

## ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting Held on 19 May 2021

#### **Absent**

##### **LB Camden**

Boris Telyatnikov  
Kate Frod - Head

#### **In attendance:**

##### **Parent**

Charlie Condou  
Flora Cornish  
Christophe Frèrebeau  
Rifca Le Dieu  
Nanouche Umeadi

##### **Staff**

Lacey Cousins – staff governor

##### **Co-opted**

Jennifer Allan – Chair of Governors  
Shanti Fricker  
Tim Peake  
Matthew Lawrence

##### **Associate members**

Sally Hill  
Natalie Stevenson  
Rosie Thomson

##### **Also present:**

Vicky Green, Business Manager.  
Tania Voaden, Clerk

The meeting was held via remote video conference.

**1.00** There were no declarations of interest.

**1.2 Corrections and matters arising – no corrections.**

#### **1.3 Actions**

**Item 10.2 Done.** Matthew Lawrence had shared resources linked to his work with to The Good Lad Initiative.

#### **2.00 HEADTEACHER'S REPORT**

The Head had did not attend the meeting as she had joined the Year 6 residential trip. Deputies Natalie Stevenson and Sally Hill took questions on the Head's report which had been shared in advance of the meeting.

#### **2.1 Eleanor Palmer in Context report**

The Head shared this alongside her report. This report provides an overview of the school by key characteristics in the local and national context. Governors reviewed the report for discussion. In the section on SEN pupils the school has 24% children listed as SEN support, but with 'no specialist

assessment' of type of need. This compares to 7% in Camden and 5% nationally. Rifca Le Dieu challenged why the school percentage is so high and whether this reflected a lack of assessment. Sally Hill responded that there were twelve clearly defined categories of SEN as outlined in the chart on the report. For children not falling within these categories, but having been identified with additional needs, the category NSA (no specialist assessment) was used. She noted that the school SENCO determines which children should be added to the school SEN list, not outside agencies.

## 2.2 Admissions and Federation

The Head's report highlighted the high percentage of Camden school spaces currently and anticipated for September. At the Heads' conference it was made clear that not only would local schools be closing, but that there was a strong directive to federate. Some neighbouring schools understood that they would be unable to sustain and operate with falling rolls. The Head had noted that the school remained oversubscribed, but that it would be prudent to start conversations with other schools with a view to future partnership. Sally Hill said that the drive for federation came from falling pupil numbers in the borough and that it would be wise to start planning now for future changes. Natalie Stevenson stressed that these would be low level talks at this point, that the school had good relationships with other heads and that it was better to be part of the conversation than to be left out. Jen Allan said that she had attended a Governors' meeting on Building Back Stronger and that there was a strong federation and collaboration flavour to the meeting. She expressed some disappointment that there appeared to have been an agenda for this, and she had hoped for a more radical discussion. Nanouche Umeadi had also attended the meeting. Rifca Le Dieu said that when the school had previously discussed federation there was a reluctance to pursue it, she challenged whether the environment had changed? Sally Hill stated that the Head had made it clear that federation looked likely to happen and the school did not want to be 'left behind'. Rather than waiting to be instructed, it was preferable to be proactive and take a lead. Natalie Stevenson added that the school would not necessarily pursue federating but would be involved in discussions and should certainly find out more. Both Acland Burghley and Brookfield schools had similar demographics to the school, and with strong links, were natural allies. Matthew Lawrence commented that he had recent experience of working with schools in a federation looking to move to a MAT (multi-academy trust) due to the management challenges of federating. One successful school had been asked to take on failing schools. He stressed that there needed to be a clear understanding of what a federation is. Shanti Fricker challenged how federation would impact headship. Natalie Stevenson said that some were more like partnerships and some had executive heads depending on the model. Charlie Condou asked about how governors could find out more, to which Sally Hill stressed that everything was still at very early stages and without detail. No change was imminent, the Head had federation flagged as a change on the landscape. The Chair commented that the borough was changing, it had the lowest birth rates nationally and that it was better not to be caught on the backfoot with regard to future planning.

## 2.3 Covid Update

It had been a joyful week at the school as the front gates had been opened to all in the mornings and parents were coming onto site. Visitors were also returning to support learning and class residential trips were taking place.

Rifca Le Dieu asked for greater clarity in the newsletters about when children should stay at home and clear instruction around testing.

- **ACTION** To give clear guidance in the newsletter for when PCR and LFT tests should be completed and for when children should remain at home. **DONE**

Tim Peake asked about resumption of swimming as this had been suspended for the year and was an important life skill and for health and wellbeing. Tania Voaden replied that there were plans for a two week block of lessons in the autumn term and there had been some suggestion of free sessions for children in the summer holidays.

- **ACTION** Tania Voaden to follow up with GLL about free summer sessions.  
Update: awaiting response to two follow up emails. Have escalated higher at GLL.

## 2.4 Staffing

Natalie Stevenson echoed the Head's report with regard to the challenges of staff absence due to bereavement and latterly with a teaching assistant having broken her ankle. She commended the school team for working so well to cover gaps and noted that the school was keeping close contact with absent staff.

Nanouche Umeadi requested that parental communication was maintained as she had received feedback that not enough notice was given of supply cover in Year 2 whilst the class teacher had joined a residential. Sally Hill noted that the student teacher who had been in class since the start of the term and the class teaching assistant were a constant whilst the supply teacher had assisted cover.

## **2.5 Curriculum**

Keir Starmer had visited the school in the prior week to meet with children in the school's BAME pupil group and to talk with the school about work on the diverse curriculum. Nanouche Umeadi had joined the visit and said that Keir Starmer was interested in speaking to children and staff and seeing what was working successfully and future plans. Sally Hill said that there would be ongoing monitoring of the diverse curriculum.

**2.6** Sally Hill reminded governors of the summer term Parents' Evening on 7<sup>th</sup> July and asked for a governor presence.

- **ACTION** Governors to volunteer attendance at the Parents' Evening on July 7<sup>th</sup>.

**2.7** Sally Hill shared some incredibly sad news that a parent had taken his own life the previous week. She said that the school had wanted to make governors aware as it had greatly impacted on the school community. Families in the children's classes had been informed. The school was taking the lead from the mother as to how best to support the children. Charlie Condou asked how the children were coping. Sally Hill said that both children were presently on residential trips and were very well supported there. The school had accessed lots of useful information for support and was taking both the short and long view in how best to do this. Sally Hill noted that mental health is such an important issue and asked the Governing Body to challenge the school's provision on an ongoing basis. Governors had a discussion around wider support and counselling for children, both in terms of identifying an individual practitioner and the cost of the provision.

- **ACTION** PPC Committee discussion to plan counsellor provision in school.

## **3.00 FINANCE UPDATE AND 2021-22 BUDGET**

In addition to the sharing of financial plans in advance of the meeting, Vicky Green shared screens at the meeting to present the 2021-22 budget and 3 year budget projections.

Vicky Green said that the school had started the year with a pessimistic view of income, broadly basing it on pupil headcount, Nursery, SEN and Pupil Premium income. There was also a pessimistic view on expenditure with Covid related cost increases. The budget included the planned £50k element taken from Teaching School, taken every year, and generated by running courses and working with the Institute of Education. In addition to this there is budget to supplement the school's operating budget with a further £25k taken from Teaching School resources. Vicky Green reminded governors that the Governing Body had approved taking up to £50k from Teaching School resources, but that taking this sum had not been necessary to achieve a balanced budget.

Around £13K was budgeted for capital expenditure, Tim Peake noted that this was quite a low amount. Capital expenditure was spent on general maintenance and refurbishment and the school did not currently have any clearly identified capital projects. Tim Peake said that if a project is identified, then the school would need to look at an associated income source, most likely through the PTA. He commented that the budget covered the wear and tear in school and that the resources committee and school managed a circuit of classroom refreshment.

Natalie Stevenson said that it would be useful for the new co-heads to have a walk through with Tim Peake and Vicky Green to understand the school's tradition of planning for both maintenance and enhancement. Tim Peake noted that the school had a tradition of exciting projects and balancing what could be afforded with what would have most impact for the children.

Sally Hill reported that the school had put in a bid for additional SEN space and was waiting to hear the outcome. There was also scope to improve use of the space outside Years 1 and 2. Natalie Stevenson said that the spaces would be used for continuous provision of learning through both exploration and formal study.

Rifca Le Dieu asked about plans for changes in the Head's office. This had been discussed and some changes will take place over the summer. Natalie Stevenson said that changes would not have large cost implications, always mindful that expenditure on the children took priority.

Vicky Green summarised that the financial position was as expected, but to note that the school had received the last of the Department of Education payments for Teaching School. The Resources

Committee will continue to closely monitor finances and whilst mindful of the diminishing Teaching School income, there was confidence that the school could live within means and budget. Shanti Fricker asked how lockdown had impacted on expenditure. Vicky Green responded that there was less income and whilst some costs e.g premises costs, had increased, the costs of educational resources had gone down. The Chair thanked Vicky Green and the Resources Committee for the management of finances and for the presentation.

#### **4.00 PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The Partnership Agreement for the new co-Heads was shared ahead of the meeting.

Sally Hill and Natalie Stevenson acknowledged that planning the headship transition had been harder than first anticipated, but that they had 2.5 days transition time booked in with the Head. They had also been gaining real-time experiences by joining the Head in discussions for example with HR on performance management and with finance and had attended additional committee meetings.

Sally Hill and Natalie Stevenson spoke about the Partnership Agreement and said that whilst it was short, it had come from deep conversations and went to the heart of how they would work together. Natalie Stevenson said that the agreement was a working document to review and come back to. Its purpose was not to enslave, but to provide a framework. The most recent edit included detail on performance management.

Regarding communication, Sally Hill and Natalie Stevenson said that decisions made would be 'their' decision. They had been working with Camden IT to migrate to google allowing them to work using google drive with shared email access and enabling them to share planning.

Both noted that they would take time in the holidays for some deep planning and then share the longer term strategy. Some plans would be in place for the autumn term and some would be for longer term consideration, mindful that there would be ongoing review and 'debugging' as needed. They commented that there was more talking to the team needed which would feed into future plans. With regard to delineation of work, Natalie Stevenson would still lead on maths and Sally Hill on teacher training. Sally Hill would also remain as SENCO initially, but with a view to training others in the longer term.

Natalie Stevenson acknowledged that whilst both had different roles currently, when it came to the running of the school they already worked closely together in terms of communication and decision making. Sally Hill noted that the goal would be seamless communication and that they talk constantly. With regard to matters such as child protection, behaviour, playground incidents etc, the CPOMs recoding system means that information is easily shared, accessed and responses recorded. When considering possible times of disagreement, they stressed that they had worked together for many years and have history of reaching agreement and working in collaboration.

In addition to the support of the Chair of Governors with whom they will have regular planned meetings, Sally Hill had met with a potential coach through a link from Jon Abbey. There is also opportunity to link with another Camden Head for broad support.

Charlie Condou said that that coaches could be very helpful, that he had training as a coach and would be happy to guide. Natalie Stevenson said that they were still exploring the idea and how best to further develop as leaders.

Jen Allan commended the agreement as a cogent, impressive document and Rifca Le Dieu concurred. Sally Hill thanked the working group for their challenge and support.

The Chair asked the Governing Body whether the document answered the questions and challenges that governors had asked around co-headship and there was assent. Sally Hill commented that it provided a good working document and that the process of writing it had been a positive one. Natalie Stevenson agreed and talked positively about having the opportunity of time to work on now before they had started in role. The intent was that that document was reviewed every six months and that the Chair would join these discussions.

#### **5.00 YEAR 6 SATs**

Natalie Stevenson reported that the school had decided to proceed with Year 6 SATs after the decision nationally to cancel these assessments. Not only were these seen as a rite of passage in Year 6 but it gave them experience of preparation, work and focus for assessment that they will experience as they transition to secondary school. The school also valued the rigor of these assessments and they provided clear attainment outcomes for the school.

Natalie Stevenson shared sample questions for governors to review. She stressed importance of times tables for these assessments, noting that Year 6 had worked to great times table fluency in the

run up to the tests. She shared reasoning papers and selected a spatial question, noting that Year 6 could 'see' the answer because so much work had been done to prepare them for these. Not just in Year 6 but starting from early years with building and construction.

Sharing the SPAG (spelling punctuation and grammar) tests, Natlie Stevenson noted that these were oft maligned and there were arguments on both sides. Rosie Thomson said that working on grammar improves writing and that grammar was taught all through school. This had been increasingly embedded over the years and the children engaged well with Grammar Grove from Infants. Sally Hill commented that for some, not all, children with English as an additional language, the SPAG test could be more challenging. Whilst there were clear rules that they could learn, use of language in the home had impact. Expressions such as 'shall not' being uncommon in many households and therefore unfamiliar in usage.

Reading fluency also has such importance as children step into Key Stage 3 and the volume of reading required reading significantly increases. The Year 6 reading assessment in challenging as it requires stamina and speed to read the text and then to go back and forth to reference the work in the questions. Rosie Thomson said that the school has a strong culture of reading with story times, pausing and exploring whilst reading and giving exposure to wider texts. There was also a culture of oracy at school evident in class discussions and assemblies. Rifca Le Dieu challenged that reading comprehension at Key Stage 2 was not at the level it should be. Sally Hill noted that many children read at 'greater depth' and that it had been identified as a strength by Ofsted.

### 6.00 Committees

As most matters discussed to committeemeetings had already been discussed as part of the meeting, there were no committee discussions.

It was noted that both the PPC Committee and Staffing Committee would require new chairs as Flora Cornish and Rifca Le Dieu ended their terms in office.

Nanouche Umeadi suggested that there was a broad review of the wording used to communicate the vacancies arising for Parent Governors and proposed a video.

- **ACTION** Video explaining role, responsibilities, and encouragement to stand as Parent Governor. Done.

No AOB and the meeting finished at 8pm.

### POLICIES

Staffing Committee had approved:

- Organisational Change Policy
- Organisational Change Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy

Following scrutiny and agreement at the Resources Committee, the full Governing Body reviewed and approved the 2021-22 budget.

### ADVOCATES 2020-21

Boys	Tim Peake and Christophe Frèrebeau
EAL (English as an additional language)	Boris Telyatnikov
Girls	Shanti Fricker
High attainers	Rosie Thomson
LAC (Looked After/ previously Looked After children)	Flora Cornish
Children working at 'expected' levels	Charlie Condou
Pupil Premium	Nanouche Umeadi
Summer born	Matthew Lawrence
SEND (special educational needs and disability)	Rifca Le Dieu