

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
WALTHAMSTOW SCHOOL FOR GIRLS
GOVERNING BODY
HELD ON THURSDAY 11 JUNE 2020 AT 6.30 PM
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING**

Present: Ms Gillian Barker (Chair) - **Co-opted Governor**

Co-opted Governors

Mr Jeroen van Dinteren

Ms Janeen Hayat

Ms Debbie Lewzey

Ms Alexandra Wills

Staff Governors

Ms Meryl Davies (Headteacher)

Mr Ashesh Ramlagan

Parent Governors

Mrs Nina Mikolajczyk

Dr Aneela Shah

Mr Sami Urrehman

Also Present: Ms Sally Kennedy (Deputy Headteacher)

Ms Jane Snowsill (Deputy Headteacher)

1. WELCOMES AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed those present. This was a single item agenda to consider the draft risk assessment and plan for Year 10 to return to school from next week.
- 1.2 Romi Jalil had apologised for absence.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of interest.

2. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 The Headteacher explained the risk assessment circulated was yet to be finalised but incorporated highlighted comments from the unions and local authority comments from Health & Safety in the covering email. The model assessment was geared towards primary schools so a substantial amount of amending had been needed.
- 2.2 The school's vulnerable and key worker students had been accommodated at Fredrick Bremer and Holy Family, because the numbers attending were so low. However, after half-term the school opened for children of key workers of whom there were currently 6. The school has also accommodated 34 to 40 Year 6 children from St Mary's Primary, as their classrooms were insufficient in number with nursery, reception and Year 1 children occupying more rooms in groups of 15 or fewer on their site. They are accommodated completely separately in Block B and to avoid any possibility of cross-contamination, they have no overlap with the school at all. A memorandum of understanding in respect of liability or injury is pending: the local authority is still drafting this.
- 2.3 The government announcement on 28 May, whilst acknowledging that five key steps had been met, was to facilitate no more than 25% of Year 10 pupils (including

- vulnerable and key worker children) on site per day, providing face-to-face time with teachers, from 15 June. The school will limit this provision to the main building so as not to interfere with other provision on site. Vulnerable and key workers' children will continue in their current grouping.
- 2.4 It has been left to schools to manage how this will happen. Given the reluctance of the school's students to attend the day care and the low engagement of vulnerable pupils, telling them they should now return would inevitably be a challenge. The school surveyed all Year 10 pupils and 110 replied; 69 did not. Students had expressed a wish to return to lessons. Around one-third were engaging well, one-third were engaging sometimes, and one-third were not engaging. Therefore, the school worked from the assumption that many were demotivated and that the hardest to reach were not engaged adequately.
- 2.5 This being the case, having a programme that was peer-related (rather than, for example, brief individual meetings with teachers), was considered more likely to encourage a greater number of students to return. The strategy is to bring them in for core teaching, to identify those that need additional input and who are not accessing technology, and to find ways to move them forward particularly in relation to their options.
- 2.6 **Governors asked for further information about what other schools were doing and for more explanation about the Year 10 survey.** The Headteacher confirmed that different schools were devising different programmes, but all were finding it challenging. Unions have also responded differently in different schools. Access to technology has contributed to the non-engagement of some students. The national programme of providing laptops/tablets for disadvantaged children, like the Edenred FSM vouchers initiative, has taken an inordinate length of time to progress and disadvantaged students still haven't received anything. The LA had reported that they were only allocated one-third of what they asked for, so it appealed and is now due to receive the full complement of devices for the borough. When it is finally delivered, the school expects to have laptop/tablet provision for all disadvantaged students.
- 2.7 SKE added that prior to moving to remote learning, the school conducted a technology questionnaire with Years 10 and 11 and identified priority students who were given a school laptop and other technology such as a sim card for one who had no internet and was therefore unable to submit work. Not all laptops issued have been used: the follow-up work done by teachers shows that around a third are submitting nothing, a third are submitting some but not all of their work and a third have submitted everything for every subject. Responses to teachers' gentle reminders are generally along the lines of motivation, lack of routine, and sleepless nights, which are not technology barriers but are about the way the family is coping, mainly amongst disadvantaged families. The safeguarding team makes regular contact and students not engaging also receive one-to-one support however it does not replace a curriculum session. Now they know they are returning the students are asking for access codes to do the work. Hopefully, preparing to return will kick start their motivation..
- 2.8 Staff also used their experience of returning to work, which was very uplifting, even when socially distancing, so are hopeful that working with others in class will help students be more productive in all subjects, although the next 3 weeks will cover English, Maths and Science only (one subject each week).
- 2.9 The Chair said that she would send the minutes of the latest curriculum committee, where these issues were discussed in detail, to all governors. This meeting concerned the risk assessment.
- 2.10 **Governors asked whether teachers had considered using Zoom or Teams to meet students?** The Headteacher responded that this was discussed at the start of

