

Litherland High School
Part of the Heath Family Trust
Full Governing Body Meeting held on
Wednesday 3rd February 2021 at 5.00 pm via MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

JB	Joanne Butcher	Parent Governor
RC	Ronnie Cowen	Trust Governor
KL	Karen Lynskey	Trust Governor
FMF	Frank McFarlane	Chair of Governors
TMK	Tracy McKeating	Trust Governor
IM	Ian Mitchell	Trust Governor and Vice Chair
DR	Daniel Rankin	Trust Governor
DY	David Yates	Principal, Litherland High School
LK	Linda Kinsella	Clerk to the Governors

Apologies:

ABE	Alison Bennett	Teaching Staff Governor
ABR	Adele Browne	Parent Governor
SP	Suzanne Pomford	Trust Governor
CMU	Carmel Murphy	Non-Teaching Staff Governor

Also in Attendance:

JMcC	Judith McConville	MAT Financial Controller
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28) Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Governors not in attendance

Welcome from the Chair. The Chair congratulated the Principal on the brilliant result at the Educate Awards. Chair also thanked Governors for their concern and well wishes whilst he had been in hospital.

Apologies from ABE, ABR, SP and CMU. These were all accepted by the Governing Board.

29) Agree Minutes of the last FGB meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes of the last meeting held on 14th October 2020 were accepted as a true and accurate account. Proposed by RC and seconded by JB.

No matters arising.

30) Finance

JMcC joined the meeting at 17.05. She had issued a financial update document at the beginning of the week to Governors.

JMcC started her presentation by sharing a power point, which gave a financial overview of the Trust. At the end of 2018/19 she explained the deficit and vulnerability that they were facing, which resulted in submitting a plan to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). This was accepted but ultimately gave rise to a FNTI. The MAT had to undertake significant staffing changes, and are now on course to repay by April 2021, moving slowly to a surplus position, expecting to grow reserves, and will be in surplus with strong reserve by 2022/23.

JMcC reviewed LHS' figures with Governors in greater detail. Although in deficit, the Trust itself is in a far stronger and sustainable position to deal with what LHS have to do going forward.

There has been more difficulty in forecasting within the current situation which is more volatile due to Covid, and schools do not know what impact this will have over the longer term, however at a local level the Principal is working closely with the Trust on this.

The figures provided are baseline and are adjusted for pupil numbers. The good news is that the school is growing, and gaining in reputation. Indicative numbers have exceeded expectations, with first choices up to 182.

DY informed Governors that he spoke with the Local Authority Admissions yesterday, and the maximum school can take is 150, so there may be up to 30 children on appeal. DY and the Financial Controller are meeting regularly every couple of weeks. DY noted that the MAT/CEO have freed up money for some additional staffing, which is very much appreciated. JMcC confirmed that this is the right thing to do, as LHS is in a period of growth and the MAT are looking how best they can support. JMcC explained that a major problem is unfunded pupil numbers i.e. there is a lag in funding, therefore school will not realise funding for these additional pupils until the following year, and the question is how growth is sustained, within the projections of the 3 year plan. DY/JMcC are looking at the structure to ensure it is fit for purpose and underpinned. School/MAT are also looking at ways to close the deficit gap, and contracts will be reviewed to ensure best value, however due to Covid restrictions there have been delays. Any changes school can make will be commencing 2021/22.

JMcC confirmed that the Trust will continue to keep dialogue with the EFSA in terms of estimated funding, and is fully committed to school and its growth.

There was an opportunity for Governors to ask questions.

Q. IM – The pupil numbers will impact on income. Therefore, if we have 187 first choices, for clarity can we accept as we need to invest to grow?

A. JMcC – There is an optimum number to grow. You would have many unfunded pupils and you would need to manage these class sizes. You may get growth just for that year and lower numbers the other years, so it is about sustained growth.

A. DY – We need to be robust and manage the growth. An upper limit of 150 will mean minimal additional staff within five groups. Once a sixth class is introduced it impacts significantly on the curriculum model and staffing. This will come in time, but it has to be managed effectively. We want to know our students and be big enough to matter, but small enough to care.

The Chair noted the argument is well made, about not running before we can walk, and asked Governors if they accepted this.

RC agreed that school needs to have sustained growth and ensure every pupil is offered the best opportunity. He supported DY stating that if school gets too big and staff don't know the students well then what is the point?

For the minutes the Chair noted that Governors accept the argument put forward that 150 would currently be an optimum year group number.

JMcC and DY will continue to work closely on this, at this stage the plan is baseline and it will be refined. The Trust as an organisation are moving from a FNTI position, trying to get the right balance to reduce costs. It is work in progress, when we come to do the annual budget in April/May the position should be improved.

There was a further opportunity to ask questions.

Q. KL – I champion for vulnerable pupils, and nurture is for vulnerable children. Is there any movement or percentage overspill?

