

GREAT CHESTERFORD [C. of E.] PRIMARY ACADEMY

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the teleconference meeting at 4pm held on 22 April 2020

Membership		Office	Term
* Jennifer Fullerty	Foundation		21/02/2021
Alex Jeewan	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
Bob Rust	Foundation		21/02/2021
Gary Benn	General Member		21/02/2021
Adele Peters	General Member	Chair	21/02/2021
* Jan Menell	General Member		21/02/2021
Sarah Mitchell	General Member	Executive Headteacher	Ex-Officio
Andrew Taylor	General Member		21/02/2021
Nicholas Rowe	Parent	Vice - Chair	21/02/2021
Laura Saunders	Parent		01/09/2023
Rachel Thackray	Co-opted		01/09/2023
Amy Sargeant	Staff	Acting Head of School	21/02/2021
Natalie Starbuck	Staff		21/02/2021

In Attendance

Tom Bennett Clerk

* indicates absence

The Rev. Alex Jeewan opened the meeting with a prayer.

Action

1/20 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Jennifer Fullerty and Jan Menell. Andrew Taylor had sent advance notification that he would be attending the meeting later.

Alex Jeewan reported that he would have to leave the meeting at 4:45pm to attend another meeting.

The Chair reminded governors that, being the first teleconference meeting, it was important for all attendees to maintain a high level of confidentiality when discussing pupils and staff matters and avoid mentioning names, should the technology be compromised in anyway.

2/20 Notification of AoB

- Building works update
- Financial update
- GDPR

3/20 Notification of business interests

Gary Benn declared that his wife worked for the Academy and he worked for Eddisons that provided services to the Academy.

No other governor declared a potential conflict of interest with any items to be discussed at the meeting or that they had given or received any gifts or hospitality that could or be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with the Academy's matters.

MAIN BUSINESS

4/20 Current Challenges at the School

Amy Sargeant outlined the main challenges facing the school during the current pandemic and lockdown.

- There were currently two to three children in school each day. These pupils fell into the categories set out in the current DfE guidance for childcare within school.
- A 2-person weekly rota to care for the children has been set up with teachers and teaching assistants.
- Teachers were posting daily home learning activities on the school website and are sending emails to parents and children to share learning, discuss any questions raised or offer feedback.
- The administration team has experienced serious challenges in obtaining free school meals vouchers from the new DfE scheme. It had taken a lot of administration time and effort to get the vouchers due to the system being used.
- Some teachers were finding planning and preparing home learning together with managing their own families challenging.
- Some members of staff and parents were finding the home learning technology challenging.
- Another challenge was the ability to make progress on the School Development Plan in the last four weeks before the Easter term, where some subject monitoring time had been planned.
- A major challenge was planning for re-opening of the school due to the lack of information from the government on the timing and the requirements to maintain social distancing.
- It was noted some parents may not want to send children back to schools when they re-open and some teachers may not be able to return initially due to personal circumstances.
- Children returning may need a greater focus on PSHE and nurturing support with the prolonged lack of social contact and interaction with other children and staff.
- It will be difficult to maintain social distancing due to the young age of the children, size of buildings and small playgrounds.
- Unions and Essex CC were having regular-meetings with the government on the technicalities of re-opening.

Gary Benn offered to provide technical notes on some the misstatements circulating in the press on the safety of premises including the spread of the virus by air conditioning units.

Nicholas Rowe asked whether the school should consider recruiting a group of volunteers in advance of the school re-opening to help with playtime and staff shortages.

The Executive Head reported that schools and the unions were asking for at least a month's notice before opening to plan. It was likely that re-opening schools would be done on a staggered basis by year groups and until this was confirmed, it was difficult to plan staff resources. However, it was a good idea for the school to be thinking now about recruiting volunteers including past volunteers and key workers who have been furloughed.

5/20 Headteacher's Report

Amy Sargeant introduced the Headteacher's Spring report and highlighted the following:

- Since the report had been distributed, a second part-time Learning Support Assistant had given a month's notice to leave to join another school in September. She had been employed to provide one-to-one additional education and behavioural support to SEND pupils.
- Since the report had been distributed, Reception admissions for 2020 had been offered to 30 families. The next step was to send out letters confirming who has and has not accepted the places offered.
- The school has received further enquiries about vacancies in the current Reception Class and there have been other enquiries about places in different year groups.
- Two children have joined since the current school closure (Years 1 and 2) and are already accessing the school's website home-learning provision. The school may not be able to complete the full transition programme for our incoming Reception 2020.
- The school has its targets and end of year results. The DFE have announced they will not be collecting data for all primary schools. This includes EYFS, phonics, KS1, KS2 and the new multiplication data being introduced this academic year for Year 4.

Gary Benn asked how would the school monitor the progress and attainment of pupils if there is a gap in the data. Amy Sargeant reported the school had its own teacher-led assessment data.

The Chair reported she had sent some questions on the report and that had been satisfactorily answered.

There were no other questions on the report.

6/20 School Development Plan [SDP]

Amy Sargeant introduced the updated the SDP 2019/20 and reported several planned actions had been put on hold as a result of the school closure but that most staff were working at home on subject coordinator work as well as class provision. Other actions to implement the key priorities had been completed.

The Chair reported it was important to consider and include on the SDP the need for succession planning, to identify those governors standing down and to carry out a skills audit to see what areas needed strengthening.

There has been continued interest from members of the local community in joining the governing body. The Chair reiterated the importance in ensuring that there was a clear and transparent process when considering the appointment of new governors; ensuring the governing body had the necessary skills and experience to set the direction and oversee the operations of the school.

7/20 Safeguarding

An update on safeguarding had been included in the Headteacher's report.

The Academy has updated its safeguarding procedures to cover the changes arising from Coronavirus.

8/20 Policies

a) Child Protection Policy [March 2020]

The policy has been amended to include the latest update from the last DFE, the changes to the safeguarding procedures following the closure of the school and an update on the deputy designated safeguarding lead.

It was **agreed** to approve the policy.

b) MFL Policy [November 2019]

The policy had been amended to incorporate a new scheme being used by the school.

It was **agreed** to approve the policy.

c) Computing Policy [2019]

The policy has been rewritten to bring it into line with new e-safety guidance.

It was **agreed** to approve the policy.

d) Fire Procedure

It was **agreed** to approve the updated fire evacuation procedures.

e) Home School Agreement 2020

The Home School Agreement had been amended last year and there were no proposed changes. However, prior to sending the policy to the families of pupils joining the school, it was **agreed** to include a new statement that the school expected all parents to support the school's values and to respect all in the school community.

It was **agreed** to approve the policy with the amendment.

f) Science Policy 2020

The policy had been amended to reflect how the subject is mapped out across the year groups and with other subjects in the curriculum.

It was **agreed** to approve the policy.

g) Volunteer Procedures 2020

The policy had been updated and now included all the aspects to consider when employing volunteers; including safeguarding, DBS and GDPR.

It was **agreed** to approve the policy.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

9/20 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 November 2019 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

10/20 Matters arising

No matters arising from the previous minutes not otherwise included on the agenda were reported.

11/20 Correspondence

The Chair reported she had received a letter from all the staff at the school expressing how grateful they were to Amy Sargeant for how she had taken over the leadership during the past term and, in particular, how well she has led and managed the staff, pupils and parents during the latter weeks when the schools was faced with the many pressures of the pandemic crisis.

The Chair and all the governors noted the appreciation of the staff for Amy and thanked her for her leadership, all the work she had done and her continued commitment to the Academy.

12/20 Committee Reports

a) Finance and Premises Committee

The Chair of the committee, Adele Peters, highlighted the main points of the minutes of the committee meeting held on the 20th January 2020.

b) Teaching and Learning Committee

The Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee, Natalie Starbuck, highlighted the main points discussed at the committee meeting held on 4 February 2020.

