

Minutes of the Annual Parents' Meeting (APM) of the Governing Body of North West London Jewish Day School, held at the school on Wednesday, 19 July 2006 at 8.15 p.m.

Present Mr Graham Morris (Chair of the APM), Mr David Landy (Chair of Governors), Dayan Ivan Binstock (Principal), Mrs Sheila Taylor (Vice Chair of Governors), Mr David Collins (Headteacher), Mr Arnie Kosiner, Mrs Naomi Landy, Mr Herman Martyn, Mr Alan Meyers, Mrs Natanya Rabinowitz, Mrs Rachel Vecht, Mrs Andrea Walker, Mrs Miriam Waserberger, Mr Michael Weinstein, Mrs Susan Braham (Deputy Headteacher), Rabbi Ronen Broder (Head of Limudei Kodesh), Ms Alison Burns (Head of KS1) and Mr David Sassoon (Clerk)

1. Prayers, introductions, apologies and preamble

- a. Dayan Binstock opened the meeting with the recitation of Psalm 121 in order that those in attendance pray for Israel at this difficult time.
- b. Mr David Landy, Chair of Governors, welcomed the parents and thanked Mr Morris for chairing the meeting. He reminded parents that Mr Morris had been a governor for 30 years (circa) and had given the school unparalleled service.

He remarked that though the Annual Parents' Meeting was not a statutory requirement, the governors had decided to hold one annually as it provided an invaluable forum for governors and parents to share views, information and concerns.

- c. The governors introduced themselves.

2. Addition to the report

Mr Morris, Chair of the Annual Parents' Meeting, presented the governors' report to the 35 assembled parents. Mr Collins advised parents that he had inadvertently omitted mentioning in the report that Mrs Lee Cass, one of the teachers, had provided the curricular link for the assemblies held to commemorate the school 60th birthday celebrations.

Following this, Mr Morris invited the parents to raise issues and/or ask questions.

3. Congratulations

Mr Jonathan Seitler, one of the parents, proffered congratulations to Mr Tony Metzger, parent governor, who was celebrating his birthday with attendance at the meeting.

4. Admissions

Mr Seitler also congratulated the Governing Body for amending the admissions criteria to give priority to Jewish children from orthodox families who lived locally, which would provide a new lease of life to the three local synagogues.

Mr Morris, Chair of the APM, reminded the governors that it was he who proposed a change to the admissions policy to give greater priority to Jewish children living within a four-mile radius of the school. He added that the school owed much to the sterling work and support of certain Jewish families like the Martyns, Landys, Steinbocks and

Raydens, who while living further afield, stood solidly by the school and sustained it when there was little or no local Jewish community.

A parent asked the governors why it was that the admissions policy had been altered to require the families of the pupils to come from orthodox backgrounds. Mr Morris clarified that the policy had not been amended to that effect. The school had always accepted children from families that were orthodox and others who were less so but committed to becoming more “dyed-in-the wool” and sympathetic to the ethos of the school.

Mrs Sheila Taylor informed parents that in a recent survey of ex-pupils she had conducted she discovered that 24 out of 35 young people who had been at primary school in North West had gone on to some form of tertiary Jewish education, which included a few who had not progressed to Jewish secondary schools.

Dayan Binstock clarified that the ethos of the school had always remained unchanged. The Admissions Committee no longer interviewed the parents of pupils entering the reception class but relied on references on them from the Rabbonim.

5. Headteacher recruitment

Mr David Landy, the Chair, apprised parents of the decision of Mr Collins to retire prematurely on 31 December 2006. He understood the reasons for his having taken the decision after being Headteacher of the school for 24 years, respected him for it and wished him much health and happiness for the future.

He briefed parents about the selection process for his successor and informed them of the strong candidates who had been shortlisted having met those aspects of the person specification that could be measured from the form.

Some parents wanted to know why it was that the Governing Body required candidates for the post to be of an orthodox Jewish orientation. Mr Morris said that the governors had had a long and animated discussion about this matter and by a majority vote decided to have this requirement as the school was small and the chol and kodesh curriculum were integrated. To lead such a school, governors required someone who came from an orthodox Jewish background, he concluded.

Parents wanted to know what steps the governors had taken to attract candidates from the widest possible field. Mr Morris stated that the governors had advertised in the national press, and the Jewish press at home and abroad. Mr Landy observed that people out of London and those abroad were deterred from applying because of the high cost of living in London.

Responding to a question, Mr Morris said that apart from his being involved on the margins at the time of recruiting Mr Collins over 24 years ago, no other governor had been part of the selection process for the current Headteacher. However, on this occasion, the governors were being supported by the School’s Link Adviser from the local authority in this task.

The Chair of Governors assured the meeting that the Governing Body would appoint the Headteacher only if it was thoroughly satisfied that he/she met the job specification. Contingency plans would be put into place should no appointment be made in the first round.

Governors assured the parents that training would be available for all the key stakeholders at the school in change-management when the new Headteacher was appointed.

The discussion moved on to the feasibility of expanding the school to make it attractive to a larger number of career-minded orthodox candidates as the salary that could be offered was determined by the size of the school. Mr Morris described the undesirability of moving to another site that would take it away from the local area which was serving the needs of children in line with the new admissions criteria. Besides, he added, the governors would not want to do that when it had, over the past few years, invested £2.5 millions on improving the fabric of the buildings and the facilities on the site.

