

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Zoom on Monday 21st September 2020 at 7.30pm

Present

Rinchen Ato, Isa Garcia Crestani (until 9.05pm), Kate Daenke, Sam Garyali (from 7.55pm), Tandy Harrison (from 8.25pm), Roger Lilley, Ken Ong, Mick Patel (from 7.40pm), Alex Pearson (Head), Mitali Peckham, Surabhi Singh and Sue Smith
Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

- | | Action |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Election of the Chair of the Governing Body for the Academic Year 2020-2021 | |
| It was agreed unanimously to elect Ken Ong as the Chair of the Governing Body for the academic year 2020-2021. | |
| 2. Welcome and Apologies for Absence | |
| Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Kay Blayney and Eirini Gkouskou. | |
| 3. Declarations of Interest | |
| There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 4. Minutes of 9th July 2020 | |
| The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 9 th July 2020 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments: | Gwyneth |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alter first page heading to show that the meeting took place on Zoom• Page 3, first bullet point: replace 'masks' with 'face coverings'. | |
| 5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 9th July 2020 | |
| a) Expressive Arts and Design visit – It had previously been suggested that this be rearranged for October. Given that the local authority was still advising against face to face meetings where not essential, and that Expressive Arts and Design would be a theme for the whole of 2020/21, it was agreed to postpone this visit until the summer. | Alex/Kate |
| 6. Governor Reappointments | |
| Governors noted that three Governors' terms of office were due to end on 22 nd September 2020: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sue Smith, staff Governor• Mitali Peckham, co-opted Governor representing staff• Roger Lilley, co-opted Governor. | |
| All three had confirmed that they were willing to continue. It was agreed unanimously to appoint Sue, Mitali and Roger to new four-year terms. | Gwyneth |
| 7. Standing Orders | |
| Governors received the Governing Body's Standing Orders. No amendments were proposed. It was agreed unanimously to adopt the Standing Orders. | |

8. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

The 2019/20 register of pecuniary interests had been circulated with the agenda. All Governors present confirmed that there were no changes to their previous declarations. Gwyneth would chase up responses from those Governors not present and would update the website.

Gwyneth

9. Committee Chairs and Memberships

Governors noted that due to other commitments, Kay wished to step down as Chair of Curriculum Committee. It was agreed unanimously to appoint Tandy as the new Chair of Curriculum Committee. Governors agreed that Roger would continue as Chair of Resources Committee.

Committee memberships for 2020/21 were confirmed as unchanged from 2019/20.

Gwyneth

10. Appointment of Vice-Chairs and Lead Governors

Ken noted that he found it helpful as Chair of the Governing Body to be supported by the two Committee Chairs as Vice-Chairs of the Governing Body. It was agreed unanimously to appoint Roger and Tandy as Vice-Chairs of the Governing Body.

Lead governor appointments for 2020/21 were confirmed as unchanged from 2019/20, subject to the following:

- a) **Child Protection and Safeguarding** – Surabhi to become Deputy Lead Governor for Child Protection and Safeguarding, working alongside Ken as Lead Governor.

**Alex/Ken/
Surabhi**

11. Governor Code of Practice

The Governor Code of Practice was received. No changes were proposed and it was agreed unanimously to adopt the Governor Code of Practice for 2020/21.

12. Terms of Reference for Curriculum and Resources Committees

It was agreed unanimously to adopt the terms of reference for the Curriculum and Resources Committees. The following dates were set for the Committees' first meetings:

- Curriculum – Monday 12th October 2020 at 10.00am via Zoom
- Resources – Tuesday 13th October 2020 at 1.30pm via Zoom.

**Tandy
Roger**

13. Headteacher's Report

Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues:

- a) **Staffing** – One teaching assistant had given in her notice at the end of the summer term, to return to Morley where she had worked previously. Homerton's music teacher had agreed to cover the vacancy until Christmas, when the post would be advertised.

Homerton's apprentice was taking unpaid leave to complete her studies, which had been delayed due to the coronavirus outbreak. She had indicated that she would be happy to return on a supply basis in due course.

- b) **Children** – Governors noted that:

- 83 of 96 places in the nursery were filled, with interested families still getting in touch. Most classes had 20-22 children, with one at 24. Homerton's funding from the local authority would be based on occupancy rates for either October 2019 or

October 2020, whichever was the higher; at present this was expected to be October 2019.

- The Nest was almost full, with children from 37 families. Eight children in the Nest were in funded places.
- Take-up of breakfast club and evening care was low, since many parents were still working from home and not requiring wraparound care. This would affect income.
- Seven children with SEND were receiving 1:1 TA support, nearing Homerton's capacity to support children with SEND.
- Ten children were eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, an increase on the previous year.

c) **Centre Development Plan (CDP)** – The CDP had been circulated with the agenda. Alex explained that the emphasis for 2020/21 would be on the mental health and wellbeing of both children and staff. There would be a particular focus on Planning in the Moment, Expressive Arts and Design and Helicopter Stories.

d) **Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)** – The SEF had been circulated with the agenda. Alex explained that one emphasis of the SEF was on staff training. Almost all staff had completed child protection training since the start of term. Fire safety training had also taken place, together with medical training for staff working with children with particular needs. Alex had received her performance management review and was starting to conduct teachers' reviews; teachers would then meet with their staff.

Ken proposed and Governors agreed that both the CDP and the SEF be included on the agendas for the first meetings of the Curriculum and Resources Committees, to enable Governors to review these documents in more detail.

Alex/
Tandy/
Roger

e) **Ofsted** – Ofsted had resumed visits to schools but these were 'non-judgemental' and would not result in formal assessments. Ofsted was saying that schools receiving these visits would not have their formal inspections delayed when formal inspections resumed.

Ofsted had visited two primary schools in Cambridgeshire since the start of term and Alex had received copies of their reports, which she would share with Governors as appropriate. Governors noted that schools were still receiving only one day's notice of visits. In the call the day before, inspectors were setting out what they were looking for, including evidence of effective safeguarding during school closures and effective support to children and families, including online offerings and work with particular groups such as children with SEND.

f) **Feedback from parents** – Alex reported that the previous year's parents had given Homerton an owl sculpture and a book compiling their comments on how they felt about Homerton and their children's time there. **Governors commented that this was a very positive gift that could be shared with a range of visitors to the Centre.**

Governors also noted that the end of year survey sent to parents had included questions about Homerton's response to the coronavirus outbreak and its online offerings during school closure. Alex noted that the comments received were generally very positive and would provide useful evidence for Ofsted.

g) **Parental consent for information sharing** – A letter and form sent to parents had been circulated with the agenda. These sought parents' consent for educational information about their child to be shared with the child's next school. The letter and form were based on templates provided by the local authority. Ken explained that these had been circulated in response to a query raised by a parent at the end of the previous term.

Governors noted that two types of information were usually shared with primary schools: an end of year summary on the child's activities and experiences at Homerton, which was also given to parents; and an interim assessment of progress in the prime and specific areas of learning set out in 'Development Matters'. The interim assessment was currently not shared with parents, partly as 'Development Matters' was a two-year programme, continuing in Reception; and partly to avoid undue emphasis on assessment and attainment in the early years. Governors noted that the interim assessments had not been completed for the 2019/20 cohort due to the coronavirus outbreak and school closures.

Alex reported that all forms returned to date gave consent for the information to be shared with the child's next school. However, Governors asked what the Centre's position would be if no response were received or if consent were actively withheld. Governors also asked whether it might be appropriate to share the 'Development Matters' interim assessments with parents in a constructive, useful format. Alex agreed to raise these issues with Jenn Barker at her forthcoming Keeping in Touch visit and to work with Curriculum Committee on them, reporting back to the Governing Body in due course.

Alex/
Tandy

- h) **Parents' WhatsApp groups** – Mitali consulted Governors about a proposal to set up WhatsApp groups for the parents of each class at Homerton. She explained that there had been some occasions during lockdown when communication by WhatsApp would have been very useful: the Centre already used e-mail and the website, but people typically saw messages sent by WhatsApp more quickly and on one occasion. Given the current situation, this additional form of rapid communication with parents could be very useful.

Mitali explained that it would not be appropriate for Homerton staff to set up or belong to WhatsApp groups but asked whether parent Governors might be willing to do this, managing a group for their child's class and possibly also covering other classes that had no parent Governor connection. Mitali explained that if an urgent message needed to be sent, a member of staff would contact the parent Governors and ask them to pass the message on. The group could also be used by parents for shared communication.

Governors welcomed the suggestion, noting that it would be good to launch this initiative at the beginning of the new school year. The parent Governors present agreed to work with Mitali to set up the groups. Following discussion, it was agreed that all people joining the groups would be given administrative rights, enabling them to add other people to the group. The invitation to the group would be prefaced with a reminder of the group's purpose, the need for appropriate contributions and not to share pictures of children.

