

## **ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting 7 February 2024**

#### **Absent**

Charlie MacCormick -Staff Governor  
Boris Telyatnikov - Co-opted Governor

#### **In attendance:**

##### **Parent Governor**

Andrea Bara-Bara  
Gonzalo Coello de Portugal  
Christophe Frèrebeau – Chair of Governors  
Sei-Kee Maturine  
Aoife Nolan

##### **LA Governor**

Jack Tinley - joined via Zoom

##### **Staff**

Natalie Stevenson - Co-Head  
Sally Hill- Co-Head  
Lacey Cousins – Associate Governor

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

Jennifer Allan  
Shanti Fricker  
Tim Peake - Co-opted Governor

##### **Associate Governor**

Nanouche Umeadi

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

Tania Voaden, Clerk

### **MATTERS ARISING**

**1.00** No declarations of interest.

#### **Corrections and actions from November FGB Meeting Minutes**

**1.1** Correction. Under item 2.2 Aoife Nolan clarified that her suggestion was for the number of year groups to be added to the incident chart, rather than adding associated year groups as minuted.

**1.2 Rollover action** under 4.4 to share Equalities Statement. This has moved from the Curriculum Committee to PPC Committee.

**1.3** Sharing the Anti-Racism Strategy with FGB remains an intended **rollover action** for Spring 2 FGB.

**1.4** Screening and Searching Policy - **rollover action** for review at PPC when Camden policy revision is shared.

Other actions marked as complete within minutes.

## **2.00 Heads' Report**

**2.1** Nanouche Umeadi enquired why it had been suggested that the Heads' report was no longer for full review and for questions only. Christophe Frerebeau clarified that the report would still be talked over page by page, but with the assumption that governors had read in advance and with a focus on questions and discussions arising.

**2.2** Aoife Nolan drew attention to Heads' time spent writing references for private schools, as referenced in their report. She asked whether there was a legal obligation to do this. Sally Hill responded that the school had always done this and welcomed voluntary donations from parents. Aoife Nolan added that perhaps time spent on this detracted from the experience of children in the state sector. Natalie Stevenson said that unfortunately different schools wanted different information, so it was not easy to replicate references and they did not want to act to the detriment of any child. She added that the requirement for these references, and the volume of them, varies by cohort.

The Heads said that they would enquire with other schools how these requests were managed.

## **2.3 Attendance**

The Chair observed poor attendance %s in Year 6. The Heads' acknowledged this and said that a letter highlighting class attendance had been shared.

## **2.4 Safeguarding**

Nanouche Umeadi drew attention to the number of incidents of violence reported in the table within the Heads' report. She asked whether these were in front of children and enquired as to the support provided to staff. Sally Hill responded that any instance of staff being hurt by a child is reported to Camden for monitoring, The school also carried out wellbeing checks. Natalie Stevenson added that staff were also given the opportunity to step away from the classroom if these incidents happened during the teaching day. Natalie Stevenson explained that every incident is different; with regard to the incidents reported two were verbal and two physical incidents of aggression. These were within the same year group, with different children and not in front of other children. She added that no staff member was physically hurt. The Chair suggested that a question is added to the staff survey around feeling safe at school. Sally Hill observed that the incidents were relatively low in number.

- **ACTION** Staffing committee to consider a question on staff feeling safe when planning the annual staff survey.

Shanti Fricker commented positively on the completion of training by Lacey Cousins as Educational Visits Coordinator. Natalie Stevenson concurred; noting the high number of trips meant that this was very valuable. Lacey Cousins added that the school already implemented much of the training, but that there were improvements to be made.

## **2.5 Disadvantaged Children**

Teachers had started 1:1 tuition for disadvantaged children in the lead up to SATs. Aoife Nolan asked how disadvantaged was defined. Sally Hill said broadly pupil premium and SEN, but that there was no strict rule. Lacey Cousins added that it started with pupil premium children and then additions were made. Natalie Stevenson said that the word 'disadvantaged' is under scrutiny in education as it may cause deficit thinking and unconscious bias, 'under-resourced' has been suggested as an alternative.

## **2.6 Partnership work**

The Chair asked for an update into recruitment for the teacher-training programme. Lacey Cousins reported that there had been an increase in interest to the School Direct programme this year, but not to pre-pandemic levels. The school had engaged in recruitment fairs and outreach to grow interest, but was also determined to maintain the high standards of the offer and quality of recruitment. The school cannot afford to offer a non-funded route, and there is

no grant funding, which means that the applicant pipeline is those who can afford this route into teaching. There is an awareness that the considerable financial commitment will act as a deterrent.

## 2.7 Staffing

The school had produced clearer job descriptions for two categories of LSA (Learning Support Assistants) to provide the opportunity for professional progression and pay. Aoife Nolan enquired about the delineation between the roles. Natalie Stevenson said that the school wanted to embed greater possibility for progression and was awaiting a response from Camden HR. Sally Hill added that this was also linked to Unison union who were working on job descriptions. Jen Allan asked whether there was scope for honorarium pay or other non-contractual ways to remunerate. Lacey Cousins said that the pay scales exist to reflect the different roles and the school did not want to create a wholly different system.

Responsibilities are based around the children LSAs work with. HLTAs (higher level) can cover a class if a teacher is absent, the teacher provides the lesson plan but the HLTA can take the class. Natalie Stevenson said the school was keen to proceed with the new job descriptions, were waiting for Camden and hoped to avoid excessive further delay.

- **ACTION** Heads to review scope for honorarium with SBM.

## 3.00 Special Item Music

The school's long standing music teacher Laura McWilliam is retiring at the end of the academic year. The Heads shared a presentation on the current music provision to inform a review of the offer going forward.

**3.1** Sally Hill explained how music is offered and that music is incorporated throughout the week, most especially on Tuesdays and Wednesdays when Laura is in school. The presentation outlined how music looks in each year group and how children all join the weekly music assembly. She highlighted that Year 1 and 2 now work with The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE) and the introduction of ukulele in Year 3 in recent years. Ukulele replaced the commencement of violin and cello in Year 3, now started in Year 4 when children have better fine motor skills. Natalie Stevenson added that the same musical elements are taught with the ukulele and that Laura had reported that children were picking up violin at the same rate when they moved to Year 4. Years 4-5 join weekly violin or cello lessons and Year 6 children opted in or out of the strings offer. She added that Laura teaches violin, but not cello which is taught by a Camden Music teacher. In addition, there is a singing teacher who works with pupil premium children for 1:1 or 1:2 lessons.

**3.2** Aoife Nolan asked about how long lessons lasted. Sally Hill responded that in Nursery lessons last 30 minutes but that the duration of lessons increases with age, with extra time spent on music ahead of concerts. For older children the lesson is a split class lesson lasting just under an hour. Natalie Stevenson added that the provision designed by Camden was intended to be a whole class lesson, but there wasn't the space at the school to accommodate. This brought some logistical challenges, but the team thinks that the current arrangement is the best solution given the space. She acknowledged that with changes in the National Curriculum, it had become increasingly harder to find the balance of time between curriculum areas. The Chair said that in talking with the cello teacher Josh Salter, he had commented on the impact of class trips on the music offer and that teachers were not always fully respectful of the half hour of music teaching. Sally Hill said that this had not been feedback to Heads. Aoife Nolan commented that 30 minutes a week was a short period of time and questioned the value of this to students, especially if further minutes were lost in this as children transitioned from the classroom.

**3.3** The Heads outlined the opportunities children had for performance including within concerts at school, in assemblies and the bi-annual Albert Hall Camden Schools concerts. Year 1 and 2 are working with the OAE ahead of a performance and Year 5 will join a project with them next term.

**3.4** Sally Hill said that the school had had a strings programme in place for 38 years. She explained the history of the programme and that when the initial funding ceased, parents had wanted to ensure that the programme continued and fundraised £20k to continue to support the programme. The account was managed through CAF and worth £36K, with dividends used to purchase instruments. Governors asked why the money had been taken out of the CAF account and this was unclear, Tim Peake suggested that the reason might have been to give the school greater freedom to use the funds.

**3.5** There was discussion about the cost of having a music teacher. The cost of the music provision is currently £41k pa. The Head invited governors for their views on how music was valued and the future music provision. Lacey Cousins said in many schools class teachers teach music and that specialism was not a given. Natalie Stevenson said that the resources from an organisation called Sing Up are used in many schools, and Eleanor Palmer already uses these. Nanouche Umeadi said that the school's provision was important as it enabled children who might not otherwise access music teaching to do so. Aoife Nolan concurred and said that Camden Music have had to increase their fees, so the cost of music lessons was increasing, which prohibited some children from joining in. Representation from working class children and across ethnic groups would be further reduced. Natalie Stevenson said that the review was initiated by Laura retiring. A music teacher position is hard to fill, requiring a musician who is qualified to teach. Sally Hill reported that at Kentish Town School there is a music specialist called Coren Peacock who, noticing the limited number of music teachers, had been supporting schools to develop music specialists. There was therefore an option of looking at the existing team to develop a music specialist to teach music and voice, alongside the strings provision supported by Camden Wider Opps. Jen Allan referred to the Model Music Curriculum (MMC) and said it would be useful to look at this in terms of singing, listening, composing and performing. She enquired whether Coren Peacock could benchmark schools on strengths and weaknesses. Natalie Stevenson explained to Governors that the MMC had been developed by musicians to deliver best practice.

- **ACTION** to share The Model Music Curriculum with governors. Done.

Natalie Stevenson suggested that the strings programme did not work for all children, especially those with fine motor difficulties. If the year group is reliant on the strings programme, but some children are not taking up the stringed instrument, then these children are not getting the whole curriculum. Lacey Cousins said that having taken feedback on this previously, the school had responded and were working with some children specifically on other ways of accessing music.

Tim Peake said that strings could be limiting in some ways and the Chair said that children in Kentish Town School had access to 4-5 instruments. He added that with Laura McWilliam leaving, decisions on the future provision were needed. Jen Allan suggested consulting with parents, who are likely to have strong opinions on changes to the offer. Natalie Stevenson suggested a draft plan for discussion at committee and proposed that Aoife Nolan joins the committee for this discussion.

- **ACTION** Cost of using Coren Peacock as a consultant taken to the Curriculum Committee.

## **4.00 Committees**

As planned, there were no committee meetings in the Spring first half. Governors participated in monitoring or planned monitoring.

### **4.1 Staffing Committee monitoring**

Governors Shanti Fricker, Christophe Frerebeau and Charlie MacCormick met with 6 teachers for CPD monitoring. The teachers were enthusiastic and reported enjoying the research -led fortnightly staff meetings.

- **ACTION** Staffing monitoring report shared with all governors. Done

## **5.00 AOB**

**5.1** Governor training - Lacey Cousins completed EVC training

**5.2** The Governing Body ratified the quarterly budget. The Governing body ratified the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS).

### **5.3 SACRE -Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education**

Lacey Cousins explained that SACRE oversees how religious education takes place in schools. The school needs to re-apply to be a non-denominational school. As a diverse community, the school is not tied to a particular faith. Children are taught about all religions and explore both their unique beliefs and traditions and their commonalities. The reapplication happens every 4 years and the school is visited by a representative of SACRE who will join an assembly and evidence teaching. It is a requirement that parents and governors are consulted and parents were invited to comment in the last school newsletter.

In consultation, governors were in agreement for the school to reapply to SACRE with the Determination unchanged.

**5.4** An extra-ordinary finance meeting was planned to look at financial sustainability in the longer term. The Chair said that discussions would be shared at the next FGB.

**5.5** The Chair had shared a survey to obtain feedback on the existing FGB structure. There were 9 responses received so far. Natalie Stevenson added that the Heads had a meeting planned with Owen Rees from Camden governor services about the structure of governing bodies in other schools and would give feedback.

- **ACTION** The Chair to share the survey again to inform future discussion.