Mr Landy mentioned that a few years ago, the Trustees had discussed the prospect of starting another local school but were unable to progress matters as finding a site had proved almost as difficult as discovering the Holy Grail.

6. Playground

In response to a query about the timescale for upgrading the playground, Mr Kosiner mentioned that plans to start the work had been deferred to 2007, as the architects had had to downscale the design to make it more cost effective. He observed that the 60th anniversary fund-raising dinner had been very successful, but the money raised was still insufficient to pay for the whole works.

Meanwhile, outstanding work on the outdoor reception area would be completed during the summer break, he said.

7. Trustees appointments

Mrs Hester Wax requested information about the Trustees. Mr Morris stated that the Trust had been established in 1958. The Trustees held the property and set the tone of the school – i.e. orthodox Jewish. Trustees had the power to appoint new trustees and the 10 foundation governors.

The current Trustees were Mr David Landy, Mr Eddie Cohen, Mr Michael Weinstein, Dayan Ivan Binstock and himself. They continued as Trustees as long as they wished to or until they were unable to for health reasons. The Trustees reviewed the membership every four years. Those chosen needed to demonstrate commitment.

The Trustees appointed foundation governors for a period of four years. A number of these governors had to be the parents of pupils of the school. To be appointed, the foundation governors also had to provide evidence that they espoused the school ethos.

8. Gifted and Talented

Mrs Wax wanted to know what provision the school made for the gifted and talented. Mrs Susan Braham said that the previous thrust of government, which confused equal opportunities with the promotion of excellence, had now been replaced with one where every child was to be challenged to achieve her/his potential. The school had organised the delivery of the curriculum in such a way that teachers ensured that their high expectations of pupils were translated into lessons that were differentiated and backed by learning support assistants - to focus on both ends of the academic spectrum at no detriment to the rank and file who received the regular curricular diet.

The Clerk added that secondary schools (nationally) were now being required to inform the government about the 5% of high-fliers to ensure that their talents were well utilised for their benefit and that of the country. Primary schools, in turn, would have to provide secondary schools with similar information. Parents were given

feedback on the levels that their children were achieving through regular written oral reports.

Mr Collins mentioned that two year 6 pupils who excelled in sports had been linked to the JFS in special extended activities to exploit their talents, as part of our increasing links with JFS through Brent and SSC (School Sports Consortium).

9. Lunches

Mr Collins answered questions relating to the lunches – in particular, the vegetarian options. He said that the recipes were more “inspiring” following advice and support from a number of experts. The Chief Cook encouraged children to try other menus with varying degrees of success. Ms Shelley Jacobson, one of the parents, had produced a report following a week she had spent in the kitchens. She was invited to make a return visit – by appointment with the Headteacher - to assess whether and to what extent matters had improved.

Action Ms Shelley Jacobson

10. SATs results

The Clerk said it had not been possible to provide the parents information on the current year’s Standard Assessment Test results at Key Stage 2 in the APM report as they were unvalidated. However, Mr Collins did announce them as follows:

Subjects		Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 4+
English		0%	40%	60%	100%
	Reading	0%	20%	80%	100%
	Writing	20%	34%	46%	80%
Mathematics		9%	28%	63%	91%
Science		3%	43%	54%	97%

Parents noted that level 4 was the norm and level 5 was achieved by the more able pupils, and that there were children in the class who had Special Educational needs who would not be expected to attain the norm.

11. Safety and Security

- a. One of the parents expressed concerns about the crossing outside the school. Mr Herman Martyn offered to investigate with the local authority the possibility of installing a school crossing patrol and/or a pelican crossing.

Action Mr Herman Martyn

- b. Some parents wondered whether the school had to accede to requirement of the local authority to making North West a polling station whenever there were local or national elections. Governors explained that it was a legal requirement. Mr Kosiner added that on polling day the site manager limited the public access to only a small section of the school.

12. Parent Governors

Parents were anxious to strengthen closer working between the governors and themselves. The meeting agreed that parent governors should be invited to attend meetings of the Parents’ Association to aid communication.

Action all parent governors

13. Pattern of school day

- a. One of the parents urged the governors to alter the school day so that all pupils ended at the same time. Mr Collins explained that this was not possible as the Key Stage 2 pupils worked till 4.00 p.m., which would be counter-productive for the younger ones. There was no prospect of the older pupils finishing earlier as the curriculum – chol and kodesh – had to be accommodated and delivered in the limited time available.
- b. With regard to the times of closure on Friday, Mr Collins said that the school had reverted to the former pattern. With the approach of winter, the closure time over each month would be the same. The rule was that pupils, staff and parents should have a minimum of 2.5 hours to get home in order to prepare for the Sabbath.

14. Valediction and Congratulations

On behalf of the school community, Mr Morris congratulated the Headteacher, Mr Collins, on the birth of his grandson.

He drew parents' attention to the fact that this was Mr Collins's last Annual Parents' Meeting and thanked him for his sterling service to the school over 24 very happy, challenging and successful years.

15. Availability of APM Minutes

At the request of parents, Mr Collins offered to display the minutes of this meeting on the school website, once it had been approved.

The meeting concluded at 9.55p.m.

Mr Graham Morris
Chair of the Annual Parents' Meeting 2006