

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Zoom on Wednesday 17th March 2021 at 7.30pm

Present

Isa Garcia Crestani, Kate Daenke, Sam Garyali, Tandy Harrison, Roger Lilley, Ken Ong (Chair), Mick Patel, Alex Pearson (Head), Mitali Peckham and Sue Smith

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 Kay Blayney and Eirini Gkouskou. | |
| 2. Declarations of Interest | |
| There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 3. Minutes of 8th February 2021 | |
| The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 8 th February 2021 were approved as a correct record, subject to the correction of 'ad' to 'had' in the second line on page 3. | Gwyneth |
| 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 8th February 2021 | |
| a) Half-term holiday club – This had run with 8 children, resulting in financial break-even. | |
| b) Data – After the previous meeting, Mitali had circulated a report summarising the first term's data. She apologised for not bringing a report on this term's data to this meeting as planned. It was agreed that she would either circulate an update by e-mail or bring a fuller report to the next meeting. | Mitali |
| 5. Head's Report | |
| Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues. | |
| a) Children – Homerton had reopened fully and the atmosphere was positive, with most children settling back in quickly. Parents had reported that the Zoom sessions during lockdown had been very helpful, enabling children to continue to see their teachers. Staff had also made a 'welcome back' video to help children prepare for their return. | |
| Bubbles were being maintained for the time being, with movement of staff between them limited as much as possible. | |
| The Nest was filling up with children who had been due to start in January. | |
| Full wraparound care was running. Currently a maximum of 10 children were attending; the capacity was 16. The Easter holiday club was filling up, which was encouraging. | |
| Offers had been made for places for September, but there were still 23 places left in the nursery and 6 full-time places in the Nest. Efforts were being made to advertise and fill these places. The Rock Allotment Society had agreed that displays about Homerton could be put on fences. A poster had been made and Governors agreed to help display this in the community and to share it via WhatsApp groups. Alex was starting to show parents around Homerton again, which was also expected to help. Governors suggested | |

that word of mouth recommendations by parents could also be very effective. Alex noted that she had asked parents via the weekly bulletin to promote Homerton. Isa reported that parents on a local bilingual WhatsApp group were discussing nurseries and recommending Homerton.

Places offered for September for children with SEND for September meant that there would be 1 child needing 1:1 support in each room and that the nursery would already be at capacity.

- b) **Staff** – Most staff had received their first coronavirus vaccine, meaning that they were feeling more reassured. It was confirmed in response to a question later in the meeting that staff who had received their first vaccine also had their second vaccine booked.

The furloughed lunchtime staff had returned. An advert had been put out for a lunchtime supervisor and 5 applications had been received; interviews would take place shortly. Unsuccessful applicants could be asked if they would be available in September for 1:1 lunchtime support for children.

Two members of staff would be retiring in August, a teacher and a 1:1 teaching assistant, both in East. Both were keen to remain involved with Homerton after retirement. Resources Committee had discussed staffing from September (minute 10 below).

- c) **Parent survey** – The parent survey had been sent out and had included new questions about Homerton's online offer during lockdown. Responses received so far had been very positive.

- d) **Events** – Recent events had included celebrating Chinese New Year and St Patrick's Day. Easter singing and hot cross buns were planned for the following week.

- e) **Twitter curriculum coverage** – Mitali had compiled a document showing how Homerton had covered the curriculum via its Twitter account during lockdown. **Governors welcomed this useful document and suggested that it be put to good use:**

**Mitali/
Alex**

- As a resource for current parents, reminding them of the resources that continued to be available on Twitter
- As information for prospective and new parents about the curriculum and the range of activities at Homerton
- As evidence for Ofsted of good practice during lockdown
- By transferring some of the information and resources it contained to the website.

- f) **Visitors** – A student from the Faculty of Education would be completing their Part 2 placement in East from April to June. Another student from Bedford working on their Early Years Initial Teacher Training would be joining the Nest from 12th April 2021 for one month.

- g) **Centre Development Plan (CDP) and Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)** – Good progress was being made against the CDP and SEF, including work to update the website.

- h) **Website** – Alex and Mitali had had a useful session beginning the review of the website. The aim was to simplify the website and to introduce clearer headings, making it easier to find information. The school photographer would be visiting shortly, which would help with sourcing new photos. It was hoped to complete the website review by May half-term. **Resources Committee had suggested that it would be useful for one or two people not directly involved in the work to provide an external overview.**

Governors

- i) **Data** – Data had been gathered for children attending Homerton in the spring term. It would be interesting at the end of the summer term to compare the progress made by children who had been at Homerton throughout the year and those who had spent time

at home. Teachers were also using the data now to check children's progress, in particular in relation to age-related expectations. **Governors agreed that data remained a useful tool, particularly when it could be used to plan activities and interventions whilst children were still at Homerton.**

Alex noted that recent training on the new EYFS framework had emphasised that Ofsted would be focussing less on data and much more on individual children, both what Homerton knew about them currently and what was being planned for their next steps. PowerPoints from the recent training were available and could be shared with Governors. Two Zoom videos by Julian Grenier, who had been key in developing the new EYFS framework, were also available. Alex noted that the videos highlighted three main points about the new framework:

**Alex/
Governors**

- The greatest emphasis would be on communication and language, enabling children to express how they were feeling
- The aim would be to have less paperwork than previously
- There would be a focus on equality for all and on narrowing the gap, which would be especially relevant following recent lockdowns.