Mitali/
Parent
Governors

- i) **COVID-19 risk assessment** – The latest version of the risk assessment had been circulated with the agenda. Governors discussed the following points:

- **Bubble** – Children in the nursery and the Nest were being kept as separate as possible, with nursery and Nest children segregated at breakfast club and in after-school care. Classes were mixing only outside in the garden and only for brief periods. Lunch was being served in two sittings to keep classes separate. The caterers were currently providing a picnic-style lunch with a hot element, such as a sausage roll, together with a dessert and fruit. The caterers were keen to return to more conventional hot meals but the local authority had advised that it was more important at present to keep classes separate, making longer mealtimes impractical. Parents were dropping children off in the garden whenever possible, coming into the Centre only when this was necessary to settle children. Parents had been asked to wear face coverings in the garden as well as the Centre and were co-operating well. If the Centre did have a case of COVID, it would be for the DfE to advise how much of the Centre needed to close and who needed to self-isolate.

- PPE – All staff had been provided with visors if they wished to use them.
- Cleaning – Governors asked whether the cleaning arrangements were satisfactory. Alex noted that one of the two cleaners was also a cook, meaning that she was in the Centre during the day and that communication was excellent. The Centre’s second cleaner was currently on leave, with her manager providing cover; it was hoped that she would return shortly.
- Testing – Alex confirmed that as with other schools, Homerton had been given 10 COVID testing kits. These were intended for use on children, particularly if the parents were having difficulty accessing a test elsewhere. She had given out some of these and would be ordering more. Alex also reported that a testing facility had been set up for Education staff and their families, which would be operating at Babraham Road Park and Ride three days a week and in Peterborough two days a week. This was expected to continue until national testing facilities became more readily accessible.
- Advice to parents – Governors noted that there was some evidence that COVID symptoms in children included vomiting and diarrhoea. However, these symptoms had not been added to the official Government guidance and therefore should not be formally listed by Homerton. **Governors suggested that in communications to parents, Alex could include a reminder of the importance of keeping children with vomiting and/or diarrhoea at home for at least 48 hours. Children showing these symptoms whilst in the Centre should be isolated from others whilst waiting to be collected.** **Alex**
- Flu vaccination for staff – Alex asked Governors whether they would support the Centre paying for flu vaccinations for staff. Governors supported this and noted that vaccinations would have to be booked individually via GP surgeries or community pharmacies. **Alex**

Governors also asked the following questions:

- Whether any adjustments to the curriculum were needed in response to the risk assessment – Alex explained that Planning in the Moment would usually involve working closely with parents. The current circumstances made this difficult, but it would still be possible to send the information sheet to parents at the beginning of their child’s focus week and to engage them in conversation either at the gate or by e-mail.
- What the implications of the current situation were for staff workloads – Alex explained that the situation to date was manageable, although some staff had been absent because of illness or waiting for test results for their households. It remained possible to use supply staff if necessary. One area of challenge might be lunchtime, if insufficient lunchtime supervisors were available. It was possible that Governors or parent volunteers could help to cover if the situation became difficult. In general, parent volunteers usually started to come in after the October half-term, once children had settled; this would be kept under review for the current year.

Governors noted that the risk assessment would continue to be updated as the situation developed. Alex agreed to keep Governors up to date and to ask for advice and help as needed. **Alex**

14. Key Issues from the Teaching School

Alex updated Governors on Teaching School developments:

- Eleven students were undertaking Early Years Teacher Training delivered by the Teaching School, working in their own Centres.

- The Teaching School was contributing to a joint application to form part of a Teaching Hub, to enable it to continue working beyond the current academic year.

15. Safeguarding

Governors were advised that a new version of Keeping Children Safe in Education had been published for September 2020. Changes from the previous version were listed in Annex H and related in part to mental health and to the sharing of information for safeguarding purposes. Governors were encouraged to read the updated guidance; Parts 1 and 2 were of greatest relevance to Governors.

**All
Governors**

16. Any Other Urgent Matters

- a) **Head's Performance Review** – Roger reported that he and Tandy had carried out Alex's annual performance review with the external assessor. All Governors thanked Alex for her hard work under difficult circumstances.

17. Dates of Future Meetings

Dates of future Governing Body meetings were confirmed as:

- Thursday 3rd December 2020 at 7.30pm
- Monday 8th February 2021 at 7.30pm
- Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 7.30pm
- Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 7.30pm
- Monday 12th July 2021 at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.