

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Thursday 5th December 2019 at 7.00pm at

Homerton Early Years Centre

Present

Kate Daenke, Eirini Gkouskou, Roger Lilley, Ken Ong (Chair), Mick Patel, Alex Pearson (Head), Surabhi Singh and Sue Smith

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

| | Action |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the new governors. Apologies for absence were received from Rinchen Ato, Kay Blayney, Isa Garcia Crestani, Sam Garyali, Tandy Harrison and Mitali Peckham.</p> | |
| <p>2. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p> | |
| <p>3. Minutes of 23rd September 2019</p> <p>The open and confidential minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 23rd September 2019 were approved as correct records.</p> | |
| <p>4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 23rd September 2019</p> <p>a) Exit interviews – Roger reported that Resources Committee had endorsed the principle of exit interviews for outgoing members of staff and agreed to adopt the EPM exit interview procedure.</p> <p>b) Governor skills audit – A summary of the skills audit recently completed by Governors had been circulated with the agenda. The purpose of the audit had been to identify any skills gaps to inform Governor recruitment. It had been encouraging to find that even prior to the recent recruitment process, no major gaps had been identified.</p> | |
| <p>5. Governor appointments</p> <p>It was agreed unanimously to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appoint Surabhi Singh as a co-opted Governor• Note the appointment of Isa Garcia Crestani and Eirini Gkouskou as parent Governors. <p>Alex would lead on the induction of the new Governors. Gwyneth would notify the local authority of their appointment and would ensure that the new Governors received an invitation to a local authority induction session.</p> <p>Ken noted that Homerton's website included a brief statement from each Governor, setting out their connection to Homerton and their relevant skills and expertise. Gwyneth agreed to draft statements for each of the new Governors, based on the statements they had submitted as part of the recent recruitment process. She would check these with the individual Governors before adding them to the website.</p> <p>The specific role of parent Governors in providing a link between the Governing Body and parents was discussed. It was noted that in the past, parent Governors had run</p> | <p>Alex</p> <p>Gwyneth</p> <p>Gwyneth/ Eirini/Isa/ Surabhi</p> |

some fundraising activities but that over time responsibility for some of these, such as cake sales, had been taken on by staff. Part of the challenge was that some parents and parent Governors were with Homerton for only one year. Ken invited the new Governors to consider whether they might be able to lead fundraising or social activities. Kate agreed to arrange a meeting to talk about this further.

Eirini/Isa/
Surabhi

Kate

6. Committee Memberships

It was agreed unanimously to appoint:

- Eirini Gkouskou to the Curriculum Committee
- Isa Garcia Crestani and Surabhi Singh to the Resources Committee.

Surabhi also expressed interest in contributing on safeguarding and equality issues, drawing on her professional experience.

Ken/
Surabhi

7. Headteacher's Report

Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues:

- Children** – Spaces in South were being filled by moving children up from The Nest and by offering the remaining places to families on the waiting list. The Nest would be backfilled; it was expected that both South and The Nest would be full from January.
- Staffing** – Two adverts had been run for a Nest leader, but no applications had been received. Alex had spoken to colleagues at Queen Emma's and at Colleges who were also finding it difficult to recruit staff for their 2 year old rooms. Following discussion at Resources Committee, it had been agreed to advertise for a teacher who would lead The Nest and would also work in the nursery school.

Another member of staff had left The Nest, to take up a job closer to home. Her post was being covered by existing members of staff working additional hours.

One lunchtime supervisor had left, to take on additional childminding; three new lunchtime supervisors had been recruited.

Staff sickness had made the previous week challenging, especially as there had also been a number of visitors to the Centre.

- Staff survey** – This was currently running, with 22 of a possible 38 responses received to date.
- Ofsted readiness** – Curriculum Committee had organised a special meeting on Ofsted readiness, to which all Governors had been invited. Following the meeting, a useful aide memoire had been prepared, which set out evidence of how Homerton was meeting Ofsted objectives. Alex confirmed that the document circulated with the agenda was the most recent version. Tandy had also recently circulated further useful documents on Governors' safeguarding responsibilities, equalities and use of the Early Years Pupil Premium.
- Equalities** – New Equalities Objectives and the Early Years Equality Plan for 2019-21 had been circulated with the agenda. Alex explained that the Objectives set out what Homerton was going to do 2019-21 and the Plan how, when and by whom these objectives would be done. In response to questions, Alex explained that the Objectives had been reduced and simplified, following advice from Louise Crook, who had previously worked as a local authority's Equalities adviser. The Plan had also been updated and rolled forward. This work had been done in consultation with staff, who

had particularly highlighted the need to raise awareness of their own and others' prejudices; and to build confidence to deal with issues as they arose.

Governors approved both documents and noted that they would be added to the website.

Governors noted that one of the proposed actions was to celebrate a different language each half-term, based on those most represented in the Centre: Chinese, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Hindi and Polish; the sign language Makaton would also be included. Celebratory activities could include cooking and sharing stories. Governors were invited to contribute if they wished.

All
Governors

Governors noted that Kate had recently taken on the role of Lead Governor for Equal Opportunities. The Equality and Diversity Policy was next due for review in May 2020; this would be done by staff with the involvement of Kate and Curriculum Committee.

- f) **Centre Development Plan** – The updated Centre Development Plan had been circulated with the agenda. Actions that were underway were highlighted in yellow and those that were complete were highlighted in green.
- g) **IT equipment** – New iPads and new computers had been purchased, as Windows 7 would not be supported after January 2020.
- h) **Data** – Baseline assessments had now been completed for all children. Staff were being supported to review data on computers, not paper.

Data showed that the current cohort of children at Homerton included even higher numbers of children with English as an additional language than in previous years: 47 out of 77 in the nursery school and 16 out of 51 in the Nest.

Data had been received for the cohort of children leaving Homerton in 2018, showing how they had performed against the Early Learning Goals at the end of their Reception year. The data showed that across all areas, the achievement of Homerton children exceeded both national levels and that of children who had been at other Cambridgeshire maintained nursery schools. Governors commended this evidence of Homerton's valuable input.

- i) **Christmas events** – The raffle held the previous day had raised £448. A cake stall had also been organised. Events before the end of term would include a story trail, a play put on at Homerton by Morley children, a visit from Father Christmas and Christmas parties.
- j) **Pond** – Work on the pond had been completed and staff and families were pleased with the result.
- k) **National and local update** – Government funding for maintained nursery schools had been confirmed to July 2021, with positive indications that it could continue after this date. Locally, a meeting set for 13th November 2019 between the local authority and maintained nursery school Chairs and Heads had been postponed. A new date had not yet been arranged.

8. Update from Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the following Curriculum Committee meetings were received:

- 9th October 2019
- 4th November 2019 (Ofsted readiness meeting to which all Governors were invited)
- 20th November 2019 (informal meeting as not quorate)

The Supporting Vulnerable Children Guidance was approved by the Governing Body.

Alex

Governors noted that the Curriculum Committee's main focus this term had been on Ofsted readiness and on equalities, as discussed above. Governors also noted that:

- Kay and Kate would be arranging a walk next term as part of the Committee's review of the Expressive and Creative Arts policy.
- It was proposed to set up a small working group to review the website, including Alex, Mitali, Sue, Rinchen and Isa if interested. Other governors were also invited to contribute their views, particularly on whether the website provided the information families were looking for when considering nurseries.

Governors discussed a range of wider issues relating to the promotion of Homerton.

- Homerton was a unique setting because of its:
 - Teaching and culture
 - Established and experienced staff
 - Physical environment, including the outside space, its proximity to the Old Orchard and park and its removal from the road and traffic
 - 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating, which had been retained over many years.

It was essential to convey this uniqueness via the website and by other means.

Governors suggested that:

- The website could include promotional video, for example showing Homerton's outside space through the changing seasons
- Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter could be used to promote Homerton:
 - Tweets could be informal news and updates. It would be important to ensure formal consent was in place if children's photos were shared; otherwise pictures could be general, for example of artwork or facilities
 - Homerton's Twitter account could be linked to other relevant accounts, bringing awareness of the Centre to a wider audience. Linking to Cambridgeshire Live or inviting a reporter from Cambridgeshire Live to write an article on Homerton could be especially useful
 - Resources Committee had also discussed the possible use of Twitter as a means of contacting parents in an emergency, especially if the site had to be vacated and more conventional means such as e-mail and landline were not available.