lockdown, and Year 10 lessons were conducted that way before the Easter break, but the issue was how to manage it without putting undue pressure on staff working at home, and students and their families coping with home learning and planning. The LT agreed on a model that protected safeguarding and based around setting the work on Monday and collecting it on Friday. This meant that where technology was limited students could access the work at different points in the day. Students were encouraged by SPLs to draw up work timetables. The material has extension activities and the school has signposted the Oak National Academy resources, GCSE bitesize and GCSE pod to supplement the work set. In addition, challenge activities have been set regularly as well as a weekly programme of guest speakers through our connection with Speakers for Schools. The model also reduces the load on the teachers who have to school their own children. The safeguarding team and union voices reinforced the view that videoconferencing was not the way forward currently.

- 2.11 SKE added one trial Zoom class was held and about one-third tuned in. Some pupils accessed it after the lesson had finished but were unable to at the time. It was not sustainable.
- 2.12 **Governors asked whether teachers could engage students on video that were not engaging with remote learning?** AW reported she had phoned some of her non-engaging students which was helpful and she felt has had a positive impact. The students understood better what they were supposed to do.
- 2.13 JSN added that parents had said that children want feedback from their teachers. There are self-marking tests and motivational feedback in the remote work. There is also a clear system for recording assignments. Teachers check which students have and have not submitted their work and contact the latter.
- 2.14 The Chair reiterated that she would arrange for the curriculum committee minutes to go out.
- 2.15 The Headteacher continued that once the school had amended the LA model risk assessment (RA) the first draft was sent to the unions, leadership and governing body. On Tuesday she, SKE and JSN engaged with all union reps (apart from the NASUWT rep who was happy to delegate responsibility, and took them through what was proposed in detail. Written questions had been received from the UNISON rep; they were then taken on a tour of the changes that had been implemented. The procedures for re-opening on Tuesday were explained in respect of entrances and exits, the use of separate classes, toilets, and all the signage. The unions passed the reassurances they received on to the teachers.
- 2.16 Some staff have had the virus and this has informed the LT's thinking to some extent.
- 2.17 Comments from Corporate Health and Safety at the LA will be addressed or incorporated in the final draft.
- 2.18 GB referred to the document preamble and explained that in this instance, the 'responsible person' is the Headteacher. The guidance that MD referred to in putting together the risk assessment is listed. The trade union queries are highlighted in yellow.
- 2.19 The hazards are listed: in respect of workspaces, office space and staffing, and classrooms **GB asked whether there were signs on the designated entrances?** SKE responded that there was clear signage outside the gate and en route.
- 2.20 **GB noted that on the explanatory video for students, the bins in the toilets and classroom were lidded but not touch-free. She asked whether pedal-bins had been considered?** MD said that lidded bins accorded with the guidance and safety of use relied on regular hand washing, wipes or anti-bac before and after use. *(It was subsequently confirmed that the school would be using pedal-bins.)*

- 2.21 In relation to the arrangements in and out of class there would be supervision at all times around social distancing. There were 3 members of the leadership team in every day to assist the teachers, so it would be very well managed.
- 2.22 In respect of the common areas, doors will be in the open position using 'dorgard'.
- 2.23 Following this, the section on hand hygiene states that there are signs from the moment students and staff enter saying "wash your hands" as well as staff reminding students repeatedly to do so.
- 2.24 **The Chair reminded the school that the government guidance is that hand drying is equally important as thorough washing.** The Headteacher responded that the school had installed handtowels in every bathroom/ toilet area and taken the hand driers out of commission.
- 2.25 The Headteacher added that UNISON queried the contents of cleaning products in case of allergies and these had been supplied. The strategy shared with the cleaners: that only specific rooms in the school are cleaned at any point in the day and access is limited. There will be 11- 13 cleaners doing this. The alcohol content of sanitising products is at least 60%, which is the minimum required to kill the virus on surfaces.
- 2.26 The unions had not questioned the social distancing regime, however the LA had commented that face-to-face meetings should be a maximum of 15 minutes each. That would not work with 3 hours of teaching but, in any case, the assessment has been aligned with the LA guidance to satisfy them in relation to social distancing requirements. The general feeling is that staff should take a common-sense approach. Most staff meetings are remote and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.
- 2.27 There will be first aiders on site every day. Risk assessments will be carried out for Year 10 students who have particular health issues such as fainting, or the need to carry an asthma pump. The LT has also extended their PPE provision for first aiders. The standard PPE given to the school by the LA is five sets of masks, goggles, aprons and sanitising materials, but the Headteacher felt it was important to have additional items, 10 visors have been made by Ms Healey, a member of school staff, and her husband, who have both been supplying local healthcare sites. These visors will be sanitised after each use and re-used.
- 2.28 **Governors asked, regarding the symptoms section on page 8, whether the school would contact the family to get the results of any test before allowing the child to return or whether it would rely on parents to report the results?** The Headteacher responded that before a child returned, the school would naturally check with the parents. GB added that a positive test triggered further actions, as set out in the RA. Cases in school would probably indicate a spike in the wider community.
- 2.29 **Governors asked, how the school would know whether a child had a loss of taste or smell when they come into school?** SKE responded that if a student started to show symptoms, one of the advantages of the model is that students are only due in school once every 7 days, so the school would have sufficient time to contact everyone, which would avoid any panic. MD said that she had raised this precise question with the local authority and had been told to ask, which is what is being done. NB Due to connection difficulties, the Headteacher was unable to continue to contribute verbally to the meeting; instead SKE responded to questions.
- 2.30 Page 9 set out the procedure for dealing with a child with symptoms and the SLT talked through with the first aider about the best location of the PPE, which is the area behind reception. The protocol for reporting a staff case on the RIDDOR system has also been addressed.

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- 2.31 As recommended by the BAME education group, BAME staff may request a meeting with the Headteacher for a personalised risk assessment. This would also apply to older staff as well as anyone else who feels they are at risk. Prior to lockdown, the Headteacher had advised staff who were pregnant, were themselves or were living with someone in a vulnerable category, or who were unwell, to go home. A confidential questionnaire was also sent to staff to identify which staff felt able and safe to attend the school and the fact that the necessary core subject teachers were available was the reason the Year 10 groups were viable on all days. MD confirmed the numbers for each subject.
- 2.32 In relation to external contractors, it was confirmed that contractors had already been on site and procedures were in place for them.
- 2.33 GB noted that there was a hyperlink missing in the section about safer travel to and from school. The guidance and plan setting out why students should try to walk or cycle to school was sent to students with the video about what to expect when students returned, with the agreement form. The email to parents was virtually the same as that sent to students; the form was different. Links to official travel advice were included.
- 2.34 **Governors asked, how teachers were travelling to and from school?** SKE responded that they were travelling by car or walking or cycling. Staff would be using the rear car park.
- 2.35 Regarding the section on risk assessments for individual students, SKE explained that the LT had reviewed details held on the medical tracker and advised parents/carers that students need to bring their own medication. Staff have identified those at risk of fainting or conditions that lead to fainting and there is a specific protocol for them which involves asking parents to come in and look at the detail of that. Some students have been seriously ill and are therefore too vulnerable to attend. Some parents have disclosed students that are in the critical category or vulnerable travelling to school. It is useful to have that information for specific students.
- 2.36 In terms of measures to reduce risks to staff and student mental health and wellbeing (RA page 12), this was a section added by the Headteacher as it was not included in the LA model and is important.
- 2.37 It was clarified that although St Mary's students were in Block A, the contractors who would be replacing the roof were not yet on site.
- 2.38 The Chair summarised that the risk assessment was not yet final, but would be sent to governors for agreement once finalised and before wider re-opening the following Tuesday.
- AGREED** That the draft risk assessment for school re-opening for Year 10 be noted. That the Chair would sign off the final RA with governors' agreement.

