

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at Homerton on Tuesday 11th July 2023 at 7.30pm

Present

Isa Garcia Crestani, Stefania Deidda, Sam Garyali, Suzy Hughes, Roger Lilley, Ken Ong (Chair), Mick Patel, Alex Pearson (Head), Rob Payne (from 7.45pm) and Mitali Peckham

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Eirini Gkouskou, Tandy Harrison, Elizabeth Head and Surabhi Singh.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of 26th April 2023

The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 26th April 2023 were approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendment to Minute 7 b), bullet point 4, second paragraph:

Alex explained that staff could be eligible for a grant if their ~~household~~ individual income was less than £27,000.

As an update to this item, Alex reported that a member of staff was currently talking to Cambridge Regional College about studying for a Level 3 Childcare qualification. It was possible that another funding stream would be available, meaning that there would be no cost to the individual.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 26th April 2023

a) **Health and safety visit** – Mick and Sam, the Lead and Deputy Lead Governors for Health and Safety, had visited the Centre for the annual health and safety visit. They had checked both physical equipment and documentation and had found all to be in order.

b) **Financial responsibilities document** – Roger confirmed that this had been reviewed by Resources Committee and that there were no issues outstanding.

All other matters arising were covered on the agenda.

5. Co-opted Governor

Mick Patel's term of office as a co-opted Governor was due to end on 31st August 2023. Mick confirmed that he was happy to serve another term. Governors thanked Mick for his long service and contributions to date.

It was agreed unanimously to appoint Mick Patel to another term of office as a co-opted Governor when his current term ends on 31st August 2023.

Gwyneth

6. Head's Report

Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues:

a) Children

- Work to support transitions was almost complete. Reception teachers had visited Homerton and Nest children had visited the nursery. A number of transition meetings to support children with SEND had taken place. Governors noted that five children would be leaving Homerton with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) already in place. Governors thanked Bernie Cafferkey for all her work to achieve this. Governors also thanked staff for their work on children's reports and special books.
- Mitali had finished entering end of year data for the current cohort and this would be shared with Governors in due course. Governors noted that:
 - Staff were continuing to review Homerton's use of data, given that this was no longer specifically requested by Ofsted and that the age bands for recording were now very wide. Despite this, staff felt that data continued to be useful, as evidence of children's progression and to flag where additional support might be needed.
 - A decision had been taken not to gather mid-year data in 2022/23, meaning that only entry and exit data were available. Staff had agreed that mid-year data would still be useful and so collecting this would resume for 2023/24.
 - Teachers would be asked to enter their own data in future, as this would be more time-efficient.
- Classes were full for September, although there might be some slight movement over the summer. Home visits were planned for September for children who were new to Homerton. The settling in process would be slightly shorter than in previous years, complete by the end of September and not extending into October. Breakfast and after school provisions were also full for September and holiday club was expected to be full over the summer.

b) Events

- Every class had been on a trip to Nightingale Park and the trips had been very successful. Children had walked to the park and had taken part in a number of activities organised by Homerton, including drawing, craft, a treasure hunt and a nature story. Governors noted that the park trips had replaced trips in previous years to Wandlebury. Coach costs had become very expensive and the park was a good alternative, with families encouraged to visit again in their own time.
- Really Wheelie had raised £1,300, of which £900 would be used to buy a defibrillator for the Centre. The remaining money would be used to pay for Claytime.
- A singing and goodbye event would be taking place on 12th July 2023. Claytime artists would be visiting on 19th July 2023, the last day of term. Staff would decide whether parents should be invited for this.

Alex

c) Staffing

- One member of staff was retiring at the end of term after 22 years at Homerton. She had agreed to come back on a supply basis and as a volunteer supporting SEND groups.
- A teacher was leaving at the end of term to work for the University. She would be replaced by a member of staff currently working as a teaching assistant, who was a qualified teacher. The new appointment would initially be made for one year, with the costs to be reviewed in April 2024.