It was suggested that Alex find out whether parents would be interested in receiving information via Twitter. Sue noted that she had been discussing Homerton's possible use of Twitter and other social media with the local authority IT support officer. Regular tweets would be an additional responsibility for staff, although not necessarily onerous once set up if limited to one or two a week, including the weekly newsletter.

Alex

- It might be possible to promote Homerton via the Families Cambridgeshire magazine, which was distributed to a range of settings including GPs' surgeries.

- Morley was using the Classlist app as a way of enabling parents to contact each other, without one person having to maintain everyone's personal details. At Morley this was used primarily for fundraising and social activities, not for communication by the school. Kate offered to find out more about the school's involvement and how the app was administered.
- The new YMCA Childcare Blinco Grove was due to open in January 2020, sited at the former Morley early years base. Its proximity to the primary school and its provision for babies meant that it was likely to be competition to Homerton in future, making it even more important for Homerton to promote its unique offer.

Kate

9. Key Issues from the Teaching School

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting to enable Kay to give the update.

10. Safeguarding

The updated Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy was approved by the Governing Body and signed by Ken.

Alex

11. Update from Resources Committee

The minutes of the meetings of the Resources Committee held on 3rd October 2019 and 28th November 2019 were received. Roger reported that the main issues discussed by the Committee had been:

- Ongoing discussions with the local authority about the future of maintained nursery schools in Cambridgeshire. Roger reminded Governors that with Government funding continuing until at least July 2021, Homerton's position remained relatively robust.
- Staffing strategy, including recruitment to the vacant Nest leader position. The Committee had also discussed whether to increase the number of 30-hour places to be offered next year, possibly by increasing the South morning session to a full day. Since July, Homerton had received a number of requests for 30-hour provision that it had been unable to fulfil.
- Whether Homerton could offer breakfast, opening at 8.00am or 8.15am. Alex suggested that this could be possible with the agreement of existing staff. *Governors welcomed this suggestion, commenting that Homerton's current opening hours could be an obstacle to working parents who needed childcare at the beginning and end of the day. Enabling parents to drop off at 8.00am would help considerably. It was suggested that remaining open later than 5.45pm could also help to make Homerton more competitive.* Alex suggested that extending the end of the day could be harder to achieve with existing staff. It was agreed that in the first instance, she would consult with staff about the possibility of opening from 8.00am.
- The Critical Incident Policy, which had been updated with key members of staff and Governors
- The Code of Conduct for All Adults

Alex

The Resources Committee was recommending these two documents for approval. Both were agreed unanimously by the Governing Body.

Alex

The policy on admissions to Owlets had also been circulated with the agenda. Governors noted that this had not been considered by Resources Committee. No changes had been made to the version previously agreed, but the policy required annual review. Sue advised that there was currently no pressure on places in Owlets. However, demand could vary considerably from year to year and was difficult to gauge in advance.

It was agreed unanimously to endorse the policy on admissions to Owlets.

Alex

It was agreed that the next Resources Committee meeting would be held on Thursday 30th January 2020 at 1.30pm. Roger would send an e-mail to all Committee members.

Roger

12. Budget Monitoring Report

The budget monitoring report for the end of October 2019 was received. Roger noted that Resources had considered a more detailed version. In summary, Homerton's financial position was healthy, with the Centre on track to achieve a balanced budget at year-end and to maintain the previous year's carry forward.

Governors asked whether it would be possible for the local authority to use one nursery school's carry forward to support the financial position of another. This was not thought to be possible without the Governing Body's consent. At Homerton, the carry forward would enable the Centre to operate for a further year, should funding from central Government be discontinued. Given the uncertainty, it was considered advisable to conserve the carry forward. Small amounts had been spent in-year to revamp the astroturf, pond and carpets and further work was planned to install additional sinks in the Nest, to paint the ceiling in the library and to clean the external glass cover.

Governors noted that income to date from the local authority was in line with the planned high occupancy rate. However, this strong position could be weakened over time with the opening of the new YMCA provision at Blinco Grove.

13. Any Other Urgent Matters – none.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Tuesday 12th February 2020 at 7.00pm.

The meeting ended at 8.40pm.