

**ELM GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Extraordinary Full Governing Board Meeting**  
*Virtual meeting*



**27th April 2020 6pm**

**Present:** Diana Boyd (Chair), Louise Willard (Head Teacher), Chris Adams, Laura Haynes-Copp, Phil Kelly, Chris McNeill, Emma Sutton, Hugh Mehta, Natalie Dodds and Sue Margolis  
**Quorate:** 10/12  
**In attendance:** Anna Johnson, Clerk

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

- i. There were no apologies. Tammy Bowles and Leigh Ward were absent.
- ii. Declarations of pecuniary interest in the business of the meeting – None
- iii. No urgent business

Governors **agreed** that the board could continue to conduct meetings online during the Covid 19 lockdown.

**Action:** DB to contact Tammy Bowles and Leigh Ward and confirm that their absence was readily accepted during the current situation.

**Action:** Clerk to send committee minutes for approval at next FGB.

**2. Minutes from meetings on the 4<sup>th</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April & Matters arising**

**Minutes 04.03.20**

The minutes were **agreed** with the amendment of pupil premium to pupil progress in actions 3. and 5. and in the body of the minutes.

**Actions** – see log for those deferred until schools reopened:

2. Governors agreed that a report on equalities was not a priority but that equal opportunities should be a central consideration for the board during the Covid 19 outbreak.

3. The Head commented that a SEND review was planned for June and she had asked for it to be a supported process due to the SENCo being new in post. This would only take place if schools had reopened.

7. The Head confirmed that the timeframe for any alteration to the school access was likely to be considerable due to the costs.

11. Feedback in the current situation had been positive and parents had also offered suggestions.

**Action:** LW to put parent suggestions and feedback in a table for next meeting.

13. Governors thanked Phil and Louise for organising a very successful governors' week.

**Action:** Governors to email reports from their visits to the Clerk for distribution.

14. Chair to email concerns about use of the school as polling station in anticipation of future requests as the May local elections had been cancelled.

**Minutes 02.04.20**

The minutes were **agreed** with the addition of noting that the meeting took place online

**Actions:**

The Clerk noted that both guidance from the government and national governance association recommended continued reminders to parents regarding online safety.

The Head confirmed that the absence of a paediatric first aider had been added to the Covid -19 risk assessment but the cost of online training was prohibitive. The government had in any case introduced an emergency amendment to the paediatric first aid requirements in the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation which removed the concern. Governors agreed that the board had approached the issue with good judgement.

The Chair recommended that all governors read the weekly Covid 19 governor update emails from the Local Authority in addition to looking at BEEM for information on their areas of responsibility.

**3. Head Teacher's Report – Questions**

*Q. – Governors asked about the wellbeing of the Head*

A. – The Head explained that her job had changed in character and she was very busy but in good health. The Chair asked that the Head contact her should this change or the pressures increase.

The Head explained that the school had been open over Easter including bank holidays. Jo Lyons, Assistant Director of Education and Skills at the council had written to the school to thank them for staying open over the bank holidays.

Before and after school provision had continued and the Head commended the staff for their commitment.

• **Vulnerable children/ with ECHP plans, the children of key workers, associated risks, issues etc.**

Attendance ranged between 1 and 16 children, who were mainly the children of key workers.

All vulnerable children have been invited to attend school and the offer was flexible in relation to days they attended. One child had been refused a place following a risk assessment which concluded that due to the child's needs, social distancing would not be possible. A meeting had taken place to discuss other support available for the family.

Pack lunches were being delivered from St Lukes school and all children and staff have free school meals. However, food was not being provided at before and after school clubs. The school was hoping to reopen the kitchen and provide hot dinners soon.

Free school meal vouchers had been a problem nationally and in their absence the inclusion team had made up hampers and delivered them to families. Families of all vulnerable children had been contacted and the team was liaising with social workers and the family therapy service. A log of calls to families detailing their welfare was being maintained.

*Q. Is it possible that some children are slipping through the net?*

A. The log of all vulnerable children ensures that this doesn't happen. If families can't be contacted, then in some cases staff visit the home to check how the children are.

*Q. How is the school responding to children who are not on the vulnerable list but are not engaging with school in any way?*

A. Teachers have contacted all children in their classes and some have raised concerns following a lack of response. The Head explained that it wasn't possible to track who

was accessing learning on the website. The school was reviewing families in the 'amber' category in terms of vulnerability and some families had asked the school for support, for example access to free school meals although they are not eligible. The school is being as accessible as it can and has repeated the message that families are invited to approach the school for support.

*Q. Is Study Bugs still running?*

A. No, attendance arrangements have altered and schools are not using registers. However, the school can see if Ping messages have been read.

**Action:** Head to report on numbers reading school messages.

Governors commented that in the present circumstances every child could be considered vulnerable in terms of their emotional wellbeing.

*Q. Has the Senior Leadership Team discussed preparation for the return of all children to school?*

A. It is still unclear when this will be and what the government's requirements will be. The main concerns are staffing levels and how social distancing will be maintained. Continuing planning for the new curriculum will be a challenge.

Staff are also considering what impact the lockdown will have had on children's emotional wellbeing and how the school might plan support in relation to this. Dates for the welcome for reception children in the summer term are still in place but new dates are being planned in case schools reopen in September.

*Q. Has teacher allocation to classes been decided?*

A. The new reception teacher is the only class decided. The Head was hopeful that the staff body would continue to be stable over the summer.

- **Issues arising from how the building is currently being used and remote working for staff**

The roofers had restarted work on the building and therefore the back and reception playground were out of use. Children were being kept in the key areas.

*Q. Has the school considered merging with another school to form a hub for current provision?*

A. Carlton Hill had approached the school to discuss this. Staff at Elm Grove were concerned about the impact on children's anxiety of being on new premises but it was something that would be reviewed if there were inadequate staffing levels.

- **Home learning**

Governors noted that parents would be in varying situations in relation to their ability to support home learning and the school has invited parents to send questions. The Head commented on her pride in the learning provision on the website. It includes material that can be accessed independently and some that is non-screen based.

Parents feedback more recently had been on the challenge of motivating children to work at home.

*Q. What feedback from parents of children with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) has been received?*

A. No specific feedback has been received but SEND children have specific online learning provision labelled 'Yellow' on the website and are also directed to look at work provided for lower years.

Governors praised the range of online provision. They discussed concerns about the

	<p>attainment gap between disadvantaged and other children increasing, aware that parental input was significant in allowing all children to make progress. In addition, the length of time that children would be absent from class would present a huge challenge for some children to catch up.</p> <p><i>Q. Could parents be informed of end of year expected attainment for their children?</i>  A. The Head responded that this was likely to increase anxiety for both children and parents. Staff are aware that the wider gap will be a critical issue when schools reopen and had discussed disadvantaged children returning first if a staggered reopening took place. It was agreed that it was difficult to have an impact at a distance.</p> <p>Governors discussed how differentiation could be used to support equalities principles. For example, by offering more to disadvantaged children and by providing activities that needed little parental input.</p> <p>The Head reported that staff were also concerned about the impact on school refusers level of anxiety after the long absence.</p> <p>Wellbeing activities were included on the online learning page which catered for everyone. Governors agreed that the structure in the day provided by online learning was helpful in itself.</p> <p>The school had contacted parents of children with English as an additional language to offer support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Wellbeing and welfare of pupils, staff and stakeholders</b></li> </ul> <p>The school continued to work with the local authority to support safeguarding and the welfare of children.</p> <p>A structure had been set up to allocate responsibility for each staff member to different members of the Senior Management Team.</p>
4.	<p><b>Review of School improvement plan and committee workplans</b></p> <p>Governors <b>agreed</b> to suspend committee meetings.  The revised Finance and Teaching and Learning workplans were <b>approved</b> subject to any queries emailed in following week. Chris McNeill would submit a revised workplan for the Staffing committee for next full board.</p> <p>It was <b>agreed</b> that ahead of the budget approval the finance committee scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> May would meet.</p>
5.	<p><b>Governor communication with families</b></p> <p>It was agreed that a message to parents including next year’s reception would be sent from the board describing the work of the board in the current context. <b>Action</b></p>
6.	<p><b>Safeguarding</b></p> <p>The Chair referred governors again to guidance on the council’s BEEM website and to department of education information.</p> <p>Natalie Dodds reported that it had been agreed that governors could access the single central record remotely.</p> <p>An addendum had been circulated for the Child Protection Policy and governors agreed the addendum pending amendments suggested by staff.</p>

	<p><i>Q. Should specific guidance on safeguarding in relation to Covid 19 be included?</i>  A. This had been covered in the Covid 19 risk assessment circulated to the board.</p> <p><i>Q. Do parents know where to find information on policy in relation to Covid 19?</i>  A. The Head had held verbal discussions with parents but would send a Ping message on the location of this information, including a link to the risk assessment and a version of the addendum with staff contact details removed (with this omission noted).</p> <p><b>Action:</b> ND, DB, LW to follow up on these changes prior to FGB.</p>
7.	<p><b>Health &amp; Safety</b></p> <p>The Head and James Waring had completed a risk assessment which was very thorough in addressing all issues in the local authority’s guide. Emma Sutton, Health and Safety governor had sent queries to James and his answers had been distributed to the board.</p> <p>The Head anticipated national guidance on health and safety requirements in advance of the schools being reopened.</p> <p>The Head reported that a mobile phone had been bought so that parents could contact staff when the office was not manned.</p> <p>There was a concern about fire safety in relation to knowing who was in the building and a door fob system had been investigated but these were prohibitively costly.</p> <p>The Heads noted that some of the first aiders on the rota lacked confidence having not applied their training recently.</p>
8.	<p><b>Committees</b></p> <p><b>Finance and premises</b></p> <p>The Head explained that the office was beginning the task of trip refunds; this had been challenging in the absence of the school business manager. Some transport providers had not replied to the school and there was likely to be a negative impact on the budget.</p> <p>Governors suggested that in the context of the school’s financial challenges, messages to parents should be phrased to allow them to choose not to claim the refund.</p> <p><u>Budget and outturn</u></p> <p>The outturn showed a £70,000 underspend but much of this was committed in sports funding and contingency funds and this figure presented a more positive picture than the reality. No additionality was predicted to be available in for the next year.</p> <p>The Head and Penny Alexander had made considerable efforts to modify the budget so that it would break even at 3 years and staffing levels would be maintained. The low numbers recorded at the time of the October census had had a negative effect while the underspend had allowed the absence of a deficit.</p> <p><i>Q. How are other schools in the city faring financially?</i>  A. It varies – schools with a high deprivation index and one form entry schools are in the worst financial position.</p> <p>Governors asked for a commentary on the budget and it was agreed that the minutes of the Finance meeting would be distributed in time to serve this purpose. <b>Action</b></p>

