

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
FOREST ALLIANCE OF NURSERY SCHOOLS (FOR CHURCH HILL AND LOW HALL
NURSERY SCHOOLS)
HELD ON THURSDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2024
AT 6-8 PM
ON TEAMS**

Present: Mark Brown (Chair) Co-opted Governor

Co-opted Governor(s):

Sally Davey
Jana Mills

Headteacher:

Helen Currie

Local Authority Governor:

Pauline France

Parent Governor(s):

Austin Ventour
Katie Thompson

Staff Governor:

Lindsay Read

Clerk to the Governors/Trustees: Maddie Hall

Summary of agreements and actions:

Minute reference	Formal agreements and/or actions identified	Named person(s) for action(s) identified	Completion date
4.17	The Chair's action is to discuss whether Lorraine will be engaged again this year or if a thank you present should be sent. This matter will be addressed in the finance group meeting next week (13th at 17:00).	Chair	13 November
4.1	Pauline needs to complete the annual governance statement	Pauline	Immediate
5.19	Sally to arrange a walk with Helen and Lindsey around resources and medical procedures.	Sally	
7.1	Governors supervision needs organising.	Chair	
14	School Term Dates - agenda item for GB meeting - 27 February 2025	GS	Next meeting
	Date of next meeting: Thursday 27 February 2025.	All /GS	Immediate

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.
- 1.2 The chair introduced the two new parent governors; Austin Ventour and Katie Thompson. Austin Ventour introduced himself and explained he is very involved in his daughters life, he is looking forward to shaping the nursery and helping to shape children's lives. Katie Stone introduced herself. She said she would like to be a governor as she is a teacher, works for the local authority in Hackney and hasn't ever been a governor before. Katie said she would be happy to be placed in finance.
- 1.3 Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Abrar Malik, Paula
- 1.4 The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate with 5 governors present.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Pecuniary Interests – Governors confirmed receipt of the register of interests.
- 2.2 There were no declarations made pertaining to any of the agenda items for this meeting.

3. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

- 3.1 The clerk welcome nominations for the position of Chair of the Governing Board for the 2024/2025 academic year, up to the first meeting of the Governing Body in autumn 2025.
Pauline France proposed Abrar Malik, this was seconded by Helen Currie. With no other nominations and no objections, Abrar Malik was unanimously elected as Chair of the Governing Board for the 2024/2025 academic year; up to the first meeting of the Governing Body in autumn 2025.
- 3.2 The clerk welcome nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Governing Board for the academic year 2024/2025
Pauline France proposed Mark Brown, this was seconded by Helen Currie. With no other nominations and no objections, Mark Brown was unanimously elected as vice-Chair of the Governing Board/Body for the 2024/2025 academic year; up to the first meeting of the Governing Body in autumn 2025.

4. GOVERNING BODY COMPOSITION, COMMITTEES, LINK GOVERNORS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Helen Currie explained about Governing Bodies and the roles of everyone in the meeting, and reminded governors that a summary of GB roles & responsibilities is in our Aide memoire/ Annual statement of governance.
- 4.2 There was an action for a DBS check on Governor Hub, which wasn't recorded accurately on the governors' profile. Helen will contact the relevant individual to review it with them. The committee will need to conduct a DBS check on Austin and Katie and organize safeguarding training for all of the governors.
- 4.3 Katie advised that she already has a DBS but there may need to just be an update on this.
- 4.4 The committee unanimously agreed that Sally will continue to chair with learning and development and SEND. The chair thanked Sally for doing a sterling job in this role.
- 4.5 The committee unanimously agreed that Mark will continue being governor for safeguarding.
- 4.6 Governors unanimously agreed that Mark Brown would continue his role in premises.
- 4.7 The committee unanimously agreed that Austin Ventour would be parent governor for premises.

- 4.8 The committee unanimously agreed that Katie Thompson would be parent governor for finance.
- 4.9 Helen explained that if you are not on either one of these committees, learning walks are available for anyone that wants to learn more.
- 4.10 The committee unanimously agreed that Sally will continue to chair with learning and development and SEND. The chair thanked Sally for doing a sterling job in this role.
- 4.11 The committee unanimously agreed that Mark will continue being governor for safeguarding.
- 4.12 Confirm Disciplinary & Grievance Panels are convened from available governors as and when needed.
- 4.13 The chairperson stated that the current operations are proceeding smoothly, and there is no immediate need for any changes at this time.
- 4.14 Confirm WhatsApp and GovernorHub arrangements for communications and agree timetable/focus for learning walks this term and Spring term. Governor Hub was discussed. Helen offered for Austin and Kate to come to her office to guide them through Governor Hub, Helen said everything on Governor Hub is up to date.
- 4.15 The chair informed the new Parent Governors about an existing WhatsApp group for all governors, to which they will be added. Additionally, Pauline mentioned the presence of a separate WhatsApp group associated with the chair's actions. It was recommended that Sally also be included in this group.
- 4.16 Mark Brown and Helen Currie are responsible for completing the timetable and focus for learning walks.
- 4.17 Previously, the committee collaborated with Lorraine, the school improvement partner, on the timetable. This year, there might be changes as Waltham Forest has subscribed to a new school improvement programme, which includes the provision of a School Improvement Partner (SIP) for one year. The Chair's action is to discuss whether Lorraine will be engaged again this year or if a thank you present should be sent. This matter will be addressed in the finance group meeting next week (13th at 17:00).

5. MINUTES

- 5.1 Governors received the minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2024 and agreed these to be an accurate record of the meeting. Arbrar will be asked to sign a copy of the minutes on GovernorHub.
- 5.2 No Matters arising from the GB minutes.
- 5.3 FPP Minutes matters arising
- 5.4 Pauline needs to complete the annual governance statement. This is updated annually to incorporate the new school development plan.
- 5.5 The chair explained that Governor Hub is a valuable resource for new governors, offering extensive training opportunities. Each term includes mandatory safeguarding training sessions, which typically last one to two hours.
- 5.6 Helen Currie advised that the school has not had FPP as of yet as some of it is not quite accurate.
- 5.7 The terms of reference have been updated but not formally agreed as the meeting is next week.

- 5.8 The latest budget monitoring was received in July, and it highlighted certain risk factors concerning the budgets for both schools. The Governors have deliberated on various strategies to mitigate these risks as effectively as possible. At that time, there was uncertainty regarding the implications of national elections on funding for early education, not just for ages 3-5, but also for children under 3. They aimed to further develop their plan for two-year-olds, which involved creating a comprehensive strategy and conducting some modelling. Helen and Haseena were tasked with this responsibility.
- 5.9 Haseena has successfully applied for a place grant within the borough, enabling the school to provide morning breakfast clubs and after-school clubs from January onward. They also have place planning funds available, allowing them to initiate these programs even if they are not at full capacity.
- 5.10 They have contacted everyone on their waiting list and conducted surveys to determine family preferences. Families expressed interest in an 8 AM to 6 PM schedule at Low Hall, while Churchill preferred a 9 AM to 4 PM term-time model. Consequently, they will need to implement two different models for each school. It is important to avoid mixing age groups, particularly children up to 8 years old with 2-year-olds. At Low Hall, they propose an 8 AM to 6 PM all-year-round provision, whereas at Churchill, they will offer an 8 AM to 6 PM provision for two-year-olds if there is sufficient demand. To break even, they require a minimum enrolment of seven children. Being a school setting, their costs are higher compared to private settings, requiring them to charge £9 to cover expenses.
- 5.11 Currently, the 15-hour provision has been manageable as many families opt to purchase additional hours. From September 2025, two-year-olds will be eligible for 30 hours of care. If they do not provide these models, families may seek alternatives. Their funding for staff such as Helen, Lyndsey, and Haseena is based on the number of 3 and 4-year-olds enrolled for only 15 hours. They are actively engaging with headteachers, the new MP for early years, and are lobbying for additional financial support for all their children. Some of these changes have occurred since Pauline's meeting with Haseena in July.
- 5.12 The minutes from 18th July will be discussed more on the 13th. There is going to be work on a business plan around 2-year-olds and agreement to model different kinds of provision to suit different needs of two schools. It is fair to see in the annual risk analysis that up to 8 risks have been identified, with the main risk concerning both schools' enrolment numbers. The more children that are enrolled, the more funding the schools attract.
- 5.13 The discussion also included the staffing structure and the consistencies between operating as a school and the required leadership management structure, as well as the incoming funding. These are the main risks the schools struggle with. Concerns about the situation at Church Hill were raised. Church Hill's reserves have been helping to manage its inherited deficit, but those reserves are no longer available. Reserves were used to build up and create a positive staffing structure across the two schools by federating and drawing on these reserves.
- 5.14 In 2016, the schools were in the schools block, but were later moved to early years funding. In 2019, research showed that Waltham Forest was the lowest-funded borough in London except for Barnet. Haringey had three maintained nursery schools and used to receive £10 per hour per child based on 3 and 4 year-olds. The top-up funding has changed, and now the schools receive £5-6 per hour, which is insufficient. Concerns were shared with headteachers across the country, and everyone feels the same. Staffing at Church Hill needs to be reconsidered. If the SEN team is included, there is a ratio of 1:6, which needs to be prepared for if Waltham Forest gets involved. Low Hall underwent a restructure to become term-time only rather than all year round. Every maintained nursery in Waltham Forest is currently in deficit.

- 5.15 Premises- Mark has not conducted a learning walk with Helen this year. There has been ongoing work in the garden at Church Hill. Helen mentioned that there is now beautiful fencing in the garden to create a forest school area. Previously, they had been working on the girls' school site. During the first year, everyone was engaged, but by the second year, tasks such as site checks were not being completed. The garden has a corner around the side, making it difficult to see children easily. A firepit has been added where the 'scary house' used to be. Additionally, they have opened up the space from the staffroom into the storybook areas and moved the 2-year-olds into this space. The staffroom has now relocated to the former 2-year-olds room. This change has fostered a sense of togetherness among the staff. The new staffroom is much larger, resulting in increased laughter and a positive atmosphere.
- 5.16 Low Hall has recently been equipped with new doors and windows. The kitchen door has been relocated to the back entrance. The heating system, which experienced flooding last year, has been repaired. Next year, the plan is to renovate the roof.
- 5.17 The primary learning area is located along the main road, which has raised concerns regarding pollution levels. This matter was discussed during the meeting.
- 5.18 Action points from FPP on 18th July: Angela Ferdinand discussed the use of Ferguson Centre car park with colleagues, and requested that environmental health measure pollution levels on Markhouse Road.

KT: One of our nurseries in Hackney got additional funding due to a lot of children having asthma.

SD: we had a long list of policy reviews that have been ratified. We looked at the special educational needs report which had a lot of useful information. Someone in helping the SENCO to make them more succinct.

HC: This is going to be designed next September

SD: We have also got our inclusion policy mark.

- 5.19 The walkway into Low Hall was also developed to make it more beautiful and to help children learn about the environment. The children really appreciated this. Sally is yet to do a walk with Helen and Lindsey around resources and medical procedures.
- 5.20 The other policy under discussion was the sleep policy, which involves numerous considerations when offering sleep to children. The staffing requirements at Low Hall were deliberated, highlighting potential issues related to adequate personnel. Haseena will be presenting the FPP. Staffing at Churchill is recognized as a challenging environment. At Churchill, 5 children have been invited to sleep, whereas at Low Hall there was only 1 child. This prompts questions regarding whether an adult needs to be present for constant supervision or if they can periodically check in. Since this meeting, the number of children sleeping at Low Hall has increased.
- 5.21 Lindsay has made significant progress in the crowd funding efforts. Haseena is responsible for managing the financial aspects, after which the project will go live. The objective is to make the garden furniture more child-friendly by acquiring new benches and creating a mud kitchen area. Additionally, a sponsored walk is being planned for the Spring Term; the exact date is yet to be determined. Governors are invited to participate.

