

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Zoom on Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 7.30pm

Present

Kay Blayney, Isa Garcia Crestani, Kate Daenke, Sam Garyali, Roger Lilley, Ken Ong (Chair), Mick Patel, 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 the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Eirini Gkouskou and Tandy Harrison. | |
| 2. Declarations of Interest | |
| There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 3. Minutes of 17th March 2021 | |
| The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 17 th March 2021 were approved as a correct record. | |
| 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 17th March 2021 | |
| All matters arising were covered on the agenda. | |
| 5. Parent Governor Update | |
| Governors noted that this was Kate's last meeting, as her term of office would end on 8 th May 2021. Governors thanked Kate for all of her contributions and invited her to attend the July Governing Body meeting, hopefully to be held in person, as an observer. | |
| Governors agreed that parent governor elections should be held in the autumn term, when the new cohort of families had joined Homerton. | Gwyneth/
Alex |
| 6. Head's Report | |
| Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues. | |
| a) Children – The Centre was currently almost full, with only 5 spaces in East Blue and one in South. All children who had been due to start in January were now in. | |
| The holiday club had run for four days at Easter and had made a profit. It would run again for four days at half-term. Places were currently limited to children at Homerton and their siblings, but it was hoped that if the Covid situation continued to ease, it would be possible to offer holiday club places more widely for the summer. | |
| Breakfast club was running from 8.00am and after school provision ran until 5.45pm. Take-up of breakfast club was not high, typically 4 to 6 children, possibly because many parents were still working from home. | |
| The children had been enjoying the Living Eggs project; for the first time, chicks had hatched from all ten eggs. | |
| Numbers for September 2021 had improved considerably since Governors had discussed this at their last meeting. 23 children were now expected for East Red and 24 for East | |

Blue, with 15 children taking up 30-hour places across both rooms, the highest number ever. 24 children were expected for West. South (the morning-only session) had the lowest uptake, with only 12 places filled at present. However, this was expected to improve as the summer term went on. More parents were also inquiring about the Nest and overall the situation felt more optimistic.

Governors thanked all those who had helped with advertising, especially Sue and Kate for their work on posters. Kate asked anyone who noticed that a poster had fallen down to let her know, so that she could replace it. Governors agreed not to make any fresh advertising efforts at present, but to keep this under review.

Governors noted that Brunswick and Colleges had recently had leaflets advertising their nurseries distributed in a number of streets local to Homerton, including Holbrook Road. Alex agreed to speak to Brunswick and Colleges about this.

Alex

- b) **Staff** – Roy, the caretaker, had returned to work and was busy. Current projects included repairs to the back fence and the possible installation of a metal hood in the kitchen.

Two members of staff would be retiring at the end of the summer term. As discussed at the previous Governing Body meeting, Jacqui Shepard, the current Nest leader, would be moving to teach in West. Michelle Cooper, who was currently a classroom teaching assistant, had been appointed as the new Nest leader. The resulting classroom teaching assistant vacancy was currently being advertised. If an internal candidate were to be successful, it would be necessary to advertise again to fill that person's post.

- c) **Centre Development Plan (CDP)** – Good progress was being made against the CDP, with almost all actions green. On actions that were still yellow, Governors noted that:

- The first part of the first aid training for lunchtime supervisors had taken place that day, with the second part planned for 11th May 2021.
- Alex and Mitali's work on the website was on track. The photographer had been in to take pictures for inclusion on the website.
- The review of the Expressive Arts and Design policy was complete and this would be a focus of the staff training day in May.
- It was proposed to review the Equalities Objectives in the autumn term and to implement the updated version from January 2022. Governors noted that it would be necessary to appoint a new Equal Opportunities Governor in the autumn term, who could help to support this process, replacing Kate.
- Helicopter stories for all would be revisited in the next school year. These would be especially relevant given the new EYFS curriculum's emphasis on communication and language.
- Supplementary funding allocations for maintained nursery schools for September 2021 to March 2022 had recently been confirmed.

- d) **Visitors** – Homerton currently had one teacher trainee from the Faculty of Education and another EYITT student from Bedford University. Other external visitors were starting to come to Homerton in person, including the trainee's tutor from the Faculty of Education and a hearing specialist.

- e) **Parents** – The recent parent survey had resulted in a 30% response rate, which was fairly typical. Responses were generally very positive. Governors welcomed this and noted that Alex would be sharing the responses with staff.

Parents' evening sessions would be held in person in the garden in the week beginning 10th May 2021, with calls by phone or on Zoom on offer if parents preferred.

7. Update from Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meeting held on 16th April 2021 were received. Governors noted that:

- The policy on able, gifted and talented children had been reviewed. Governors noted that there was no additional funding to support the most able children and that the new EYFS framework would focus most on narrowing the gap for more vulnerable children. However, Homerton would continue to encourage and stimulate all children according to their needs.
- The Committee meeting's main focus had been on the new EYFS curriculum, which would be coming into effect in September. The local authority had provided overview training for all staff and was also providing training on specific curriculum areas, which individual members of staff were attending and then feeding back on at staff meetings.

It would be necessary to revisit all of Homerton's curriculum policies in light of the new framework. The Maths policy had recently been reviewed but the others were still to be done.

Homerton's approach to Planning in the Moment would also need to be reviewed. The new EYFS framework placed a strong emphasis on adults being with the children and less on documenting observations. Alex and Mitali commented that they welcomed this emphasis as being central to Homerton's own ethos.

- A full data report would be brought to the next Governing Body meeting.

Mitali

8. Update on the Teaching School

Alex reported that the Heads of Cambridgeshire's maintained nursery schools continued to meet on Zoom at least every half-term. One of the issues they were discussing was the succession arrangements to the Teaching School.

Kay explained that she and her colleagues had formed a project management team and were feeding into the Heads' discussions. One model for future arrangements might be a community interest company, i.e. a social enterprise approach. Heads were keen to build capacity so that future initiatives could be led by practising staff as part of their professional development, rather than by bringing in external facilitators.

9. Safeguarding

Ken noted that there were no safeguarding issues to raise. Ken and Alex would liaise to arrange a safeguarding visit before the end of the summer term.

**Ken/
Alex**

10. Update from Resources Committee

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 20th April 2021 were received.

Budget – Three budget documents had been circulated to all Governors:

- Notes from 2020/21
- Budget for 2021/22
- Notes for 2021/22.

Reviewing these documents, Governors discussed the following points:

- The end of year deficit for 2020/21 was £130,000, lower than the £160,000 anticipated at the previous Governing Body meeting. The shortfall was due mainly to loss of income resulting from the pandemic. Homerton's carry forward from 2019/20 meant that this shortfall could be accommodated.
- Part of the deficit was due to increased Covid-related cleaning costs. Governors asked whether any additional funding was available to help meet these increased costs. Alex noted that Homerton had not received any additional funding. She had raised this with the local authority but had been told that as an early years setting, Homerton was not eligible.

Governors agreed that this should be challenged, especially since maintained nursery schools had been required to stay open when other schools had closed from January to March 2021. It was agreed that:

- Sue would prepare figures setting out the additional costs incurred, including higher prices of staples such as wipes and gloves as well as the cost of additional cleaning activity. **Sue**
 - A letter would be sent to the local authority and the local MP, challenging the decision that maintained nursery schools were not eligible for additional funding for Covid-related cleaning costs. The letter should note that in addition to costs already incurred, contributing to the 2020/21 deficit, costs were expected to be ongoing as schools learned to live with Covid and so should be taken into account in future budgets. **Alex/
Ken**
 - Alex would ask other Cambridgeshire maintained nursery Heads if they also wanted to provide figures and sign the letter. **Alex**
- The budget proposals for 2021/22 had been prepared on the basis of 75% occupancy, which would mean a year-end deficit of £40,000. 80% occupancy was needed to achieve breakeven. In practice, the recent increase in take-up of places for 2021/22 meant that the end of year position was likely to be a surplus. It was possible that additional income would also be received, such as funding for SEND children, which had not been included in the proposals.

Governors thanked Sue for the helpful notes accompanying the budget and agreed unanimously

To approve the budget proposals for 2021/22.

Financial benchmarking – Financial benchmarking information for all schools, including maintained nursery schools, was available on the internet. Current figures covered 2019/20, with figures for 2020/21 due to be added in September. Sue agreed to provide the link to the website for circulation to all Governors. Ken noted that the benchmarking information for Homerton showed that the Centre spent less than other maintained nursery schools in Cambridgeshire on teachers, especially senior teachers. This was mainly because Homerton's management structure did not include a deputy Head, leaving scope for some alternative spending to strengthen leadership. **Sue/
Gwyneth**

Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) – Ken confirmed that he would work with Sue to submit the SFVS to the local authority by the end of May. **Sue/
Ken**

Head's performance management – Alex agreed to contact the external assessor to arrange a Head's performance management review for September. She and Roger would also discuss whether to arrange an interim review, recommended as best practice, after 21st June 2021 and before the end of term. **Alex/
Roger**

11. Health and Safety Policy

Governors had reviewed the Health and Safety Policy at the previous meeting and had agreed to add wording referring to the pandemic, stating 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. The Policy was confirmed, subject to this amendment.

Governors agreed that Homerton's legal responsibilities relating to health and safety further strengthened the action agreed above, to seek funding for additional Covid-related cleaning costs.

12. Any Other Urgent Matters

In-person events for new children and families – Alex reported that at the staff meeting earlier that evening, staff had suggested that the new parents' evening on 24th June 2021 be held in person in the garden. Governors welcomed this suggestion. Governors also noted that it was hoped to carry out home visits for new children in September. Governors agreed that future plans should be made as normal but that everyone should remain aware that circumstances might change.

Next Governing Body meeting – Ken suggested that at the next meeting, Governors should review the range of changes to practice made in response to the pandemic, for example alternative drop-off, pick-up and lunchtime arrangements, and agree which should continue as best practice in September.

**Ken/
Alex**

13. Date of Next Meeting

The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Monday 12th July 2021 at 7.30pm, in person at Homerton if the easing of lockdown restrictions permitted.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.