

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Wednesday 12th February 2020 at 7.00pm at Homerton Early Years Centre

Present

Rinchen Ato (from 7.35pm), Kay Blayney, Isa Garcia Crestani, Kate Daenke, Sam Garyali, Tandy Harrison (until 9.00pm), Ken Ong (Chair), Mick Patel, Alex Pearson (Head), Mitali Peckham and Surabhi Singh
Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

- | | Action |
|--|--|
| 1. Welcome and apologies for absence | |
| Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Eirini Gkouskou, Roger Lilley and Sue Smith. | |
| 2. Declarations of interest | |
| There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 3. Minutes of 5th December 2019 | |
| The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 5 th December 2019 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments: | Gwyneth |
| Page 3, Minute 7 e), Equalities: 'The Equality and Diversity Policy was next due for review in May 2020; this would be done <u>by staff with the involvement of Kate and through Curriculum Committee</u> '. | |
| Page 5, Minute 11, Update from Resources Committee: 'It was suggested that remaining open later than 4.45pm, for example until 6.00pm, <u>5.45pm</u> could also help to make Homerton more competitive'. | |
| 4. Matters arising from the minutes of 5th December 2019 | |
| a) Induction of new governors – This was progressing well. It was noted that: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isa and possibly Surabhi would complete induction training online, as it was not practical for them to attend the local authority's induction training.• Surabhi was liaising with Sue to complete her DBS check.• Gwyneth would send the skills audit to the new Governors and add their responses to those previously collated, to give a full picture of the Governing Body's capabilities.• The summary of Governors' skills and experience on the website had been updated to include statements from the new Governors. | Isa/
Surabhi
Surabhi
Gwyneth/
Eirini/Isa/
Surabhi |
| b) Parent governors – Some of the parent governors had met informally. Their discussion had focussed mainly on engaging parents and promoting Homerton. Governors discussed the scope to involve the wider community in life at Homerton, for example by inviting friends and family to events such as the international lunch. | |
| Kay suggested that Homerton liaise with the community centre at St John's, especially as their Chatty Caterpillars session was not well attended. Governors agreed to do this but emphasised the importance of holding Messy Play at Homerton, to bring new families into the Centre and as an introduction for children who would be joining the Nest or nursery. | Kate/Isa |

It was agreed that the parent governors would meet again, possibly one evening, and that their discussion would include fundraising.

**Kate/All
parent
governors**

5. Headteacher's report

Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues:

- a) **Children** – The Centre was virtually full. Two children had recently left Homerton, one to move to Switzerland and one because the birth of a new sibling made it difficult for them to attend.

Information on children with SEND, children with EAL and children eligible for the EYPP had been circulated with the agenda. Governors noted that there were currently 10 children on the SEND register. Alex confirmed that this was a typical number, but noted that the current cohort had relatively high levels of need. Four children were expected to have Education, Health and Care Plans in place by the end of the school year. EHCPs helped to ensure that these children received appropriate funding and support both in the nursery and as they moved into Reception.

- b) **Places for 2020/21** – Places for next year were currently being offered for both the nursery and Nest. Ten more nursery places were being offered this year than at the same point last year, which was positive. Governors noted that only 21 families had requested 30 hours, compared with 34 last year. 21 were wanting the morning class in South, compared with only 7 last year. This pattern of requests meant that the idea of converting South into a 30-hour class would not be progressed at present.

- c) **Events** – Recent events include celebrations of the Chinese New Year; a cake sale that had raised £150; and a book swap that had raised £161, which would be used to buy a world musical instrument set. Forthcoming events including the living eggs and the Eggstravaganza. All 3 year olds would have a dental health check on 1st April 2020, arranged by Public Health England.

- d) **Staffing** – Jacqui Sheppard had been appointed as the Nest lead. Jacqui had previously led the Nest, before leaving to teach at primary level in Reception and Year 1. She was currently providing some teaching cover for Mitali. Governors welcomed this appointment.

Alex and Sue would be meeting shortly to review the staffing structure for 2020/21.

- e) **Local authority Keeping in Touch visit** – The report of the recent KIT visit had been circulated with the agenda. Alex explained that these visits took place twice-yearly and helped to ensure Ofsted readiness. The most recent visit had found the Centre to be on track.

- f) **Planning in the Moment** – Alex reported that she had been monitoring the children's special books and that these had also been considered by Curriculum Committee. The books showed that the new Planning in the Moment approach was developing well and was also effective in involving parents.

Mitali sought parent governors' views on the Planning in the Moment sheet sent home for parents to complete. She explained that the sheet first sent in the autumn term was currently being sent home a second time; she asked whether this was felt to be a duplication. **Parent governors welcomed the resending of the sheet, as it gave them a chance to update on recent events, changes in circumstances or interests and phases that children might be going through. Governors agreed that it should be made clear to parents that they did not need to fill in the sheet a second time if they felt that there was nothing new to report.**

Mitali

- g) **Early Years Foundation Stage quality framework** – The local authority would be asking all early years settings to complete this as a form of self-assessment. Alex reported that she and Mitali were working on it and that the findings so far were positive. Curriculum Committee would be asked to look at the completed document in more detail. **Governors suggested that Resources Committee also be asked to consider the section on leadership and management and that the final document be brought back to the Governing Body.** Alex/Mitali
- h) **Parents** – The recent writing workshop for parents had been well attended and the PowerPoint slides from the workshop had been circulated with the newsletter. Parent consultations had taken place the previous week and at the start of the current week. The parent survey had been sent out and responses received were largely positive; detailed feedback would be brought to the next Governing Body meeting. Alex commented that the main area for comment was the catering. She had already spoken to the catering team about the frequency with which some meals were served. Governors commented that the menu plan should be available to parents and noted that this was already displayed at the entrance to the Centre and in classrooms; it was agreed to flag this in the weekly bulletin. After discussion, Governors agreed that the menu plan did not need to be on the website. Alex
- i) **Visitors** – Homerton was receiving numerous visitors, including students from the Faculty of Education; sixth formers studying Health and Social Care; Year 10 students; and a Duke of Edinburgh participant. Alex
- j) **Local and national conversations** – Anthony Browne, Homerton’s local MP, would be visiting on 6th March 2020 and Jon Lewis, the local authority’s Director of Education, would be visiting on 16th March 2020. The local authority had written to Gavin Williamson MP, the Secretary of State for Education, to lobby for continued funding for nursery schools. Daniel Zeichner, MP for Cambridge, had also written in support of this letter. Alex
- The local authority was asking the nursery schools to consider options if Government funding for maintained nursery schools were to be discontinued after July 2021. Alex noted that Beatrix Merrick, the Chief Executive of Early Education, had suggested that an announcement on the future funding of maintained nursery schools could be made on 11th March 2020.
- k) **Staff survey** – A good response rate had been achieved in the recent staff survey and most feedback had been positive, with staff strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statements proposed. There had been a small number of ‘I don’t know’ responses, which Alex suggested might have been from lunchtime supervisors, some of whom were less fully involved in the day to day running of the Centre. Alex
- l) **Centre Development Plan** – Ken invited Governors to reflect on progress to date against the aims and objectives set out in the Centre Development Plan. The following points were discussed: Alex
- Quality of education
- Good progress with Planning in the Moment meant that this could be moved from yellow to green.
 - The core book range was being extended, with materials being prepared to enhance the use of ‘My Granny Went to Market’ next half-term.
 - Staff meetings were being used to reflect and share good practice, with a meeting earlier that day focussing on behaviour management for individual children.
 - ICT provision and educational apps were being reviewed, with Mitali planning further work on this.
 - Staff were increasingly using Target Tracker online to interrogate data.

- Key suggestions from Governor visit reports had included how ICT was used and greater use within classrooms of the language of science.

Strategic goals

- There was scope to do more to make the Centre more eco-friendly and sustainable. There were some challenges: for example, it was difficult to find cost-effective alternatives to plastic bags for wet clothes and the number of supermarket carrier bags available for reuse was falling. Working online more would reduce the amount of paper used. The Centre had stopped buying glitter. Governors suggested that children could become more involved, learning about recycling, switching off lights etc. Alex proposed a visit to the nursery at St Philip's to share good practice. It was also suggested that Homerton could join the national Eco-Schools initiative.

Leadership and management

- It was suggested that the point on safeguarding systems could become green, as a recent follow-up visit from the local authority had commended improved recording systems.
- Alex was attending a leadership course and was receiving additional leadership support from Mitali.
- Alex and the other staff had made considerable efforts to familiarise themselves with the new Ofsted framework.
- Bernie Cafferkey was undertaking SENCo training and was also training to become the Centre's domestic abuse lead.
- Staff visits to other settings were underway as part of their continuous professional development.
- Homerton's apprentice staff member was progressing well.
- Morley staff would be invited to attend a meeting at Homerton before Easter, in addition to the usual meeting in the summer term. Nursery Heads' meetings and meetings for Heads south of the river were continuing.
- Risk assessments were almost completed.

