

# **PLENARY MEETING WITH THE APE BUREAU – SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025**

## **Minutes of the Meeting on 11 February 2025**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

Present at the meeting were :

- Ms. Dalila MESSEGHEN, Headmistress,
- Ms. Lise TALBOT BARRE, Counselor for Cooperation and Cultural Affairs (via videoconference),
- Mr. Isadore REAUD, School Manager,
- Mr. Blaise FENART, Primary School Director,
- Mr. Christophe MONIER, Director of Administration and Finance,
- Mr. Matthieu REYNAUD, President of APE Bureau,
- Ms. Nadia ALTAMIRANO-PANZANI, Treasurer of the APE Bureau,
- Mr. Pooripat PRUKSANUBAL, Member of the APE Bureau,
- Ms. Marisa PHIWKHAW, Member of the APE Bureau,
- Ms. Juthaporn COWAN, Member of the APE Bureau,
- Ms. Lalana SERMSUKSKULCHAI, Member of the APE Bureau (via videoconference),
- Mr. Therdsiddhi HOPRASARTSUK-PELLAUMAIL, Member of the APE Bureau (via videoconference),
- Mr. Axel GAUTHIER, Staff Representative,
- Mr. Olivier VILAÇA, Staff Representative.

Apologies from:

- Ms. Sirikorn MANEERIN, President of the FFE,
- Mr. Vincent ROUBINET, Vice President of the FFE,
- Ms. Geneviève FAMY, Member of the APE Bureau.

The meeting minutes were taken by Ms. Chanikan BUAKAEW, assistant to the APE Bureau.

### **MEETING TIMELINE**

Start : 2.00 PM

End : 4.40 PM

### **AGENDA**

1. Adoption of the meeting agenda and the meeting introduction
2. Approval of the minutes from the 7 November and 16 December 2024 meetings
3. Declaration of potential conflicts of interest by participants
4. Finance Commission
5. HR Commission
6. Canteen Commission
7. Constructions & Purchases Commission
8. Communication Commission
9. AES Commission
10. Transportation Commission

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11. Follow-up on the LFIB 2032 Project
12. Organization of the APE Bureau Elections for the 2025-2026 school year
13. Any other business
14. Date of the next Plenary Meeting with the APE Bureau

## **1. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND INTRODUCTION OF THE MEETING STRUCTURE AND THE NEW APE BUREAU**

The meeting's agenda is unanimously adopted by the participants.

## **2. VALIDATION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE 7 NOVEMBER AND 16 DECEMBER 2024 MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings held on November 7 and December 16, 2024, were approved by the members present.

Mr. REYNAUD proposes validating the minutes online in order to avoid delays in their publication and to make them accessible to parents as soon as possible.

## **3. DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No declarations of conflict of interest are made by the members.

## **4. FINANCE COMMISSION**

Mr. Monier reports that the anticipated decline in student numbers for 2025 has been confirmed, although slightly less severe than expected with 11 fewer students instead of the 14 initially anticipated. This decrease is partially offset by some new registrations and by families who decided to remain at LFIB. However, projections for 2025-2026 indicate a concerning trend, with a significant drop in new enrollments compared to previous years. This is reflected in a 2,000,000 THB decrease in registration fee revenue between the 2024 and 2025 budgets. Particularly, kindergarten enrollment has seen a sharp decline, despite an open house event in January that attracted a large number of families.

Despite a billboard campaign and various communication initiatives, few registrations have been finalized. There remains a question as to why families are not completing the enrollment process after attending the open house. To better understand these decisions, a questionnaire was sent to interested families, but the response rate has been very low, only 7 out of 30 responded. Mr. Reynaud suggests contacting families directly by phone to obtain more detailed feedback and better understand the barriers to enrollment.

Ms. Panzani points out the growing competition from international schools and the emergence of new French schools developing in Bangkok. However, the management clarifies that the new established school, Séquoia, currently serves only a small number of elementary-level

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students and does not target the kindergarten audience, with only 8 students currently from CP to CE2 levels. Ms. TALBOT BARRE confirms that, in the line of the vision of the Embassy and the Agency, LFIB should aim to attract students from French-speaking kindergartens in the city center into the primary level, and eventually the secondary level, whether or not they are French-speaking. While she does not view the opening of Séquoia as a direct threat, she acknowledged the potential emergence of other French or international kindergartens in Bangkok. To strengthen enrollment in kindergarten, she recommends that LFIB adopt a more proactive and client-oriented approach. Mr. Reynaud also emphasizes that competition is increasing with the growing number of international schools offering French programs.

Mr. Reynaud reminds everyone that LFIB's attractiveness strategy should be adapted to the specific characteristics of each educational level: kindergarten and primary target a different audience than secondary. He also notes that many Thai families tend to leave the French system at the secondary level, often opting for international or Thai schools instead.

Mr. Monier states that a new communication strategy is being developed, including leveraging targeted influencers to reach parents who might be interested in French-language education. This approach will be refined and finalized in the coming days.

In addition, Mr. Monier informs the members that the implementation of the online payment platform is functioning well, although it is currently being used by only a limited number of parents. Mr. REYNAUD confirms the system's efficiency, noting that it significantly streamlines the payment process. However, he suggests enhancing communication and improving accessibility to encourage wider adoption and make payments even more user-friendly.

Regarding the 4% increase in tuition fees, Ms. Panzani emphasizes clear communication with families to ensure transparency and anticipate their reactions. She proposes including an explanatory note during the re-enrollment process to inform parents of the changes in fees. Mr. Monier and Mr. Reynaud note that this increase had already been mentioned in the plenary meeting minutes and during the school council meetings.

The situation is considered concerning, particularly at the kindergarten level, and requires immediate actions to strengthen LFIB's appeal and reverse the downward trend in enrollment.

### **5. HR COMMISSION**

Since the last meeting, several recruitments have been carried out, including a second part-time educational assistant position and a new FLSco teacher position. Both staff members began their roles in January. As for the newly hired school nurse, her start date is scheduled for early March, after the school holidays.

Mr. Fenart mentions the upcoming recruitment session planned for February. A recruitment panel (CCPL) will be held to hire AEFE staff, followed by the selection of candidates for locally recruited positions, with interviews scheduled for early April. Interviews for primary school positions are also expected to take place in early April and will be organized based on candidate availability (generally between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.). Elected parent representatives will also be invited to participate in the interview process.

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Elected parents raised concerns about the importance of recruitment in a context of seemingly high staff turnover, particularly for key roles such as CPE. Ms. Messeghem clarifies the distinction between officially vacant positions and those identified as potentially vacant. Although a potential vacancy does not confirm a staff member's departure with certainty, recruitment interviews must still be conducted in anticipation. The discussion also highlights the challenges posed by frequent changes in some positions and parental concerns, particularly for students at the end of a learning cycle. This applies, for example, to the school psychologist and the CPE—both well-known to students and families—whose positions are currently listed as potentially vacant on the school's website.

Mr. Monier explains that, in order to attract the best candidates, it is necessary to advertise positions as soon as any potential departure is announced, even if the decision has not been finalized. Mr. FENART added that, in the primary school, there are no confirmed vacancies at this stage, but some teachers may apply elsewhere. Therefore, positions are posted as potentially vacant to allow for better planning of recruitment needs, even though it is possible that no actual vacancy will occur. For positions in the secondary school, most remain uncertain. The situation is fluid, with possible—but not yet confirmed—departures, making precise planning challenging.

Ms. Messeghem notes that the school psychologist had initially expressed the intention to leave before reversing the decision, creating uncertainty around the position. She adds that the creation of new roles is being considered, such as a technology teaching post and a position for academic support, in order to improve timetable structure. She also emphasizes the difficulty of replacing highly experienced and well-regarded colleagues, whose departure would represent a significant loss for the school community.

### **6. CANTEEN COMMISSION**

The Canteen Committee held a meeting to examine the offer proposed by Café di Maria. Mr. REAUD reminds the group of the operational changes implemented at Café di Maria since December, following concerns raised during previous meetings. He explained that, in the absence of kitchen facilities meeting sanitary standards, food preparation and handling on-site is no longer permitted. All food products must now be delivered ready to consume and can only be reheated or refrigerated on-site. Despite these changes, concerns remain regarding compliance with hygiene standards. As a result, the Committee has decided to prepare a new call for tenders for these food kiosks, based on updated specifications reflecting these priorities, with implementation planned for the start of the 2025 school year.

Ms. Messeghem notes that Thai regulations require high school students to remain inside the school during lunchtime. This underscores the importance of providing a food service within the school that meets students' expectations in both taste and food safety.

Ms. Panzani raises the issue of the existing contract with the external provider, suggesting that the school should formalize the partnership in a stricter way. Mr. Reaud agrees, adding that the new call for tenders should prioritize student safety. The current contract clauses are deemed insufficient, and it is agreed that the specifications would be revised to include stricter safety and hygiene criteria. Potential providers, including those who responded to the previous call for tenders, will be invited to submit new proposals.

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Ms. Messeghem emphasizes the need to rethink the space allocated to high school students to ensure that they have a comfortable place to eat lunch, including those bringing their own lunchboxes. A project to redesign this space is being launched, with a deadline set for the end of May for implementation by September. The aim is to create an environment where students feel at ease, while ensuring all regulations are respected. The layout of key school areas, including the high school entrance, will also be reviewed to ensure they are welcoming and secure.

Regarding the incident that occurred in the school canteen on February 4, where several students experienced nausea and diarrhea after lunch, Mr. Reaud outlines the actions taken by LFIB. He explains that once the school nurse identified the same symptoms in a fourth student, an alert was triggered and an investigation was launched. Epicure, the catering company, was informed immediately and its food safety team quickly conducted inspections. The relevant authorities, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, the district, and food safety inspectors, were swiftly involved. Inspections were carried out across the canteen, water points, kitchen areas, and food samples were collected for testing. In parallel, Epicure fully cooperated and has taken into account the authorities' recommendations. Mr. REAUD stresses the importance of ongoing monitoring to ensure that these recommendations are implemented effectively over time.

Several measures will be introduced: recommendations were issued regarding hygiene practices in the canteen, such as preventing students from handling bread with their bare hands, stopping the use of cloths to dry dishes, and reviewing the storage of utensils. Food and water testing is currently underway to help determine the origin of the contamination whether it is linked to the canteen or other sources.

As the school is planning to renovate the canteen area, Mr. Hoprasartsuk-Pellaumail proposes that this project include designated spaces for high school students. Ms. Messeghem supports the idea, but emphasizes that since students are the primary stakeholders, their participation is essential. However, she also acknowledges the challenge of finding time to work with students on these projects due to tight schedules and short lunch breaks.

### **7. CONSTRUCTIONS COMMISSION**

The Construction Committee met to review the progress of the canteen renovation project. A call for tenders was launched, and six companies attended the presentation of the specifications as well as the site visit. Following this stage, four companies confirmed their participation. The project presentations are scheduled for February 13, starting at 9:30 a.m., with each provider allocated a 30-minute slot.

However, Mr. Hoprasartsuk-Pellaumail raises concerns about the time allotted, suggesting that 30 minutes per provider may be insufficient to cover both the financial aspects and the visual presentation of the project. He proposes extending the slot to 45 minutes, although this would require a reorganization of the already scheduled appointments.

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Mr. Reaud also points out potential language barriers when communicating with certain providers, which could lengthen the presentations due to the need for translation.

In addition, Mr. Reynaud proposes inviting members of the Canteen Committee to attend the presentations. However, some of them will not be available on that date. It is therefore agreed that after the presentations by the four companies, a joint discussion would be held between the Construction Committee and the Canteen Committee to collect their feedback and refine the final selection.

### **8. COMMUNICATION COMMISSION**

The Communication Committee meeting was held on February 4th with the website service provider to review various issues and recent adjustments. Several changes have been implemented, although some features still need improvement. An analysis was also conducted to provide recommendations on content optimization and the promotion of activities through Google Ads to boost website traffic. Additionally, the issue of caching was discussed, and modifications were made to improve the website's performance. Mr. Reynaud emphasizes the importance of having a Thai version of the site to better attract a broader local audience.

Regarding the open house events, participation was high, but the number of actual enrollments remains low. An analysis is underway to determine the necessary adjustments and follow-up marketing actions.

The call for tenders for influencer partnerships has been launched, with three companies expressing interest. Ms. Panzani highlights the importance of defining clear guidelines to ensure that communication aligns with the school's values and fits within the school's calendar and key dates. Mr. Monier stresses the need to focus on storytelling and closeness in communication, rather than only highlighting major events. He suggests showcasing smaller events and day-to-day moments—such as workshops or classroom sessions—to offer a more authentic and immersive glimpse into school life. A content publication plan aligned with school events is also part of the tender requirements. This project is expected to be implemented quickly to make the most of the current opportunity.

Mr. Fenart adds that work is ongoing to clarify the roles of the school's various governing bodies (APE, School Council, Primary School Council) on the website. The new communications officer is tasked with creating a simple, visually clear explanation for families, using minimal text. The goal is to help parents better understand whom to contact depending on their needs.

### **9. AES COMMISSION**

The AES Committee met on 10th February to review the enrollment for the second semester. Numbers remain stable compared to last year, with no significant drop. The introduction of new activities successfully attracted additional participants, which is seen as a positive point. A

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survey conducted during the Open House event highlighted the need for closer monitoring of the quality of certain activities. As a result, visits will be organized starting after the February break to observe these sessions in person.

The committee also discussed the contracts of the AES activities providers. It was decided to revise the terms and conditions based on existing documents to clarify the rules ahead of the next school year. A new clause will be added regarding the reading of the school's code of conduct and the submission of police clearance certificates, which must be renewed every two years in accordance with current contracts.

In addition, Mr. Fenart reports that enrollment for the after-school care service has been launched. Although not directly linked to the AES program, the initiative was discussed during the Primary School Council. This service is intended for students from CP to CM2 who do not take the school bus and wait for their parents. Registration will be done via a Google Form, and the fee for the 2024–2025 school year is set at 125 baht per half-day. Most of the students concerned will be present between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., with very few remaining after 4:00 p.m. Supervision will be provided by a former assistant, supported by two other staff members. This is basic supervision only, no organized activities, and students will have access to the playground or a classroom where they can do their homework.

The initiative was implemented to address the issue of unsupervised children who are not enrolled in AES activities and remain at school after 2:00 p.m. It offers a secure framework to regularize such situations. Mr. Fenart notes that there is currently no similar issue in preschool, as children are either picked up by their parents or enrolled in AES activities. This first implementation will serve as a trial period to evaluate the impact and make adjustments if necessary.

### **10. TRANSPORT COMMISSION**

The Transport Committee met to inspect on-board equipment in accordance with the transport provider's specifications. An initial inspection of the vans was carried out on 5 February, including a visual check of the vehicles and their equipment, as well as interviews with the monitors and drivers assigned to those vehicles. The objective was to verify compliance with contractual obligations specifically, the presence of fire extinguishers, hand sanitizer, appropriate seat belts, cameras, first aid kits, and the overall condition of the vehicles. The monitors were asked about their experience and English communication skills to assess their ability to manage various situations. Drivers were also questioned about their health and professional backgrounds. The results of the inspection, conducted on five randomly selected vans, were found to be very satisfactory.

Ms. Phiwkhaw highlights the presence of communication boards in some vans. These boards, which display instructions in English, Thai, and French, help facilitate communication and improve student management during transport. The committee found this initiative to be very relevant and is considering recommending it for all vans. Additionally, it is noted that some



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monitors demonstrated strong problem-solving skills and initiative, which could be leveraged by involving them in the training of other staff members.

On an operational level, Montri is providing consistent follow-up and represents a significant improvement over the previous service provider. Although the transition was initially challenging at the start of the school year, the vehicles are now arriving on time, and traffic around the school has become more fluid. Mr. Fenart adds that the drivers and monitors have built a good rapport with the students and their families, contributing to a safer and more personalized transportation service.

Regarding access management around the school, parent representatives raises concerns about traffic issues, particularly involving vehicles from the SDS Transport company, whose owner also oversees school security. Ms. Phiukhaw points out that while Thai regulations do not authorize security agents to manage public traffic, they should be allowed to do so within a private soi.

Ms. Panzani raises questions about parking management and the presence of unauthorized vehicles parked along the wall. She emphasizes the need for better coordination among security staff to prevent congestion and ensure smoother access to the school especially in anticipation of upcoming construction work and changes in traffic flow.

### **11. FOLLOW-UP : LFIB 2032 PROJECT WORKING GROUP**

Mr. Reaud reports that the law firm initially recommended by the French Embassy was unavailable within the required timeframe to draft an official letter to the property owners. This led to a second round of research. Three law firms listed by the French Embassy were contacted, and one was selected. A first draft of the letter has been submitted and will be presented to the property owners during a meeting coordinated with the French Embassy to help advance the negotiations.

In parallel, a study is planned to assess the costs of maintaining the current premises with renovations, versus the cost of relocating and building a new facility. The proposed methodology involves listing all current buildings and facilities to estimate the required surface area and obtain a cost assessment based on current market rates.

Elected parent representatives raise concerns regarding the financial impact on school fees. Mr. Monier explains that in the case of renovation, the financing could be spread over time, thus limiting the impact on tuition. However, relocation would require full upfront financing, including land purchase and construction, likely resulting in a significant increase in fees. He also emphasizes that the location of a potential new site is a strategic issue: if too far from the current area, it could lead to a temporary or even permanent drop in enrollment, which would further complicate the financing of the project.



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Mr. Reaud reminds the committee of the legal constraints regarding the minimum land area and construction restrictions, such as the maximum building height depending on educational levels.

Ms. Panzani mentions rumors that a neighboring school might be interested in the site. Mr. Reaud clarifies that, according to official discussions with SISB's management, there are no plans for expansion in the short or medium term, as they have recently invested in a new building. Nevertheless, this possibility will be monitored. The upcoming meeting with the property owners will help clarify their position.

Ms. Talbot Barre notes that the embassy is actively following the matter and plans to bring together the heirs of the owners as soon as possible. A proposal letter will be delivered to them with a set deadline for response. In the absence of a reply, the silence will be interpreted as a refusal, which will allow the school to move forward with the next steps of the project.

Ms. Panzani emphasizes the need for improved communication with the school community. A clear action plan should be developed to keep teachers and parents informed of upcoming steps.

Mr. Reaud announces that a meeting of the LFIB 2032 task will be scheduled as soon as a significant process is reached, particularly following the meeting with the property owners and the embassy.

### **12. ANY OTHERS BUSINESS**

Ms. Messeghem presents a modification to the APE's Operations Regulations regarding the voting procedure for parent representatives. The proposal aims to allow each parent of a child to vote individually, in contrast to the previous system in which only one parent voted per family, with the number of votes proportional to the number of children (up to a maximum of four).

This change is motivated by practical reasons, particularly the technical limitations of the current IT system, which cannot support family-based voting. The proposal also seeks to align the voting rules with those applied in the School Council. The Headmistress emphasizes that this new approach is more equitable.

After discussion, the participants in the plenary meeting are invited to vote. As no votes against or abstentions are recorded, the proposal is adopted. The amended regulations will now be submitted to the Embassy for validation.

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## Article 2. Composition

2.1. L'Association des Parents d'Elèves du LFIB comprend :

- des membres de droit,
- des membres d'honneur.

2.2. Sont membres de droit tous les parents d'élèves effectivement scolarisés au LFIB, chaque ~~famille~~ parent comptant pour un membre de droit. Lors d'un vote en Assemblée Générale, ~~les parents disposent ensemble d'autant de voix qu'ils ont d'enfants régulièrement inscrits au LFIB:~~ chaque parent dispose d'une voix.

*"All parents of students **currently** enrolled at LFIB are members by right, with each **family parent** counting as one member by right. During a vote at the General Assembly, ~~parents collectively have as many votes as the number of children they have regularly enrolled at LFIB.~~ **each parent has one vote.**"*

## 13. NEXT PLENARY MEETING WITH THE APE BUREAU

The date of the next Plenary Meeting with the APE Bureau is scheduled for Tuesday, 22 April at 2 PM.