The Chair, Alex Jeewan and Nick Rowe had carried out a visit to look at behaviour and anti-bullying. This had been followed up by Laura Saunders, Rachel Thackray and Alex Jeewan meeting with the School Council and the next step was to receive feedback from parents. A questionnaire had been prepared by the governors (with consultation by the staff) and was due to be sent out in March, however this was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. It will be sent out to parents once pupils are back in school. The governors will also prepare a survey for staff by the end of 2020.

The designated safeguarding lead and SENCO were in regular contact with vulnerable pupils, children with SEND needs and their parents.

Jennifer Fullerty had carried out a monitoring visit to look at phonics and had observed assembly and lessons in Reception (phonics), Y2 (reading) and Y1 (phonics).

13/20 Governor training

Sarah Mitchell reported the lockdown provided some governors with a good opportunity to study an NGA online course; especially safeguarding

All governors need to complete the online safeguarding course annually.

It was **agreed** to send an email to all governors on how to access the online courses and what the key course titles should be studied.

It was **agreed** all governors should complete one training course per term, including safeguarding and send Sarah a copy of the certificate once completed.

SM

All

14/20 Any other business

• Building works update

Bob Rust provided an update on the building of the Multi-Purpose Teaching Space [MPTS] and reported work had stopped as a result of the current lockdown.

It was estimated the builders would need a further eight weeks to complete the build. The builders were planning to return to work in a couple of weeks, having put in place plans so workers and trades could work safely.

As expected, there had been some additional works that had not been anticipated that had used up the contingency sums included in the contract. This has also led to an increase in the amount being funded from reserves.

The builders have been paid 60% of the contract price and additional and the remaining S106 funding due from Essex CC would cover the balance of the total costs due. The board thanked Bob Rust for his detailed report and continuing support with this project.

The PTA, Friends of the School, had advised that they would like to fund some of the external and internal fitting out.

The meeting discussed the replacement of the tyres in the playground. There had been a lot of support from both parents and children for them to be replaced. Amy Sargeant reported there had been a reduction in first-aid incidents since they had been removed

The Academy had submitted two bids to the Condition Improvement Fund [CIF] 2020-21. One was for repairs to the listed building.

The second CIF bid was for the replacement of both the heating and hot water boilers.

The decision of the two bids would now be published in May rather than Easter due to the current disruptions.

The school had had to replace the hot water boiler in the kitchen as it had totally failed just before half term. It was noted that the kitchen and administration staff had worked very hard to ensure there was no disruption in the provision of school meals and expressed her thanks to them for this.

- **Financial update**

Laura Saunders provided a report on the Academy's finances.

She had received the February and draft March 2020 management accounts which were currently indicating a budget surplus.

There had been some underspends on staff due to the resignations and difficulties in recruitment.

There had been some overspends in catering costs due to bulk buying and a lower income from parents following the closing of the school. These overspends were being offset by not having filled the catering vacancy for the present.

The school was investigating the latest guidance and criteria as to whether there was the option to consider furloughing staff under the government scheme, during the Coronavirus pandemic.

There have been some overspends on learning resources due to purchasing new books for the new library. These have been offset by donations gifted from the local council specifically for the new library books.

The School was still waiting for confirmation of the Sports Premium funding for 2020-21. There was a possibility that the government may be stopping the grant, which potentially have an adverse impact on the provision of PE at all schools.

- **GDPR**

Sarah Mitchell reminded all governors of GDPR guidelines.

- **Other**

The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of all the governors to, first, Sarah and Amy for all the hard work and commitment in dealing with the current situation with the school during the Coronavirus pandemic and secondly to all the teaching staff for the work in setting up and operating the online home learning provision.

15/20 Date/time of future meetings

- Tuesday 30/06/2020 at 16:00 hrs

Committees to organise their meetings to feed into these meetings

Approved by the LGB on 21st May 2020