### Income and lettings

The school had lost lettings income from breakfast, after school and out of school clubs, as well as evening lets for adult activities such as the Jam Tarts choir. It was forecast that this would be a loss of £8-9,000.

The playground development funds are ring fenced but future PTA fund raising is on hold until schools reopen.

The Peppercot nursery had asked to have rent waived. A discussion followed on the furlough arrangements for nurseries which under government guidance could not furlough the proportion of staff represented by privately paid nursery places at each setting.

**Action:** Nathalie Dodds to send government guidance.

Governors **advised** that the school should continue to invoice all accounts.

The Head reported that it was a possibility that the government would reimburse schools for losses incurred during Covid 19 outbreak.

### Buildings update

The Head reported that the local authority planned to go ahead with the refurbishment of the toilets and windows. While the resubmission of the application for a lottery grant for the playground had been unsuccessful.

Governors commented on online posts about the blossom garden at Elm Grove and agreed that the Chair should email Martin Lundgren to thank him. **Action**

### **Teaching, learning and standards**

The Head noted that teachers had recorded spring term data and this would be used for predicting end of year outcomes. This would be used for handover between year groups at the end of the summer. The government had significantly reduced the requirements for data collection during school closure.

The Head expressed regret that the positive attainment outcomes expected this year would not be published to replace the last year's results which were less good due to the particular nature of the cohort. Governors suggested that the school was free to display predicted results and 'tell the story' on the school website.

The Head would keep books from the year and evidence of the current year 6's progress would be evidenced in the TLS committee's minutes.

### **Staffing, Pay and Appraisal**

The Head confirmed that Alex Graham had started in the SENCo role and made an enthusiastic start. She was working in school maintaining SEND support and the administration of Educational Health Care Plans.

Dan Blomfeld, teaching assistant has moved on and the Head was pleased that the budget when confirmed would allow a replacement appointment.

**9. Next Meeting: 21.05.20**

Chair's signature: ..... **ACTION LOG OVERLEAF**

<b>ACTION LOG</b>				
	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
1.	04.03.20	Trends in parent concerns to be added to the Head's report.	LW	Ongoing
2.	04.03.20	Chair to email about use of school as a polling station urgently.	DB	Asap
3.	27.04.20	DB to contact Tammy Bowles and Leigh Ward and confirm that their absence was readily understood during the current situation.	DB	Asap
4.	27.04.20	Clerk to send spring term committee minutes for approval at next FGB. <b>Plus</b> finance minutes for the budget.	AJ	14.05.20
5.	27.04.20	LW to put parent suggestions and feedback in a table for next meeting <b>Plus</b> report on numbers reading school Ping messages.	LW	14.05.20
6.	27.04.20	Governors to email reports from their visits to the Clerk for distribution.	All	Asap
7.	27.04.20	Chair to send message to parents including next year's reception would be sent from the board describing the work of the board in the current context	DB	Asap
8.	27.04.20	ND, DB, LW to follow up on changes to Child Protection addendum prior to FGB.	ND, DB, LW	14.05.20
9.	27.04.20	Nathalie Dodds to send government guidance on nursery furlough arrangements	ND	Asap
10.	27.04.20	Chair should email Martin Lundgren to thank him for Blossom Garden blog.	DB	Asap
11.	14.01.20	Laura Haynes-Copp and Natalie Dodds would present an item on equalities at the next meeting.	LHC/N D	Deferred
12.	14.01.20	Governors to consider attending PTA events coming up, also Pupil Premium or SEND reviews via LW	All	Deferred
13.	04.03.20	Laura Haynes-Copp to send PTA dates to governors	LHC	Deferred
14.	04.03.20	Head to send dates of Pupil Premium and SEND reviews for next term	LW	Deferred
15.	04.03.20	Recommendations from the Safeguarding office review report which should be followed up at next meeting.	ND/AJ	Deferred