SD: The observation format has been changed. They record an observation and focus on why this observation is significant.

- 5.22 On 20th July, Lindsay will provide an assessment Excel sheet. Helen has already discussed the HEP training packages. Early education networks, including Roland Hill, are part of this HEP initiative. Lindsay is collaborating with early years practice hubs, which have been extended to 8 settings.

Jana: If you haven't already you could email Stella Creasy and get her to promote it.

6. EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

- 6.1 Helen circulated report to governors. The key considerations for the school's external grading include the quality of education, personal development, behaviour and attitudes, and leadership and management. As a school, the next actions in these areas and the financial implications of these plans need to be contemplated. Helen's report outlines these points on every second page, detailing her 24-25 recommendations and their directions.
- 6.2 The primary development focus for educational quality is the Centre of Excellence. The school has applied for and received the IQN certification, which suggests that it qualifies as a Centre of Excellence. This designation represents a gold standard mark, commonly awarded to eco-friendly and healthy schools. The school has invested in this and will now refer to it as the Gold Mark Quality IQN. Helen attended a conference where it was noted that Waltham Forest is implementing this across the country.
- 6.3 Waltham Forest has conducted a thorough assessment and identified that Low Hall is experiencing a funding shortfall, impacting its operational effectiveness. Starting next year, Waltham Forest will collaborate with NELFT and the Inclusion Pathway to support children with complex needs, ensuring their placement in appropriate special schools. This year has presented challenges in securing Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), with multiple refusals being experienced. Despite these difficulties, Level 5 funding has been secured for two children, which is an uncommon achievement. Efforts are actively being made to place these children in suitable environments. The agreement is subject to an annual review, and if the deficit continues to increase, this project's sustainability may be threatened. Additionally, Widget software has been acquired to facilitate its use for all children.
- 6.4 Sally will develop the toolkit for OAP - Ordinary Provision. The aim is for all governors to utilize this in their SEND practices. A tool has already been created, and Sally is tasked with evaluating it for their use.
- 6.5 **Personal Development**
The focus is on collaboration with artists to enhance creativity, which was previously felt to be limited due to reliance on Pinterest. Over the past two years, extensive training has been undertaken and a partnership formed with the William Morris Gallery, facilitating monthly visits for children from lower-income families. The collaboration with Alice Wilson was particularly inspiring; sessions were organized where staff teams alternated working with her, fostering creativity and enhancing overall wellbeing. As a result of these initiatives, one of the teachers developed an interest in exploring various artists. Over the course of a year, he has created a diverse calendar featuring artists' birth months. The borough has shown interest in funding this training, and it is planned to commence this initiative from spring

onwards. Additionally, collaboration with Haringey schools on this project is underway.

6.6 On 4th November, Helen delivered an inspiring speech at the Haringey conference on anti-racism. Haringey has conducted a comprehensive audit on this matter. Given that Waltham Forest has now joined the efforts, we should consider utilizing this approach moving forward. Helen has invited staff to collaborate in developing this initiative together. Governors will also be invited to participate.

6.7 Chicken Shed: The theatre company has offered to conduct sessions for us without charge. This is an exceptional opportunity, as the cost of these sessions would typically be £500 each.

7. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

7.1 The school is currently planning for its 2-year-old program for the upcoming year, considering the necessary adjustments to the building and wrap-around care. Significant thought has also been given to the early years practitioners. This planning has been conducted in a detailed manner. A learning library has been established to address topics that early years practitioners wish to explore. These topics will serve as discussion points for staff meetings. Additionally, Helen has reviewed the Unison guidance for teaching assistants.

PF: The governors role and supervision, is this something we need to include in the plan?

HC: Yes – action- governors supervision needs organising. Sally to do group supervision with SENCO, Mark to help Helen. We also may be able to engage with Haringey with this. Governors to help with senior leadership team.

7.2 SEND offers are on the hub and have been signed and are being ratified today.
School rolls, staffing and attendance

7.3 SDP Priorities

7.4 School Self Evaluations and recommendations

8. SAFEGUARDING LINK GOVERNOR REPORT & KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION:

8.1 Governors have confirmed they had read KCSIE document and established what training is required.

8.2 SEND Link Governor Report: Confirm the SEND annual report to governors for each school is in hand and will be sent out before half term. Confirm SEND Offer for each school has been updated for publication. Visits update?

8.3 Report on Budget, Schools' Financial Value Standard & Risk Register: Brief summary of current situation and the risk we have identified through risk register analysis and discussions in SFFC (confidential?)—this has not been written yet.

8.4 Policy & Practice for example 5 Pillars of well Being & Equality Objectives

8.5 Strategic intents and planning for 2024-25 –

8.6 School safe priority and school development plan

8.7 governing body monitoring schedule

8.8 governors training

8.9 policy review

8.10 Schools' SEF priorities in current SDP- this has not been written yet.

- 8.11 Governance Strategic Intents & priorities and proposed monitoring – do we need to update last year’s document to reflect risk register?
- 8.12 Governing body monitoring schedule – meetings, schools visits and learning walks

9. GOVERNORS TRAINING

- 9.1 Safeguarding training needs to be done by all governors every year.

10. POLICY REVIEW

- 10.1 Sign and ratify both SEND offers. The Early Career teacher induction policy is to be replaced with a checklist, which needs to be signed and ratified in the minutes. Admissions and Transitions will need to be chair's action as the offer is changing due to National FEEE strategies. This is a work in progress. In order to change the policy, consultation has been done, and the changes need full governing body (FGB) buy-in. For FEEE two-year-olds, it must be decided whether to run 8am to 6pm at both schools and whether to offer all year round at Low Hall. An application has been made for a place creation grant from January to start this work at Low Hall. The changes are currently for two-year-olds who can have two to four 9am-4pm places using their FEEE 15 hours over two and a half days, with the option to buy more hours if needed.
- 10.2 From September 2025, two-year-olds will be able to access 30 hours, so deciding the 30-hour pattern for them is essential. Wrap-around provision for two-year-olds from 8 am to 9 am and 4 pm to 6 pm will also be extended. It must be determined whether parents at Low Hall can use their 30-hour code over 11 hours for 48 weeks of the year. Holiday provision for two-year-olds will only be at Low Hall. If two-year-olds stay during the holidays, three-year-olds could effectively stay as well, though the community does not want play schemes. Therefore, this provision should be only for children who attend Low Nursery.
- 10.3 The Pay Policy will be a chair's action as they are awaiting the LBWF model. The Safeguarding policy is now generated via a portal that had access issues (they forgot the institution was a school). However, Hasina and the team will have this ready for FPP next week as access has now been granted.
- 10.4 Keeping children safe in education- everyone has read this.

11. SCHOOL TERM DATES

Deferred

ACTION: CHAIRS ACTION, DEFERRED TO NEXT MEETING

12. FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION

12.1 Statement of Internal Control

Governors to approve the Statement of Internal Control

12.2 School Financial Regulations

Governors to approve the School Financial Regulations

12.3 Scheme of Delegation

Governors are reminded of their responsibilities to review and approve the Scheme of Delegation on an annual basis. (Reference 2.3 of the Financial Regulations state: The Governing Board shall have a scheme of delegation which authorises the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, School Business Manager and other relevant staff employed at the School to act on its behalf on operational financial matters

within the scheme of delegation see Appendix A(i) and Delegation Decision Planner Appendix A (ii))

12.4 **Best Value Statement** (this is no longer statutory, but schools can make a statement if they wish)

12.5 **Whistle Blowing Policy**
To review the policy

13. HEALTH AND SAFETY AT SCHOOL

13.1 Governors to receive a report from the Health and Safety Link Governor

13.2 The Premises Safety Health Check document (PSHC) to be completed

13.3 Educational Visits (if applicable)

13.4 Governors are reminded of the requirement to approve the arrangements for all residential visits

14. DATE & TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS

14.1 Date of next meeting will be held on Thursday 27th February 2025.