Behaviour and attitudes

- Staff time and team meeting time were used to reflect on children's perceptions and experience.
- All staff including lunch time staff had received STEP and behaviour management training.
- Special books and Planning in the Moment sheets were being used to identify and reflect on the characteristics of effective learning.

Personal development

- Children and staff were celebrating a range of languages and cultures through Language of the Month and activities such as Irish dancing and the Chinese New Year celebrations.
- The Expressive Arts and Design Policy would be rewritten next term, with input from a Governor visit.

Top priorities

- A new Nest lead had been appointed, meaning that this point could become green.
- A devolved leadership model was being developed, with Mitali supporting Alex, Felicity leading the recent writing workshop, Liz leading on equalities and multicultural activities and Bernie as the SENCo. Many other members of staff were also leading on specific areas.

Governance

- Governors were working to support Alex in responding to local and national issues.
- Three new governors had been appointed, meaning that the Governing Body was now at full strength.
- A number of governor visits had taken place or were planned.
- It was agreed to appoint Tandy as the lead governor for data analysis. Governors noted that this would link well with her role on Curriculum Committee and her responsibilities as SEND lead governor. Alex noted that when Ofsted visited, it would be useful to have one governor who was particularly conversant with the data, but that the inspectors would be keen to meet as many governors as possible, with a range of backgrounds and experience. Tandy noted that the Curriculum Committee had been reviewing the new Ofsted framework and identifying the key documents with which all governors should be familiar. She agreed to recirculate the summary she had prepared, to include the new governors. She also noted that a reference file of key documents had been prepared, which would be kept in Alex's office.

**Tandy/Alex/
Mitali**

Tandy

6. Update from Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meeting held on 28th January 2020 were received. Tandy reported that the meeting had covered a number of the points covered above, including the new Ofsted framework and preparing for inspection; the recent KIT visit; the EYFS quality framework; the Centre Development Plan; and special books and Planning in the Moment.

Tandy also reported on her governor visit on SEND, which had taken place the previous day. She would circulate the written report shortly. She highlighted the following points:

Tandy

- Of the 10 children currently on Homerton's SEND register, 5 were on the local authority's early years support pathway. The local authority operated a hub providing support on SEND issues, for example educational psychologists' input. Tandy had found that Bernie as SENCo was accessing support from the hub effectively.
- SEND support within Homerton was also of high quality, with a SEND teaching assistant in every classroom in addition to the class TA. Targeted interventions were helping children with SEND in specific areas such as memory, concentration and speech and language development. The varying levels of need were being met well.
- Homerton was working effectively to secure EHCPs for the children who needed them, bringing funding to the nursery and as the children started school.
- SENCos in local nurseries were working well together, sharing training and support.
- Bernie had been well supported when newly in post by having Homerton's previous SENCo as her mentor. Bernie was currently studying for the national SENCo qualification. Tandy noted that this was a considerable time commitment and that it would be important to ensure that Bernie continued to receive appropriate support, including time to study when needed.
- Target Tracker was being used to gather and interpret data on children with SEND, together with more specialised tools that enabled staff to pinpoint particular issues and to plan support as effectively as possible. Tandy had reviewed the previous year's data and whilst not all children with SEND would make rapid progress, there was evidence that some had progressed very significantly during their time at Homerton.

Alex

In conclusion, Tandy congratulated staff on their work and noted that she would like to make a further visit in the summer term to sit in on SEND group work.

Tandy/Alex

Governors asked Tandy the following questions about her visit and report:

- How the proportion of children with SEND at Homerton compared with the proportion at private nurseries. Alex explained that it was difficult to make meaningful comparisons, as private nurseries were not required to take children with SEND. Governors noted that SEND support was one of the strengths of the maintained nursery schools; children with SEND at private nurseries might not be appropriately identified and if they needed EHCPs, might not have these in place by the time they started school.
- Whether children started at Homerton with SEND already identified, or if these were being flagged by the Centre. Alex noted that either could be the case.
- Whether parents might be resistant to the identification of SEND for their children. Tandy explained that this could be the case, but that she had been reassured in talking to Alex and Bernie that their approach to families was sensitive, recognising that families could be at different stages of acceptance.

7. Key issues from the Teaching School

Kay updated Governors on issues relating to the Cambridge Early Years Teaching School (CEYTS):

- The Teaching School was continuing to deliver a SEND project and a STEP behaviour project, as well as free literacy training for local settings.
- Direct funding for Teaching Schools was likely to be discontinued next year as six new 'test and learn' hubs were established. None of the new hubs would be in Cambridgeshire, but one would be centred on Saffron Walden County High School, with which CEYTS had useful links. It was possible that CEYTS could be involved in the delivery of Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT). EYITT did not lead to Qualified Teacher Status but was important in upskilling staff working in early years, including those in the private and voluntary sector.

