

Homerton Early Years Centre

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at Homerton on Monday 18th September 2023 at 7.30pm

Present

Eirini Gkouskou, Tandy Harrison, Elizabeth Head, Roger Lilley, Ken Ong, Rob Payne, Alex Pearson (Head) and Mitali Peckham

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

Governors' challenge highlighted in green

- | | Action |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Governor Appointment | |
| Governors were advised that Ken's term of office as a co-opted Governor was due to end on 23 rd November 2023. It was agreed unanimously to reappoint Ken Ong as a co-opted Governor. | Gwyneth |
| 2. Election of the Chair of the Governing Body for the Academic Year 2023/24 | |
| It was agreed unanimously to elect Ken Ong as the Chair of the Governing Body for the academic year 2023/24. | |
| 3. Election of the Vice-Chair(s) of the Governing Body for the Academic Year 2023/24 | |
| It was agreed unanimously to elect Tandy Harrison as a Vice-Chair of the Governing Body for the academic year 2023/24. | |
| Governors were reminded that two Vice-Chairs were usually appointed, each of whom was also the Chair of either the Curriculum or the Resources Committee. Roger had advised that he would be standing down as Chair of Resources Committee. It was agreed to consider the appointment of a second Vice-Chair once the new Chair of Resources had been appointed. | Ken/
Gwyneth |
| 4. Welcome and Apologies for Absence | |
| Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Isa Garcia Crestani, Stefania Deidda, Sam Garyali, Suzy Hughes and Mick Patel. | |
| 5. Declarations of Interest | |
| There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 6. Further Governor Appointments | |
| Governors were advised that Eirini Gkouskou and Isabel Garcia Crestani's terms of office as parent Governors were due to end on 14 th November 2023. A parent Governor recruitment process would need to be run after the October half-term, advertising the two places. | |
| Eirini would be eligible for re-election as a parent Governor as she still had a child at Homerton. She confirmed that she would like to stand again. Gwyneth agreed to make parents aware of this when sending out the request for nominations. | Gwyneth |
| Isa would not be eligible for re-election as a parent Governor as she no longer had a child at Homerton. However, she had advised Alex that she would like to continue to serve on the Governing Body if there was an appropriate role available. | |

Governors also noted that Surabhi Singh's term of office as a co-opted Governor was due to end on 4th December 2023.

It was agreed to make a decision on the co-opted Governor role and possible associate membership at the next Governing Body meeting on 6th December 2023.

**Gwyneth/
All
Governors**

7. Minutes of 11th July 2023

The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 11th July 2023 were approved as a correct record.

8. Matters Arising from the Minutes of 11th July 2023

The following matters arising were discussed:

- a) **Head's performance management** – The Head's performance management meeting due to take place earlier that day had had to be postponed as the external assessor was incapacitated. A new date would be arranged for early October. Alex would liaise with Roger, Tandy and Mick.

Alex

- b) **Safeguarding training** – Staff were required to receive full safeguarding training every three years, with annual refreshers. Governors noted that a full training session for staff had taken place on 5th September 2023. Surabhi had led a session for Governors in March 2022 and it was agreed that another Governor session should be run during 2023/24. Governors were also asked to let Gwyneth know of any relevant training they received through their work, including but not limited to safeguarding.

**Ken/
Alex**

**All
Governors**

9. Governing Body Membership

A list of Governors had been circulated with the agenda.

10. Standing Orders

Governors received and reviewed the Governing Body's Standing Orders. No amendments were proposed. It was agreed unanimously to adopt the Standing Orders.

11. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

The 2022/23 register of pecuniary interests had been circulated with the agenda. Governors were asked at the meeting to complete new paper declarations of interest, which Gwyneth would use to update the register for 2023/24. Gwyneth would also chase up responses from those Governors not present.

Gwyneth

12. Committee Chairs and Committee Memberships

It was agreed unanimously to reappoint Tandy as Chair of Curriculum Committee.

As Roger would be standing down as Chair of Resources Committee, Ken agreed to act as Chair of Resources Committee for the first meeting of the new school year.

Ken

Committee memberships and lead Governor roles were confirmed as for 2022/23, subject to the following points:

- Committee memberships and lead Governor roles would need to be reviewed at the next Governing Body meeting on 6th December 2023, once the parent Governor recruitment process was complete and other Governing Body appointments confirmed.

Gwyneth

- Ken would check with Mick and Sam whether they wished to continue as Lead and Deputy Lead Governors for Health and Safety **Ken**
- It might be helpful to appoint a new Lead Governor for the Nest and Owlets, someone who currently had children using one or both of these.

13. Terms of Reference for Curriculum and Resources Committees

It was agreed unanimously to adopt the terms of reference for the Curriculum and Resources Committees.

Governors agreed that Committee meetings would continue to be held on Zoom, as Zoom meetings were easier for Governors to attend during the working day.

First Committee meeting dates of the new school year were confirmed as follow:

- Curriculum – 11th October 2023 at 1.00pm
- Resources – 17th October 2023 at 1.30pm.

14. Governor Code of Practice

The Governor Code of Practice was received. Ken drew Governors' particular attention to the following points:

- All Governors have equal status.
- All Governors should know the Centre well and take up opportunities to visit and become involved.
- Governors must observe complete confidentiality when asked to do so by the Governing Body. Access to e-mails relating to Homerton should be password-protected by individual Governors.

It was agreed unanimously to adopt the Governor Code of Practice for 2023/24.

15. Governors' Expenses Policy

The Governors' Expenses Policy was received and confirmed. Governors agreed that it was useful to be aware of the expenses that could be paid if these were necessary to enable attendance at full Governing Body meetings or authorised training events.

16. Headteacher's Report

Alex briefed Governors on a number of issues:

a) Staffing – Governors noted that:

- Homerton was almost fully staffed at present, with the exception of a lunchtime supervisor to work Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.
- The playworker in Owlets, a long-serving member of staff, had handed in her notice that day and would be leaving at the end of term. This post, working from 3.00pm to 6.00pm Monday to Friday, would need to be advertised.

Two sixth formers were starting in Owlets, one on a Wednesday and one on a Friday, but students were not an option to fill the substantive post. There was limited scope to increase the capacity of Owlets, which already had 24 children in the evening, not because of staffing but because of the size of the classroom.

- Staff in new roles were settling in well.
- A number of staff were hoping to study for their Level 3 childcare qualification, in person or remotely. One person had asked Homerton to contribute £200 towards the cost of her course, as this was a qualifying requirement. Governors agreed to support this and to make the same contribution for other staff members wanting to follow the same course. Governors noted that Cambridge Regional College would not be running an in-person course this year, as they had been unable to recruit a trainer. This would affect some staff members' plans.
- Three members of staff were pursuing National Professional Qualifications (NPQs): Bernie in Senior Leadership, Michelle in Early Years and Mitali in Headship. These qualifications would take approximately 18 months to complete.
- The teachers' pay increase had been agreed by the unions, was currently going through Government and would be processed in October. Discussion of a pay increase for support staff was ongoing.

Alex

- b) Building works** – Installation of the air source heat pump over the summer holidays had gone very smoothly. One more part was due to be delivered and then the new system would be switched on on 21st September 2023. There would be a training session for staff on how to use the system at 1.30pm that day. A small amount of money remained in the budget, which would be used for patch-painting over the October half-term where new radiators had been installed.
- c) Funded places for 2 year olds** – The Government had announced that parents would be able to access 15 hours of free childcare for 2 year olds from April 2024 and 30 hours from September 2024. The local authority had advised that this would be funded at £8.00, which was less than Homerton currently charged.

Governors asked whether Homerton would be required to offer funded places for 2 year olds, or whether the Centre could decide not to do this. Alex explained that technically the Centre had a choice, but in practice would be expected to offer the places and would want to offer the places, to support working parents and to bring children in at the age of 2 to support the ongoing viability of the nursery as a whole. Room capacity meant that there would be no new places in addition to the 24 currently available.

Governors asked whether it would be possible to levy additional charges to parents of funded 2 year olds to help with financial viability. Alex explained that this could be done, for example by charging for the lunch hour. It was also noted that a private nursery in Cambridge was offering some funded hours but fewer than the number specified by Government. However, Governors noted too many additional charges or an offer of fewer hours would undermine the aim of making childcare accessible and affordable for those families who needed it most.

Governors noted that to make the new arrangements more affordable, the Government's proposals included a loosening of staffing ratios for 2 year olds, from 1:4 to 1:5. Governors expressed concern that this would lead to a reduction in the quality of Homerton's offer. In practical terms, it would also be difficult to implement, since there were two rooms for 2 year olds with 12 places each: a third member of staff would still be required if more than 10 children were present in a room.

Alex would continue to discuss the implications of the new 2 year old offer as more information became available with Ray Byford, the local authority financial advisor, and with Resources Committee and the full Governing Body.

Alex/
Governors

- d) **Cost increases** – Suzy had circulated a paper setting out cost increases from the previous year. Governors expressed concern that this identified a number of significantly increased costs for the same level of service provision.
- e) **Catering** – Governors had previously been advised that Homerton’s caterers, Dolce, had proposed to increase their service charge from £500 to £12,000 a year, making their service unaffordable. It had therefore been agreed that the current contract would end on 30th September 2023 and the catering service be brought in-house from 1st October 2023, with the two employees TUPE-transferred across.

Alex advised Governors that the unions had asked for the staff to transfer on Cambridgeshire’s terms and conditions, not Dolce’s. She had asked EPM to cost this. For the time being, the staff had agreed to transfer on Dolce’s terms and conditions with a review to take place at Christmas.

Governors noted that food would continue to be supplied by Brakes Foodservice and staff would take on responsibility for compliance and monitoring, of which they already had experience and for which there were already systems in place.

- f) **Training** – Alex and Mitali had run an introductory session on 15th September 2023 for the 17 students beginning an Early Years PGCE at the Faculty of Education.
- g) **Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) report** – Governors thanked Alex for the clear report detailing Homerton’s use of the EYPP and welcomed the significant progress made by all children in receipt of EYPP. **Governors commented that Homerton’s holistic approach to the use of EYPP was very important and potentially more effective than smaller individual interventions.**
- h) **Data reports** – Mitali presented data reports for children who had attended the nursery in 2022/23. The reports were presented by room, East, South and West. The attainment charts compared children’s assessments in the autumn term and at the end of the summer term across the three EYFS prime areas of communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. The charts showed significant progress for all groups, including children with English as an additional language, children with SEN and summer-born children, and class averages of all children performing within the nursery year band by the end of the summer term.

The progress reports for each room showed the number of steps by which children had progressed from the autumn to the summer term against the EYFS early learning goals. Data was not recorded for 1, 3 or 5 steps meaning that these lines showed zero returns.

Governors noted that progress by 6 steps was excellent, by 4 was significant and by 2 still represented substantial progress. Governors noted that these reports also showed significant progress for most children.

However, Governors asked why the report for West room differed from the others, showing no steps of progress for 50-75% of children against some goals. Mitali explained that she and Alex had discussed this using their personal knowledge of the children in West and had noted that:

- Autumn term assessments of some children had been quite high. Staff would be entering their own data for 2023/24 and it was hoped that conversations supporting this would help with moderation across the rooms.
- Some children, especially those with additional challenges such as SEN or EAL, had made significant individual progress during the year but this qualitative data was not reflected by the broad bands.

- i) **Centre Development Plan (CDP) and Self-Evaluation Framework (SEF)** – These had been circulated with the agenda.

Ken noted that the CDP included a goal under Governance of ensuring that Governors and the Centre were Ofsted ready. Alex explained that Ofsted could visit as early as summer 2024, although experience of other local nursery heads suggested that they might not come until 4 years after the previous inspection, in 2024/25.

Governors agreed that it was nonetheless important for all Governors to feel prepared for a visit. Tandy noted that the Curriculum Committee had already agreed to look at Ofsted preparation, using the grade descriptors set out in Ofsted’s School Inspection Handbook as a starting point. Governors welcomed this. It was also suggested that later in the year, a Governor could pull together a file of useful reference documents, as Kate Daenke had done in anticipation of the previous Ofsted visit.

**Tandy/
Alex**

17. Policies

A number of policies had been circulated with the agenda.

- a) **Equality and Diversity Policy** – This was agreed as circulated.

Alex

- b) **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** – Alex explained that this was a new model policy, recommended at the recent local authority safeguarding training as it had been written specifically for early years settings. It was agreed to adopt the policy and appendix, including the amendments in red, subject to Alex checking and if appropriate adding the names of more Governors who had undertaken safer recruitment training to the table on page 7. Mitali would change the logo on the documents to Homerton’s logo.

**Alex/
Mitali**

Governors noted the new Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), which had been updated for September 2023.

- c) **Acceptable Use Agreement: Use of WhatsApp Groups for Classes and Use of Professional Social Media Accounts Policy** – These policies had been considered at the previous Governing Body meeting and Rob had agreed to ask his wife, who was a digital property lawyer, to review them.

Mitali reported that she had had a very helpful Zoom meeting with Rob’s wife, who had helped to refine the documents and to express ideas more positively. Proposed changes to the documents were highlighted in red. All Governors asked Rob to pass on their thanks to his wife.

Rob

It was agreed to approve the Use of Professional Social Media Accounts Policy as amended.

Alex

Governors agreed the Acceptable Use Agreement: Use of WhatsApp Groups for Classes, subject to two practical points being resolved:

Alex

- As Isa and Stefania, who managed the WhatsApp groups, were not present, it was agreed to e-mail the document to them for their agreement.
- Rob’s wife had suggested to him that it would be preferable for the groups to be managed by Governors who had children currently at Homerton, as they had a more immediate relationship with parents. As neither Isa nor Stefania still had children at Homerton, it was suggested that Eirini (subject to being re-elected) could join Isa and Stefania as a group administrator, as she had a child still at Homerton. Rob and Mitali would seek Rob’s wife’s views on this proposed solution.

Mitali

**Rob/
Mitali**

- d) **Nest Admissions Policy** – Alex had circulated an updated version of this policy, with proposed amendments highlighted in red. She explained that there were 24 places in the Nest, all of which were full, supporting a total of 37 children across the week. Even with some movement in the year, not all of the 25 families on the waiting list would get a Nest place in the current year and there was little benefit in adding more names to the list. The amendments were intended to make the situation clear to parents, who would still be able to join the waiting list for future years.

Governors agreed the amendments and also asked for wording to be added explaining parents' responsibility to ensure that their contact details were kept up to date, so that they could be contacted quickly and easily in the event of a place becoming available.

Alex

18. **Any Other Urgent Matters** – none.

19. **Date of Next Meeting**

The next Governing Body meeting would be held on Wednesday 6th December 2023 at 7.30pm at Homerton.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.