

Al-Hijrah School
Interim Executive Board Meeting
Wednesday 4th June 2014 at 1.30pm
Minutes

Attendees : David Wiley (Chair, Schools ER – DW), Kiran Chanian (HR Consultant – KC), Jane Spilsbury (Acting Head of Schools Improvement – JS), Sabrina Hobbs (DHT Calthorpe School – SH), Sue Beer (Head of SFS – SB), David Bridgman (LA School Governor Support Team - DB), Graham Hardy (HT Calthorpe School – GH), Ian Burgess (Senior Solicitor – IB), Ian Meacham (School Improvement Advisor – IM), David Brown (Consultant – DB)

Visitors:

Clerk: Sally Anderson (SA)

ACTION POINTS

Action	Responsible	Timescale
Minutes of meeting dated 21 st May 2014 to be reviewed; comments to be emailed to Jane Spilsbury	All IEB members	Immediate
Venue to be confirmed for staff meeting on 12 th June 2014	JS	9 th June 2014
Letter to be sent to Peter Hay regarding the issues being encountered by the IEB obtaining access to the site	Chair	Immediate
Prospective IEB member details to be provided to JS for consideration	GH	Immediate
Contact to be made with DRB regarding repayment provision	SB	Immediate
Contact to be made with security and website companies regarding current contract terms	SB	Immediate

1. Apologies and welcome

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting at 13.30.
- 1.2 There were no apologies for absence.
- 1.3 The Chair clarified that the IEB had formally been appointed two weeks ago, a week of that had been half term however, a considerable amount had happened during that period.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated at the meeting.
- 2.2 It was noted and agreed that due to the time set for the discussion and the need to fully read the content, members would be asked to read and present their comments by email to JS. All comments and redactions would be noted and the minutes re-p-resented at the next meeting for approval and signing.

3. Matters Arising and Chairs Report

- 3.1 It was unanimously agreed that items 3 and 4 (Matters Arising and Chairs Report) would be taken as one.

- 3.2 The Chair re-iterated that a considerably amount had happened since the first meeting pre the half-term break. A number of decisions were agreed at that meeting regarding actions to be taken and updates would be provided.
- 3.3 A visit to the school took place on Wednesday 28th May 2014, with the remit to review governance, IT, finance, the staffing establishment and school leadership. Members of the IEB arrived at 8.15am and at 9.00am were allowed into the Head teachers office. A subsequent three hour wait resulted in no information being obtained and the team were physically harassed by members of the school security team into leaving. It was made clear during the time on site that there is no acknowledgment of the IEB's existence or the receipt of the LA or DfE letters detailing the changes.
- 3.4 GH queried whether anonymised pay scales could be shown at the impending parents meeting for information. The Chair advised against this course of action. The data is personal data and is not for sharing or discussion outside of the IEB meeting. It was agreed however that pay is a point that parents should be made aware of.
- 3.5 The fourth person is the previous Chair of Governors, Wasim Yacoub. It was noted and agreed that to date Mr Yacoub has blocked every attempt made by both the IEB and the LA to access the school. Attempts to access the school were made on Wednesday 28th May 2014 – the IEB were removed after being made to wait for three hours; again access was denied on Monday 2nd June 2014, the IEB / LA withdraw attempts after 12 minutes; On Tuesday 3rd June 2014 GH, JS and DB entered the reception of the school at 12.45 and left at 13.15 having been prevented gaining access to Ms Baptiste by the previous Chair of Governors. JS advised that a discussion had taken place with Ms Baptiste regarding the visit however Mr Yacoub deemed the arrival of three members of the IEB heavy handed and wished to negotiate the access. JS advised that this was not a point of negotiation
- 3.6 SB asked for clarification as to why Mr Yacoub was in Woodcock St Reception on Monday evening. The Chair confirmed that he had arrived for the meeting with Ms Baptiste, although not invited and asked to wait in reception.
- 3.7 GH referred back to the recent attempts to gain access to the school and informed the IEB that on leaving the site, calls had been made to rally a number of people to attend the site; c20 plus were gather around the front entrance. Mr Yacoub had tried to open the minibus door as it left the site. This incident had been accurately documented including times to senior officers.
- 3.8 IB referred to the letters banning Mr Yacoub from site and advised that David Brown from Birmingham Legal Services was leading on this issue and that a press release was being released later today. A copy was requested for the IEB to review and approve by return. The Chair expressed concern that a press release had been prepared without the input or acknowledgement of the IEB, whilst there were no issues in the content, all and any future releases should be approved by members of the IEB in advance. The release was agreed for release by all members in attendance. IB provided verbal approval to the press office.
- 3.9 In terms of visits to the school site, JS advised that Peter hay is insistent that members of the LA attend the site each day until access is gained. IEB members were advised that an email has been sent to Sue Twells and Sally Taylor regarding the risks of the unplanned visits. DB and JS attended the site again today but to no avail.
- 3.10 IB advised that Mr Yacoub has sent three letters / emails to the leader of the City Council (Councillor A Bore) and Mr Hay which contain personal remarks. As a consequence, responses have been drafted by David Brown (Legal Services) and are to be delivered directly to Mr Jacobus home address by the end of this week. The contents of each letter were read out by the Chair of the IEB for member's information and approved as an appropriate course of action and response by those IEB members in attendance.

4. Letters to Parents and Staff and Meetings with Both Groups

- 4.1 The Chair confirmed that in the last few days a number of letters have been sent on behalf of the IEB to both parents and staff using the address details held on the system. The first letters

detail the rationale for the disestablishment of the IEB along with details of the new IEB and its members. The second letter is an invitation to a meeting to meet with members of the IEB, to ask questions and to address concerns. It was agreed that with the recent arrival of the press, there will be anxiety and issues for both groups.

- 4.2 The parent meeting has been arranged for Monday 16th June at 5.15pm at BCFC. The staff meeting has been arranged for Thursday 12th June at 4.00pm. The venue is yet to be confirmed depending on access to the school. The Saffron Centre was recommended as an alternative location and GH agreed for Calthorpe School minibuses to be used as transport if necessary. As a minimum the Chair, GH and JS would be in attendance from the IEB, however all other members are welcome to attend.
- 4.3 JS advised that a number of calls had been received from staff regarding the current position of the school and the future. Whilst not all were wholly supportive of the actions being taken, they were requesting clarification of the issues and the options. JS further advised that the final option for the school could be closure dependent upon the progress which is made.
- 4.4 In terms of the parents meeting, GH raised a concern on how the school / IEB could guarantee only those who had been invited would attend and gain access. The Chair advised that there is a significant trust issue which needs to be overcome. Whilst signing in sheets will be available for individuals, it cannot be guaranteed that the meeting will contain only parents.
- 4.5 GH advised that a letter had been received from the current PTA (this was read out for IEB members information) and advice had been taken from Joyce Rawlinson on how to best support the PTA going forward. It was agreed that a response would be sent stating that the IEB looks forward to working positively with the PTA in the future.
- 4.6 It was further agreed that the current staff need to be assured of the IEB's remit and attendance on site and that all parties need to work together to support the children and progress the school.