8. Safeguarding

Ken reported that the local authority's Safeguarding lead had made a follow-up visit to the previous safeguarding audit. The findings of the follow-up visit had been positive, including more detailed recording and signposting and more staff involved in safeguarding.

9. Update from Resources Committee

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 30th January 2020 were received. The following documents had been considered by the Committee and circulated to all Governors with the agenda:

- Best Value Statement 2020
- Statement of Financial Responsibilities.

Governors discussed the following points:

- As Chair of the Resources Committee, Roger would be reviewing the Schools Financial Value Standard with Sue and this would also be brought to the Governing Body in due course.

Roger/Sue

- The catering and cleaning contracts would shortly be due for renewal. As these contracts were over £5,000, a tendering process would usually be required. Governors noted that both contracts were working well and that it had been difficult to find other bidders when these contracts had been arranged. Given this and the uncertainty over funding for maintained nursery schools from 2021, it was agreed that Roger and Sue should investigate whether it might be possible to extend the existing contracts for one year, without a formal tendering process.
- Resources Committee had discussed the use of social media to communicate with parents and to promote Homerton. A Homerton Twitter account had been set up and was currently being used to tell parents about life and events in the Centre.

Roger/Sue

Governors discussed the relative merits of Facebook and Twitter for communicating with parents and for raising Homerton's profile more widely. It was suggested that Facebook was more typically used to communicate with small, local communities, whereas with sufficient input Twitter could reach a wider national or global audience. It was noted that tools were available that enabled more than one formal of social media to be populated from a single entry.

Governors noted that the work to administer social media needed to be kept manageable. Following discussion, it was agreed to continue with the current approach of using Twitter to reach parents, tweeting about once a week; whilst the Centre's account would not achieve a high profile, it would be accessible for people who wanted to look for it. The Twitter account would be highlighted in the newsletter and parents' views sought on what other types of social media use they might welcome. Governors recognised that Homerton's use of social media would continue to evolve.

Alex

Governors noted that Mitali was currently preparing a Twitter policy. No names would be used and photos of children would be used only where parental consent had been given.

Mitali

10. Budget monitoring report

The budget monitoring report for the end of December 2019 was received. Governors noted that a surplus of £33,385 was projected for year-end. This was due in part to slightly more income from the local authority than had been anticipated, the result of a higher pupil headcount. It was suggested that the Centre's financial position offered scope to consider improvements to quality and service, and to ensure that there was sufficient capacity to support Alex, especially in view of the saving made by not having a Deputy Head.

11. Policy review

Governors reviewed the following policies:

- Admissions to the Nest
- Admissions to the Nursery

In both policies, it was agreed to switch admissions criteria 4) and 5), so that children of contracted members of staff and governors of the Homerton Early Years Centre come before children in the catchment area.

Alex

Governors also considered a suggestion to amend the policy on admissions to the Nest to state that places for funded 2 year olds would be offered in the afternoon only. Alex explained that the afternoon sessions were harder to fill and there was a risk otherwise that some afternoon places would not be used. The Centre was not obliged to offer any places to funded 2 year olds. Advice had been sought from the local authority, who had said that it was important for the nursery schools to keep in mind financial viability.

Governors accepted the need to consider financial viability but noted that overall, the Centre's financial position remained relatively strong. Governors felt that limiting the offer made to funded 2 year olds, who came from some of the most disadvantaged families, was not in line with the Centre's ethos of offering equal and high quality opportunities to all. It was agreed not to make this amendment.

Subject to the amendments to the ranking of admissions criteria above, both policies were approved.

- Safer Employment Policy

This was agreed as circulated. It was noted that Ken would visit in the summer term to carry out a Safer Employment audit.

12. Any other urgent matters

Classlist – Kate shared information about Classlist, an app used by parents at Morley and other schools. The app enabled the PTA and parents to communicate with each other without personal data being shared. At Morley, it was administered by a member of the PTA; staff were not involved and could not access the app. Kate suggested that it could be used at Homerton to encourage parents to arrange social and fundraising events, but might need managing by staff given the rapidly changing parent cohort. She agreed to circulate a briefing note providing more details.

Kate

13. Date of next meeting

The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Thursday 19th March 2020 at 7.00pm. George Hayes, the local authority's Strategic Lead for Governance for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, would be attending for the first half-hour.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm.