

ELEANOR PALMER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting 15 May 2024

Apologies

Nanouche Umeadi - Associate Governor
Rosie Thomson – Associate Governor

In attendance:

Parent Governors

Andrea Bara Bara
Gonzalo Coello de Portugal
Christophe Frèrebeau - Chair of Governors
Sei-Kee Maturine
Aoife Nolan – Joined via Zoom until end of item 2.

LA Governor

Jack Tinley

Staff

Natalie Stevenson - Co-Head
Sally Hill- Co-Head
Lacey Cousins - Associate Governor
Charlotte MacCormick – Staff governor

Co-opted Governors

Jennifer Allan
Shanti Fricker
Tim Peake
Boris Telyatnikov

Also present:

Vicky Green – Minutes

1. Matters arising

- 1.1. No declarations of interest
- 1.2. Corrections and actions from March FGB Minutes:

Item 1.1 referencing previous item 5.5 It was agreed that any proposed change to the structure of the governing body should be tabled for now bearing in mind the potential impact of the partnership on governance in the long term.

Item 2 It was confirmed that the budget had been reviewed by the Resources Committee (which the Chair joined) prior to being circulated by email for final approval by Governors, which had taken place.

Item 2.2. Reference to a reduction in staff being against values and ethos of the school should instead say that any reduction in staffing should be weighed against the ethos and values of school.

Item 5.1 Action The Chair confirmed that he had shared the slides from his cyber security training.

Item 5.2 Action – as for item 1.1 this would be tabled whilst the impacts of the proposed partnership on the school's governance are assessed.

2. Special Item - Partnership Discussion and vote

The Chair led a discussion around the structuring of leadership time in the proposed partnership. He explained that the proposal being presented to the governors is that Sally will increase her working days from working three days per week to working full time, which, together with Natalie's three days a week (ignoring the additional day supporting Camden Learning schools with Maths which the school does not have to budget for), would bring them to a total of eight days of headship. [REDACTED]

This costing structure will mean less benefit in terms of reducing the school's deficit budget, which will particularly be the case if the school decides to go ahead and retain two members of the school's support staff who are currently on agency or short-term contracts due to end this July. The Chair explained however it is proposed that we will still go ahead and do this, in order to support the current levels of SEN need in the school. This will be achievable by means of a proposal that the Chair and Heads have now circulated to the Resources Committee that, rather than taking [REDACTED] of top up funds from the Partnership (formerly "Teaching School") account in the current financial year, [REDACTED] down in 2025-26, that that account be wound up this year, moving the total amount available of [REDACTED] to the school during the current financial year. This would allow the school to have a working budget deficit outturn of in the region [REDACTED] can be addressed through other efficiencies and fundraising during the financial year. The school's leadership will then have time to address the 2025-26 budget overspend by identifying efficiencies that can be generated from the partnership relationship over the course of the upcoming year.

In terms of the Heads' working patterns, it was noted at the moment there is one day during their working days overlap when they can collaborate. With this model, there will be far more days when both Natalie and Sally will be working, improving the time available for them to work together.

Jen queried how it would be possible to achieve substantive financial changes when the partnership relationship is only structured to last for two years? Sally said that they are already expecting there to be possible savings in the schools' back office and inclusion teams to be shared across the two schools and that potential greater savings could be found if this relationship were to continue beyond this initial two years. Shanti asked whether it is the plan that we step away after two years? The Chair responded that the relationship is to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to see if it is working for both parties. The aim is that it *both* saves money *and* improves provision. Natalie explained that the current proposal is not the complete solution to the school's financial position, but that it presents the potential opportunity to find further savings.

[REDACTED]

The Heads emphasised that the value of this Partnership was as a way for the school to retain a strong team of leaders, allowing the school to maintain its outstanding provision without losing a member of a strong leadership team.

