

**West Didsbury CofE
Local Governing Body Remote Meeting
Tuesday 9th February 2021 at 7.30pm
Minutes**

Present:

Paul Blackburn	Chair of WDCE GB
Felicity Bradley	PCC Governor & Parent
Paul Good	Chair of SJE Trust (MDBE)
Julia Heatley	Staff Governor
Hannah Large	Head of School
Karen Michael	PCC Governor & Parent (<i>from 16.45</i>)
Lucy Noden	PCC Governor & Parent
Zaheer Saleem	Parent Governor
Anne-Marie Sarantis	Parent Governor (elected)
Cariole Shaw	PCC Governor
Tom Studman	Foundation Governor
Matt Whitehead	Executive Headteacher

In attendance:

Kathy Crotty	Clerk
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Any text in red bold italics represents Governor question (Q); challenge (C); Governor and/or clerk support (S). Black bold upright represents decisions and actions.

1. Welcome, Opening Prayer and Apologies for Absence

The chair welcomed Governors to the meeting. Tom Studman gave the opening prayer. All Governors were present.

2. Declarations on non/pecuniary interests

- There are no other declarations other than those listed on the school website.
- Felicity Bradbury, Lucy Noden, Anne- Marie Sarantis, Tom Studman, Karen Michael, and Zaheer Saleem each have two children in the school.

3. Approval of minutes of Previous Meeting held 24.11.20 & Matters Arising

Governors formally approved the minutes of the meeting held 24th November 2020 as an accurate record

Action: All Governors to read the SIP and SEF and submit questions to the clerk before the next meeting.

See agenda item 5

Action: HL to provide actual attendance data alongside DfE required attendance data.

It was clarified that children self-isolating were counted as attending and this was a request for actual numbers of children in school. This was relevant in relation to attainment and progress. Given the current lockdown this is no longer required.

Action: HL and MW to discuss appropriate gestures to show appreciation to staff.

The HoS reported from November to December staff were given a well-being afternoon. All support assistants were due to have a well-being morning. This was scheduled to continue in January 2021 but lockdown prevented this. All staff have some time working from home as part of the well-being initiatives. Well-being sessions will happen again for teachers after the support staff once school is fully open.

4. Head of School Report

Attendance

The attendance figures for autumn term were shared and these were excellent. Previously if a child had to isolate for ten days the curriculum was different. The attendance was 96.8% in the autumn term and this reflects the growing numbers of children in the school. (Statistically each absent child now represents less). There are eleven PA (persistently absent) children which will be analysed if this continues after lockdowns ends.

Q: Are the eleven PA children considered vulnerable and therefore offered a school place? If these children are at home, are they engaging in home learning?

These children are not in school and they are engaging in home learning.

In the context of the pandemic these attendance figures are excellent. The HoS explained there was less illness than usual for the time of year. This might be linked to the hygiene regime.

There are 95 KW/V (key worker and vulnerable) children who have been allocated a place in the school, which is 20% of the school population.

Q: You have varying numbers in school each day; do you know when the children are attending in advance?

Yes, the children are allocated a place when their parents are working, the pattern of attendance is agreed in advance.

Remote learning provision

- All classes are set three pieces of work each day. The Hof S report detailed the home learning offering. Collective worship still occurs twice a week. Seesaw is the platform used. Learning packs can be issued to families if needed.
- There are weekly welfare calls if a child is not engaging in home learning. General welfare calls are now occurring fortnightly.
- The lost learning from the first lockdown has been tracked and topics have been identified. The new teachers in this academic year were asked to reduce their curriculum to provide a boost and include topics missed in the last academic year from the spiral curriculum.
- Children with high needs receive interventions and all teachers are now sending home individualised learning.
- Yr5 are a group of concern and Yr1 have missed some key foundation work. The school had employed a catch-up TA and this catch-up is happening with vulnerable

children.

Q: Are the targeted vulnerable children attending school?

