

**Old Ford Primary Academy  
Academy Council Meeting  
Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Attendees**

Councillors:

Dawud  
Mizanur  
Jusima  
Sakya  
Mohammed

Kevin - Principal  
David Willis - link director and chairman of the board

Plus 4x parents/carers

**Welcome**

Well done to all new academy council members

Meetings are on the second Tuesday of every half term.

Kevin will put the dates in the newsletter.

Kevin will email academy council members to see if there are any agenda items.

Parents and carers can raise any items as well and attend the academy council meetings.

The meetings are for parents to discuss issues and Kevin said he does not come to the meeting with any agenda or items as this is a parent/ carer forum.

Kevin will answer questions and David Willis will attend from time to time.

David said he tries to attend meetings when he can to be able to hear directly from the parents and carers and it's good to have a board member.

Nice to meet new councillors and really please for people to put their names forward.

Attendance was low compared from previous meetings so Kevin will circulate dates regularly.

### **How will classes be covered during covid due to staff absences, and will this affect children's learning?**

There is a new strain of covid called Omicron and the school has had several absences in the past couple of weeks and the school has covered them and the staff have been really good at working together by giving up their planning time or reorganising things to make sure that classes are covered. The school hasn't had a great many staff off and only have about 6 off at the moment. The school has used their internal cover and there are teachers who are not class based who are able to cover classes and the school has used agency teachers where they have had to. The school uses agency staff who know the school, who are familiar with the set-up, know the curriculum and the way the school teaches, which means the disruption to the pupils' learning has been minimal.

The worst-case scenario would be that we have so many staff off that the school will have to close classes but that has not had to happen. The school does not want to go back to pupils being at home doing remote learning with laptops. The school is doing everything it can to keep the classes open and continuing as they are. Kevin was about to go into a class to cover.

The teaching staff have been amazing and gone into class to cover and had to delay their planning time.

### **Are there any extra classes or sessions to help pupils with their mental health?**

The school has focused on pupils' mental health throughout the pandemic and to help pupils the school has been honest and open about what is happening. The school gives the pupils space to talk. The school do AVR which stands for Acknowledge Validate and Recognise pupils feelings and experiences. The school tells the pupils that things are going to be ok and that there are extra measures in place such as hand washing and wearing masks in the playground.

The school feels it is best to be honest with everyone rather than pretend nothing is happening. The pupils know all about the measures that are in school to keep them safe to help them feel secure. There are two learning mentors and a third learning mentor starting in February, to give pupils one to one support for those who need it to talk about how they are feeling about what is going on. The school also has Shabina, the home school support worker, who liaises with families. The school has done a lot of work in classes as well when pupils have returned from a lockdown or holiday. The school

uses the Jigsaw PSHE programme, which has a recovery curriculum which the school has used when pupils have returned from lockdown and holidays.

The school also works with Stephen Aravena who is a qualified mental health professional, a psychologist, who has supported across the trust with the mental health support. The school recognises there are actually more specific mental health support needed for families and pupils and the school has commissioned additional professional support and the school because CAMHS has a huge waiting list and the Trust recognises the need to provide more specialised support for those pupils who need it.

### **How have the pupils coped during this period overall?**

Kevin feels that the pupils are coping really well, and the school is working hard to make it a safe and enjoyable place to be. The school has done a lot of work such as the kindness banner that is outside the school. The school tries to do a lot of enjoyable things, so the pupils enjoy coming to school. Kevin feels that school is genuinely the best place for pupils as they know the school, it's familiar and safe and they are with people who know them. The school was most anxious about the time when pupils were at home often with their families and although there was regular contact via the screens and phone calls, this was the time the school worried most about the pupils. When pupils are in the school, staff can keep an eye on them, speak to them about issues that come up and put in place support if it is needed. There are probably some pupils who may be able to hide issues but they are better in a safe space where they can talk about these issues if needed. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to speak if there is something concerning them, either in class or year assemblies or with the learning mentors.

### **How are staff coping?**

Kevin and the school try to make it as easy as possible for staff to do their job. Their primary job is teaching and if there is anything Kevin as a principal, or the Trust can do to make it easier for staff they will do, such as if staff wanted to leave earlier, such as 4 or 4.30pm, to beat the rush on the tube then staff are supported to do that. The Trust also provides 6 paid counselling sessions for staff and a number of staff have taken this up. Stephen also supports staff with their mental health and the school keeps up a number of initiatives for staff to make sure they are safe. Kevin praised the staff and said they are all doing an amazing job and if there is anything he can do to support staff he will and the Trust is on board with this as well.

Kevin mentioned that a positive that has come out of the pandemic is the sense of collective community and support and the parents and carers have had a chance to see what the school is about and Kevin feels that the school values of Excellence Community and Integrity are really embedded now and instead of just seeming to be posters on the wall, people can genuinely talk about them from their heart. Kevin is very proud of his school and what the school has done.

### **Locks on girls toilets outside year 5 and 6 are not working properly.**

One lock was broken on the girls toilet outside but these have been checked now and all should be ok. Kevin is aware that sometimes the locks get broken so they will be monitored.

**Young Voices was scheduled for 14<sup>th</sup> January** but has now been postponed due to the current situation with COVID. There is a new date in March or May but Kevin will check on this.

### **Food boxes**

Timur's mum thanked everyone for the donation of food boxes.

### **Travel to and from swimming for year 5**

Year 5 swimming has started again in January and it was asked if it is possible to have the coach to pick the pupils up for swimming. It was highlighted that it is now the cold months until the easter break.

Kevin said they will speak to Tower Hamlets as they can only use what the council have given them, and there are no more coaches at that time. Some parents have dropped their children to the swimming pool for 9am and anyone who cannot do that the pupils go to breakfast club and staff take them to swimming. The issue seems to be getting to swimming as the coach should be bringing all the pupils back to school. Kevin will check this as he says the pupils do not get there by coach but all get back to school by coach. Another parent mentioned that her daughter got the D6 there and back from swimming, and this meant the pupils don't have a long time to eat their lunch. Kevin said it is a difficult time in the morning as before the swimming was on a different day and at a later time and now the council are saying they just don't have the coaches at that time. The school wants pupils to go swimming as it is very important for them and it's just about trying to make it work. It was mentioned that one of the issues may be sanitising the

coaches between uses and this delays what coaches are available at any one time.

**The interactive board in year 5E is a problem as the image is very blurry and can affect pupils eyesight.**

Kevin said the school has ordered 5 new boards and paid for them and they were supposed to be delivered before Christmas but there has been a hold up on the order and they will not now be in place until April. Kevin has seen Jeanene the ICT teacher and she will take one of the projectors from the ICT rooms and swap it in the meantime as there is something wrong with the projector.

**NEXT MEETING 9.15AM TUESDAY 1ST MARCH**

Minutes taken by Kevin Jones and Dawud Marsh