

## Homerton Early Years Centre

### Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Zoom on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 7.30pm

#### **Present**

Isa Garcia Crestani, Stefania Deidda, Sam Garyali, Tandy Harrison, Elizabeth Head, Roger Lilley, Amy Mehta, Ken Ong (Chair), Alex Pearson (Head), Mick Patel and Surabhi Singh (until 8.20pm)

Present by invitation: Suzy Hughes

#### Governors' challenge highlighted in green

#### **1. Briefing on Prevent**

As Homerton's Deputy Lead Governor for Safeguarding and Child Protection, Surabhi gave a briefing on Prevent, the part of the Government's CONTEST programme for countering terrorism aimed at safeguarding and supporting those most at risk of radicalisation. The slides of her presentation are attached as Appendix A to these minutes.

#### **2. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Suzy Hughes, who would be taking over from Sue Smith as Office Manager in the summer term. Apologies for absence were received from Eirini Gkouskou, Mitali Peckham and Sue Smith.

#### **3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **4. Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 were approved as a correct record.

#### **5. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

##### **a) Lead Governor for Equal Opportunities/Monitoring Racial Incidents – Isa had met with Liz Greenhalgh and Mitali for a useful discussion. Governors noted that:**

- Isa was a member of several parents' WhatsApp groups and could be a useful link between parents and staff. She encouraged all parents to contact staff directly where appropriate.
- One parent had particularly welcomed Homerton's use of Makaton as a means of communicating with their non-verbal child.
- Continuing high Covid levels meant that a full International Day was unlikely to be possible this year, but Isa and Stefania were keen to help organise a more informal event in the park before the end of the summer term, drawing in the wider community and also helping to raise funds. They would discuss this further with Alex.

Isa/  
Stefania/  
Alex

It was agreed to confirm Isa's appointment as Lead Governor for Equal Opportunities/Monitoring Racial Incidents.

#### **6. Head's Report**

Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues:

##### **a) Children – Governors noted that:**

- The nursery was almost full at present, with only one vacancy due to a child moving away to Ipswich. The Nest was also almost full, with the two available places currently being offered out.
- 61 of the 96 places in the nursery had been offered for September 2022. Alex was continuing to receive enquiries and to show parents round. Take-up would be reviewed in April/May to determine whether an advertising campaign was needed. All places in The Nest had been offered for September.

**b) Staffing** – Governors noted that:

- Sue Smith, the Office Manager, would be leaving at the end of term to spend more time with her family. Suzy Hughes would be taking on her role with Melody Wright backfilling Suzy's role; this arrangement would be kept under review. Sue would be staying on one day a week for the summer term to help with the handover and both Suzy and Melody were attending relevant training courses.
- Alex thanked Mitali for stepping up whilst she had been absent due to Covid. She and Sue had both tested positive and there was also a cluster of six Covid cases amongst children in West room.
- Julie Beattie, a teaching assistant in The Nest, would be leaving at the end of the week to return to a secondary school role. Laura Webb, currently a 1:1 TA in East Room, would be moving across to the Nest. The vacancy in East Room had been advertised unsuccessfully. The post would be advertised again and it was hoped that the lunchtime supervisors would be able to help. A new lunchtime supervisor was also needed for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday lunchtimes.
- A teacher trainee from the Faculty of Education had just started and would be at Homerton until June.
- Alex and Mitali were making enquiries about a possible new music teacher for September 2022.

**c) Parents** – In-person events for parents were starting to resume, including parents' evenings over the previous two weeks. Parents were also starting to come into the Centre to collect their children at the end of Owlets. Fran Crouch was running an in-person parenting course consisting of three sessions with a group of 6-8 parents. She had just completed the first cycle of this and was beginning the second.

The parent survey had gone out and findings would be reported to Governors in due course.

**d) Events** – Governors noted that:

- Marion Leeper had given story telling sessions for the children in the orchard garden. This had been funded by an Arts Council grant.
- Bernie Cafferkey's niece had led Irish dancing sessions, which had been very well received.
- The Eggstravaganza event for children and parents would take place in the garden on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022. Stefania and Isa agreed to run a cake stall at the event to raise funds for Ukraine. Alex would include an item in this week's bulletin asking parents for cake contributions.
- An event would be arranged to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

**Stefania/  
Isa/  
Alex**

- e) **Centre Development Plan (CDP)** – Governors noted that actions not yet started related primarily to engagement, which was more challenging at present due to Covid. Governors welcomed the increasing opportunities for face-to-face meetings with parents, such as the recent parents’ evenings. It was noted that a date had now been set for Curriculum Committee; the Committee would be asked to review plans for Governor visits and to get these underway when possible. Isa noted that she would be coming in on a monthly basis to read to the children. Stefania would also be coming in to share songs and games.
- f) **Fundraising** – Isa and Stefania suggested that it might be possible to raise funds for Homerton via Amazon Smile, a scheme under which Amazon customers nominated a good cause to receive a percentage contribution linked to their online purchases. Governors questioned whether it was possible to do this unless a formal registered charity. Isa and Stefania noted that the arrangement was being used by other local schools and agreed to find out about how they did this.