5. Immediate Issues

- 5.1 The Chair expressed his concern regarding the current safety and well-being of the IEB now and particularly when the Calthorpe team have access to the school and the support of the IEB is removed. Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that all members of the IEB remain safe and secure at all times.
- 5.2 IB referred to the staff meeting and acknowledged the reasons for holding this so soon, however there are a number of issues to be addressed which may make it a volatile situation and consideration should be given to ensuring the meeting does not become an opportunity for individuals to vent their anger. A neutral venue should be agreed. GH advised that the parent meeting is considered to be the more volatile at the current time.
- 5.3 DB questioned whether an invitation should be sent to Ofsted to attend the meeting on 18th June, which is yet to be confirmed by the school. The Chair advised against that. Neither the LA nor IEB wish to inflame the situation.
- 5.4 It was noted that the LA has now control over the schools budget. A discussion took place regarding ceasing the contract for the security company on site. The Chair asked for caution to be exercised in this respect particularly as no contracts have been provided and there is no evidence to support any break clause payments. SB was asked to try and obtain contracts or terms of reference for Guard Group Limited and Peninsula Limited.
- 5.5 JS expressed concern that should Ofsted attend for the follow visit which is anticipated to be during the coming term or the start of the autumn term, there will be limited if any progress to show. Ofsted have been advised that there are current issues in gaining access to the site.
- 5.6 The Chair confirmed that the IEB should assume that the meeting will progress on the 18th June 2014 as requested. In accordance with LA requests, daily visits will continue to be made to try to obtain access to the site. All members were in agreement to those actions. JS expressed some concern regarding the latter. There should be a clear remit to attend the site, today's visit was to arrange a date for the IEB to take over. DB advised that a text has since been sent by Mr

Yacoub to all parents that the IEB has left and all is well. IB advised that without the IEB's agreement, the previous Chair to Governors cannot enter the site, in doing so he will be an unwelcome visitor and trespassing. Those previous members who cause a nuisance or disturbance can be the subject of criminal proceedings.

- 5.7 The Chair advised that should the blocking to site continue, the police and justice system will become involved and the matter will be taken out of the hands of the IEB; the question is how long that takes. For the foreseeable time the IEB have responsibility for the school and remain in an untenable position, which could be exacerbated over the summer holidays. JS reiterated her previous comments regarding senior officers against police involvement during school hours. The IEB is responsible for the safety of the children and at the current time, that is not guaranteed due to the inability to gain control of the site.
- 5.8 A discussion took place in terms of the daily LA representation at the school. The instruction is for LA officers to attend each day, however DBridgman expressed his concern at the vulnerable and difficult position this places the officers in particularly in view of the text sent today to parents. JS advised that the concern has been fed back to Peter Hay.
- 5.9 IB advised that an email had been received today from a parent questioning if the IEB were on site as a text had been sent to all parents requesting their help and attendance on site. The email expressed concern and support towards to the IEB and LA in resolving the issues. It also advised that the previous Chair of Governors was arranging for High Court Barrister representation to support the school. No papers have yet been received DBridgman requested that representation be made in terms of the limited progress being made to gain access to the site.
- 5.10 The Chair agreed with the comments made in respect of the LA officers and that their daily presence undermines the position of the IEB. JS clarified that the IEB is appointed by the LA who are legally responsible for the school, the IEB are officers and representatives of the LA. In terms of senior officers providing instructions, the IEB are the representatives of the LA. In legal terms, the IEB is the GB and should make the ultimate decisions.
- 5.11 IM clarified the current position of the IEB, there is a role which cannot be practicably fulfilled and no opportunity to review the strategic direction of the school despite many attempts. The IEB was set up to try to help save the school from special measures but is unable to progress. This is a unique position which should be acknowledged. The IEB cannot and should not create any additional tensions within the LA, nor the local community. Currently the IEB are seen as intruders at the school and it needs to consider the safety of its members and the children at the school. Daily attendance at the school is unsuccessful. Aside from devolving budgetary responsibility from the school and informing the parents and staff of the changes the IEB is not able to discharge its duties and is being seen as a negative. It was agreed that the Chair would write to Peter Hay outlining this and expressing concern that the IEB is being set to fail. The letter would be copied to Sue Twells and Sally Taylor.
- 5.12 IB reminded members of the staff and parents meetings which have been arranged for the next two weeks and the need to ensure that a positive message regarding the work of the IEB was delivered. It was agreed that the timing of the letter to Mr Hay should be considered.
- 5.13 In advance of the whole staff meeting, it was agreed that pre-meeting with the SLT should take place to advise them of the work of the IEB and the expectations of the SLT and the support required. JS advised that a copy of the current staffing structure has not been provided. KC to provide a list of all staff on the leadership pay spine to GH and JS for invitation to the meeting. It was agreed that an SLT meeting would be arranged for 3.30pm on Monday 9th June at Calthorpe School, transport will be offered as necessary. IEB attendees will include IM, GH and JS.
- 5.14 DBridgman advised that Governor Support Services have received a number of calls from parents regarding the IEB and whilst not wholly unsupportive, the recurring theme is the make-up of the board and lack of Islamic representation. It was noted that this is question which will be raised at the parent meeting. The Chair advised that there were two Islamic applications on

the original list for the IEB which were not approved by the DfE. This will be highlighted to the DfE in terms of recruiting further members to the Board. GH advised that there are two possible candidates within Calthorpe School who might be considered for approval to the IEB. IB clarified that it is for the IEB to appoint additional members to the board however it was agreed that DfE and LA agreement would be sought prior to any new member appointments being made. It was further noted that following the staff meetings, a staff member might also be appointed. Names of those who should be considered for appointment should be provided to JS for further discussion.

6. IEB Allowances

6.1 The Chair advised that there is provision for out of pocket travel expenses for members.

7. Budget

7.1 SB advised that the LA were aware at Christmas there would be a deficit of c£600k. At the end of March 2014 the deficit was £638k and no repayment plan had been provided by the school despite requests being made since November.

8. Staffing

8.1 The Chair confirmed that the strategy for the change of senior leadership had been covered and

9. Governance

9.1 The latest Ofsted report has identified the governance within the school as inadequate and not fit for purpose.

9.2 It was re-confirmed for the purposes of the minutes that the letters provided by the LA in respect of banning the previous Chair of Governors were approved by all members in attendance and that upon Ms Baptistes removal, GH would assume the role of Executive Head Teacher supported by DB.

10. Teacher Standards

10.1 GH confirmed that a number of colleagues would be used to observe staff including Nicky Penny at James Brindley which is another teaching school; Kevin McHenry in Northampton, an associate advisor to the LA. Recommendation was given in support of Claire Constantine previously a member of staff at Bordesley Girls School.

10.2 It was agreed that Calthorpe has a strong team to support the school and its objective is to complete 2/3 joint observations a week with the SLT in order to maintain the monitoring process.

10.3 The current concern is the staffing position and whilst the resignation date has passed, it is not known whether any resignations have been received. There are a number of candidates who have recently interviewed for Calthorpe who could be placed at the school if necessary however it is difficult to plan for an unknown September start.

10.4 GH further advised that Calthorpe does not have the capacity for long term support and middle / senior managers will need to be recruited. There is support from the alliance of teaching schools and SB confirmed that payment from this will need to be made from Calthorpe and journalled across to the schools budget.

10.5 It was noted that the current action plan is not fit for purpose due to the access issues and unfair criticism is being of JS. JS advised that a discussion had been held regarding this and that it is difficult to judge the statement without it being written in conjunction with the school. The plan is being used as a tool against the IEB.

10.6 DBrown left the meeting at 16.00

11. Any Other Business

- 11.1 IB advised that a discussion had been held in terms of the staff and parent meeting and whether these should be videoed; it is possible that these will be videoed regardless by members of the audience and there is an argument to arrange professional videoing ensures and highlights the IEB is an open and transparent board. The IEB members had no objection to this, but questioned those parents who did not want to be on camera. It was recommended the cameras faced only the panel.
- 11.2 DBridgman questioned if issues would be raised if the staff meeting differed from the parent meeting on camera. Would minuting of the meeting be a more prudent option. After a short discussion, it was agreed that minuting would be the preferred option knowing that it is highly likely members of the audience will audio / record the meeting.
- 11.3 A further discussion took place in terms of onsite security. Again JS re-iterated the LA's position on this. IB agreed to raise this with Legal.

12. Next Steps

- 12.1 Pending approval for access, JS, GH and IM will attend the School to advise staff of the change in the satiation and begin work
- 12.2 A staff meeting will be arranged for 4.00pm at Calthorpe on Monday, transport can be provided as necessary.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

- 13.1 To be confirmed

The meeting ended at 16.15.