3. YEAR 10 PLAN

- 3.1 The Chair explained that in accordance with government guidance, the plan for Year 10 is a phased return with no more than 25% of the year group including any keyworker or vulnerable children in school on any one day. This did not include the St Mary's children who are completely separate.
- 3.2 The plan document set out the groupings and subject areas for the next 3 weeks, how the rooms were being allocated, how students were being asked to report to school, break times and all other arrangements.
- 3.3 **Governors queried what would happen when there was only one teacher and a child wanted to go to the toilet?** SKE responded that there were 3 floating members of the leadership team and a first aider plus front office staff as well as the

- 4 classroom teachers. If being taken to a designated toilet, it has been decided that students can only leave the room if accompanied. There are however a few children with conditions who have a toilet pass and they will be allowed to go on their own if necessary. There are 4 toilets next to each of the 4 classrooms.
- 3.4 The plan sets out the group size for each class, all of which are no greater than the maximum of 15 students.
- 3.5 The agreement forms went to parents yesterday. 115 responded almost immediately and 75% confirmed they would return. Five or six requested the option to talk to a member of the leadership team first. After speaking to SKE, they completed the return form. SKE suggested to some that they wait until their friends had returned. This is because students are anxious: their parents want them to come, but they have not left their homes for weeks and are worried they will contract something and take it home.
- 3.6 After the first week, SKE will write to the remaining 25% and say they still have the option to return. She will be able to report on how the first week has gone and explain that the routines have been established.
- 3.7 **Governors asked whether classrooms would be re-used?** SKE explained they would, but only after deep cleaning each day after every session. Every surface would be cleaned and sanitised.
- 3.8 It was still to be decided what would be offered to Year 10 after the first 3 weeks. Many teachers would like the option subjects covered, which would require 18 classrooms on a morning and afternoon session basis, which becomes more complex and would involve having students over lunch. This is why the risk assessment will be reviewed after a week as a decision will be needed as to whether the school looks at offering options or specifically targets vulnerable students. The system will be tested first.
- 3.9 **Governors asked whether 3 hours was too long for a single session?** SKE acknowledged it was a long session, but would enable students to be completely absorbed in a subject and avoids the temptation to get distracted. In addition, a fifteen minute break had been built in supervised by a member of LT.
- 3.10 AW added that if options were to be considered, it would involve also the management of materials and social distancing.
- 3.11 The Chair added that the Headteacher had explained that English would be asking the students to produce creative writing about the Covid-19 pandemic which would help them organise their feelings about what has happened. SKE concurred and added that students would take home the work to complete it. Teachers would give detailed feedback and set them up to talk about it which had cathartic value.
- 3.12 **GB asked what other provision would be in place to support student wellbeing?** SKE responded that the leadership team would be in school and if a girl wanted to talk one-to-one, that would be on offer. There would also be a pastoral leader on site every day and teachers would also identify students whom they think struggled and parents would be called to say that staff had kept their daughters back to talk to them and offer help.
- 3.13 **Governors asked whether the sessions would concentrate on the core subjects or whether wellbeing and PSHE would be included?** SKE responded that this had been discussed as had the recovery plan. JSN added that the school was looking at PSHE being focussed on wellbeing from September. SKE added that wellbeing was one of the reasons it was decided to start with English as it is more open to initiating PSHE-type discussions. The teachers are experienced at shaping and scaffolding those experiences and helping students feel relaxed about talking about them.
- 3.14 **Governors asked whether students would return in uniform and whether rooms would be well-aired?** SKE confirmed that uniforms would be worn and all windows

would be open. It was part of the guidance to have fresh air. The school would not however collect phones, but will ask students to switch off and put them away. Staff will confiscate phones if girls break the rules. Students will also be told to bring their own water, because of the risk of transmission via water fountains, and their own snacks.

3.15 **GB asked how consistency of bubbles would be maintained given that the grouping of students changes from one week to the next?** SKE responded that bubbles applied to primary settings: in secondary a social distance model applied.

3.16 **Governors asked whether first aiders were still keen to carry out their duties?** SKE confirmed all first aiders had been approached in the same way as every other member of staff and asked whether they were able and willing to attend. The school has utilised those that were available. The lead First Aider is willing to come in every day if needed. All first aiders had been trained by the lead First Aider.

AGREED That the Year 10 plan be noted.

4. CLOSURE

The Chair thanked everyone for attending: she felt reassured that everything had been covered in detail and governors concurred. Once the risk assessment has been finalised and recirculated, governors could respond further if they have any queries. The local authority, as the employer, is ultimately responsible for signing off the school's risk assessment, but it is important that governors scrutinise it as well, given their knowledge and understanding of the school.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.

Chair: (sign)

(Print) Date:.....

Chair's Initials:
