

Vale of York Academy
Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Governing Committee held on
held via Zoom on Monday 21st September 2020 at 5:00pm

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| Present: | Patrick Looker (Chair) Toby Eastaugh (Principal) Jenny Smailes Miriam Zulkarnain | Matt Halifax (Vice Principal) Andy Thirlwell Helen Todd Paul Clayton |
| In Attendance: | Helen Groot (Governance Support Officer and Clerk) | |

| | | Action | | | | | | |
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| 1. | <p><u>Election of Chair and Vice-Chair</u> Patrick Looker was unanimously elected as Chair of the Local Governing Committee for a term of one year. (Proposed: Toby Eastaugh; Seconded: Matt Halifax)</p> <p>Andrew Thirlwell was unanimously elected as Vice-Chair of the Local Governing Committee for a term of one year (Proposed: Patrick Looker; Seconded: Toby Eastaugh)</p> | | | | | | | |
| 2. | <p><u>Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</u> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received, with consent, from David Seddon. There were no declarations of interest.</p> <p>Business interest forms for 2020-21 had been distributed by email and Governors were asked to complete these.</p> | | | | | | | |
| 3. | <p><u>Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd June 2020</u> The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record.</p> | | | | | | | |
| 4. | <p><u>Action Plan and Matters Arising</u></p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 5%;"></th> <th style="width: 55%;">Action Point</th> <th style="width: 40%;">Update</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td>Distribute document on calculated GCSE grades to governors.</td> <td>Completed</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><u>Matters arising</u> The Chair explained that the core of the current meeting was for the Principal to update Governors on what had been done over the summer, how they had got to the current position of reopening, what the current challenges were and how the school was dealing with those challenges.</p> | | Action Point | Update | 1 | Distribute document on calculated GCSE grades to governors. | Completed | |
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| 5. | <p><u>Principal's Report</u> Previously distributed. The Principal explained that they had worked over the summer to get prepared for opening for all pupils in September. The curriculum and timetable remained essentially the same, the main difference was the rooms in which the children were taught.</p> | | | | | | | |

The Principal continued, explained that the school had been divided into three bubbles: Year 7, Years 8-9 and Years 10-11. Each bubble had their own areas and the timetable was structured so that there was no contact between these throughout the day.

To reduce risk of contact and transmission between bubbles, toilets had been recommissioned so each cohort had access to separate facilities and hand sanitisers were in place outside every class room.

The Principal reported that the school was following the current guidance on face coverings, strongly recommending their use in communal areas. He highlighted that there was a low proportion of student wearing the masks, as currently it was not mandatory and compliance was not being enforced.

A Governor commented that another local school was enforcing mask wearing and issuing detentions if they were not being worn. This was a stricter approach and as a school governors asked whether they wanted to begin to enforce masks in order to protect staff and students.

Despite different entrances, many corridors were narrow and areas could get crowded with year groups. The Principal responded that every school approach was slightly different, even locally.

A Governor asked if there was a reason that such a low number were choosing to wear masks. The Principal responded that it was not an act of defiance, it was because the school were not enforcing it. This had been discussed among the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and at the moment it was about picking the right battles. A working group meeting was scheduled for later in the week to revisit the decision, but it was not non-compliance, and should they push the message harder, compliance would certainly go up.

A Governor asked whether staff felt comfortable with students not wearing masks in communal spaces. The Principal responded that all staff had been wearing masks in communal areas from return to school. No member of staff had approached him to say that they were feeling uncomfortable.

In response to a further question the Principal said that they would continue to monitor the situation, but enforcing mask wearing would be easier if it became mandatory. The phrase “strongly recommended” gave leeway and as a school they needed to consider if they wanted to take on the battle of enforcing under the current guidelines.

There was a brief discussion about the distance that children travelled in communal areas, and it was highlighted that many only had to walk short distances. There were other issues raised then based on the number of time students then touched their face placing their mask on and taking it off in such a short time, plus the potential for timewasting.

Governors expressed that the concern was primarily for the welfare of the staff and children. If staff were currently comfortable it was sensible to continue to monitor the situation for now. The Principal explained that it was the first item for discussion during the working group that week. He would take feedback on whether they felt comfortable and safe, and assured Governors that staff wellbeing was a priority.

The Principal reported that initially, attendance had been very good, higher than same time last year for the first three days. However it had then reduced every day since, down to attendance of 90% that day (compared to 94% on the same day last year). There were groups of children self-isolating due to family members exhibiting symptoms. They also had a higher than normal percentage of colds and stomach upsets. The Principal reported anecdotally, that other schools locally had seen a similar pattern in attendance. He advised that attendance was lower in the older year groups and among the missing groups of children, not all were absent due to having to self-isolate.

A Governor asked whether the children with high absence were from a similar demographic. The

Principal explained that he did not have any data to provide that level of detail, however they were seeing a general pattern of absence from children whose attendance had not been strong in the past.

A Governor asked what actions SLT were taking to improve attendance. The Principal responded that they had an Attendance Officer, so there was now a piece of work around looking forensically where these absences were. Then they would need to decide on an approach with those families, and make a decision on how quickly pressure was then put on them and issue fines if necessary.

In response to a further question, the Principal explained that there were a small handful of parents that were anxious about safety and regular phone-calls were being made to them by school. One family had chosen to remove children for home-schooling for several days. The large majority of the parent body were supportive, or at least passive, towards the measures in place.

A Governor noted that if 10% of children were absent, which equated to around 60 children, it would not be long until those absences caused a drain on the Attendance Officer.

A Governor asked what the council stance was if the picture of attendance was similar across schools in York. While the school should provide challenge that children should only stay off for legitimate reasons, surely they would expect the LA to step in and offer extra guidance if it was happening across city. The Principal responded that it was very early in the term, but the LA were looking closely at attendance and the DfE were calling daily for attendance registers.

A Governor asked if there was a steer from the Trust. The Principal explained that he had reported that their attendance had dipped but it was likely that all schools were seeing a similar pattern.

Resolved : Governors agreed that school should continue to monitor the situation and issue further communications to parents about their obligations to get children into school.

In terms of staff absence, the Principal reported that one member of staff had had to self-isolate due to close contact with a positive case, but had now returned to school.

The Principal reported that the curriculum was being delivered, teaching and learning was taking place and behaviour around school was good. The Principal explained that he was mostly conscious of the pressure on staff who now no longer had their own allocated teaching space and were moving around school. He advised that SLT were looking at what could be done to further support teachers. For the moment they wanted teachers to teach their best lessons and re-establish systems and routines in school.

In response to a question about what additional support was being given to teachers, the Principal advised that the school was looking to reduce directed time after school. For the autumn term he would remove the pressure of formal lesson observations, offering instead a lighter touch which was supportive for teaching and learning.

A Governor asked whether the increasing amount of pupils not attending school would be adding pressure to staff if they were also teaching online. The Principal responded that he hoped not. He added that online teaching had not yet been launched, however subject leaders had learned a great deal over the summer term about uploading resources and if teachers were provided with the time there should be no additional pressure.

A Governor asked about getting feedback from staff, and whether there were enough channels for them to express where their mental wellbeing was at risk. The Principal explained that all staff were aware of the channels, with the first port of contact being their line manager, then SLT, then himself. In addition to this a working group had been set up, which was a further platform for staff to feedback concerns. It was noted that the Union representative was a member of the working group.

The staff Governor was invited at this point to provide some feedback to Governors. The staff Governor explained that they were only seeing other staff in passing. Step counts were high and many staff were getting tired. They needed to be organised and prepared in advance in order to move from one room to another and not drop time. There was the added pressure of understanding the three different timings when teaching across all three bubbles. The Deputy Principal explained that staff needed some time to recondition to the 'new normal' which went against the practice they had for a long time.

A Governor asked whether teachers were getting enough time between lessons as rushing would be contributing to fatigue. The Deputy Principal responded that they used the training day to discuss with teachers planning their lesson to ensure the last task was discussion based so books, resources were packed away and they were able to leave the room at the end of the period. He continued that they had invested time over the summer to make sure IT provision was simplified, which appeared to be working well.

A Governor highlighted that there was the added mental challenge of preparing for the next lesson whilst moving around school. The Principal again highlighted that he was concerned for the staff. Potentially the current arrangements would be in place for most of the school year and they were very conscious of looking at ways of supporting staff wherever possible.

A Governor asked about offering twilight training in order to give the training days off. The Deputy Principal explained that this was already in place.

4.1 Risk Assessment for Wider Opening

Previously distributed Governors noted the detail in the risk assessment, and no further questions were raised.

4.2 Recovery Plan

Previously distributed. The Principal explained that the recovery plan that all schools required to use, would prove to be a useful document, and briefly detailed how they were adjusting the curriculum, work for children at home, attendance, wellbeing, staff training and staff wellbeing.

A Governor commented that children had received no formal teaching since March 2020 and students would be in different places in terms of their learning. They had to presume that exams would be going ahead in 2021, however there was over a term of teaching missing. **The Governor asked how the school would deal with the strategies for preparing them, alongside assessing where they were in relation to where they should be.** The Principal explained that now the practical issues of re-opening were out of the way, they were able to look strategically at adjusting the assessment schedule to monitor those students.

The Principal explained that throughout lockdown teachers had been RAG rating individuals' work. They had base line assessments coming up and would be looking particularly at those children that did not engage with learning over the summer term. There was a clear expectation now that children currently isolating at home would complete the work set for them unless they were unwell. It was a difficult time which was being approached with sensitivity as they were conscious of the wellbeing of families. The Principal advised, however, that moving forward where children were self-isolating they would be expected to complete the work.

4.3 GCSE Outcomes

Previously distributed. The Principal advised that they had received the grades submitted, with the exception of nine out of 1000 grades which were marked up.

The Progress 8 score compared the school's Centre Assessed Grades with 2000 other secondary schools that use SISRA. This resulted in a positive 0.04 Progress 8 score, which was in line with expectations. The previous year had been -0.25, which demonstrated a continued trajectory of improvement.

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| | <p>The Principal highlighted that they could have been celebrating greater success if children had the opportunity to sit the exams, but the outcomes were largely uncontroversial.</p> <p>A Governor asked if the Principal could briefly describe results day. The Principal reported that children had been provided time slots and asked to attend in tutor groups. They received their grades and were able to have conversations with staff. The careers service was on site to provide advice, and the large majority were happy with their outcomes.</p> <p>A Governor commented that the ambition would be to build on those results. A large part of that success could be down to the work completed over the lockdown period. The Governor asked if they knew the percentage of students that had accessed online learning. The Principal explained that he could provide an estimate, but a numerical breakdown had not yet been done. He advised that he had asked teachers to provide RAG rated feedback (red, amber or green) on engagement. At the start lockdown approximately 40% were accessing work regularly, 20-30% sometimes and 25% no evidence. During the course of lockdown, the percentage accessing regularly reduced to 25%.</p> <p>A Governor asked whether the school was significantly pushing work at the time. The Principal replied that they were not.</p> <p>The Principal highlighted that there was no question that the gap would widen in terms of disadvantaged and advantaged students, and this was a challenge nationally. It was noted that the school had made online access available via loaning equipment so this had not been a barrier.</p> | |
| 5. | <p><u>Resources (Overseeing Financial Performance)- verbal update</u></p> <p>The Principal explained that savings had been made during lockdown, predominately through savings on supply costs and holding back on some appointments. The money saved had then been spent constructively;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £7k - set of chrome books • £4.5k replace lighting in sports hall • £2k replace goal posts on astro-turf <p>The Principal explained that the outturn figure for 2019-20 was not yet available, but it was expected that this would be similar to the reports from Periods 9 and 10 which had been previously distributed. He explained that the Finance Manager had been asked to attend the LGC meeting in November to share more detail about the budget.</p> <p>The 2020-21 budget had assumed an intake of 130 into Year 7, though the actual figure was 142 provided additional £60k a year for 5 years. It was noted that there would be additional costs for supply, cover supervision, resources, IT purchasing. In addition the Principal advised that the school should be able to access the government catch up funding, and more detail on this would be available at the next LGC meeting in November.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted that the school had been in financial difficulty for number of years, running deficit budgets. They had moved into a position to show a positive budget which demonstrated a significant turnaround for the school. It was noted that the additional costs of COVID would need to be monitored separately to show they were outside of what would normally be spent.</p> <p>A Governor asked how the catering contract had been managed during lockdown. The Principal responded that they had paid a retainer to the external catering company. Since return they had successfully accommodated the requirement for three sittings and it was working well.</p> | |

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| <p>7.</p> | <p><u>Local Governing Committee Strategic Direction</u></p> <p><u>6.1 Working Group membership and schedule of meetings</u> The Chair highlighted that they had five scheduled LGC meetings in addition to the working group. The suggestion was to scale back the updates at those working group meetings from teaching staff to reduce pressure and cover off day to day issues with the Principal. The Principal suggested that the working group meetings monitored work of day to day and the recovery plan, and continued to monitor the work of school through this period.</p> <p>It was agreed that the working group would meet every fortnight on Tuesdays at 5.00pm.</p> <p><u>6.2 Link Governor Roles</u> The Chair highlighted that the link roles should ideally correspond to key priorities of school. The following were agreed;</p> <p>Curriculum – Andrew Thirlwell and Matt Halifax Standards - Andrew Thirlwell and Matt Halifax Behaviour and attendance – Paul Clayton Workforce development– Patrick Looker Finance – Patrick Looker Safeguarding – Jenny Smailes SEN disadvantaged– Helen Todd and Liz Hardy Health and Safety would collectively feed into the working group.</p> <p>The Chair asked that as a minimum link Governors pick up with the area lead on a termly basis, and feedback to Governor meetings as appropriate. Contact details should be shared with relevant Governors to arrange introductory meetings.</p> <p>The Principal advised that the risk assessment included the provision for Governors to come in for pre-arranged visits or meetings.</p> <p><u>6.3 Governor Training – skills audit summary and identification of training needs for the coming year</u> The timetable for virtual autumn training had be previously distributed.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted that the courses were good quality and recommended Governors to attend.</p> | |
| <p>8.</p> | <p><u>Admissions – draft policy for 2022/23 and proposal for PAN</u></p> <p>The Principal explained that historically the PAN had been set at 180, but this had been reduced to 150 last academic year.</p> <p>The proposal was that the PAN remained at 150, noting that they had 142 new pupils in Year 7 and would likely get a similar number the following year.</p> <p><i>Resolved: Governors agreed that the PAN for 2021/22 remain at 150.</i></p> | |
| <p>9.</p> | <p><u>Safeguarding (standing item)</u></p> <p>The link to Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated September 2020) had been previously distributed.</p> <p>The Principal advised that he would be inviting Assistant Vice Principal, Gavin Kumar to the November LGC meeting to provide an update on disadvantaged and Pupil Premium in greater detail. He reported that the school had adjusted the Behaviour Policy with greater focus on safeguarding and vulnerable children.</p> <p>The welfare team in school had been in touch with the most vulnerable families over lockdown but there was an awareness that there may be increased vulnerability due to lockdown. The Principal</p> | |

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| | advised that the school was they were ready and prepared to support this. | |
| 10. | <u>Ethos & Wellbeing Update</u> It was noted that wellbeing had been discussed as part of the Principal's update and there were no further details to add at this point. | |
| 13. | <u>Any Other Business</u> Governors extended huge thanks to the Principal and all staff for all the hard work and dedication through summer term. A lot of work had gone into supporting the community and getting the school back up and running. The Principal reported that the open evening would be run virtually. There would also be short Zoom meetings with the five main feeder primary schools. Two short films had been made with the children and Principal which would also be on the website. The Principal provided a short staffing update. An advert was currently out for the Head of Science position. | |
| 14. | <u>Dates of future meetings</u> Monday 16 th November at 5pm | |

The meeting closed at 6.26pm

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| <u>Patrick Looker</u> Patrick Looker, LGC Chair | <u>16/11/2020</u> Date |
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Items for the Next Agenda:

- Finance Manager (S Simpson) to provide budget update
- Assistant Vice Principle (G Kumar) to provide PP and disadvantaged update