Isa/  
Stefania

7. **Safeguarding** – No issues to report.

8. **Update from Resources Committee**

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022 were received.

**Heating and lighting** – Roger briefed Governors on recent discussions relating to Homerton’s heating and lighting. Central Government was offering Homerton a grant, topped up by the local authority, totalling £178,279, for a complete overhaul of heating and lighting to reduce carbon footprint and to save money. Homerton had been asked to make a contribution of £23,025, payable back to the County Council as a loan over 20 years at a very low interest rate. This offer compared very favourably with the cost of replacing the boiler alone, approximately £48,000.

An initial meeting had taken place with Bouygues, the County Council’s contractor, and a follow-up meeting with County Council representatives. The County Council had asked for a quick decision from Homerton on an initial contract, to enable supply chains to be triggered for the work to be carried out during the summer holidays. Governors had therefore agreed at Resources Committee to sign an initial contract with Bouygues and the County Council, to ensure that the technical assessment could take place as soon as possible. If this assessment supported the contractor’s initial estimate of likely carbon and financial savings then the works would go ahead over the summer.

The proposal would mean that the Centre retained a gas boiler but that as much of the heating as possible would be sourced from an air heat source pump. The lighting would be switched to LED lighting and photovoltaic panels would be installed on the roof, the electricity from which would be used in part to power the air heat source pump. Financial savings would be guaranteed by Bouygues, who would reimburse Homerton if they were not as high as anticipated.

Governors welcomed the commitment to greener energy and financial efficiency and endorsed the proposal to proceed.

**Sandpit** – Governors noted that Resources Committee had agreed to accept a quote of approximately £7,500 to replace the wooden sandpit in the Nest garden, as it was rotten.

**Schools Financial Value Standard** – Ken shared this document and e-mailed it to all Governors. He explained that it was an annual audit of funding and spending, requiring the Governing Body’s approval before submission to the local authority. This year’s document was based on that for 2020/21, which had been delayed due to the pandemic. Governors noted in the section on comparisons that Homerton was broadly in line with similar schools, with the following exceptions:

- Spend on teaching resources was relatively low, possibly because comparison was being made with other settings for older children. Governors noted that this was kept under review and that funding was available if additional resources were needed.
- The in-year balance for 2020/21 showed a loss of £130,000. This was due to lost income during the most restrictive period of the pandemic. It was viewed that 2020/21 was an exceptional year and it was expected that the current year would result in a balanced budget.
- Homerton was in the lowest 20% of similar schools for teacher costs; this was thought to be due at least in part from the savings arising from not appointing a Deputy Head.

Governors agreed that the SVFS should be submitted to the local authority.

**Ken**

## 9. Policy Review

Governors approved the following policies, subject to the points noted:

- **Special Educational Needs/Disability Policy** – reference on page 2 to an Education, Health and Care Plan formerly being known as a Statement of Special Educational Needs to be removed. **Alex**
- **Disciplinary Procedure Relating to Misconduct for All Employees**
- **Health and Safety Policy** – Mick confirmed that he would arrange a Health and Safety visit in the summer term. Governors noted that the Covid risk assessment was updated frequently and stood as an appendix to the main Health and Safety Policy. **Mick/Alex**
- **Use of Twitter Policy** – Alex would check with Mitali whether the password had been changed at the start of the academic year, as stated in the policy.
- **Admissions into The Nest** – It was agreed to amend the wording to make it clear that children were eligible to enter The Nest the term after their second birthday, rather than as soon as they turned two (in line with children joining the nursery the term after their third birthday), unless spaces were available, which was not currently the case. **Alex/Suzy**
- **Over-Subscription Criteria**

## 10. Any Other Urgent Matters

**Early Years Foundation Stage training** – Stefania had e-mailed Governors the slides of a local authority training session she had recently attended on the Early Years Foundation stage.

## 11. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next Governing Body meeting would take place on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 7.30pm. It was agreed to invite Sue Smith to attend as a guest, if by this time she had stepped down as staff governor.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm.