

Vale of York Academy
Minutes of the Meeting of the Local Governing Committee held on
held via Zoom on Monday 12th April 2021 at 5:00pm

Present:	Toby Eastaugh (Principal) Patrick Looker (Chair) Jenny Smailes Matt Halifax	Andy Thirlwell Helen Todd Jack Martin
In Attendance:	Jess Swarbrick (Governance Advisor and Clerk)	

		Action
1.	<p><u>Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Interest</u> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received, with consent, from Paul Clayton and David Seddon. There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
2.	<p><u>Minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2021, Action Plan & Matters Arising</u> Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p>With reference to the Action Plan:</p> <p>1. <i>The Principal to check whether the school could claim back lettings income losses through its insurance.</i> The Principal advised that following discussion with the Trust, it was unlikely that an insurance claim could be made against losses due to lack of lettings income. He advised that budget reserves would be expected to be used to cover this where possible.</p> <p>With reference to Year 11 Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) it was noted that the Principal had reported in January the potential that external papers would be provided to support schools in making assessments. However, in actual fact what had been published by some exam boards were past papers with topic-type questions, rather than a range of papers as expected. The Principal advised that TAGs would be discussed in more detail as part of the curriculum update later in the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p><u>Principal's Report</u> The Principal's Report had been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p><u>Full Re-Opening of School</u> The Principal reported that in preparation for the full re-opening of school on 8th March, all students had been offered three Lateral Flow Tests, with around 75% take up which was very positive. He advised that all students participating as well as staff members were now being issued with kits to test at home on an ongoing basis. The Principal advised that two members of staff who had been shielding during the lockdown had also now returned to school from 12th April. He noted that separate to this, staff absence had remained low overall.</p> <p>The Principal reported that students were now required to wear facemasks in classrooms as well as in corridors and communal areas. Overall he advised that students had been really good about this, with</p>	

no significant pushback. The Principal advised that the bubbles which had been in place during the autumn term remained, with staff moving between classrooms for lessons and students staying in their designated zones.

With reference to whole school attendance, the Principal advised that it was difficult to draw comparisons with previous years, due to the pandemic. He advised that whole school attendance was currently 92.9% which was lower than the previous year, and the national average pre-Covid. However, the Principal asked governors not to draw conclusions on attendance figures until there was a clearer picture of national attendance figures.

Governors asked whether there were any specific issues relating to attendance which they needed to be aware of. The Principal advised that attendance in Year 10 was lower than all other cohorts, and had been so pre-Covid as well. He advised that there were a high number of persistent absentees within this group, with around a quarter of the year group with less than 90% attendance.

Governors expressed concern that this was a significant issue, particularly as this cohort would be entering their exam year from September. Governors asked what action was being taken to address this. The Principal advised that following the full return of all students to school, persistent absentees were being specifically targeted in this group. He advised that the Attendance Officer was working to increase pressure on parents regarding the expectation and importance of ensuring their children attended school regularly. The Principal noted that this process had only just started following lockdown, but he expected this targeted intervention to have a positive impact on attendance.

ACTION: Governors agreed this would need to continue to be monitored closely, and requested an update at the next meeting on Year 10 attendance.

Staffing Update

As noted in his report, the Principal advised that there had been a number of staff appointments recently, including the new post of Behaviour Intervention Lead. He noted that a further update on the focus of this role would be provided later in the meeting.

The Principal thanked Andy Thirlwell for supporting the recruitment process for Science Curriculum Lead. He advised that there had been a good field of applicants and a strong appointment had been made.

Curriculum

The Principal reported that school place allocations for September indicated that there would be 167 new starters in Year 7, which was 53 more students than the current Year 11 cohort leaving this term. He advised that Matt Halifax, Vice Principal was finalising the curriculum and timetabling of groups in light of these figures.

Governors noted that the increase in numbers year on year was evidence of the improved reputation and standing of the school in the local community. The Principal noted, however, that fewer children in the current Year 5 across feeder primary schools meant that it would be challenging to reach this figure for September 2022.

Mr Halifax provided an update on TAGs for governors. He advised that teachers would submit a grade for their students, which would be verified by their line manager, Liz Hardy (Vice Principal Assessment and Data) before being signed off by the Principal and sent to the exam board. Mr Halifax advised that this year there were clear dates by which set criteria needed to be completed and submitted, but overall the process being followed was similar to that agreed the previous year. He noted that exam boards had released some materials to support assessment, which had not been available last year. Mr Halifax also advised that following initial analysis, schools could be subject to centre scrutiny before the publication of results, if there were discrepancies between historical school performance and this year's TAGs. Overall Mr Halifax advised that the process was robust. The Principal added that

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the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had met to discuss what resources would be used for assessments in all curriculum areas, and what would be used to follow up on these where necessary. He advised that he was confident that all TAGs would be clearly backed up with the necessary evidence should anyone request to see this.

Key Stage 4 Options

Mr Halifax reported that the shared provision with Manor CE Academy for certain subjects would not be continuing from September. This was due to the fact that Manor were changing to a two year Key Stage 4, which would mean that the two schools no longer aligned. The Principal added that there were no plans for Vale of York to follow suit. He noted that the current courses being shared for Years 10 and 11 would continue.

Mr Halifax advised that in terms of option choices, there had been a much lower take up for more practical subjects including Design Technology, Food Technology and Drama. He noted that the Covid and bubble restrictions had meant that there had been a lack of opportunity to experience these subjects fully this year, which was likely to have affected this.

Governors asked whether any subjects were now no longer being offered because of the end of shared provision with Manor. Mr Halifax that Dance was no longer offered, but other subjects which had previously been shared were still being run in school, including Music, German, Design Technology and Textiles.

Governors asked for more detail about numbers in each group, particularly referring to the take-up for Computer Science. Mr Halifax advised that most groups were in the mid-20s, with two groups over 30 and a small number in the high teens. He noted that Computer Science had around 26 students.

Mr Halifax advised that working through the option choices, he was now focusing on ensuring that staffing matched the curriculum.

Governors asked whether more practical work was now possible with the easing of restrictions. Mr Halifax advised that there had been no official guidance on this, particularly in terms of science.

Safeguarding, Behaviour and Attendance

A report on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance had been circulated with the agenda. The Principal advised that discounting the period of lockdown at the start of the spring term, the number of on-call incidents and seclusions was lower than the previous two years. However, the number of fixed term exclusions increased notably in the autumn term and was in-line with figures for 2018-19. The Principal advised that he believed this was due to a number of factors. He explained that in “normal” circumstances, students at risk of exclusion would receive more one to one intervention from progress leaders and pastoral support to keep them in school. This had not been possible during the autumn term, due to the measures which had been put in place due to Covid and the restriction of movement across bubbles. The Principal also advised that there had been a capacity issue due to long term staff absence within the Pastoral Support Team. This had meant that this team had not been able to be as proactive in classrooms as they would have liked.

Governors asked what action was being taken to address these issues. The Principal advised that there was now increased staff capacity within Aspire, with the appointment of the new Behaviour Intervention Lead and also a newly appointed Student Welfare Manager. He advised that the Behaviour Intervention Lead would work specifically with Year 7 students, providing proactive support and interventions for these students who had had a disrupted Year 6 and had struggled with the secondary school setting.

Governors agreed the importance of proactive intervention. It was noted that social distancing meant that it was not possible to carry out some activities, but governors asked what alternatives could be progressed now that there was additional capacity and resources within the team. The

Principal advised that risk assessments had been adapted to enable students to access additional support through Aspire where appropriate. He advised that with the increased capacity and additional appointments, it would be important to monitor the impact of this work over this term, with the expectation that it would lead to a further reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions.

Governors asked what contact the school had with students and families during an exclusions, and how they were reminded of expectations around behaviour before returning to school. The Principal advised that students following each exclusion, students and parents were required to attend a re-admission meeting, and students then spent the first day back in seclusion, rather than going directly back into their classes. The Principal advised that in the event of most exclusions for a half or a full day, students would be given every opportunity to avoid exclusion and would be reminded of the expectations in-line with the behaviour policy.

It was noted that there had been two permanent exclusions at the end of the spring term, which were due to be reviewed by a governors' panel on 20th April.

With reference to attendance and engagement during the period of remote learning, governors noted that a question had been raised at the last meeting about how the school was working to address students not accessing online resources, and requested an update on this. Mr Halifax advised that from January, there had been a move to live teaching, which had enabled immediate feedback to teachers on interaction, and also tracking of levels of engagement and completion of work. He advised that in the three weeks from 8th March to the end of term, no additional homework had been set to allow students who had not completed their lockdown learning to do so. This had also been a reward for those who had already done so. Mr Halifax advised that staff would be checking that all work had been completed this week, in order to assess where there were any gaps. He noted that Year 9 and Year 10 exams in the next fortnight would also provide formal assessment of students' learning, the impact of remote provision and where there were gaps which needed to be addressed. Action plans would then be produced to inform targeted intervention where needed.

The Principal advised that remote learning provision had been much better in the spring term than during the first lockdown last year. He advised that over 140 Chromebooks had been issued to students, ensuring that every child in school had access to a device for online learning. The introduction of registration for all lessons had also supported monitoring of engagement and attendance.

4. Academy Development Plan / Self-Evaluation Framework

Circulated with the agenda. The Principal advised that all schools in the Trust were now using this format, which dovetailed the self-evaluation framework (SEF) with the academy development plan. He advised that the plan included a four year overview of the journey towards Outstanding, with a breakdown of priorities and success criteria for each stage. The Principal advised that the plan included aspects connecting to the Recovery Plan which had been introduced in September 2020, with any longer term developments and priorities fitting into the new plan.

The Principal advised that whilst the summary of priorities was extensive, they were all achievable. He noted that a number of the priorities linked back to areas for improvement as set out in the Ofsted report from November 2019. These included improving quality of teaching, improving attendance, reducing the number of fixed term exclusions, personal development and cultural capital. The Principal advised that staff and student wellbeing was also a key priority as a direct result of the pandemic. In terms of leadership and management, the Principal advised that more still needed to be done to address workload and workforce development.

With reference to the success criteria for quality of education, to achieve a Progress 8 (P8) score of between 0.0 and 0.2, governors asked how this would be judged in the absence of exams this year. The Principal advised that quality assurance was a key element in judging quality of education, though the approach to this had also had to be changed due to Covid restrictions and pressures this term. He

	<p>advised that a clearer picture on quality assurance and judgement of the quality of education would be possible in the autumn term.</p> <p>With reference to the plan, the Principal explained the term “Walkthrus”. He advised that this referred to a book which provided a comprehensive guide on good teaching, looking at questioning, modelling, explanation and curriculum. He advised that the CEO had advocated the use of Walkthrus across all secondary schools in the Trust, as a handbook to support development of best practice.</p> <p>The Principal advised that he would be looking to introduce one or more temporary TLR posts from September to work under the guidance of the Vice-Principal and to take the lead on Walkthrus, to promote and advocate this practice.</p> <p>The Principal advised that the plan had been reviewed by the CEO and Central Team, and feedback had confirmed that the Trust was happy with the document. Governors recognised that the November 2019 Ofsted report had provided a good starting point for the key priorities to be included to support school development. It was agreed that there was some frustration that progress against a number of actions had been delayed due to the pandemic.</p> <p>It was noted that the Academy Development Plan / SEF would remain a standing item for review at future meetings.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Resources – Finance Update</u></p> <p>A summary report for Period 6 and notes on key variances had been circulated with the agenda.</p> <p>The Principal advised that there was a continued loss of lettings income, as discussed at previous meetings. By April, he advised that this amounted to an income loss of almost £45,000. Grant funding had also been less than expected, due to the removal of the Year 7 Catch-Up Grant.</p> <p>The Principal highlighted a number of additional costs which had not been initially budgeted for. This included cover of £10,000 for a long-term staff absence in IT. He noted that this cost covered support from Vital over this period, which had been excellent. £3,000 had been originally budgeted for electrical testing, but the total cost had come in at £11,000.</p> <p>The Principal advised that approximately £20,000 in additional catering charges had also been incurred, essentially to backfill furlough.</p> <p>AGREED: The Chair noted that this should be included on the list of Covid costs, and raised with the Trust about how it would be dealt with. Governors raised concerns about having to make efficiency savings to offset this significant cost, which had been incurred through no choice of the school.</p> <p>With reference to staffing costs, the Principal advised that the supply budget had increased as a direct result of Covid, to cover staff having to self-isolate and also those who were shielding. It was noted, however, that some savings had been made in this area whilst the school was not fully open to all students. The Principal advised that other additional costs included the appointment of the Behaviour Intervention Lead earlier than planned to increase capacity and support for the Pastoral Team. Additional cleaning and supervision costs had also been incurred as a direct result of Covid.</p> <p>The Principal advised that the bottom line showed a projected deficit of £3625, which was a slight reduction from the last period. He noted that some savings had been possible as lockdown had meant that roles such as the librarian and science technician, who had both resigned, had not needed to be immediately replaced.</p> <p>Governors asked about the Covid Catch-Up Grant. The Principal advised that this funding had been used for the purchase of Chromebooks and tuition in English and Maths, as well as on additional lunchtime supervision support and other resources.</p>	

Governors asked whether the purchase of the Chromebooks would make a difference to teaching in the classroom now that all students were back in school. The Principal advised that there was an opportunity to enhance provision in school, with effectively four times the capacity in terms of equipment now than the start of the academic year. He advised that SLT had started to discuss options around this, including whether to make them available in zones of the school, as a bookable resource or allocate to curriculum areas. Mr Halifax advised that the first priority had been to ensure that all devices were returned and in working order, and this was almost complete.

