

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Zoom on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 7.30pm

Present

Rinchen Ato, Isa Garcia Crestani, Kate Daenke, Sam Garyali, Tandy Harrison, Roger Lilley (from 7.50pm), Ken Ong (Chair), Alex Pearson (Head), Mitali Peckham, Surabhi Singh and Sue Smith
Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

Action

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Ken welcomed everyone to this virtual meeting of the Governing Body. Apologies for absence were received from Kay Blayney and Eirini Gkouskou.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of 29th April 2020

The open and confidential minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 29th April 2020 were approved as correct records.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of 29th April 2020

All matters arising were covered on the agenda.

5. Headteacher's report

Alex had circulated a written report with the agenda. She highlighted a number of key issues:

a) The current term

Lunchtime staff had been furloughed from 8th June 2020. These were the only staff chosen to be furloughed, as their salaries were the only ones paid exclusively from private income.

The catering company Dolce had been providing packed lunches for children in the Centre. It was hoped that hot meals would resume in September.

Final Zoom sessions would take place on Thursday 16th and Friday 17th July 2020, with both parents and children at home and staff and children in the Centre to take part. Mitali had compiled a playlist of all the books read by staff during the past few months, which would be sent to leaving, continuing and new families.

The summer holiday club would be running from Monday to Wednesday for three weeks, beginning on 27th July 2020. Uptake was high, with most of the 12 spaces available expected to be filled most days.

b) Centre Development Plan 2019-20

Governors commended all staff on the high proportion of aims achieved, especially given the challenges presented by the coronavirus outbreak. **Ken invited Governors to reflect on learning from the last term. Governors identified:**

- The successful response to the coronavirus outbreak, with Homerton remaining open throughout to key worker and vulnerable children and subsequently reopening more widely
- The successful use of online technology and videos to continue to deliver the curriculum to children at home; to provide information for returning and new children; and to hold professional meetings.

Ken thanked Governors for their efforts to remain involved, dealing with additional paperwork and participating in remote meetings.

c) **Plans for September**

A welcome video had been sent to new families and added to the website and had also been circulated to Governors. Governors congratulated the staff involved in making this video, noting that it also made Homerton more visible for children's wider families and friends and for prospective parents and the wider community. The inclusion of all members of staff was particularly helpful. Governors suggested that similar videos could be made in future years.

Approximately 20 children per class were expected for September 2020, with some children dropping out and new ones signing up. Drop-in sessions would run from 7th to 14th September 2020 and the first children would come in from 14th September 2020. It was expected that all children would be in and the Centre would be fully operational from 28th September 2020.

The local authority had agreed that from September, Homerton could operate as a single 'bubble'. This was because Homerton was relatively small. There were significant benefits to Homerton of operating as a single bubble: in particular, it would be possible to run breakfast club and after school care, helping working parents. Staff would also be able to meet and to move around the Centre, enabling support and good practice to be shared.

Social distancing measures would continue to be observed where practicable. Classes would be separated by screens for lunch; administrative staff would make use of rooms throughout the Centre to enable them to distance; parents would not come into the Centre, other than to settle children; and if possible, visitors to the Centre would come at the end of the day, when most children and staff had left.

Operating as a single bubble did mean that if a case of COVID-19 were to be reported, the whole Centre would have to close. However, Governors noted that even if Homerton were to operate in two or more bubbles, the reporting of a case of COVID-19 in one bubble was likely to cause anxiety and reduce attendance for children in the other bubbles as well. On balance, Governors welcomed the decision to operate as a single bubble, with the benefits that this would bring.

Governors noted that guidance was changing quickly and would need to be kept under review. A further risk assessment would need to be completed and agreed before the September reopening. It was agreed that Governors would review documentation by e-mail before the next Governing Body meeting on 21st September 2020, arranging an earlier meeting only if needed.

Alex/All

d) **Recovery, Development and Improvement Plan**

The local authority had asked all schools to complete this, setting out their plans from September. The main focus for Homerton would be on the wellbeing of children, families and staff.

Alex sought Governors' views on the use by staff at Homerton of masks or visors. Governors discussed a number of points:

- The use of face coverings in hospitals and on public transport was now mandatory and was strongly encouraged in enclosed spaces and places that were not well ventilated. The local authority's current position was that staff in schools should not wear masks. However, it was possible that this would change, given that nationally the trend seemed to be towards greater use of masks indoors.
- Masks and visors had differing benefits in the protection offered to the wearer and others. Using either a mask or visor was likely to reduce the spread of coronavirus more than using nothing.
- Staff using visors could be less frightening for young children than staff using masks, as their faces remained fully visible. However, children were becoming increasingly accustomed to seeing people wearing masks.
- Particularly in early years settings, masks could inhibit learning as communication, both verbal and non-verbal, could be less clear.
- Visors were more expensive per unit than disposable masks; however, it was possible to buy reusable visors, which could be wiped down and reused by individuals. Reusable masks were also an option if staff were willing to wash them.

