

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Zoom on Thursday 3rd December 2020 at 7.30pm

Present

Rinchen Ato, Kay Blayney, Isa Garcia Crestani, Kate Daenke, Tansy Harrison, Roger Lilley, Ken Ong (Chair), Mick Patel, Alex Pearson (Head), Mitali Peckham (from 7.50pm) and Sue Smith

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

- | | Action |
|---|---------------|
| 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence | |
| Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. An apology for absence was received from Eirini Gkouskou. | |
| 2. Declarations of Interest | |
| There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 3. Minutes of 21st September 2020 | |
| The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 21 st September 2020 were approved as a correct record. | |
| 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 21st September 2020 | |
| a) Parental consent for information sharing – Governors had been advised at the last meeting of a new practice from September 2020, to seek parents' consent for educational information about their child to be shared with the child's next school. Alex reported that all parents had returned the form and agreed for information to be shared. Governors asked Alex to find out what the Centre's position would be if no response were received or if consent were actively withheld, in case these situations arose in future. | Alex |
| 5. Head's Report | |
| Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues. | |
| a) Children – The nursery school was filling up for January 2021, in part with children moving up from the Nest. Places in the Nest were also filling up; the afternoon session was least popular, as usual, probably because this was when young children often napped. | |
| Owlets numbers for the evening sessions were very low, although breakfast sessions were slightly better filled. It was thought that end of day care was not being used because a high proportion of parents were still working from home. The holiday club had run for three days at half-term and had been completely full, generating a surplus of £300, which was more than the October 2019 club that ran for five days. | |
| A small number of children had left Homerton, all for natural reasons: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One who had lost a place at Ace Nursery for non-attendance over the summer had been at Homerton briefly but had now returned to Ace• One child's family had moved to Milton and another's to Australia• One who lived in Trumpington and had a sibling at Fawcett had been offered a place at Fawcett. | |

One child had tested positive for COVID-19. However, as the first symptoms had appeared 48 hours after the child last attended Homerton, the local authority had advised that Homerton did not need to take any action. A number of children had been absent, isolating whilst they or family members awaited test results, but no more positive cases had been confirmed.

A number of activities had taken place, relating to Diwali, Bonfire Night and the Bookstart programme. Primal Play, Ross Sargent's movement group, had restarted on Fridays and was being attended by some children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) and a small number of other children. Input for children in receipt of EYPP who attended only at the beginning of the week was also being arranged.

The free school meal voucher scheme would be running again during the Christmas holiday. Homerton would shortly be finding out more from the local authority.

Homerton currently had a high number of children with SEND attending. This was thought to be due in part to other professionals recommending the support offered by Homerton. However, the Centre was now at capacity in terms of teaching assistant support and so new families were being advised to reapply for September 2020.

Governors asked whether the enquiries being received were for children with SEND already formally identified. Alex explained that in most cases, children were entering the system but did not yet have EHCPs.

Alex noted that Homerton's difficulties in supporting children with SEND were also due in part to the challenges of using Liquid Logic, the new system that health, education and social work professionals were now required to use to share information about children with SEND. These challenges were also being experienced by all of the other nursery Heads in Cambridgeshire. Homerton staff were due to receive additional training on Liquid Logic on 9th December 2020. Governors asked whether Homerton was missing out on SEND funding as a result of these challenges. Alex noted that it was expected the funding would be received once children had been successfully entered on the system.

In addition, on the advice of the local authority, specialists such as the Area SENCo and speech and language therapists were not currently visiting Homerton to observe children with SEND. Instead, Homerton were being asked to send them observations. This was very time-consuming, as for example children had to be filmed undertaking certain activities but without other children in shot. Governors suggested that specialists could observe children in their homes over Zoom and that parents could also help with sending observations. It was hoped that visits by professionals to Homerton would resume as the pandemic eased.

A high number of children attending Homerton had English as an additional language. The Centre was focussing on a different language each half-term, currently Spanish.

One child in care would be joining Homerton in January.

- b) Staff** – Staff performance reviews had been carried out and targets set. Targets this year would focus on consolidation, for example deepening understanding of Planning in the Moment, rather than covering new ground.

Staff wellbeing was a priority, especially as a number of staff members were supporting elderly relatives. Staff were being signposted to wellbeing resources and class leads were supporting individuals. Staff sickness was currently very low and there seemed to be fewer coughs and colds in the Centre than usual.

Kate had been appointed as a new lunchtime supervisor. Two teachers trainees had been at Homerton, although the placement of one had been shortened by health issues. Alex thanked Mitali and Felicity for supervising the trainees.

Alex and Mitali had been pursuing their leadership courses. Bernie Cafferkey had undertaken SENCo award training, currently awaiting results. All staff had taken part in STEP training and sessions from the recent Nursery World conference were also being shared with staff via staff meetings and playbacks of recordings.

- c) **Parents** – A recent plant stall intended to promote family wellbeing had been very successful. All parents had been phoned for parents’ evening. Information on Planning in the Moment and the curriculum had been sent home. A play talk and music sessions had been shared on YouTube. **Governors noted that Homerton’s YouTube channel was unlisted and hence accessible only by people who had received a link. Governors commended staff on keeping parents so well involved despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic.**
- d) **Christmas** – A YouTube clip had been shared of the staff singing The Twelve Days of Christmas. Alex would be recording a Christmas story and a video of the Christmas singing would be sent out. Hillary’s on Mill Road and Tesco in Fulbourn had donated Christmas trees, which had been put up outside the Centre; all children had been invited to make a decoration at home to bring in and add to the trees.
- e) **Centre Development Plan (CDP) and Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)** – These had both been considered by the Curriculum and Resources Committees and the latest versions had been circulated with the agenda. Actions were progressing well.
- f) **Data** – Baseline data had been completed for the autumn term and would be brought to the next Governing Body meeting. **Alex/
Mitali**
- g) **Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework** – The EYFS framework would be changing from September 2021 and would place more emphasis on staff spending time with children and less on assessment and data. Training sessions would be taking place in February and March. Alex agreed to forward invitations to Governors and encouraged everyone to attend. Governors noted that some data would still be required and that it would take time to work through the new requirements and the updates to the Target Tracker software. **Alex/All**
- h) **Future of maintained nursery schools** – Vicky Ford, the Minister for Children, had stated in a recent Tweet that funding for maintained nursery schools would continue for 2021/22 and that long-term solutions were being sought. However, this news had not yet been formally announced elsewhere.
- i) **Ofsted** – Ofsted had announced that there would be no formal inspections until summer 2021. It was possible that ‘supportive’ visits would take place earlier, but these were likely to focus on lower-performing schools. Visits prior to summer 2021 could assess how well schools had responded to the coronavirus outbreak, but it was thought that visits from summer 2021 would be more ‘business as usual’. It remained important for all Governors to keep themselves up to date on the key issues in which Ofsted would be interested.
- j) **Ofsted readiness document** – This had previously been drafted by a group of Governors and recently updated by Kate. Kate explained that it was intended as an aide memoire covering key areas in which Ofsted would be interested. Kate set out the key areas covered by the document, including:
- The role of the Governor
 - Key Ofsted documents – The Education Inspection Framework and the School Inspection Handbook

- The three strands for evaluating 'quality of education': intent, implementation and impact
- Key inspection themes including safeguarding, equality, SEND, EAL, EYPP and 'cultural capital'
- The EYFS curriculum
- Planning frameworks
- Data recording and reporting.

The Ofsted readiness document included illustrative examples relating to Homerton and numerous links to policies and other more detailed sources of information. All Governors were encouraged to familiarise themselves with the points covered in the document.

All

Governors thanked Kate for her work and commented that it was very useful to have key issues summarised in a single document.

- k) Wellbeing** – Ken drew Governors' attention to a local authority document previously circulated by e-mail, 'A Governor's Guide to Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing During COVID Recovery'. He emphasised Governors' role in supporting the wellbeing of the Head and staff, both at a strategic level and in practical terms, noting that praise and thanks were hugely valuable.

Ken led non-staff Governors in thanking Alex, Mitali and Sue for all of their efforts in recent months. Governors particularly noted the calm, confident and happy atmosphere in the Centre; responding so resourcefully and imaginatively to the challenges of the pandemic, continuing to support children and families both during closure and when the Centre reopened; and the achievement of delivering so much of the curriculum and the aims of the Centre Development Plan during this time. Alex, Mitali and Sue received small gifts of thanks previously delivered by Ken.

Alex thanked Governors for their ongoing help and support.

6. Update from Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meetings held on 12th October 2020 and 9th November 2020 were received. Governors noted that:

- The Committee had reviewed a number of policies, which had been circulated with the agenda:
 - Personal, Social and Emotional Development Policy
 - Acceptable Use Agreement – Digital Images
 - Acceptable Use Agreement – ICT Equipment
 - E-Safety Policy

These were all agreed by the Governing Body, subject to the addition of a paragraph in the E-Safety Policy making it clear that staff would switch off internet access before allowing children to use the Centre's iPads.

Alex

One further policy would be circulated by e-mail for Governors' ratification, the Outdoor Play Policy.

**Tandy/
All**

- The Committee had noted that no data was available for summer 2020, due to the coronavirus outbreak and school closure. The Committee had also noted the challenge of meeting the new data requirements from September 2021, linked to the new EYFS framework. Mitali would be undertaking training and the Committee would revisit this in due course and bring a summary to the Governing Body.

- The Curriculum Committee would be meeting the following day to work on the Curriculum vision and statement and the Early Years Pupil Premium statement, so that these could be added to the website.
- Tandy would circulate the link to the YouTube video on play to all Governors. She commented that watching it had helped her to feel more in touch with Homerton at a time when it was not possible for Governors to visit.
- Governors had previously supported the creation of WhatsApp groups for each class. These had now been set up with the help of parent Governors. Joining was voluntary but the parent Governors reported that the majority of parents in their classes had signed up. There would be another recruitment drive in January with the new intake of children. It seemed that the nursery classes' groups were currently fairly quiet but that the Nest group was well used. Governors thanked all who had helped to set these up, noting that they would be particularly useful for rapid communication with parents if needed.

7. Key Issues from the Teaching School

Kay updated Governors on the Teaching School. She explained that:

- Teaching Schools would continue in their current form until July 2021. Work for the Cambridge Early Years Teaching School (CEYTS) was being led on behalf of the nursery Heads by Kay Blayney, Kay Dimelow, Ysanne Heald and Rikke Waldau and included Early Years Initial Teacher Training (EYITT), SEND, STEP and preparation for the new arrangements from July 2021.
- From July 2021, the current arrangements would be replaced by new 'superhubs'. It was hoped that CETYS could be a strategic partner, particularly to deliver EYITT, and discussions were taking place with both the group led by Saffron Walden County High School and with Anglia Ruskin University. It was possible as part of the new arrangements that the current CEYTS would need to become a Trust, with both internal and external Trustees. Ysanne Heald and Amanda Bannister, Executive Head of the Cambridge Nursery Federation, were looking into this.

8. Safeguarding

A new version of Keeping Children Safe in Education had been published in September 2020 and had been circulated with the agenda. Alex asked all Governors to ensure that they had read the relevant sections. Ken noted that key updates included:

Alex

- An emphasis on mental health as well as physical health as a safeguarding issue, particularly for children returning to school after lockdown
- Additional guidance on information-sharing between agencies if this was in the best interests of a child, even in the absence of parental consent.

The updated Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy was approved by the Governing Body, subject to the addition in paragraph 2.2.3 of Surabhi as the deputy Nominated Governor for Child Protection and Safeguarding. Ken would sign the updated document.

**Alex/
Ken**

9. Policy Review

Governors reviewed a number of additional policies that had been circulated with the agenda:

- Equality Information and Objectives 2019-21 – This was a two-year plan, currently in its second year. Governors noted and confirmed the document.

- Code of Conduct for All Adults – Alex reminded Governors that this document applied to all adults at Homerton, including Governors. The Code was confirmed.
 - Critical Incident Policy – This document was confirmed, subject to the deletion of ‘Vice Chair of Governors’ after ‘Kay Blayney’ on page 5, the members of the Critical Incident Response Team. **Alex**
It was agreed to keep Kay as a member of the team even though she was no longer a Vice-Chair, as it could be useful to have team members who lived close to Homerton.
- Sue would update staff and Governors’ contact details in the team members’ packs and recirculate these. **Sue**
- Alex reported that staff had discussed what would happen if any member of staff needed to self-isolate for two weeks during the pandemic. **Alex**
Ken asked for these contingency plans to be recorded as a written document.

10. Update from Resources Committee

The minutes of the meetings of the Resources Committee held on 13th October 2020 and 24th November 2020 were received. Roger reported that the Committee had:

- Reviewed the COVID-19 risk assessments, including arrangements for staffing and mealtimes. Most notable was the new emphasis being placed on the circulation of fresh air, rather than cleaning surfaces, and the associated challenge of keeping warm when all the windows were open.
- Received an update on the Centre’s financial position. A shortfall of £90-100,000 was forecast for the end of 2020/21, but given the previous year’s carry forward, Homerton’s overall position would remain strong if the pandemic eased in the spring as was hoped. Governors welcomed the update and the clear figures.

Ken noted that the news that supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools would continue for 2021/22 also strengthened Homerton’s financial position. **He encouraged Alex and the staff to continue to propose funding to address areas of need, particularly if pressures were greater than usual due to the current circumstances.**

Alex reported that Bernie Cafferkey had asked for her thanks to be passed on to Governors for the extra time allocated to her for her SENCo role.

11. Any Other Urgent Matters – none.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Monday 8th February 2021 at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm.