



Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting

Monday 15 November 2024 at 6.00 pm

Membership

Name	Initials	Term Expiry Date	Governor Category
Leon Choueke	LC	N/A	Head Teacher, Ex-officio(1)
Debby Kuypers (Chair)	DK	09-11-2025	Co-opted Governors (7)
*Richard Holmes (Vice Chair)	RH	01-02-2026	
Eddie Webb	EW	25-09-2026	
Jean-Michel Garcia-Alvarez via video	JGA	10-02-2025	
Becca Monahan	BM	17-11-2027	
*Claudia Simms Abrahm	CSA	04-02-2028	
Andrena Emin	AE	04-02-2028	
Melian Mansfield	MM	19-01-2026	LA Governor (1)
Kirsten Schmidt	KS	04-02-2028	Staff (1)
Morinade Akinbobola	MA	05-11-2024	Parent Governor (2)
Nomi Tysman	NT	30-11-2024	
Also in attendance:			
*Tim Ibbotson	TI	N/A	Asst HT
Ben Strange	BS	N/A	Deputy HT
*Darren Heath	DH	04-02-2028	Associate Governor
Ben Miller via video	BMi	01-07-2028	Associate Governor
Michael Wang	CW	01-07-2028	Associate Governor
*Corrina Phillips	CP	N/A	Asst HT and SENCO
Louise Foulkes	LF	N/A	Deputy HT
Laura Goodey	LG	N/A	Early Years Lead
Adam Crosier			Clerk

* Denotes absence

PART 1

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

DK opened the meeting at 6.05 pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from RH and DH. These were accepted. The meeting was quorate.

2. Declarations of interest, pecuniary or otherwise in respect of items on the agenda

None.

3. Deep dive subjects

Early Years: Laura Goodey, Early Years Lead

LG described the staffing structure for Early Years and provided an overview of the school day for children in Nursery and Reception. This began with 'explore and learn' inside and outside, followed by a Phonics session at 11.00 am, lunch, outdoor play, more 'explore and learn' in and outside, a whole class session and ending with a story.

She explained that the curriculum was based on the statutory requirements identified in the Early Years framework: the more recent version of this had recommended a move away from working at tables and focused activity to encouraging children to explore their interests. She said that this was in line with the approach Coleridge had been taking for some time.

Child development

LG reported on research evidence about child development and the importance of the key characteristics of effective learning: playing and exploring, taking risks, active learning, developing new ways of doing things, problem solving and critical thinking.

The classrooms/learning environments were planned both in and outside. Also, there was a focus on repetition and consistency to provide children with security and there was an awareness of the importance of balancing child led and adult led learning.

LG discussed the so called '7 areas of learning':

- Communication and language
- Personal, social and emotional
- Physical development
- Maths
- Literacy
- Understanding the world
- Expressive arts and design

Brain development and cognition

She reported that the early years of a child's life are the most important in terms of brain development, and described the critical importance of engagement, interaction and conversation with children to stimulate neural connections. Research evidence showed that where children suffer trauma and/or lack of interaction, these connections fail to be made.

She said that children naturally seek and need challenge: crawling, for example is a natural process of challenge. She said that within the Early Years setting the school provided the environment for such challenge through a wide range of experiences and interactions with peers and adults and the natural world. There was also a recognition of the importance of not over-planning and of allowing children to be bored, as this was essential to enabling children to find ways of challenging themselves, rather than becoming passive recipients of information and experiences.

Assessment: LG reported that the school held regular focus sessions, at which the progress of each child was reviewed by all the staff team. She said that while the DfE set Early Learning goals, these were not to be used as targets to be taught to by a school.

Coleridge's approach was informed by the book, 'Birth to Five Matters' and the school sought to work closely with parents. The school encouraged the active involvement of parents. The school took an approach that focused on individualised teaching tailored to

the needs of each child. In practice this meant using each child's interests to motivate the child, within a cycle of constant observation and assessment and teaching. The Early Years staff team met weekly to discuss progress and to plan ahead.

Pedagogical approach

The pedagogical approach at Coleridge emphasised the importance of play, which was child led, imaginative and unstructured. The role of adults was to encourage, question and help children to develop. The school purposefully had long periods of uninterrupted play time, rather than stopping and changing. Important to develop ideas and to reflect and improve. LG pointed out that the process of play was more important than the product, with sharing and risk taking being key.

Where the focus was on adult led learning, there was an intent to build themes around texts. These were based on what was going on around the children, including seasonal celebrations, festivals, the weather etc. As a school in London there was a focus on developing natural thinkers, with a recognition that many children may not get to experience the natural environment outside of the school. The children were exposed to nature, including plants and insects/bugs etc.

The school also had a focus on reading, with each child having a book bag. There were guided reading sessions and one to one support for children who struggled with reading. The daily Phonics focused on repetition of sounds and the school used the Little Wandle scheme.

MM thanked for an excellent presentation.

Q. DK asked how many adults were present in the classroom.

A. LG said that there was a teacher and TA at all times plus other TAs for one-to-one support for identified children.

Q. MA asked whether there was a noticeable difference in children who entered the school in Reception from those who had experience of the Nursery.

A. LG said that overall, there were differences in children's development, based on the experience they had prior to joining the school. Some private nurseries were very focused on specific elements of development. Meanwhile, some children lacked social skills. At the school the staff worked to ensure that all children were able to thrive, through the methods discussed.

Q. MW asked about areas of greatest concern.

A. LG said that her view was that the social and emotional concerns had become dominant in recent years, and that these impacted many aspects of children's development including problem solving and friendships, self-regulation etc. She said that post Covid there had been an evident dip in communication and language, something that was a nationally recognised phenomenon. However, she reported that for the first year since the pandemic, it now felt that children entering Nursery were back to pre-pandemic levels.

Adaptive teaching strategies: Ben Strange

BM had previously discussed with governors the rationale of the curriculum for Y1- Y6. That presentation had focused on 'what we teach and the sequencing' ensuring it was rich and diverse. The focus of the current presentation was on HOW the school delivered the content, using the best strategies to teach. He said that there was no point having a very good curriculum unless it was delivered well, and that it was through teaching strategies that the school ensured all children had access to the curriculum.

He reported that about 10 years ago there had been a lot of talk about differentiation. Differentiation was essentially teaching different activities based on the different ability of children. Such an approach, however, did nothing to reduce the gap in attainment between advantaged/disadvantaged groups. Now, the school no longer differentiated the learning: everyone learned the same knowledge/skills.

This was achieved through the following approaches.

- Sharing the learning objective with children at the start of a lesson.
- 'Think, pair, share'. To encourage individual thinking and talking with a partner.
- 'Cold calling': not asking children to raise their hand if they knew the answer to a question, but asking 'cold' any child/pair to ensure they remain engaged
- 'Targeted questioning': where the teacher adapts the question to the needs of the individual.
- 'Modelling': my turn, our turn, your turn. This involves the teacher showing how a problem is to be addressed, working it through collectively and then asking children to answer a question on their own.
- 'I say, you say'.
- 'Don't ask one, ask five'.
- 'Full sentence responses'.
- 'No guessing games'. This was an approach to avoid children 'guessing' the correct answer and confusing themselves and others by getting the answer wrong. Instead, knowledge about facts was imparted by the teacher.
- 'Storytelling'. This involved the teacher introducing a subject by telling a story outlining the key facts to engage children with the lesson and providing them with a narrative that would engage their interest.
- 'Reasoning with images'. Using images to explore similarities/differences.
- 'Adapting learning tasks and worksheets'.

Q. MM asked whether these strategies were helpful.

A. BS and LF said that when the SIA had visited, they had found that the knowledge of the children had been 'unbelievable.' BS said that the curriculum had been purchased from HEP and that there was an inherent focus on disadvantaged children. He said that the amount of knowledge that all groups of children were able to hold was impressive. LC added that in the past some children could 'zone out' but now they had to be much more focused, thanks to techniques including cold calling.

Q. MM asked about the role of practical work.

A. BS said that this varied according to the intent of the lesson. Some lessons were more concerned with imparting substantive knowledge and the application of knowledge. He said that in some subjects (history/geography) it was less easy to have practical sessions than in other (science).

Q. MA asked about equal access Maths and English and the role of project-based learning.

A. BS said that project-based learning had been in vogue in the past: for example, the project 'chocolate' was a means of learning about maths, geography and history. However, BS said that there had been a recognition that project-based learning creates disjointed learning and about 5 years ago, the DfE made clear the importance of discrete learning over project-based learning.

LC agreed and suggested that elements of project-based learning could offer valuable opportunities for the children. This could be looked at when reviewing the curriculum in the future to explore realistic ways to incorporate these elements.

Q. A governor asked how learning was assessed.

A. BS explained that one approach to assessment was through synoptic tasks: for example, the teacher may present the question, 'how was life different in Ancient Greece to Ancient Rome?' Such an open question then enabled children to be creative in their response and to demonstrate their knowledge.

LF added that assessment methods varied according to the subject, and that there was a place in assessment for a wide range of approaches. Reviews of children's books and interviews were other means.

Q. MM asked whether the school encouraged discussion and debate about what children learn

A. BS confirmed that it did and pointed to examples of debates where children were asked to prepare and argue for or against a given idea, in front of their peers.

Q. MA asked how the school's use of 'sets' for some subjects married with its approach to non-differentiated learning.

A. BS said that the school did use sets for maths (Y5 and Y6) and English (Y6). LC said that the school was always reviewing its practice with setting and that while the school had been using the HEP curriculum for 4 years, there were still some elements not used in the school.

Q. MM asked if there were any disciplines where there was a concern.

A. BS said that he was more concerned with the field work in geography. Making field work relevant and useful was challenging when focusing on a topic like coasts and erosion, when the school was located so far from the sea.

LF added that music was also a concern because some teachers lacked the confidence to teach the subject. As a result, the school was currently exploring the idea of bringing in music specialists. Overall, no subject was of huge concern and most concerns were about resources (time and money).

4. Any other business

None.

5. Date of next meeting

2 December 2024 at 6.00 pm

6. Confidential items

None.

Signed..... Date.....
Chair of Governors