



Minutes of the Local Governing Body meeting of the Wessex MAT held via Google Meet on Thursday 24 February 2021 at 6pm

Present	Elected Parent	Sophie Duke SD CHAIR
	Headteacher	Catherine Smith CS
	Elected Parent	Vicky Needham VN
	Elected Staff	Annie Hardinge AH
	Co-opted	Lesley Goldsack LG
	Co-opted	Ruth Bettenson RB from 7.06pm
	Co-opted	Margaret Moss MM
	Co-opted	Sandra Scott SS
	Co-opted	Joanne Wibley JW

Absent: Co-opted Tom Amery TA

In attendance: Natalie Green NG (Clerk), Moira Bearwish MB (DHT), Jan McKie JMK (Finance Director, Wessex MAT) to 6.34pm, Miles King (MK) Prospective Co-opted Governor.

Q/C - Question/challenge

LDP Link Priority 4, Leadership & Management : *To further develop and strengthen the role of strategic leadership and governance in securing improvements in teaching, learning and outcomes for children with a particular focus on curriculum design and disadvantaged pupils.*

Success Criteria: *Governors and middle leaders make an effective contribution to the overall leadership and management of the school leading to improved quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils, demonstrating a detailed understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement based on a secure evidence base. Governors are further equipped to robustly challenge key leaders in driving improvements and both Governors and middle leaders are uncompromising in their ambition.*

Action - *Ensure that all Governor actions are tightly linked to the evaluation and monitoring of the LDP*

Intended Outcomes - *Governors robustly hold senior leaders to account for all aspects of the school's performance, including the effective use of Pupil Premium and PESS funding through their tracking of 'focus pupils'; Local Governing Body establishes a more rigorous Self-Evaluation Cycle which focuses more closely on the achievement of groups and cohorts across the school.*

1. Welcome

SD welcomed all present, particularly prospective Co-opted Governor MK, who gave a brief introduction of himself to governors. JW had also resigned and was attending her final meeting. Governors recorded their thanks to JW for her hard work and contribution to the school over several years.

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2. Apologies for Absence

None.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 were approved virtually as an accurate record.

4. Declaration of Any Other Urgent Business

None.

5. Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in respect of the Agenda.

6. Trust Board Issues

6.1 Receive Policies - the MAT Complaints Policy was received.

6.2 *Budget Report* - JMK noted the new reporting format and gave a presentation of the overview document which had been included in the meeting pack. She covered the Management Report section and highlighted some figures, linking to the narrative report which was also in the pack. She noted the Covid-19 Catch Up funding and invited consideration from governors about how this should be spent. She noted that the surplus was now C£51k. CS added that staffing costs were a challenge considering the lack of absence insurance in place but that this challenge was not unsurmountable. JMK noted that the PE grant should be spent before the end of the year and MB described some items of planned expenditure. JMK invited questions from governors at any time.

CS thanked JMK who had joined the meeting feeling unwell. She left the meeting at 6.34pm.

7. Matters Arising & Action Plan

1. (4 (4 (4 (7))) CS to provide a report on Guided Reading by February 2021 LGB - this was not achievable due to lockdown and would be delivered in due course. ONGOING
2. (4 (4 (4))) SD to ensure that all governors undertake Safeguarding Training - TA was the only established governor yet to complete the mandatory Safeguarding module which was now in an NGA elearning format. NG confirmed that TA had received information of how to enrol and SD would follow up. **Q/C Governors asked whether staff governors should complete it and NG said that this was recommended as it focussed specifically on the governor's role in relation to Safeguarding.** AH would complete the module asap. ONGOING.
3. (4 (4 (10)) TA to write to Chamber of Commerce ref governor vacancies. - TA not present to report back. CLOSED
4. (8) CS to inform governors of dates of forthcoming virtual Harmony Workshop/s - ON HOLD
5. (9) NG to look at policy work and report to CS - CS had examined this and website updates in liaison with Tammie Barnes and would request NG's help in due course - CLOSED
6. (10) 6. SLT to inform link governors of dates of Curriculum and Inclusion SLGs. - there would be an SLT meeting on w/c 1.3.21 after which MB would share with key link governors -

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ONGOING

7. (10) NG to conduct web audit - see 5 above CLOSED
8. (10) CS to report back on the Performance Management Report. - ON AGENDA

8. Correspondence

None.

9. Headteacher's Report

9.1 Headteacher's Written Report - CS referred to the folder in the pack and noted pressure with numbers in KS2, with some Y3 appeals being heard. She added that the Y3 cohort was full across the town and that the cohort was now above PAN. She noted that the school was built for four form entry and this may be an option going forward. CS would speak to Ed Denham at Dorset Council and would report back to governors at the next LGB.

The numbers attending over lockdown were around 50% and some parents did step back, even though they were entitled to send their children, in order to ease pressure. CS was exceptionally proud of how the school had managed this lockdown. She made particular note of success with vulnerable children and positive management of challenging behaviour, adding that the vast majority of staff were in school daily. Teachers had done an 'amazing job', juggling different teaching commitments, virtually and face to face. SD said that she had seen this first hand as a parent and praised teachers for how they had coped. CS added that huge amounts of positive feedback had been received from parents, particularly during this lockdown. Governors noted how positive the pre recorded lessons were and CS said that they had been really well received by children and this fresh and new approach had taken learning to places it would not have done before. Staff had been much braver in terms of taking different routes and approaches and this had paid off. In effect, parent workshops were taking place three times a day for 6 weeks and parents were really engaging with the learning methodologies around core subjects.

Governors had commented on how special the Christmas period had been. LG had also attended a Harmony workshop and noted how useful it had been in explaining the Harmony principles and that she very much looked forward to being able to attend further workshops.

Further questions raised by governors on the report followed:

Q/C Will it be possible to link skills developed in response to demands of remote learning to performance management retrospectively? CS replied: "The rapid learning that has happened over these last few months will certainly add to what we do next and individual lines of enquiry. We are currently making sure that all LoEs are still relevant and manageable within the current context and I will share a few examples at the LGB of how current learning has enhanced targeted areas of enquiry."

Q/C Can we please know :

- **how many of our children are hard to reach and causing concern?**
- **how these figures compare to pre-pandemic**
- **are there many that can be grouped into common themes?**
- **and if we could/should allocate more resources to issues raised?**

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CS replied that “MB will talk this through at the LGB but there are very few children that we would consider to be out of reach at this point.”

Q/C With regard to the numbers of vulnerable children who had attended school during lockdown, governors asked “Are these numbers higher than pre COVID?” CS replied that numbers were higher for children with social workers but the demand for key worker places had reduced the school’s ability to provide for the children that would fall under the school’s definition of vulnerable (those without a social worker but significant vulnerabilities)

Q/C Governors also asked “How many children/families account for the 5% that haven't been in?” CS replied that this was 1.

Q/C With regard to the families collecting vouchers for free school meals, a governor asked “Do we draw down funding for holiday vouchers? I see an underspend on catering supplies, will that be left in our budget?” CS replied: “Yes holiday vouchers are funded by the LA's Winter Grant fund and other vouchers during term time are funded centrally by the government. We pay a retainer to Local Food Links to ensure that their business remains viable (this is a general recommendation to all schools). JMK will be clearer on where this money is coming from and when” It was noted that with the support of Thomas Hardye School, around 30 vulnerable families had received a hamper each week.

Q/C With regard to additional costs incurred from Covid-19, governors commented “It is tricky to monitor the budget with significant unallocated funds and virements - a problem for leaders and governors alike.” CS replied “We are operating at a clear 'needs must' level at the moment and our main outgoings relate to the impact of C19 on staffing which won't be covered by central funding. Many of these expenses are beyond our control until we are working within a more manageable context again.”

Governors commented on how the postcards sent to each child were very thoughtful and well received, particularly with the teacher’s current workload. CS said that the teachers had led this and it had been a very valuable addition.

Q/C With regard to assessment and target setting, a governor commented “I think the children's wellbeing should be a priority and that as governors we shouldn't worry about pupil outcomes at the moment. I think the term catch-up is unhelpful because it implies that pupils must get to where they would have been without covid which is both unrealistic and stressful for children, staff and parents. I think we can trust the school to ensure all pupils make good progress when they return to school and to plan appropriate support where needed.” CS thanked governors and replied “An accurate summary of the situation we are in and what we need to focus on will emerge over the next few weeks. We feel confident that we are in a different place this time though and are eager to hit the ground running as soon as we can in terms of assessments. Teachers have had a close eye on progress for all children throughout this lockdown and on their wellbeing and it feels as though nothing is unknown this time around. We need to know what children's independent writing looks like as we have had a few parents submitting work.”

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Q/C Governors also asked if there was anything further they could do to help? CS thanked SD for her support, noting that she had been a very good listening ear for CS over a challenging period. She added that the situation was better that week and that she had optimism for the future.

(At 7.06pm RB joined the meeting).

It was noted that reading in AH's class had been really pleasing with expectations set high but in a supportive way.

Governors noted the update to the Risk Assessment which had been included in the pack.

9.2 Safeguarding - Q/C MB referred to an earlier question raised on Early Help and explained that the Early Help team was the first stage of intervention and formed a link between the school and Children's Services. MB reiterated how extraordinary teachers had been in managing remote learning and remarked that she felt that it had held everyone together from the point of view of Safeguarding. She noted recent guidance and policy changes in terms of Brexit and updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education, details of which had been included in the pack. The Child Protection Policy had been updated to reflect remote learning, including how to instil a school approach at home. There had been contact with hard to reach families. MB referred to training updates and noted that she and RB had completed the Annual Safeguarding Audit with the self assessment audit completed alongside. Numbers being monitored changed daily, with a lot of movement at present. My Concern figures appeared high but MB noted that these had not been reported on to governors since September 2020. MB said that there would be a need to monitor children as they returned to school and that some things took some time to filter through, adding that mental health and emotional development would be at the core of the full re-opening process. Governors noted that My Concern was equally spread over year groups and boys and girls which showed that everyone is using it across the school.

9.3 Remote Learning Arrangements - CS referred to the folder included in the pack which contained the Remote Learning Policy.

9.4 Performance Management Report - CS tabled this report as it contained sensitive information and was therefore not shareable. She explained the MAT requirements around reporting on this and why the report was late. She noted the priorities for the period in terms of the LDP and what the school had achieved, noting that some work had been halted due to lockdown. She added that governance would need to re-establish on a firmer footing following full re-opening. Staffing was significantly weighted towards the upper payscale and there was a need for more budgetary flexibility with mainscale and NQTs although the school has still maintained a healthy position of 80% of the budget accounted for by staffing costs, in spite of the imbalance. She highlighted pay progression and explained how this worked, noting that some teachers opt to stay in the mainscale. Teacher performance was harder to assess at present as normal assessment approaches had been more challenging to monitor in lockdown. She noted teacher led performance management with teachers establishing their own Lines of Enquiry and the process was now less top down but rooted in genuine professional development. The next stage was postponed into March due to lockdown but each teacher will now meet with CS individually prior to the full reopening of schools to ascertain the relevance and manageability of current Lines of Enquiry. CS covered the details of pay progression recommendations, and showed governors anonymised Lines of Enquiry around key headings.

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Q/C Governors asked about Lines of Enquiry and how the work was shared with the rest of the staff. CS said that Teacher Learning Groups covered different areas of the LDP, within these groups teachers agreed their own individual Lines of Enquiry and the outcomes of their research then fed back into the learning group and the school as a whole. MB supported this and said the plan to formalise this would be re-visited following the full reopening.

9.5 *MAT / DASP Update* - CS noted the discussion paper in the pack and explained that the future of DASP was being reviewed by a small group, which CS was leading. This would be focussed on things that made a significant difference to teaching and learning within DASP, a longer term plan for cohorts going through the partnership and possibly with initiatives following a similar format to DASP Music. DASP may convert to a charity from a limited company but this was still under discussion. The group were currently working on the rationale behind any changes and future structure and CS would report to governors further following a meeting in the following week.

10. Governance Issues

10.1 Link Governor Reports - MM had met with AHT Ellie Goodridge on outcomes and SD had provided a report on Remote Learning. These had been included in the pack and there were no further questions.

10.2 Governor Training Feedback - governors were reminded to inform the Clerk when training had been completed.

10.3 Adopt Admissions Policy - a copy of the policy had been included in the pack and adoption was agreed.

10.4 Approve Performance Management - CS gave an overview of the report in item 9 above. This was agreed.

10.5 Agree Governor Visits Schedule - CS would inform the GB when the time was right to resume.

10.6 Succession Planning/Governor Induction - NG noted there were now 4 Co-opted Governor vacancies and NG would send the application form to MK. SD reported that she had been working with the MAT team on a Governor Induction Plan and subject to appointment, would pilot this with MK.

11. Any other Urgent Business as declared at start of meeting

None.

12. Date and time of next meeting: Thursday 29 April 2021 6pm

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8pm.

Action Plan following the Local Governing Body meeting held on 25 February 2021

Action to be Taken	Minute No.	Governor/Staff Member	Suggested Completion
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		Involved	Date
1. Provide report on Guided Reading.	7 4 (4 (4 (7)))	CS	By next LGB
2. Ensure that all governors undertake Safeguarding Training.	7 4 (4 (4))	SD	ASAP
3. CS to inform governors of dates of forthcoming virtual Harmony Workshop/s	7 (8)	CS	ASAP
6. SLT to inform link governors of dates of Curriculum and Inclusion SLGs	7 (10)	MB	ASAP
7. CS to inform GB when governor monitoring can re-commence	10	CS	ASAP
8. Include LAC Report on next LGB Agenda	9.2	NG	Next LGB

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Date