higginson** –Mitali drew Governors’ attention to an e-mail sent by Felicity Higginson, one of the teachers, to Julia and herself, raising a number of concerns about the transition of children from the Nest to East Blue in January. Seven children would be moving up, who had just turned three. Felicity was proposing that for a temporary period, these children be collected at 2.45pm, not 3.45pm as for other children. She had set out a number of reasons for this proposal: |  |
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|  | * The children would have a shorter settling-in period than those who had started in September |  |
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|  | * Being younger, they would tire more quickly |  |
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|  | * They would be in a larger space with a lower adult to child ratio than they were used to |  |
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|  | * Felicity’s staff covered lunch on Thursday and Friday, leaving less time for tidying up from the morning and preparing for the afternoon and reducing her own lunch break |  |
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|  | * There were only two adults in the room from 3.00pm on Thursday and Friday |  |
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|  | * There were already high levels of SEN and EAL in East Blue |  |
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|  | * The extra support that the settling children would need would mean less provision for the older children already in the room. |  |
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|  | Julia reported that she had already discussed the e-mail with Felicity. Governors recognised Felicity’s concerns and her commendable aim of ensuring high quality provision, but expressed concern that: |  |
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|  | * Having two different regimes for children in the same class would be very disruptive |  |
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|  | * Parents of children whose session ended at 2.45pm would not be charged for the lunch hour. Offering this option only to children moving up in January would not be fair to parents whose children had moved up in September and who had been offered only the option of a session ending at 3.45pm with a chargeable lunch hour |  |
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|  | * Parents had the option of collecting earlier than 3.45pm if they wished, and some did, to fit in with school pick-up; but they should not actively be encouraged not to make use of provision to which they were entitled and for part of which they had paid for |  |
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|  | * The whole system, including the chargeable lunch hour, would be reviewed at the end of the year, when the 30 hours offer would have been running for a year. |  |
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|  | Governors suggested that it might help to advertise for parent volunteers to come in at the end of the day, identifying specific activities that they could help with such as reading books to children or singing with them. | **Alex** |
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|  | Arising from this discussion, some Governors expressed concern about the use of television in the nursery, typically as a form of quiet time after lunch or when children were tired at the end of the day. The use of television in holiday club was also raised. It was agreed that this would be discussed further. | **Alex/**  **Parent Governors** |
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|  | Julia agreed to e-mail Felicity with a response following the Governors’ discussion. | **Julia** |
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| **17.** | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
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|  | The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Thursday 8th February 2018, starting at **7.00pm.** |  |
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|  | The meeting ended at 9.20pm. |  |