A. DY – If we can fund, we are looking very closely to employ a Primary teacher to teach English, Maths and Science in Year 7 and Year 8, an enthusiastic teacher of SEN or for those who are struggling to access the

curriculum - they would be taught by the same person 12 times per week. That may allow us to go over 150 if a situation arises. Admissions have been really helpful, and I will check if we could go slightly over if a need arises, but it would need to be part of the criteria or protocol.

The Chair stated that to have such a teacher could be reputational.

Q. RC – Can we have the Finance updates presented in the same format each time?

A. JMCC – Yes, we are looking to make reports consistent and they will go onto Governor Hub.

Q. RC – If we are making a loss do the MAT still take the top slice?

A. JMCC – Yes, it is 8.5% from all schools including the reserve.

Q. RC – 8.5% means we are not making as much of a loss.

A. JMCC – The resilience reserve is if schools are showing a deficit we can support them.

Q. RC – We are aware of the top slice, but I want to give all funds possible to support our students.

A. JMCC - The other schools support each other going forward. On that basis if you are not hitting target, we are here to help. The top slice ensures balance across the schools' finance.

Chair thanked JMCC who left the meeting at 17.35.

31) Principal's Report – January summary

DY asked Governors if the weekly briefing notes are useful – they confirmed that they are.

The Principal's Report was circulated to Governors in advance of the meeting. DY reviewed the content with Governors.

DY and Governors discussed remote learning and keeping in contact with the students. Almost 100 laptops have now been distributed and school are building up a reserve list. The weekly calls to students are working well, as are the facebook live sessions and the live assemblies with live chat – DY and the Senior Leadership Team have strongly contributed to this, and lessons have been learnt along the way. There has been some major progress with online teaching and learning resources and staff are putting together stream lessons. There is some call for live lessons, but the numbers are not as large as DY would like, students will undertake the work, albeit not via a live lesson.

DY recapped on the number of lateral flow tests completed in school and the small number of cases. As a school we are trying to keep everything going in very difficult circumstances, however some weeks have been exceptionally challenging with Covid issues, reduced staffing etc. The Chair asked about the gaps and what DY was doing to close these. DY shared an example in Science where normally there are five classes – he has had to put on Health & Social Care at the same time as Year 9 Science, having only four teachers. DY plans to provide an intervention class and make ratios smaller and fill these gaps.

DY and staff are also working to keep Year 11 students motivated who may want to relax their work ethic if they have already secured their College place. Some staff have suggested fortnightly calls for self-motivated students, but following discussion with the DSL Ms Murphy, school is continuing with the weekly calls, as they have been a core part of maintaining regular contact.

TMK joined meeting at 17.40.

DY informed the Governors that Ms Baines is in charge of home learning, and has put together a one page summary report around engagement. From the latest figures he believes that 21% of students are not engaging. The figure for PP is 29% and SEN 23%.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Send out summary report on engagement / DY / asap.

Q. TMK – We must never assume children are logging on, therefore how are we going to demonstrate their level of engagement? Are we doing doorstep visits? I know you have given many devices out.

A. DY - At the start of next week I am also going to do doorstep visits for hard to reach students. To support the engagement question, we are taking uploaded work and completed returned work to school and classing that as engagement.

Q. IM - Is it a lack of internet as One Vision have said that they will support?

A. DY – No, at the moment we are fine with the laptops we are receiving, and internet access for students.

TMK stated the many aspects that schools will be scrutinised on e.g. remote learning, safety and safeguarding, and she wants to ensure the Governors and the MAT are clear on this, as her role in the LA is always to challenge.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Meeting to advise on scrutiny / DY and TMK / asap.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Meeting to advise on SEN plan / DY and KL / asap.

KL left the meeting at 18.00.

32) Standing item: Safeguarding

The Chair informed Governors that he had planned to conduct another safeguarding walk recently. However due to Covid this had to be called off. The Chair will arrange another date.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Arrange Safeguarding Walk / Chair / as soon as practicable.

DY highlighted key areas of the safeguarding strategy. As part of the strategy, weekly telephone calls are made home to all students and families. Due to the nature of safeguarding, the DSL Ms Murphy has taken the decision to come into school every day, and has not been working from home. She attends to the safeguarding needs of our students through a number of means i.e. additional telephone calls, home visits, LA involvement. school nurse referrals, mash referrals etc. There has been a real concern for some of our vulnerable students, and DY is offering access to on site provision full time or part time, whilst still being mindful of balancing staffing concerns due to increasing student numbers, staffing quotas and the new variant.

TMK informed that there is very positive feedback from Social Care about Litherland High School. However, school need to be assured that if they cannot contact a student or family that they do everything in their power to do so and this must all be documented.

For the minutes the Governors noted the serious challenges around vulnerable students, and Governors support the Principal in the necessary actions to take to ensure our students remain safe.

33) Attendance – Autumn Term 2020

TMK asked if the Attendance addendum is published on the school website. The clerk confirmed it is, and sits within the Covid Addendum document.

