

Vale of York Academy
Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Governing Committee held on
held via Zoom on Monday 16th November 2020 at 5:00pm

Present:	Patrick Looker (Chair) Toby Eastaugh (Principal) Jenny Smailes Miriam Zulkarnain [from 5.17pm] David Seddon	Matt Halifax (Vice Principal) Andy Thirlwell Paul Clayton [from 5.25pm]
In Attendance:	Sara Simpson (Finance Manager, HLTY) [to 5.20pm] Gavin Kumar (Assistant Vice Principal, Student Welfare, Vale of York Academy) [to 5.45pm] Jess Swarbrick (Governance Advisor and Clerk)	

		<u>Action</u>
1.	<p><u>Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received, with consent, from Helen Todd. Late apologies were also received from Miriam Zulkarnain.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2.	<p><u>Minutes of the meeting held on 21st September 2020, Action Plan & Matters Arising</u></p> <p>The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p>There were no actions or matters arising to report.</p>	
4.	<p><u>Resources – Finance Update</u></p> <p>The Finance Manager provided a verbal update on the school's budget, noting that Period 2 reports had been processed but were awaiting verification from the Trust. She advised that these would be circulated to governors as soon as this had been done.</p> <p>The Finance Manager reported that there had been a significant contrast in the budget from Periods 1 to 2, with the in-year surplus position reducing from around £42,000 in Period 1 to £1,847 at the end of Period 2. She advised that there were a number of key factors which had led to this reduction as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Reduction in Income: due to restrictions around COVID-19, the school had originally been advised not to budget for one month of lettings income from the start of the autumn term, but this had now been extended to an assumption that lettings would not resume for the whole of the autumn term. The Finance Manager advised that this equated to a drop in income for the school of around £38,000. * Year 7 Catch-Up Funding: the Finance Manager advised that the funding which had been expected for Year 7 catch-up had been included within the COVID-19 catch up grant of around £49,000 from the DfE. The fact that this funding would not be additional as usual had not been clear at the time the budget was set, and therefore £12,000 had been deducted from expected grant income in the budget. * Catering charges under the new contract had increased to £21,000 for this year, and supply costs were also higher than usual, with an additional £10,000 being put into the budget to cover this. 	

	<p>The Finance Manager advised that these factors had contributed to the reduction in surplus, which resulted in a significantly different position to Period 1.</p> <p>Governors noted that it was difficult to review the budget without the monitoring report, and requested that this be forwarded as soon as possible. Governors also asked whether a final outturn position was available for the previous financial year.</p> <p>The Finance Manager advised that external audit had been completed at the end of the previous year, and once this was processed the final report for Period 12 would be available. She noted that governors had reviewed a draft version earlier in the term, which had shown a small in year deficit in revenue due to increase in Capital overspend. The Finance Manager noted that adjustments and additional funding which the school had applied for had led to the Period 1 surplus position.</p> <p>Governors noted that the budget had been set with an expected surplus position, though it had been clear that there would be potential additional costs due to COVID-19. Governors asked whether it would be made clear on the budget what expenditure and loss of income was due to COVID specifically.</p> <p>The Finance Manager advised that the additional funding had been allocated and verified by the Trust to be used as identified in the school's Recovery Plan. It was agreed, however, that it was also important to identify where loss of income and expenditure were a direct result of COVID-19, and which could not have been planned for but which could impact the budget in the future.</p> <p>The Finance Manager advised that continued loss of income from lettings was a risk going forward, recognising it may not be possible to resume lettings for some time. In addition, the increased catering charges had been a big hit on the budget. The Finance Manager advised that cleaning costs had also understandably increased, along with supply cover.</p> <p>Governors asked whether there had been any discussion from the Trust about how these additional costs were being managed, and whether schools were expected to find savings from elsewhere in the budget to cover these and the loss of income.</p> <p>The Principal advised that there had not been a direct discussion around this at this point, but the issue had been flagged up with the Trust before the start of the financial year. The Finance Manager advised that there would be a need to be active in making savings wherever possible. She advised that the lettings were a significant risk, noting that last year the school had generated around £78,000 through this.</p> <p>Governors agreed the importance of continuing to closely monitor the budget, whilst also having an understanding of the clear reasons why the surplus had decreased so significantly from Period 1. It was further agreed that if this position was likely to continue longer-term, then discussions and decisions would be needed on how to address this.</p> <p><i>[Miriam Zulkarnain joined the meeting at 5.17pm]</i></p> <p>ACTION: The Finance Manager agreed to circulate the latest monitoring report at the earliest opportunity, so that this issue could be picked up at the next working party meeting if necessary.</p> <p><i>[Sara Simpson left the meeting at 5.20pm]</i></p>	SS
3.	<p><u>Principal's Report</u></p> <p>The Principal's Report and an Updated Recovery Plan had been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><u>Behaviour & Attendance Update</u></p> <p>Assistant Vice Principal Gavin Kumar shared a presentation with governors, providing an update on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.</p>	

Safeguarding

Mr Kumar reported that Miss Nicki Jephson had been appointed as Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, and had started in the role from September 2020. He advised that this appointment had been incredibly positive, and Miss Jephson was already having a positive impact in the school.

Whole school safeguarding training had been delivered to staff at the start of the autumn term, and all staff had also completed the City of York Council (CYC) basic e-learning course in safeguarding. It was noted that this training had been updated in-line with the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance, which all staff had also read and understood. Mr Kumar advised that he would continue to deliver safeguarding updates through the CPD programme over the course of the academic year.

Governors asked what the impact of the COVID situation had been on safeguarding practice in school, particularly during the period when the majority of students were not in school during the summer term.

Mr Kumar advised that during the first lockdown period, any student with a designated social worker had been contacted once a week both by himself and by their social worker. He advised that this regular one to one contact with families had been to check in and provide support. In addition to these higher tariff students, all form tutors contacted the families of students in their groups at least three times over the period of school closure. Mr Kumar advised that this process was monitored, with any issues around communication flagged and followed up.

Mr Kumar advised that since the start of the autumn term, a significant rise in anxiety was evident, and he was working with Miss Jephson to support students in this. All students had completed a "PASS" test, which was a self-assessment covering wellbeing and self-esteem amongst other issues. Any student flagged up through this process was also being supported by the Pastoral Team. Mr Kumar advised that capacity had also been added to the Wellbeing Service provided in school on a Friday, to further increase the support available to students.

Governors asked how wellbeing and safeguarding was being monitored in any students who had not returned to school.

Mr Kumar advised that in these cases, there was regular and robust communication between school and home. This included one to one work with students where there were concerns, as well as referral to the Wellbeing Service and also CAMHS where needed.

Behaviour

Mr Kumar shared data on the number of fixed term exclusion incidents since September 2020. He advised that the figure was higher than the same time last year, though the majority of these related to a very small group of high tariff students in Year 11 and Year 7.

He advised that adjustments were being made to modify behaviour and reduce the repetition of exclusion where possible. However, where a referral to Danesgate Community would have been investigated previously, Mr Kumar advised that the number of places available had been significantly reduced this year. In addition the bubble system in school had also reduced capacity in Aspire.

With reference to the small group of students in Year 7, Mr Kumar advised that referrals had been made to Danesgate Outreach, and the Behaviour Manager was also undertaking small group work with these students, which was having some impact on behaviour. Further investigation into individual support for these students was ongoing.

In terms of whole school behaviour, Mr Kumar reported that this was much improved from the previous two years, with incidents of seclusion also lower. Overall, progress in behaviour across school was positive.

Governors asked how seclusion was working with the bubble system.

Mr Kumar reported that capacity had had to be reduced, to enable bubbles to be grouped together

with a two metre distance between each. He advised that the logistics of escorting students to and from their bubbles to seclusion were now working well.

[Paul Clayton joined the meeting at 5.25pm]

Governors asked whether the number of on-calls being recorded was related to lower attendance.

Mr Kumar advised that attendance was not impacting on this, and that whole school behaviour and the climate for learning was overall very positive.

Attendance

Mr Kumar provided a comparison of attendance over the last four years, highlighting the work and focus in 2019-20 which was having a positive impact to the point of lockdown in March 2020. He advised that from the start of the autumn term, attendance had been a concern, though this was not isolated to the school, but rather a consistent picture across the city and nationally.

Mr Kumar shared information on the processes in place to continue to increase attendance in school. He outlined the protocols in terms of how persistent absence was addressed, from first contact with home, through a formal letter and monitoring period. He advised that if attendance was not improved after the completion of a second monitoring period, this would lead to a fine through the LA.

Mr Kumar advised that having spoken to colleagues locally, it was clear that the school was being incredibly proactive in promoting attendance, though this was not yet having an impact on figures. He advised that he had asked tutors to look at trends and attendance data, and was encouraging praise for low attendee students on their return to school. In addition, work was being explored on where reasons for non-attendance were due to barriers to learning, and how these could be removed. Rewards systems were also in place to celebrate all students with over 96% attendance in each half term.

Mr Kumar advised that where students were not in school due to needing to self-isolate, they could access work through Google Classroom and the shadow curriculum. Chromebooks were also in place in seclusion to support access to learning. Laptops and dongles for internet access were also now available for any student who did not have this already in place and who was having to self-isolate at home.

In response to a question from governors about reasons for non-attendance, Mr Kumar advised that this was overwhelmingly due to illness. Having spoken to families and the Attendance Officer, it was clear that concerns about illness which may potentially be COVID-19 had led to students being kept off school. The Principal advised that he had re-enforced the message to families about the specific symptoms of the virus, and when children should be kept off school pending a positive test result.

Governors noted that attendance levels for Year 11 were particularly low, and asked how much of the shadow curriculum work was being accessed from this cohort at home.

Mr Kumar reported that this had been discussed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), and faculty leaders had been asked to complete a questionnaire regarding access and the quality of work being submitted for all students who were self-isolating. Mr Kumar advised that attendance in Year 11 was a concern, but looking at the individual students with persistent absence and the reasons for these, they all related to illness rather than other causes.

Matt Halifax, Vice Principal, reported that there had been no bubble breaches in Year 11, and in theory there should therefore not be a need to access the remote curriculum. He added that overall feedback was that Year 11 students were focused on their learning, and getting back up to speed.

[Gavin Kumar left the meeting at 5.45pm]

Update on Recovery Plan

The Principal reported that over the last two weeks there had been three positive COVID cases in the school community – one member of staff, and two students. As a result, groups of students in Year 8 and Year 7 had had to self-isolate, though all were due to return during the course of the next week. The Principal advised that there was also one clinically extremely vulnerable member of staff who had been instructed to shield during the current lockdown.

As reported through the fortnightly governor working group meetings, the impact of COVID absences in school was being monitored. The Principal advised that the school's allocation of DfE laptops had been released, and delivery was expected soon. As noted above, students were accessing remote learning with take-up and completion rates being monitored.

Remote Learning

Governors asked what feedback was already available on how students who were self-isolating were engaging with the work being set for them.

The Vice Principal reported that an audit had been carried out following the first bubble breach in Year 8, which had shown overall that levels of engagement and completion had been poor. He advised that on further analysis, there were a number of factors to explain this, including the fact that it was a very short isolation period, being only the final three days before half term.

The Vice Principal advised that further analysis would be done on the access and engagement of Year 7 students currently isolating. He noted that the process had also been clarified for staff in terms of contacting students and holding them to account. He also advised that where students did engage, the work was of a good quality.

Following the first audit, the Vice Principal advised that certain systems had been tightened up, including clarifying through simple document titles on the Google Classroom work-stream where uploads related to curriculum resources, homework and work to access in class.

Governors asked how staff were managing the workload of teaching students both in school and managing students' work from home.

The Vice Principal advised that following the Year 7 bubble breach, timetables had been adjusted to allow smaller class sizes where possible. This had generated at least one member of staff for every period available, and had enabled additional capacity for supporting remote learning as well as for the progress and pastoral teams.

Miriam Zulkarnain reported as a member of staff that this response to the situation had been rapid, and had meant that overall workload had not increased during this time. She noted, however, that managing how and when to respond to students submitting work online was still an issue, where this was being done at different times, rather than in-line with the expected timetable. The Vice Principal agreed that it could be beneficial to set expectations that students would complete and submit work at the point of their timetabled lesson, rather than at different points during their period of isolation.

Governors noted that staff had had the opportunity to prepare the shadow curriculum in advance of the start of term. However, a question was raised as to whether this had been reviewed further in light of baseline testing, which identified where the gaps were in students' learning.

The Principal agreed this was a good point, noting that there was a challenge to get engagement with Writing in particular via remote learning. He advised that the baseline data for Year 7 showed that a considerable number of students were significantly below their chronological reading and writing age, and that this was an issue nationally rather than specific to the school. He added that where originally the Year 7 curriculum had been planned for an intake of 130, with four forms plus a smaller nurture group, in reality the actual intake had been 139, with a much higher number of pupils needing intervention through the nurture group.

Governors asked whether there was a consistency across all subjects in terms of engaging students

who were learning remotely.

The Vice Principal advised that in response to lessons learned from the first bubble breach, staff were being encouraged to recognise and reward those students who were engaging in learning from home. Governors recognised the difficulties for teachers in having to deal with new and different ways to deliver the curriculum, and noted their thanks and appreciation to all staff.

The Principal reported that as well as the specific needs coming to light through baseline assessments for Year 7, data collection for Year 10 showed a decline in progress from spring term of Year 9 for the same cohort. He advised that SLT had carried out line management meetings with curriculum leaders to further understand this information. Questions asked included what the data had been based on and the evidence for this, as well as where this had been either optimistic, pessimistic or cautious. The Principal advised that through core subject meetings, it was evident that there was an element of caution in the data. He advised that more formal assessment at the end of term for Year 10 should provide a more accurate picture, though it may still show an overall lower Progress 8 (P8) score for this cohort.

Governors recognised that this decline in progress was in some way to be expected after the length of time which students had been absent from school over the spring and summer terms. In light of this, governors asked how the school would mitigate the issues around lack of progress to support students moving forward.

The Principal advised that formal assessments would be held in the week commencing 7th December, with another data collection from this feeding into the start of the next term. Following this, catch up interventions could be targeted and implemented more effectively for Year 10 students. He noted that attendance for Year 10 was also the lowest in the school, meaning that this cohort was a significant area for concern at present.

The Principal advised that catch up had already started for Year 11 students, with an additional lesson being run at the end of school, as well as intervention groups in English across a number of different year groups. He highlighted to governors that the recent data from Year 10 was part of indications which were coming through on the impact of lockdown earlier in the year on children's learning.

Governors suggested a letter home to parents and carers, highlighting this information around a decline in pupil progress. It was agreed that parental engagement was key to supporting students' learning.

The Principal agreed the importance of parental engagement. He noted that the recent Year 7 form tutor evening had been run remotely and had gone well. Year 11 parents' evening was also coming up soon. The Principal advised that as reports started to be sent home, this would clarify the position in terms of student progress for parents and carers, though it was noted that reports did not currently show past progress and where this had slowed or declined. The Principal advised that parents and carers had been overwhelmingly supportive of school around remote learning, and where bubbles of children had had to self-isolate.

Preparation for Mock Exams

The Principal thanked the Vice Principal for his earlier summary of remote learning provision, and highlighted the details of this which had also been set out in his report. He also highlighted to governors the planning and preparation which was already in place for Year 11 mock exams as well as assessments for other year groups.

The Principal confirmed that mocks in core subjects would take place in January, followed by a full set of exams in March 2021. He advised that at present, the DfE had pushed back the GCSE exams by three weeks to June, though English and Maths would take place in May. In addition to this three week delay, there had been some adjustment to content, and a number of practical subjects had moved to 100% coursework.

The Principal advised that in-class assessment was thorough, standardised and moderated, and the

	<p>mock exams would be conducted in the same way. He advised that this would provide robust data as an evidence base if required later in the year.</p> <p><i>Governors thanked the Principal for his update, and also for circulating the latest version of the Recovery Plan and Risk Register. It was noted that these documents had been and continued to be the focus of the fortnightly working group meetings, where more detailed discussions were ongoing.</i></p>	
5.	<p><u>Governance Update</u></p> <p><u>5.1 Link Governor Reports</u></p> <p>A paper on ways of maintaining governor monitoring remotely during the pandemic had been circulated for information. It was noted that monitoring continued through the fortnightly working group meetings.</p> <p>The Principal noted that Helen Todd had also met with Rob Orr to discuss Pupil Premium.</p>	
	<p><u>5.2 Governor Training / York Education Access</u></p> <p>Jenny Smailes reported that she had been attending a series of training sessions on introduction to governance. She noted that the session on vision and values had been helpful, though more clarity would be useful on how the school's vision and values fed into that of the Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The Chair noted that the school's identity as a small and nurturing environment was a key part of its values, whilst still being supported by the MAT</p> <p>The Governance Advisor asked governors to confirm that they were happy to be added to York Education, which provided a resource of information on governance (through School Bus) as well as services for schools provided by City of York Council.</p> <p><i>AGREED: Governors confirmed they were happy to be added to the site and receive access.</i></p>	
6.	<p><u>Policies to Note / Approve</u></p> <p>The following policies had recently been renewed and approved by the Board of Trustees and were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Health and Safety Policy and Procedure * Assets and Disposals Policy * Data Breach Policy and Procedure * Photography and Videos at Schools Policy * E-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy – Staff and Authorised Users * E-Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Agreement for Students * Risk Management Policy and Strategy * Attendance Management Policy 	
7.	<p><u>Safeguarding (Standing Item)</u></p> <p>It was noted that an update on safeguarding had been provided as part of the Principal's Report.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Ethos / Wellbeing Update</u></p> <p>There were no other updates to report.</p>	
9.	<p><u>Items & Questions to Raise with the Trust Board</u></p> <p>The Chair reported that he had attended a meeting of LGC Chairs the previous week, and had received an update from the CEO on the proposed merger with Sentamu Academy Learning Trust in Hull.</p> <p>There were no other issues to report.</p>	
10.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p><u>10.1</u> The Principal reported that initial indications for student numbers for September 2021 showed</p>	

	<p>149 first choice preferences for Vale of York Academy, an increase from 114 the previous year. Governors congratulated the Principal on this positive news, and agreed it was something to celebrate.</p> <p>In response to a question from governors about the possibility of going over the Published Admissions Number (PAN) of 150, the Principal advised that with 150 he would look at six forms with an additional smaller Nurture group. If numbers increased towards 160 or 170, then further consideration would be needed about the total number of groups within the cohort. The Principal advised that numerically the school was slightly over-staffed at present, though with further growth, the pressure increased on teachers covering second subjects.</p> <p>10.2 It was noted that the next working group meeting would take place on Tuesday 1st December. The Principal agreed to circulate a Zoom link for the meeting.</p>	
11.	<p><u>Dates of future meetings</u></p> <p>Monday 25th January 2021 at 5.00pm</p> <p>Monday 12th April 2021 at 5.00pm</p> <p>Monday 7th June 2021 at 5.00pm</p>	

The meeting closed at 6.35pm

Andrew Thirlwell (Vice-Chair)
Patrick Looker, LGC Chair

25th January 2021
Date

Vale of York Academy LGC – Action Points From the Meeting of the Local Governing Committee held on 16th November 2020

	<u>Action Point</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
1	<i>The Finance Manager agreed to circulate the latest monitoring report at the earliest opportunity, so that this issue could be picked up at the next working party meeting if necessary</i>	4	Sara Simpson	30/11/2020