

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXTRA CURRICULAR  
HANDSWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY HELD ON 11-01-2024  
AT 6PM AT THE SCHOOL**

**Present:**

Katherine Buckee

**Co-opted Governors**

Louisa Augustine-Fraser

Kathryn Ball

Candice Thorpe

Molly Hall

Beth Billington

**Headteacher**

Claire Nairne

Also present: Afua Addai-Diawuo - Deputy Head  
Mary Wilson - School Business Manager  
Aoife O'Connor - EYFS Lead

**1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 1.1 Claire explained the reason for the meeting. Concerns regarding reducing pupil numbers in the nursery
- 1.2 In the past, the school has had waiting lists for the nursery, and it has been very easy to fill.  
This year was a real challenge. The school just about filled it, and they are currently breaking even with income and expenditure. Children have left this year, and the school has filled places eventually. The school must not 'top up' the nursery with money from the whole school budget. It has to run itself. Core funding must not be used for under 5s

**2. DISCUSSIONS: COMMITMENTS**

- 2.1 The SLT are committed to not closing the nursery midway through an academic year.
- 2.2 Working with the LA and making sure communications come from them and the school.
- 2.3 Communicating with the local community and making sure the school supports them
- 2.4 The school will maintain a high standard of nursery provision.

**3. FEEDBACK FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

- 3.1 CN and MW met with the Local Authority - Lindsay Jackson, Gurpreet Kataora and Charlie Fagan - on 10.01.24 to discuss the risks around ongoing nursery provision in light of the observed falling demand for places. The Local Authority raised the following points:
  - 3.2 Nursery is often an asset for schools and is used effectively in the marketing of a school. The LA recognises that Handsworth is a first-preference school.
  - 3.3 The LA recognises that there is a large, well-resourced nursery next door. This makes the school's position quite unique.
  - 3.3 If Handsworth Nursery is breaking even, that means the school is doing ok. It will become a big issue when the school no longer breaks even, which is a possibility.

- 3.4 The LA strongly recommended a conversation with Eve McLoughlin (head of Early Years) to help form the school's business plan and options.
- 3.5 The local community – Eve has advised that a potential issue in the local community is the low number of early years providers that will take children just for their 15 or 30 FEEE
- 3.6 The LA shared the following data which demonstrates the excess of Early Years places in the wards which feed Handsworth's nursery.

WARD	Under 2's places gap	2 year old's places gap	3 & 4 year old's places gap	TOTAL PLACES GAP PER WARD
<b>CHINGFORD</b>				
Chingford Green	-6	13	63	70
Endlebury	-57	-47	-45	-148
Valley	-56	-8	-34	-98
Larkswood	28	43	113	185
Hatch Lane & Highams Park North	-10	-5	95	80
Hale End & Highams Park South	9	51	65	124
<b>CHINGFORD SUB-TOTAL</b>	<b>-92</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>213</b>

#### 4. QUESTIONS FROM GOVERNORS

- 4.1 BB asked about extending the school day for the children in the nursery to offer more hours. Governors discussed the possibility of extended wraparound care - possibly with our current provider.
- 4.2 CT agreed that wraparound care is attractive and needed. Questions arose surrounding space at Bright Horizons and whether they are full. Governors noted that the school had spoken with Bright Horizons, and they confirmed that they take children for only full days. They do not offer a three-hour sessional provision. Governors noted that the demand was greater for longer days to accommodate working parents/carers, especially in light of the more recent drive for employers requiring employees to work remotely less frequently post-COVID.
- 4.3 KB asked what percentage of the children have a sibling in the nursery currently. AO noted that although there are siblings in the nursery, a number of siblings join in the Reception year and do not attend our nursery.
- 4.4. Governors discussed the benefits that the space could provide for the rest of the school (R-6), noting that the nursery is not a statutory requirement and the space would provide excellent facilities for interventions and delivering the curriculum.
- 4.5 Concerns were raised surrounding giving the parents too much notice, which could lead to parents feeling worried about sending their child to the nursery knowing it is the last year.
- 4.6 MH asked about the increased EY funding and if this has been taken into account. MW confirmed that the change in funding has been considered and that there will be a slight increase in funding for 3-4-year-olds from the LA (£5.26 per hour to £5.51-£5.53 depending on outcomes of the ongoing consultation). This would approximately offset one vacancy.
- 4.7 The data (added above) states that there are 160 excess spaces available for 3&4-year-olds in the school's catchment area.

- 4.8 KB asked what the timeline is for this. MW noted that the school closes the waiting list for nursery in February for the following academic year. Governors agreed that it is too short a timeframe to consider closing at the end this academic year and that we would need to accept the risk of falling places for another academic year, with a view to closing in July 2025.
- 4.9 Claire added that the concern remains that the school will not be able to fill the nursery moving forward and that it is becoming a risk. The SLT are thinking that next year will be the last year of nursery at Handsworth as year on year it is getting more difficult to fill, and the data from the Local Authority proves that this is an issue.
- 4.10 Communication is important in making sure that the school community know that this year (academic year 2024/25) will be the last, the school do not want to leave families with difficulties
- 4.11 KB agreed that early communication is important and that families who are signing up for the nursery need to know that this is the last year and raised concerns that some families may decide not to send their child to the nursery if they know it is the last year.
- 4.14 AA confirmed that the school needs to make sure the community knows that standards will remain high.

## **5. GOVERNORS OPINIONS**

- 5.1 CN stated that, with clear and open communication, next year could be the last year that nursery provision is offered at Handsworth. This is due to the growing concerns surrounding pupil numbers and the data that proves there is a surplus of places in the local area. Alongside this, the school has a nursery just next door, and the school lacks space and the nursery would be able to provide the school with additional resources, including intervention space, facilities to deliver the DT curriculum, letting opportunities and extended wrap-around care potentially provided by our current provider.
- 5.2 After discussion, all governors present agreed that the next academic year should be that last. They highlighted the need for clear communication and their passion for EY education, however they could see how the increased space could also provide benefit for the current children at school
- 5.3 Next steps would include the school meeting with EM, the Early Years Lead from the LA, who was unable to join the meeting on 10.01.24. The school will produce a Business Plan, discussed with the LA, which would include Income and Expenditure data and present the proposed plan for the nursery space post-closure. It would outline the risks associated with keeping the nursery open and closing it. Governors need to include the nursery on their risk register in light of falling demand in the area and the risk of impact on the core budget. The school will carefully review the update of nursery places for the 2024-24 academic year and will keep governors informed.

**The meeting finished at 7.15pm**