In conclusion, Governors agreed that until such time as use became mandatory, all staff should be allowed to use either masks or visors if they wished. Staff should be consulted on their wishes and Homerton should procure the equipment requested. Governors also emphasised that social distancing should continue to be observed wherever practicable.

Alex

e) Centre Development Plan 2020-21

Alex commented that a period of consolidation would be essential, focussing on core values of kindness, compassion and trust. It would be especially important to build trust with the new cohort of parents and children, helping them to develop resilience and to overcome any anxieties. A recent meeting with local authority and mental health colleagues had noted that children returning to nursery and school were likely to be more clingy than usual, having been at home for so long with their parents.

Governors asked how they could help to support staff wellbeing, given that it had been a very stressful time for staff. Alex noted that individual risk assessments had been carried out for all staff members and almost all had received supervisions during the term. All staff were now back in the Centre except for the furloughed lunch supervisors and one who had been shielding, whose return was planned. Staff were having opportunities to talk to and support each other.

Staff would have time to reflect over the summer holidays and the first staff meetings in September would be used to talk about how they felt. Both Alex and Mitali had recently undertaken leadership training and a session had been booked with their trainer for all staff in February on Myers-Briggs, to help staff understand their own and others' personality types. Mitali would be attending an adult mental health training course in the autumn term to enable her better to support staff. Alex commented that any additional resources from Governors on how best to support staff would be very welcome.

All

6. Update from Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meeting held on 12th June 2020 were received.

Tandy commended Homerton's efforts to continue to deliver the curriculum during lockdown, especially thanking staff for their dedication and flexibility. As SEND Governor, she had been kept informed of the ongoing support being offered to families of children with SEND and the records being kept of this. She particularly thanked Bernie Cafferkey for her work in progressing Education, Health and Care Plans for three children.

It was noted that Governor visits could potentially resume from September. Kate and Kay would rearrange their Expressive Arts visits, possibly for October; Governors would consider what other areas visits should cover.

7. **Key Issues from the Teaching School** – No issues reported.

8. **Safeguarding**

Ken had circulated a revised addendum to the Safeguarding Policy, which had been prepared nationally to take into account the measures needed to reopen schools safely and to safeguard those children not attending during the coronavirus outbreak. Alex noted that she had received a further update earlier that day, together with additional information on Child Protection. Ken asked about possible use of an electronic safeguarding system so that staff not working in the Centre could log concerns from home. Alex agreed to look into this, but noted that almost all staff were now back in the Centre.

Alex

Governors commented on the need to be aware that families may have been adversely affected by the coronavirus outbreak in a range of different ways, including loss of income. Alex and Sue confirmed that this was being taken into account when requesting overdue payments.

It was agreed unanimously to endorse the revised addendum to the Safeguarding Policy, pending advice from Ken and Alex on the further update.

Ken/Alex

Alex reported that the Centre's number of safeguarding cases was increasing, mainly involving families already known to staff who were struggling with the changes to everyday life. Staff were following these up and were in frequent contact with social workers. It was also intended to continue weekly conversations with these families during the summer holidays.

Governors welcomed the intention to continue to contact vulnerable children and also children with SEND on a weekly basis during the summer holidays. However, concern was expressed that Alex and other staff should have a proper break, given the challenges of the past term and the likelihood of fresh challenges in September. Alex and Mitali suggested that weekly calls during the holidays could be shared between Alex, class teachers and two holiday club staff who were deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads.

9. **Update from Resources Committee**

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 18th June 2020 were received. Roger highlighted the following points:

- The Committee had confirmed the practical arrangements for the furloughing of lunchtime staff.
- A budgetary control report had been circulated to all Governors. There was likely to be a significant loss of income as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, but it was too early to confirm how much this would be. Governors commented that Homerton was in a relatively strong position given its surplus at the end of 2019/20 and carry forward. Opening as a single bubble from September would also enable income to

be generated from wraparound care. The lunchtime supervisors would return from furlough in September as the lunchtime charge would also resume.

- A survey was about to be sent out asking parents how they felt Homerton had responded to the coronavirus outbreak. It was hoped that this might provide useful evidence for future Ofsted inspections. Governors noted that Ofsted inspections were expected to resume in October but were intended to be 'non-judgemental'.

10. Policy review

Governors reconfirmed the following pre-existing policies, subject to dates being rolled forward where necessary: **Alex**

- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Governors' Expenses Policy.

11. Any other urgent matters – None.

12. Dates of future meetings

It was agreed that future Governing Body meetings would be held at 7.00pm on:

- Monday 21st September 2020
- Thursday 3rd December 2020
- Monday 8th February 2021
- Wednesday 17th March 2021
- Wednesday 28th April 2021
- Tuesday 12th July 2021

Governors were reminded that George Hayes, the local authority's Strategic Lead for Governance, had been invited to attend the March 2020 Governing Body meeting, which had been cancelled. In light of frequently changing guidance and strategic advice and likely ongoing heavy workloads, it was agreed not to renew this invitation at present but to keep the situation under review.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.