- Two current members of staff and one new member of staff would begin working as 1:1 teaching assistants from September and would receive additional support to help them in their new roles.
- It was currently expected that there would be enough lunchtime supervisors from September.
- The local authority would be running child protection training for all staff on 5th September 2023 from 9.00am to 12.00pm. Governors were also encouraged to attend if available.
- The Head's performance management meeting had been arranged for 18th September 2023.

**All
Governors**

d) Centre Development Plan (CDP)

Most actions on the CDP for 2022/23 were green. A small number remained yellow:

- Installation of the air source heat pump – A meeting would be taking place on 13th July 2023 to advise staff on how this work would progress over the summer. Homerton was being well supported by the new property management company, Cath Conlan, whose representatives would attend. **Sam gave his apologies for the meeting but asked to be kept briefed.** Alex noted that scaffolding would be going up on 19th July 2023, the last day of term, with safety precautions in place.
- Ofsted readiness – Maintained nursery schools were supposed to be inspected every three years, meaning that Ofsted's next visit could be as early as next year.

Governors noted that the 2023/24 CDP had been drafted with Ofsted readiness in mind. Alex particularly highlighted:

- Quality of education:
 - Communication and literacy skills, with a focus on discussion in class, engaging children in 'conversational tennis'
 - Promoting live theatre, drawing on staff and Governors' skills
 - Ensuring that Curriculum goals were fully embedded through the planning process, a comment Ofsted had made on their previous visit
 - Engaging parents, by sharing information with them; inviting them in to share stories, cuisine and other aspects of their culture; and through termly information sharing sessions for parents of children with SEND led by external professionals such as speech and language therapists and educational psychologists
 - Running new small groups for children on the autistic spectrum using 'Play Circles' material shared by the local authority.
 - Keeping the outdoor area refreshed as a learning space
 - Fortnightly planning across the Centre to share ideas and avoid duplication of effort
 - Reviewing the assessment process and the format of reports in the summer term. Governors noted that three different formats had been used this year; the aim was to settle on one, involving staff and Curriculum Committee Governors in this decision.
- Vision:
 - Planning for Government funding proposals from April 2024 – Alex explained that free 15- and 30-hour places for all 2 year olds were due to start from April 2024, being fully rolled out by September 2024. If implemented at Homerton, this would have severe consequences for the

Centre's budget: parents of privately funded 2 year olds currently paid £9.00 an hour, but the Government was expected to fund to only £5.50-£6.00 an hour. Governors noted that no maintained nursery school nationally would be able to remain viable on this basis. Staff had raised the issue with Ray Byford, the local authority financial adviser, and he was pursuing it.

- Leadership and management:
 - The move to new catering arrangements – The current provider proposed to increase their service charge from £500 to £12,000 a year, making their service unaffordable. Alex had pursued a number of alternative options and with advice from Ray Byford, had concluded that the best option was to bring the service in-house, with the two staff currently employed by the service provider transferring over via TUPE. Food to be prepared would be ordered from Bidfood on a two-week rolling menu.

Governors expressed concern at the substantial increase to the service charge from the current provider, which seemed intended to drive smaller schools to terminate their contracts. The TUPE process would involve considerable work, including meetings with trade union and other representatives and a formal consultation process, even though the staff involved were happy to be brought in-house. Concern was also expressed that the staff might be difficult to replace in future. Alex noted that other options could then be revisited if necessary, such as heating chilled food or operating as a satellite of Morley.

Alex noted two additional points she would add to the new CDP:

Alex

- Ensuring that every child had the opportunity to take part in music sessions, now that the new music teacher was in place
- The use to be made of the Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP), especially for the Life Skills through Movement sessions.

Governors asked whether too many actions had been included on the new CDP, making it overly ambitious. Alex and Mitali explained that the majority of actions were those the Centre was already planning to deliver, usefully documented in preparation for Ofsted. The only additional initiatives for 2023/24 were the new group for parents of children with SEND and the Play Circles groups.

7. Update from Curriculum Committee

The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meeting held on 27th June 2023 were received. The following points were highlighted:

- Tandy and Elizabeth had carried out a joint Governor visit on 13th June 2023 to see a session led by the new music teacher, Davina. Their report had been discussed at Curriculum Committee and circulated with the Governing Body agenda. Alex had discussed the report's observations with Davina, particularly in relation to the new cohort of children who would be starting in September.
- The Committee had reviewed three policies: Teaching English as an Additional Language; Independent Learning; and the Overarching Policy Document relating to the curriculum.
- As discussed at Committee, Mitali had spoken to the teacher who would be leaving at the end of term to gather her views on the South Room Red group arrangement.

Alex had also given the teacher an exit questionnaire and had offered her an exit interview.

8. Safeguarding

Ken reported that there were no safeguarding concerns to raise. He presented two safeguarding reports:

a) **Governor visit on safeguarding** – As Lead and Deputy Lead Governors on Safeguarding and Child Protection, Ken and Surabhi had carried out their annual safeguarding visit on 30th June 2023. They had not identified any issues of concern. Ken highlighted the following points:

- It was being suggested that a lower threshold be used to share safeguarding concerns with external colleagues, since small pieces of evidence could together form a significant picture. As it could be difficult to get Social Services involved, health visitors were being recommended as useful contacts: Surabhi had noted that GPs with concerns could ask a health visitor to carry out an additional visit for a low-key check. Health visitors were no longer linked to specific GP surgeries but were employed directly by the local authority.

It was suggested that it might also be useful to invite a health visitor to the proposed parents' SEND group, to discuss what support they could provide for children with SEND.

Alex

- Staff training was in hand: staff were required to receive full safeguarding training every three years, with annual refreshers. Governors also needed to be kept up to date but there were no specific requirements. Ken noted that he and Surabhi both received professional safeguarding updates. Surabhi had run a training session for all Governors in March 2022. It was suggested that a light-touch training session for Governors would be useful in the next school year, possibly based on an anonymised case study. Governors were also reminded of the invitation to attend the staff training session on 5th September 2023.

Ken/Alex

**All
Governors**

b) **Annual safeguarding monitoring report** – The annual safeguarding monitoring report was received.

Alex reminded Governors that Ofsted could check their awareness of safeguarding procedures. She reminded Governors that there were five designated Safeguarding leads amongst the staff, with at least one present at all times that the Centre was open, including during morning and evening care and during holiday clubs.

It was suggested that it would be useful to include a copy of the annual safeguarding report in the Governors' file on preparing for Ofsted.

Alex

9. Update from Resources Committee

The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 12th June 2023 were received, together with a chart of accounts review from FMS and a summary of cost increases from April 2023.

Governors were advised that the local authority was switching to a new budgeting system but that the new system, SBS, was not yet functional for schools. Homerton's budget had been uploaded to SBS but not staffing, meaning that the full picture was not available. Ray Byford, the local authority financial adviser, would be working over the summer to get the system operational and would be meeting with Alex and Suzy in early September. Suzy noted that whilst it was frustrating that the new system was not yet working, she had received training on it and was expecting it to be very useful once up and running.

Governors were also advised that Resources Committee had looked at the significant cost increases faced by the Centre. Most were not within the Centre's control, but staff were making every effort to maximise income by ensuring that the Centre would be full from the start of next term.

Governors had noted at the previous meeting that there had been a £40,000 reduction to Homerton's income from the local authority in 2022/23, due to a change to the census rules. A solution had been found to this issue and a similar deficit was not expected to occur in 2023/24.

10. Policy Review

Governors discussed two policies:

a) Acceptable Use Agreement: Use of WhatsApp Groups for Classes

Governors noted that the drafting of this agreement had been prompted by an incident at Homerton, which had been managed by staff at the time but about which a parent had later posted inappropriately on a class WhatsApp group.

Class WhatsApp groups differed from other social media used by Homerton, in that they were not organised or run by the Centre, and parents participated in them much more actively than on Homerton's other social media sites. Although staff encouraged parents to use the groups, as they were an effective means of sharing information and organising social events, the groups were administered by parent Governors from their personal phones. This meant that Homerton could not prescribe how the groups were used, nor directly manage their membership or content.

Governors recognised the challenges of clarifying ownership of and managing these groups. They thanked Mitali for her work to draft an Acceptable Use Agreement. Rob noted that his wife was a digital property lawyer and offered to arrange for her to meet with Mitali to discuss this document and the issues it covered. This offer was welcomed by Mitali and the other Governors.

**Rob/
Mitali**

In the meantime, it was agreed that the title of the working document should be changed to 'Use of parents' WhatsApp groups for the classes at Homerton Early Years Centre: Acceptable Use Agreement'.

Mitali

b) Use of Professional Social Media Accounts Policy

Mitali presented a proposed policy to govern Homerton's use of social media accounts, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Governors noted that social media was important in promoting the Centre and its offer. Twitter had been especially useful for keeping in touch with families during lockdown; now, Facebook tended to be the most viewed.

The draft policy had two sections highlighted in red, which Governors discussed:

- Staff following Homerton sites with their own personal accounts – Although this showed staff members' support for Homerton, it was not allowed as it meant that their personal accounts could easily be found by other users including families. Mitali would speak to staff currently following Homerton sites before removing them.
- Homerton sites to be linked to an official school e-mail account and entirely separate from any personal social media accounts – This was also best practice as it meant that no personal accounts could be traced back from Homerton sites. However, Mitali explained that the Homerton Facebook page had first been set up

using a personal Facebook account. A member of staff's son with social media expertise would be coming in to help Mitali unpick this.

Mitali

Governors also discussed the following issues:

- Suggested that it would be useful to look at the Facebook page for Messy Play, which used Homerton's logo but was not linked to the main Homerton page. **Mitali**
- Asked why the fifth paragraph on page 3 of the policy began 'If you are an employee of a school and particularly if you are a teacher'. Mitali explained that this was a quotation from another policy, which referred primarily to primary and secondary schools, but agreed that it was not a helpful approach at Homerton where a large proportion of the staff were not teachers. She would review whether this section could be edited or deleted. **Mitali**
- Discussed the first paragraph on page 5 about what hardware could be used to post to social media sites. Mitali explained that none of the iPads at Homerton could be used to access social media, since the ICT service could not differentiate between iPads for adults' and children's use and it was important to ensure that children could not access social media from theirs. The policy therefore allowed staff to post from home using personal devices, provided that all images of children should be deleted from personal devices once posted.
- Noted with concern that Wi-Fi connection at Homerton remained poor, despite the considerable charges being paid. This would become even more problematic when the Centre's phone system moved to VOIP. Staff would continue to raise this with the ICT service. **Alex/Suzy**
- Expressed concern that considerable work was involved for Mitali to keep Homerton's sites up to date. It was suggested that it would be useful to involve another tech-savvy member of staff to help share this work. **Alex**

Governors thanked Mitali for all of her hard work on the policy and in developing Homerton's use of social media. It was suggested that it would be useful to ask Rob's wife also to look at this policy; he agreed to do so.

**Rob/
Mitali**

- 11. Review of the Year** – Governors in small groups informally reviewed what they felt had gone well during the year.
- 12. Any Other Urgent Matters** – none.
- 13. Dates of Future Meetings**

The following dates were agreed for 2023/24, all to be held at 7.30pm in person at Homerton unless otherwise agreed:

- Monday 18th September 2023
- Wednesday 6th December 2023
- Monday 5th February 2024
- Wednesday 13th March 2024
- Wednesday 24th April 2024
- Tuesday 9th July 2024.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.