

ELM GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Extraordinary Full Governing Board Meeting
21st May 2020 6pm Virtual meeting



Present: Diana Boyd (Chair), Louise Willard (Head Teacher), Tammy Bowles, Leigh Ward, Chris Adams, Laura Haynes-Copp, Phil Kelly, Chris McNeill, Emma Sutton, Hugh Mehta, Natalie Dodds and Sue Margolis

Quorate: 12/12

In attendance: Anna Johnson, Clerk

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

- i. There were no apologies.
- ii. Declarations of pecuniary interest in the business of the meeting – None

2. Minutes from last full board and committee meetings & Matters arising

The minutes of the Full Governing Board meeting on the 27th April and the Teaching Learning & Standards committee on the 6th February 2020 were approved.

Actions from FGB:

The Head reported that the last Ping message to families had been sent to 686 recipients and there had been notification that 350 had been read. With 420 children on roll, the governors agreed that this was a good proportion. The Head explained that there was not currently enough staff capacity to analyse whether it was the same families who were not accessing the messages.

It was agreed that a message from the Chair to the families of next year's Reception children would be sent when the final intake was confirmed. **Action**

3. Budget 2020-2023 approval

Following the finance committee's scrutiny of the budget forecast it was **recommended** to the board for approval.

In the absence of the School Business Manager, the Head supported by Penny Alexander from the local authority finance team, had done excellent work on the budget in a particularly challenging context. The committee had agreed that the predicted loss of income was realistic and governors congratulated the Head on achieving a budget with an underspend in each year.

Q. *Is there any contingency available for unexpected expenses?*

A. A Covid-19 cost centre had been established for expenses caused by the impact of the virus with the hope that the government would reimburse these amounts. However, it was not yet clear what would qualify for compensation. The Head noted that expenses due to Covid-19 could be significant - for example a deep clean of the school had been arranged at a cost of £2,500.

The budget was **agreed** and the Chair would email schools finance on the 22nd May with board approval. **Action**

4. **Head Teacher's Briefing – Questions**

The Chair reported that she had attended the briefing with Jo Lyons, Assistant Director Families, Children and Learning at the local authority and would circulate a transcript when it was available.

The Head explained that following consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, a draft plan and risk assessment for opening the school to more children had been created. Staff had been supportive of the leadership but felt strongly that the government's policy on reopening was a risk to their wellbeing. The Head was working hard to keep communication open with all stakeholders.

Head teachers had been sent multiple risk assessments and check lists. However, following a meeting for Heads with the local authority on Friday 15th May, the Head described the council's position as balanced and clear and reported that the council would not challenge school's decisions with regard to reopening as long as they had a clear rationale for decisions made.

A joint letter from the teachers' unions had been sent which was unhelpful in tone and could hamper Heads' efforts to collaborate with their staff. The National Association of Head Teachers had written to Heads reassuring them with regard to liability and emphasising that school leaders should not be expected to complete all the different checklists and risk assessments being given to them. Schools would need to share their final risk assessment with the LA once completed.

The current plan was to open on June 8th but this was still very uncertain and dependent on government satisfying the unions. The Head reported that she would survey Year 6 parents and carers when it was completely clear what could be offered.

The Chair reported that the National Governance Association had asked the Department of Education to produce guidance for governors. The board would be consulted in advance of decisions to reopen the school.

Q. *Was a risk assessment completed in March ahead of opening the school for vulnerable children and the children of key workers?*

A. Yes, this was a generic risk assessment provided by the local authority in contrast with the risk assessments for June which require much more adaptation.

Governors emphasised that as the virus outbreak was likely to last over a year, staff and governors must evaluate the considerable risk to children in being absent from school for an extended period of time.

It was also acknowledged that the unusual conditions that children returning to school would experience, could also be damaging to their emotional wellbeing. They would be kept apart and the usual resources would not be available.

It was agreed that the onus being given to Head Teachers to decide levels of risk in relation to a medical situation (about which they were not qualified to judge) was unacceptable. Guidelines from the government were inadequate – schools required proscriptive instructions based on published scientific information. It was proposed that wider reopening should only take place if a sustainable system was possible.

The draft plan used nearly all available teachers for the first phase and although the Head would like to have all children return this was not possible due to the building and staff capacity.

Governors agreed that the school's excellent response in opening for the children of key workers and vulnerable children since March had generated good will from the community and it was important to avoid making decisions that would damage this.

The Head stated that without the 5 key tests being met and agreement from the unions the plan could not go ahead.

Consulting with staff was agreed to be essential and deferring wider opening to the 8th June completely justifiable in order to establish a robust risk assessment and plan which the local authority should be required to sign off. Governors suggested that the final risk assessment be published on the website.

The Head confirmed that a team approach to the risk assessment will be used with staff making contributions and asking for clarifications. It was explained that children with Educational Health Care plans would have individual risk assessments.

The current plan established 6 pods of 10 children entering and leaving school at staggered times. There would also be three pods of the children already attending school. 9 staff members would be needed to allow 60-70 children to attend school. Due to staffing capacity, Breakfast and After School Clubs would only be offered to vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Elm Grove Out of School Club would start to offer this service again if possible. Year 6 children would be invited back to the end of term to allow families to plan their work arrangements.

Governors drew attention to the significant challenges faced by the school in the past due to long term staff sickness absence and expressed concern that this might be a result of reopening. It was not clear that the cost of supply staff would be compensated and the school's budget did not have funds for this.

The Head noted that the Department of Education guidance on staff living with vulnerable or high risk family members differed from the unions guidance which stated they could not return to work in schools.

Q. Will there be enough experienced first aiders amongst staff when Year 6 return?

A. Yes, there are a number of higher level first aiders who will be present.

Governors approved the Head's suggestion of prioritising pupil premium children in any further reopening. If there was a low uptake, the Head would survey parents regarding the next phase of children to return.

Q. Will the school's INCo team be used to assist children returning from disregulated home lives who might have resulting social and emotional issues?

A. The Head explained that due to social distancing, children would not be able to leave their pod to attend the Nest, so INCo support would consist of advice to staff on how to support these children.

It was **agreed** that a joint letter from the Head and governors should be sent to all parents. The Head would invite feedback on a draft from governors in advance of it being sent on the 22nd May. **Action**

Home Learning

Key Stage 2 teachers would be used for Y6 pods, other staff in school would teach the keyworker pods and any teachers unable to be in school would prepare the online learning. The school had invested in the White Rose maths programme and Class Dojo which enabled online feedback on children's work. It was important to ensure equity of provision for year 6 children who would not be able to attend because they were shielding.

	<p>Staff who were in school would teach for four days with the fifth day allocated to PPA (Planning Preparation and Assessment). Full time provision for children of key workers and vulnerable children would continue.</p> <p>The Head reported that parents have been hugely supportive. A few have been requesting that the school provide lessons via the Zoom platform but local authority guidance has advised against this due to safeguarding risks. Governors noted there was also an inclusion issue with Zoom as not all children would be able to access this learning at home.</p> <p>Q. How is the free school meals voucher system operating? A. The vouchers had been accessed successfully but not all had worked when submitted in a supermarket. The INCo team had been delivering food hampers weekly to the homes of 26 families who could not go shopping, with the PTFA providing funding for the food. Governors strongly commended this effort to ensure families were supported. Action: Chris Adams to write a letter to parents describing how vulnerable families were being supported by the school.</p> <p>Q. Have parents/carers been asked for feedback on how the school is operating in the current situation? A. When staff had phone contact with families they had asked for feedback. Governors suggested that a Zoom parent consultation group could be set up with a representative from each year group. It was agreed to revisit this idea at the end of June when feedback from Year 6 experience might be available. Action</p> <p>The Head confirmed that she hoped that the school would be open to all children from September.</p>
5.	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>The Safeguarding link, Nathalie Dodds had joined the Head and Chair of governors for an in-depth meeting on safeguarding and Nathalie's report had been received by the board.</p> <p>Q. Is there concern about the low staffing in the office with regard to safeguarding? A. Attendance checking and all safeguarding activity will continue and will be covered by Teaching Assistants in the office if necessary.</p> <p>The Head reported that it was likely that a further change to the addendum for Covid-19 in the Child Protection policy would be necessary in the near future. Action: LW to consult with ND by email.</p> <p>The Head reported that at the start of lockdown, child protection referrals were at a higher level and a fall in referrals since then had led the local authority to set up an information campaign to encourage city residents to report any concerns.</p> <p>Q. Is there a replacement Designated Safeguarding Lead if they and the deputy should fall ill? A. Yes there is a robust delegation structure.</p>
6.	<p>Staffing Structure 2020-21</p> <p>The Head reported that the staff base was predicted to remain stable for September 2020.</p>
7.	24 th June tbc

Chair's signature:

ACTION LOG OVERLEAF

ACTION LOG				
	Date	Action	Owner	Due Date
1.	27.04.20	Governors to email reports from their visits to the Clerk for distribution.	---	Asap
2.	21.05.20	Chair's message to parents and carers of next year's Reception children would be sent when the final intake was confirmed	DB/LW	tbc
3.	21.05.20	Chair would email schools finance on the 22 nd May with board approval	DB	22.05.20
4.	21.05.20	The Head would invite feedback from governors on the joint draft letter to be sent 22 nd May	LW/All	22.05.20
5.	21.05.20	Chris Adams to write a letter to parents describing how vulnerable families were being supported by the school.	CA	01.06.20
6.	21.05.20	Zoom parent consultation group on agenda at next meeting	AJ	24.06.20
7.	21.05.20	LW to consult with ND on Covid-19 addendum to Child Protection Policy.	LW/ND	tbc
8.	14.01.20	Laura Haynes-Copp and Natalie Dodds would present an item on equalities at the next meeting.	LHC/N D	Deferred
9.	14.01.20	Governors to consider attending PTA events coming up, also Pupil Premium or SEND reviews via LW	All	Deferred
10.	04.03.20	Laura Haynes-Copp to send PTA dates to governors	LHC	Deferred
11.	04.03.20	Head to send dates of Pupil Premium and SEND reviews for next term	LW	Deferred
12.	04.03.20	Recommendations from the Safeguarding office review report which should be followed up at next meeting.	ND/AJ	Deferred