6. Governor Visit Reports

Three Governors visits had been carried out remotely and the reports had been circulated with the agenda. These covered:

Expressive Arts and Design – Kate had monitored Homerton's Twitter feed during lockdown to see how well it had covered expressive arts and design. She reported that she had been very impressed with the range of activities covered, including music, singing, dancing and creative activities. She commented that this was an excellent example of staff at Homerton going above and beyond to support children not in the Centre.

Alex and Mitali both welcomed the suggestions Kate had made in her report. They would add suggestions for messy play such as play dough to the website and would encourage staff to include more bilingual sessions, for example at circle time.

**Alex/
Mitali**

Kay had joined the Zoom meeting celebrating Chinese New Year and her observations were set out in her report.

SEND – Tandy had observed specialist support delivered via Zoom to a child at Homerton, assisted by her teaching assistant. Tandy commended the session as an excellent example of staff working together to respond to the circumstances imposed by the pandemic and to continue to deliver support to children with additional needs. Tandy had also spoken to Bernie Cafferkey, Homerton's SENCo.

Governors asked when specialist staff would be able to resume visits to Homerton. Alex explained that it was hoped that some would be able to return in the summer term, but that NHS speech and language therapists had been told not to resume school visits until September at the earliest, the concern being that adults visiting multiple settings could spread the virus. Capacity was also reduced as some specialist staff had been diverted to work on the coronavirus response.

Governors noted that working with specialists over Zoom presented additional challenges for Homerton staff. Homerton staff were also being asked to carry out more observations themselves and forward their findings to their colleagues, which could be very time-consuming.

7. Update on the Teaching School

The situation in relation to the Cambridge Early Years Teaching School (CEYTS) had been explained by Kay at the previous meeting.

8. Safeguarding

Ken noted that there were no safeguarding issues to raise.

9. Policy Review

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

Health and Safety Policy

- Alex noted that the main change needed to the previous version was in the penultimate bullet point on page 1, to note that accident reporting was now online only, not on paper. **Alex**
- **Governors suggested that some wording be added referring to the pandemic, e.g. that Homerton would follow all Government guidelines relating to the Covid response and that this policy should be read in conjunction with the Covid risk assessment.** **Alex**
- Alex agreed to send a copy of the policy to Mick for review before finalising. **Alex**

SEND Policy – this policy was agreed as circulated.

Twitter Policy

- Governors noted that this policy had been written just before the first lockdown and actively tested since then. As a result, Mitali was proposing a number of amendments to the original documents:
 - To allow users of the Homerton account to favourite or bookmark other sites, for example educational sites, but specifically not parents.
 - To allow personal hardware to be used to access the Homerton account, as it was not practical to limit activity to Homerton devices. Governors noted that the account was password-protected and accessible only to specific Homerton staff. Photographs of children would not be taken or stored on personal devices.
 - To allow retweeting of relevant material, for example relating to World Book Day, mental health etc; but specifically not of parents' tweets.
- Governors endorsed the policy with these amendments. **Mitali/
Alex**

10. Update from Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 9th March 2021 were received.

Roger reported that the Committee's discussion had focussed mainly on how to address the loss of income both in the current year and projected for 2021-22, if the take-up of places did not improve. Governors noted the following carry forward figures:

March 2020	£294,000	
March 2021 (predicted)	£136,000	(-£160,000)
March 2022 (predicted)	£50,000	(-£83,000)

Governors had been advised earlier in the meeting that two staff were due to retire in August, one of them a teacher. In view of this, the Committee had considered three

possible options to respond to the financial situation: to close a class; to recruit replacements for the retiring staff on a like-for-like basis; or a middle option, to reduce staff costs by recruiting a Level 3/4 qualified professional to lead the Nest and moving the teacher currently leading the Nest to work mainly in the nursery, but returning to the Nest for two sessions a week to provide teacher input. Governors noted that the Resources Committee was recommending the middle option.

Governors discussed the following points:

- Noted that a colleague at St Paul's was reporting a reduction in pupil numbers due to fewer academics visiting Cambridge from overseas. It was possible that this was also affecting Homerton and that this situation would improve as the pandemic eased. It was also possible more generally that parents would start to think more about nursery places for their children as the pandemic eased.
- Noted that under the proposed middle option, the Nest would continue to receive qualified teacher input, which was part of its special identity. Other staff continuing in the Nest were also highly qualified and experienced and would continue to provide a stimulating and educational environment for the children.
- Asked whether the current Nest leader was willing to move to spend most of her time in the nursery. Alex confirmed that she was. Governors commented that good management would be essential to ensure that she did not end up working as both a nursery teacher and the Nest leader; Alex recognised this.
- Noted that the local authority required the budgets for the Nest and for the nursery to be kept completely separate. It had also been confirmed that there would be no financial support from the local authority for the Nest, if Homerton were unable to make it financially viable.

Following the discussion, Governors agreed unanimously to support the middle option as outlined above. **Alex**

11. Any Other Urgent Matters – none.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 7.30pm.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm.