

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at the Centre on Monday 12th July 2021 at 7.30pm

Present

Kay Blayney (from 7.45pm), Isa Garcia Crestani, Sam Garyali, Tandy Harrison, Roger Lilley, Ken Ong (Chair), Mick Patel, Alex Pearson (Head), Mitali Peckham, Surabhi Singh and Sue Smith (from 8.05pm)

By invitation: Kate Daenke

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

Action

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Kate who was attending as a guest following the end of her term of office. An apology for absence was received from Rinchen Ato.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of 28th April 2021

The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 28th April 2021 were approved as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 28th April 2021

a) **Brunswick and Colleges leaflets** – The distribution by Brunswick and Colleges of leaflets advertising their nurseries in a number of streets local to Homerton had not been pursued. No further leaflets had been distributed.

b) **COVID cleaning costs** – Following discussion at the last Governing Body meeting, Sue had calculated the costs incurred by Homerton for additional cleaning due to COVID, approximately £2,000. These costs had been discussed at Resources Committee and Governors had agreed, given Homerton's relatively strong financial position, not to seek reimbursement from the local authority. The costs incurred would continue to be monitored.

Governors were advised that children at Homerton used soap, not hand sanitiser, to clean their hands. There was some evidence that this was a more effective form of infection control. Repeated use of hand sanitiser could also make children's skin sore. Some parents were providing soap for sensitive skin, which staff helped children to use.

Governors also noted that following the Government announcement earlier in the day that almost all COVID restrictions were to be dropped, new guidance was likely to be issued by the NHS and the local authority. Alex reported that there was a COVID meeting with the local authority planned for the following day and another in September.

5. Governor Appointments

Governors noted that Kay's term of office as a co-opted governor would end on 31st August 2021. Kay confirmed that she would be standing down, but would continue to support Homerton within the community. Governors thanked Kay for all of her contributions and wished her well for her future plans.

Governors noted that following the end of Kate's term of office, there was currently one parent governor vacancy. Rinchen's term of office as a parent governor was due to end on 4th December 2021. It was agreed to run elections for the two parent governor vacancies immediately after the October half-term, which should mean that the newly elected governors would be able to attend the December Governing Body meeting.

Gwyneth/
Alex

The co-opted governor vacancy arising from Kay's departure would also be considered in the autumn term. If there were more expressions of interest from parents than parent governor posts, it might be possible to make a co-option on the basis of relevant skills and experience.

6. Head's Report

Alex briefed Governors on the following issues:

- a) **Children** – A number of positive events had taken place or were planned, including the Really Wheelie event, Claytime, butterfly hatching and a goodbye singing event on 21st July 2021.

Staff at Homerton were working with primary school staff to support children's transitions to school and a Reception teacher from Morley (Homerton's main destination school) had visited.

Uptake of holiday club over the summer was expected to be good, with days either full or almost full.

Numbers of children for September 2021 were good, with most classes full or almost full. The exception was South, the morning-only class, which currently had 17 children. The Nest was virtually full. Home visits and drop-in sessions were being planned for September for new children.

- b) **Staff** – Staffing arrangements for September had been confirmed.

Kate would be joining as a teaching assistant providing 1:1 support for a child in West.

Homerton was currently looking for lunchtime supervisors to work three days a week from 11.30am to 1.00pm. The vacancies had already been advertised in the weekly newsletter. Governors agreed also to promote them via the nursery and Nest WhatsApp groups and by word of mouth.

All
Governors

All staff would be taking part in first aid training on 6th and 7th September 2021.

Performance appraisals for Alex and other staff were being arranged for the autumn term.

- c) **Website** – The new website had gone live earlier that day. Governors spent some time reviewing it and congratulated Alex and Mitali on their work, noting that the new website had beautiful photos and many more than previously; was easy to navigate; had good internal links; translated instantly into numerous languages; and reflected the warmth, diversity and inclusivity of the Centre. Governors especially commended Alex's welcome to parents and the Life at Homerton section.

Governors asked how the new website would be launched and advertised. Alex explained that it had already been trailed in the newsletter for parents. It was planned to include links to specific pages in later newsletters. Governors suggested that the website could be shared with children at Homerton, to encourage them to talk about it with their families. Governors agreed to promote it on the nursery and Nest WhatsApp groups. It was also suggested that it should be advertised to partners, including

Alex/
Mitali/
All
Governors

university partners such as the Faculty of Education and Bedford, other nursery schools and local primary schools.

d) **New EYFS framework** – The new EYFS framework would apply from September. Staff had already received some training and this would be ongoing during the next school year. Alex explained that the content was not new but that there was a refocussing, particularly:

- On communication and language, as the basis for all progress, and on identifying children with barriers to learning, for example because of SEND or social reasons.
- To reduce the amount of time spent by staff on written assessments. Ofsted inspectors would expect staff to be able to tell individual children's stories: where they had started on entering the nursery, where they were currently and what the nursery's plans and aims for them were. Governors noted that staff would be supported in practising the telling of children's stories, for example to colleagues in other rooms.

A summary for Governors of key points about the new EYFS framework had been circulated with the agenda and would be added to the Ofsted folder in Alex's office.

e) **Homerton's curriculum goals** – These had been discussed at Curriculum Committee and circulated with the agenda. Governors asked how they had been developed. Alex explained that they were based on work by Julian Grenier for his nursery school, Sheringham Nursery in Newham. Julian Grenier had been key in developing the new EYFS framework. Governors noted that most of the goals mapped directly onto aspects of the new framework, but asked about maths and number. Mitali explained that maths and number should be embedded into all activities at Homerton, for example counting children or dividing food.

It was suggested that the goals could be used by staff to track children's progress, by simple highlighting of the steps achieved. Alex noted Homerton staff were reflecting on what data gathering might be done from September, since data could still be useful for assessing the Centre's progress and to share with parents and schools. She noted that Planning in the Moment, already used by Homerton, helped to engage parents and that children's special books were also important records.

f) **Centre Development Plan (CDP) and Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)** – The CDP and SEF for 2020-21 and the draft CDP for 2021-22 had been circulated with the agenda. On the draft CDP for 2021-22, Alex reported two proposed additions:

- Makaton training, which had been requested by staff and linked well to the new EYFS framework's emphasis on communication and language. This had been booked for 4th January 2022.
- Additional support for parents, which would be led by a member of staff who had previously been a family worker, possibly in the form of monthly parenting drop-in sessions.

Alex would bring the CDP and SEF for 2021-22 to the next meeting.

Alex

g) **Equality and Diversity Policy** – Governors reviewed this policy and:

- Noted that Homerton's current Equalities Objectives covered 2019-21. Staff were required to take part in equalities training every three years and this was next due in the school year 2022-23. Alex proposed that the document and training cycles be aligned, so that the Objectives were next fully revised in September 2022. Governors agreed that this was sensible but asked for the Objectives to be brought for brief review in the autumn of 2021 to ensure that they remained fit for purpose.

Alex

- Discussed whether more detail should be added on the procedure followed when staff encountered prejudice expressed by children. Alex explained that there was a clear procedure in place, which included making and filing a written record in the PRIDE book and involving parents, as well as softer measures such as approaching the issue through choice and discussion of stories at circle time. Governors asked Alex and Mitali to consider adding an appendix to the Policy setting out these measures.
- Noted that following the end of Kate's term of office, a new lead governor for Equality and Diversity would need to be appointed at the September meeting.

Alex/
Mitali

7. Update from Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meeting held on 18th June 2021 were received.

Tandy paid tribute to Alex, Mitali and all staff for their achievement in continuing to deliver the curriculum during a very challenging year; maintaining contact with families during lockdown, including those with additional barriers to learning; managing the phased return of children to the Centre; and settling everyone back in.

Tandy noted that the Curriculum Committee had reviewed the new EYFS framework and Curriculum goals, as discussed above. The Committee had also talked about what data might be gathered in future and how it might be used.

Tandy commented that it had been a strange year for Governors in that they had not been able to visit the nursery to see the curriculum being delivered. She suggested and the Governing Body agreed that it should be a priority for Governor visits to resume as COVID restrictions eased. Governors suggested that Governor visits could also be an opportunity for staff to practise telling individual children's stories, as required by the new EYFS framework. It was agreed that the Governor visit template would be amended to include this.

Alex

The Committee had reviewed two policies:

Teaching English as an Additional Language – Governors asked whether Makaton could help with children who were learning English as an additional language. Tandy explained that Makaton was a simplified sign language, usually used with children who had difficulties with speech. However, Governors noted that if the use of Makaton were to become embedded more widely at Homerton, used by staff and by children between themselves, it could also benefit children who were learning English as an additional language and promote inclusivity.

Kay noted that one of the current year's EYITT students had written a paper on the links between Makaton and EAL. She agreed to ask the student if the paper could be shared with Governors and to invite her to give a presentation at the Homerton staff training day on 4th January 2022.

Kay/
Alex

Biting – Ken asked for clarification to be added of how the first aid response would differ depending on the severity of a bite, specifically whether the skin had been broken. He agreed to send Alex some proposed wording.

Ken

Subject to these points, the policies were approved.

8. Safeguarding

Two Safeguarding reports had been circulated with the agenda:

- Annual Safeguarding Monitoring Report, as submitted to the local authority
- Safeguarding Governor Monitoring Report

As the Lead Governor for Child Protection and Safeguarding, Ken introduced his report. Governors discussed the following:

- Expressed concern that Liquid logic, the system designed for information-sharing between partners, remained difficult to use and a potential barrier to effective safeguarding. Alex noted that staff at Homerton sometimes had to send e-mails instead of using the system. She had raised concerns with the local authority on numerous occasions. She had also discussed these concerns with the other nursery school Heads and a face to face training session was now planned for September.
- Noted that Governors were required to take part in Prevent training every three years and that this was next due in February 2022. All Governors should also be aware of safeguarding policies and procedures. As Deputy Lead Governor for Child Protection and Safeguarding, Surabhi agreed to lead a 30-minute session on Prevent and safeguarding at the February 2022 Governing Body meeting.
- Agreed that Ken would add a note to the Monitoring Report that his visit had included a review of the Single Central Record.

Surabhi

Ken

9. Update from Resources Committee

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 15th June 2021 were received.

Roger reported that the Centre's position remained financially secure, despite the challenges arising from the COVID pandemic. He paid tribute to the resilience of the staff, who had ensured that the Centre had continued to function and had developed new skills and new approaches to engage children and families, which would continue to be of benefit in the future.

A budget report had been circulated, covering the three months from April to June 2021. Sue reported that there were no particular causes of concern at this stage. Take-up of the summer holiday club was expected to be strong.

Kay noted that the Save Nursery Schools campaign was gearing up again. Governors were reminded that the supplementary funding for maintained nursery schools was guaranteed only until April 2022 and that the local authority was facing severe financial pressures. Kay had recently spoken to Felicity Higginson, who would be retiring from Homerton at the end of term; Felicity had asked Kay specifically to remind Governors of the need to continue to campaign for the long-term financial security of maintained nursery schools. Felicity had also asked Kay to place on record her thanks to Alex for all her support as Head.

10. Data Reports

Mitali tabled reports from Target Tracker summarising progress against age-related expectations made by children in the nursery and in the Nest. Governors discussed the following points:

- Overall, the proportion of children whose attainment was at or above age-related expectations was lower than in the previous year. This was not surprising given that, due to the pandemic and lockdown, many had received only two terms of education instead of three.
- In both the nursery and the Nest, significant numbers of children had still made 4 to 6 steps of progress.

- Staff had looked at each individual child for whom no steps of progress had been recorded. Some of these children had not been attending or had left; other had identified special educational needs; in one case, a child had come in with Maths already at a very high level and so had appeared not to progress according to the measures used.
- Attainment had been compared for autumn-, spring- and summer-born children. In the nursery, summer-born children had made good progress but had not quite caught up with their older peers. In the Nest, the gap in attainment for summer-born children was greater, but this was to be expected for such young children.

Mitali also tabled a chart comparing the progress made by children who had attended Homerton from January to March 2021 with that made by the children who had been at home due to the pandemic. She explained that this was a relatively small sample, showing only nursery children who had started in September 2020 and would be leaving in July 2021; 30 had attended during lockdown and 44 had been at home. Across all of the prime areas, the progression of children who had attended Homerton was greater than that of those who had been at home.

Mitali commented that this had been a unique opportunity to try and quantify the value to children of attending nursery. However, she also emphasised that it was not possible to quantify the benefits that children might have had from being at home more, for example through spending more time with parents and siblings and strengthening family bonds.

Governors thanked Mitali for her work and commented that in future data could still be useful in helping staff and Governors to assess children's progress.

11. Review of the Year

Ken reminded Governors that it was useful for the Governing Body to reflect annually on its practice. He invited Governors to record on Post It notes their thoughts on three questions:

- What have you learned about working during the COVID pandemic?
- What new ways of life (since the start of COVID) would you like to continue post COVID restrictions?
- What do we need to watch out for, or catch up on, post COVID restrictions?

A summary of Governors' contributions is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

12. Any Other Urgent Matters – none.

13. Dates of Future Meetings

It was agreed that future Governing Body meetings would be held at 7.30pm on:

- Monday 20th September 2021
- Wednesday 8th December 2021
- Monday 7th February 2022
- Wednesday 16th March 2022
- Wednesday 27th April 2022
- Tuesday 12th July 2022

The meeting ended at 9.30pm.