Governors received the attendance data in advance, summarising the Autumn Term. DY informed that school is currently performing better than national. Where it says a % attendance figure, it does not include X code, e.g. shielding. DY confirmed that there have been very few cases in school and this is brilliant news, adding that the attendance staff have worked incredibly hard. Normally the Attendance Team do whatever they can

to support a child to stay in school if they start feeling unwell, however in the current circumstances DY has instructed that if students start feeling unwell they must go home immediately.

34) Standing item: SEND

DY informed the Governors that the Department is working well, but there a need, also identified by the MAT, to recruit additional teaching assistants. It is thought that at least two new TAs are required, and the MAT have indicated that they will help support the budget costs.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Meeting to advise on SEN Plan / DY and KL / asap.

35) Vision

DY expressed to the Governors how delighted he is to be appointed as Principal. He shared the power point previously circulated to Governors of his vision for the school. He also shared the Ofsted criteria for good and outstanding schools. DY highlighted the area of Leadership and Management, stating one of the key criteria - **'Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing high quality education to all pupils'. This is realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice.**

DY wants all school stakeholders to have knowledge of this.

36) SEF

DY and SLT have taken the good and outstanding grade descriptors, and with these in mind have re-written the School SEF with their curriculum leaders. This has been quality assured by DY. The document will be hyper-linked throughout with evidence. The updated SEF has also been shared with the MAT CEO.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Send Ofsted grade descriptors to Governors / Clerk / asap.

37) Action Plan

The updated Action Plan was circulated to Governors in advance of the meeting. DY asked Governors for their comments and feedback in due course. He welcomed their views on any aspect of the SEF or Action Plan, both positive or negative, and asked their thoughts on the size of plan and hyperlinking the document with evidence. It is his responsibility to hold senior leaders to account for each of the actions and report to Governors on progress.

He highlighted some of the key areas that school needs to work on. One key priority is launching a new reading strategy.

DY requested a follow up meeting next week to look at the Action Plan in greater detail. This would be a one item agenda.

There was an opportunity to ask questions.

RC stated that it is a lengthy document, goals need to be set and school must ensure it is a regularly used document. He considered that the previous version had items in the document that could not have realistically been achieved.

DY agreed that it cannot live in a folder, and the updated version has major leadership input and ownership.

There was Governor discussion around each section of the SEF and how close we are to good in the areas.

The Chair asked for further comments on SEF within the next two days.

ACTION / WHO/ WHEN: Comments on SEF areas for development / Governors / by Friday 5 February.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Meeting re: Action Plan / Governors / Wednesday 10th February.

38) Governance

The following documents were circulated in advance:

MAT Governance Spring 2021 Newsletter.

MAT Governance Self Evaluation form (completion required by 26/3/21).

MAT Chair of Governors 360° Review form (completion required by 26/3/21).

Trust Committee Report.

With regards to the Chair of Governors 360° Review, the Chair asked the Vice Chair to undertake the review with Governors.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Complete Chair of Governors 360° Review / All Governors / by 26/3/21.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Arrange a meeting to complete Governors' Self-Evaluation / Clerk / asap.

39) Policies – MAT Policies to receive

- i. Governor Allowances & Expenses.
- ii. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- iii. Pay Policy – Teachers.
- iv. Pay Policy – Support Staff.
- v. Finance Policy.
- vi. Gifts and Hospitality Policy.
- vii. Charging & Remissions Policy.
- viii. Whistleblowing Policy.

Governors reviewed and received these MAT Policies.

40) LHS Policies to review

- i. Covid Safeguarding Addendum.

Governors reviewed and agreed to adopt.

41) AOB

- **Parent Governor Election** – Mrs Browne's term of office is ending March 2021. The Clerk will put out the vacancy to all parents.

ACTION / WHO / WHEN: Circulate parent governor vacancy details / Clerk / asap.

- **COVID**

DY informed Governors on the current staffing. Staff are genuinely worried, and school needs to be sympathetic. He has informed staff that if they are concerned, then they must work from home. The Chair confirmed that as a Governing Body we must follow the guidance.

Q. RC – How are you doing?

A. DY – Thank you for asking. I have been reassuring staff and students, making the ratios better, making people work from home where possible, and even fogging rooms. I need to maintain a level of confidence for all. I am looking to close the school at February half term, as the full-time staff have sufficient holiday leave and we all need a break.

The Governors discussed how difficult it has been for students doing remote working for so long, as it is so challenging to maintain that motivation every day in front of a computer screen. JB commented on the benefits of DY communicating the 50 minute lesson to the students, to ensure students moved onto their next lesson, and took breaks the same as a normal school day. Some students had been spending hours on a lesson and not moving on to the next. TMK added that working from home had been incredibly difficult for some, and it is about getting the balance right.

- **Next Full Governors** - Wednesday 28th April 2021.
- **Additional meeting to review SEF/Action Plan** - Wednesday 10th February 2021 @ 5 p.m.

The Chair thanked everyone for their time. The meeting closed at 18.30.