[REDACTED]

The governors turned to the school's SEN provision. Sally said that in the event that Lacey were to move to Hawley, as former SENCO she holds the NASENCO qualification and can become substantive SENCO at Eleanor Palmer, but that they are looking at the potential for Lacey to lead SEN provision with a team across the two schools.

The Chair reviewed questions that had been emailed to him:

Tim: *What if one of the Heads is sick? How would absence be addressed?* It is standard for a deputy headteacher to deputise for the headteacher in the event of their sickness. The Heads would not be able to provide their executive head service to Hawley if they were unwell. There would always be a head of school in position at Hawley for day to day school management.

How is this being sold to the parents of both schools? There will be a clear communication plan. The model means that we always have Heads on site here at Eleanor Palmer – in fact, they may be present more than they currently are as much of the day-to-day executive headship support may be being provided from Eleanor Palmer.

[REDACTED] The Heads explained that they have a communication strategy mapped out but it cannot be put into place until the Governors have approved this proposal. They agreed with Jen that the communications with parents for both schools has to be aligned with the same messaging.

[REDACTED] The Heads explained that they are excited about the opportunities that this partnership provides for advancement of teachers here. Charlie confirmed this from the staff perspective and that everyone is very positive about it so far.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Jack emphasized that it was important that Governors had identified and assessed any other risks to EP we should be considering other than financial, and how we will mitigate for them. The Chair confirmed that we have been advised to set up KPIs for next year to ensure quality of provision at Eleanor Palmer is maintained and monitored, but that Governors also have to trust Heads to maintain standards. The rebalancing of the number of days of co-headship at Eleanor Palmer had already attempted to mitigate some of these risks. Jack noted that having a dual headship model also acts as a mitigant for the school. Aoife confirmed that the five days of headship for Eleanor Palmer increased from four has served to mitigate a lot of her concerns about the proposal.

Andrea: how often will the partnership be monitored? Termly.

Jen noted that this move can be seen as the next step in the progression of our appointment of a co-headship structure at Eleanor Palmer. At some point in the future, if we were to take on an additional school there might be the possibility in the future of a head of school be appointed at Eleanor Palmer with Sally and Natalie working across a group of schools as executive headteachers. There are some federations of three or four small schools in Camden that are now working well.

In terms of an assessment of risks to the staffing community, Shanti said Charlie's expression of the staff's enthusiasm is encouraging. Charlie said that staff are aware that in the current climate, the situation for small schools is either to absorb or to be absorbed and that it was preferable for us to be the former category. Other staff concerns that Charlie said might be raised include questions about how schools will manage CPD and who staff should approach for what support. She said that, having previously worked in a school which was taken into a partnership where it was not well managed, the way that this is managed and communicated to the staff at both schools would be very important. If teachers are expected to lead Hawley staff there is the potential for workload to increase, but if the intention is for planning to be shared across the schools, then this should help with workload. Jen noted that it is impossible to transplant structures from one school to another and it was agreed that each school's context is very important. Sally said that in order to make a start on getting to know Hawley's context, Camden Learning are paying for her to spend a day a week there from now to get to know the school well and to ensure that the change is managed well.

Jen suggested that we should review the risk register that The Chair has shared with the governors on a regular basis in the context of the Partnership.

Action: The Chair will re-circulate the link for the risk register. All governors to add suggested risks to be allocated to the relevant committee for review

Action: Rick register to be added as a standing item on the agenda at Full Governing Body meetings with a focus on how to make Partnership work long term.

Boris questioned Hawley's SEN levels. Lacey explained that they have similar SEN, and higher levels of PP. Boris said that we need to push for better SEN funding for pupils from the local authority. Lacey said that we do so much more and we also do now do push back on some referrals where we feel we cannot meet the need. In order to improve on staffing costs our goal is to have all staff across both schools be more effective so that children are able to work more independently and with less need for individualised support.

In terms of governance structure, The Chair explained that, each school retains its own governing body but there will be a committee of governors of both schools meeting to review the performance of the partnership. The head of school would be on site at Hawley and be the person managing the school on a day to day basis. The Heads explained that their role for Hawley would be more strategic, with them being physically more present here, but with leadership teams working collaboratively across both schools. They reported that they are ready to go with the recruitment process for the new Hawley head of school with a job description and person specification drafted. They had presented to the four members of the leadership teams across the two schools last week. To date, one individual has said that they do not intend to apply. The interviews will take place next week with one of the Heads, a Hawley governor and a representative of Camden Learning. Staff at

both schools will be being told about the partnership simultaneously and the parent community after half term.

Following conclusion of Governors' analysis of the tabled proposed partnership the Chair requested that those eligible to vote express their support by way of a show of hands. The Heads, and Lacey did not participate.

The governors voted unanimously by way of a show of hands in favour of entering into the proposed partnership with Hawley Primary School and authorised the Chair of Governors to sign the tabled Partnership document.

The governors thanked the Chair for leading the process.

It was agreed that communication of the plans would be overseen by the PPC committee.

The Chair stated that the next steps are to constitute a joint oversight body - the Governing Body Partnership Sub-Committee - across the two schools with two governors from each school. This committee will meet once a term. The membership of this committee will be decided at the next Governing Body meeting.

Action: Any governors who would wish to put their names forward to sit on this committee please contact The Chair in advance of the next meeting.

Action: Election of governor representatives on the Governing Body Partnership Sub-Committee to be added to agenda at next governing body meeting.

3. Informal head's update

- 3.1. The Heads tabled a brief written report. Year 6 are currently sitting their SATs. Whilst the papers are again challenging this year the children have coped well. Many members of the teaching staff have been tutoring pupils outside of school hours. This additional work is paid for out of the Pupil Premium budget. Pupil Premium pupils, and those non pupil-premium children who would benefit from additional support are focussed on.
- 3.2. Celebrating Black Culture Night takes place this Friday evening. The Heads thanked Andrea and Sei-Kee who are taking the lead on organising the event this year. Governors are encouraged to attend
- 3.3. Run Kids Run takes place this Sunday, with over 150 children having registered to participate which is more than last year. All funds raised are matched from donations from companies based in the Kings Cross area, and so it is hoped that a significant amount of funds will be raised. Gonzalo questioned whether the funding for Run Kids Run could be applied towards the school's sports provision. Sally said that the current intention is to apply the funds towards re-varnishing the hall. This is an ongoing discussion. Sally reported that there has been some discussion around charging for sports clubs which take place before an after school, at least to cover the £5,000 cost to the school of Martin and Rae's time.
- 3.4. The quantity of trips taking place across the year has not reduced and remains significantly above the offering of most schools. It would be difficult to reduce the number of trips offered in order to reduce expenditure when so much of the Keep it EP messaging is to continue to support the number of trips and

workshops pupils enjoy, but the but the Heads confirmed that teachers are being creative about not booking some of the more expensive trips and workshops and finding affordable alternatives.

3.5. Jen congratulated the school on being top of Camden for its attendance.

4. Staffing Committee report

Tabled. Main focus on partnership. Staffing survey has been revised and sent to staffing committee.

5. Resources Committee report

Minutes tabled.

Tim reported that they had conducted a site walk around the school, looking at ideas for how to improve the space, subject to funding becoming available.

6. PPC Committee report

Minutes tabled.

- Sei-Kee reported that the committee had primarily been looking at the partnership proposals. They had also reviewed Club EP and looked at capping numbers at 45.
- It was agreed that it would be better to circulate the parents' survey before the partnership is announced.

7. Curriculum Committee report

Boris reported that the committee had discussed the upcoming SATS and the current provision for Dyslexia.

8. Any Other Business

Action: Vicky to look at whether we have insurance to cover Cyber

The Heads said that they would like to look at the governing body's cycle of how it conducts its business. They suggested that Owen Rees can be asked to come and run a session for the governors [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]