Most vulnerable children are in school but not all children are in school or engaging. Other schools in the Trust are finding some children offered a place are not taking their place.

Assessment is challenging as it is hard to know who is completing the children's work.

Disadvantaged/SEND pupils – how are they being supported

- There are six children with an EHC plan and one new child due to join the school when full re-opening occurs. Emilie Smith has allocated places to all children, of the six children four are in school. The new child is engaging with remote learning. The places are held for all of these children. The children are able to access the live lessons. The families not taking the place have formally declined their place in writing.
- 14 laptops have been received from the DfE and have been issued. There has been engagement from the families issued with devices. The school is expecting to be allocated more and the HoS was unclear who owns the laptops.

Wellbeing of staff and pupils

Staff are working one week in the school building and one week from home. School staff have felt under immense pressure from some parents which seems to be a national problem. Parents situations are different and some parents can only upload work outside of normal school hours and this presents more challenges for workloads of school staff.

Staffing and management resource

There is one vulnerable member of staff who has now had a vaccine. Pregnant staff members are working socially distanced.

Impact on budget

Generally, there is a lack of income from Kids Club and there were some additional supply costs last term due to staff having to isolate. There are more expenses for the additional 290 phone calls each week.

5. Questions from Governors

One Governor had submitted a question relating to the SIP & SEF asking about the group identified for catch-up funding and what plans / actions have been put in place to continue to support this group specifically in the current lockdown, particularly with regard to accessing online learning.

The question was answered in the HoS report in item 4.

6. Behaviour and safety of pupils (Safeguarding) – update

- Children have been asked safeguarding questions as part of the peace garden development.
- There are two more children with Early Help support which has been influenced by lockdown and Covid.
- There has been one low level bullying incident the school is dealing with.
- Children with poorer attendance are monitored more closely.

Q: Have you any plans for the children returning?

This will be similar to last time depending on whether there will be a staggered return or all children return at once.

- If schools are to be open to the 8th March 2021 as expected, the same procedures will be in operation as before the lockdown such as wearing of masks. The Executive Headteacher informed Governors there is a possibility if teachers have not had the vaccine three weeks before the start of term, there might be an issue of teachers issuing section 44 notices indicating the workplace is unsafe. There is an issue of staff morale and well-being if teachers are expected to offer extended hours for catch-up. Staff have undertaken much CPD in technology and the workloads have been relentless. Parents present felt also their children need a break from all this home learning. The catch-up programme will require resourcing and should focus on the wider curriculum.
- Governors were informed the core group still continues to meet approximately fortnightly to share issues and concerns across the four schools. The Heads and Chairs will meet next on the 1st March 2021 assuming there is an announcement about the full reopening of schools on the 22nd February 2021.

7. Staff Recruitment

- The school is currently recruiting new teachers. There were over 100 applicants for one post, and some excellent candidates were not shortlisted. There are 12 interviews being arranged and the intention is to organise virtual interviews. The final four can undertake some socially distanced lessons. The school has advertised also for an experienced Yr6 teacher and one teacher will be moved to Yr6 from another year group. There is also a vacancy for a support teacher to work with a child with an EHC plan. At some future date there will also be cover needed for a maternity leave.

Q: With regard to the current vacancies, is there going to be any governor involvement in this recruitment?

The virtual interviews are scheduled for the 24th and 25th of February. The observations of lessons are scheduled for the week commencing March 8th date to be confirmed.

Q: Are there any Governors who have been trained in safer recruitment?

Paul Good is safer recruitment. Paul Good reported NGA advice suggested different panels could be established for different aspects of the interviews. For example, one group could assess the professional dimension and another panel assess social skills. It was suggested the questions can be split across the two panels. A governor from different professions shared an experience of interviewing with more than one panel.

Governors agreed each panel would include a member of staff and a Governor. **Three governors available were Lucy Noden who has experience with observing lessons; Paul Good and Felicity Bradley.**

C: Governors questioned why the shortlist has 12 applicants?

The HoS explained some of the applicants shortlisted have been students at this school and the school is offering them an interview experience. The virtual interviews will be more in-depth than normal.

- Governors noted it was imperative all candidates understand this is a two-stage interview process and the HoS reported their invitation letter states they are invited to the next stage of the recruitment process.

Action: Hannah Large to arrange a recruitment meeting with Lucy Noden; Paul Good; and Felicity Bradley.

8. Executive Headteacher updates

Finance Update

The Executive Headteacher reported on the budget until the end of December 2020 which represents four months of the budget. (One third of the year). WDCE has a healthy budget due to start-up funding allocated to new free schools. The school income projected is approximately £1,900,000. The YTD (year to date) income and expenditure were detailed in the report. The audit process moved some items across financial years reducing the carry forward slightly. The revised YTD shows a balance surplus of approximately £81,000 despite the extra costs incurred by Covid and reduced income from Kids Club. There has been more income from government grants. There was a slight increase in staffing costs, non-staff costs are slightly lower. In comparison to the other schools in the Trust, WDCE has no areas of concern. Income is expected to be nearer £2M. Non-staff costs and staff costs are expected to rise. The PTA in this school also provides valuable funding. The school has had many newly qualified teachers in the early years who are now moving up the pay scales. Jane Dunn the deputy at WDCE needs more time out of class and next year this will be the biggest school in the Trust.

Q: Does the surplus budget mean the school cannot access government grants for extra Covid spending?

Yes, all schools in the Trust carried forward a surplus of about 4% even though additional staffing was needed for example to cover pregnant teachers who cannot work in classrooms at the moment.

Formal thanks were given to the new CFO (chief financial officer) and Julia Heatley in her new role of school business manager.

9. Governing Body Matters including:

Training undertaken

Felicity Bradley has completed a short course in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities for Governors, and attended a Well-being Governors: children's and young people's mental health and well-being event.

Zaheer Saleem has completed day one of the Governor induction training. This is a two -day introductory training and day two will be attended in May. This was described as very useful training for a new governor.

Paul has attended a recent briefing for chairs of governors.

Link Governor reports

Felicity Bradley shared a report on SEND from her visit with Emilie Smith.

The CoG reported he is dealing with a parental complaint and a governor panel may be needed.

10. Policy review & approval

There are no changes to these policies other than updating.

First Aid Policy

Governors suggested the policy includes the dates the designated first aid leads qualified. The HoS explained this information is not included in the policy and is kept in a separate list kept by Julia Heatley

Action: HL to explore the current qualification requirements from the HSE and the LA given the practical element cannot be completed.

There is no reference to contractors on site and it was agreed all policies across the Trust includes reference to dealing with contractors on site including peripatetic teachers.

Governors formally approved the First Aid Policy subject to the above amendments

Trips and Visits Policy

Governors formally approved the Trips and Visits Policy

Health and Safety Policy

Governors formally approved the Health and Safety Policy

Risk Assessment Policy

Governors formally approved the Risk Assessment Policy

11. AOB:

Governors agreed to include a link Governor for well-being

Governors agreed Felicity Bradley to be the link governor for well-being

12. Date & Times of future meeting

Governors agreed to change the time of the next meeting to an evening meeting

Tuesday 23rd March 2021 – 7.30pm (remote)

Tuesday 11th May 2021 - 7.30pm

Tuesday 6th July 2021 - 4pm (meet the children)

An Admissions Committee meeting will be arranged after half term. Governors were informed there are 180 applications for 60 places.

13. Closing prayer

Tom Studman led the closing prayer.

Signed.....Date.....

Mr Paul Blackburn (Chair)

Meeting closed at 21:15

Summary of actions

- Action: Hannah Large to arrange a recruitment meeting with Lucy Noden; Paul Good; and Felicity Bradley.
- Action: HL to explore the current qualification requirements from the HSE and the LA given the practical element cannot be completed.