The Principal noted that another consideration was whether a decision was taken to provide every disadvantaged student with a device to use from home to support learning. He advised that this would need to take into account the financial cost of provision year on year, which would need further investigation.

Governors suggested that this idea be explored in more detail to determine viability. It was agreed that if provision of devices was making a difference, the school should look at whether it was possible to continue this, and in what way.

The Principal advised that the next LGC meeting in June would include a review of the 2021/22 start budget. He noted that increased student numbers meant that the forecast for future years was looking positive.

6. Governance Update

Governors noted the summary update from recent Trust Board meetings, which had been circulated with the agenda for information.

6.1 Update from Trust Chairs' Meeting 22nd March 2021

A copy of the presentation given by the CEO to LGC Chairs had been circulated on the day of the meeting for information. The Chair reported that the CEO had provided an overview of the Trust's plans for governance moving forward, particularly in light of the upcoming merger with the Sentamu Academy Learning Trust (SALT) from September 2021. He explained that with a larger number of schools to manage across a wider geographical area, the Trust wanted to ensure that governance was streamlined and effective.

The Chair reported that the most significant difference in this proposal was a change to the Scheme of Delegation, notably in relation to funding allocation. He advised that from September 2021, the Trust would hold all school reserves centrally, and from September 2022 all GAG funding would be pooled centrally, with the Trust determining how individual schools were funded. The Chair advised that the Trust were also keen to point out that finance was the Trustees' responsibility rather than LGCs, and that subsequently any additional resources groups within LGCs were not necessary. The Chair noted, however, that finance remained important in that it linked directly to resources and development in school and governors still needed to be aware of the school's budget.

The Chair advised that more detail and support from the Trust on proposed governance arrangements was expected during the summer term.

With reference to the pooling of funding, the Principal noted that Vale of York had been supported by the Trust for a number of years, and he agreed with the idea of putting back in now that this was possible. The Principal also noted that even with changes to the Scheme of Delegation, governors should still be lobbying Trustees where necessary, through the Chair and the LGC minutes. He noted that governors should not underestimate the influence they could have. In addition, the Principal advised that where resources were needed for new developments, these needed to be set out in advance, and clearly linked to the Academy Development Plan and key priorities for school improvement.

	<p>Governors agreed that it would be helpful to see details of any new formula for calculating allocation of funding, and the impact this would have on the school.</p> <p>ACTION: The Principal agreed to share the curriculum led financial planning which was being used to set the budget as part of wider discussions at the next meeting.</p> <p>6.2 Governor Training Jenny Smailes reported that she had completed the City of York Council safeguarding training.</p> <p>ACTION: The Governance Advisor agreed to share the spring term training attendance record with the Chair.</p> <p>ACTION: The Governance Advisor agreed to forward details of training opportunities to Jack Martin, newly elected staff governor.</p>	<p>TE</p> <p>JS</p> <p>JS</p>
7.	<p><u>Safeguarding (standing item)</u> The Principal reported that the Trust Inclusion Lead would be completing an audit of the Single Central Record this week. He advised that an external safeguarding review was also due, with the last one having been completed in 2018.</p> <p>It was agreed that an update report would be provided to the next LGC meeting in June.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Ethos & Wellbeing</u> With reference to staff wellbeing, the Principal reported that a number of individuals had set up virtual events such as quiz nights and book clubs to provide the opportunity to meet up online for those who wished to do so during lockdown. He noted that the way that staff had worked together during both the lockdown and on return to school had been first rate, and he could not ask for a more supportive staff team.</p> <p>Mr Halifax added that this was due in a large part to the clarity of message from leadership, with staff feeling involved and part of a team.</p>	
9.	<p><u>Policies to Note / Approve</u> Governors noted the following policies, which had been circulated with the agenda:</p> <p><u>FOR ADOPTION:</u> * Trust-wide SEND Policy (for adoption)</p> <p><u>FOR INFORMATION:</u> * Leave of Absence Policy (NEW) * Maternity, Adoption, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave Policy (NEW) * Expenses Policy (Review - with new content and forms) * Reserves Policy (Review) * Protection of Biometric Information Policy (Review) * Minibus Policy (minor correction on p6, item 2.5, third bullet point)</p>	
10.	<p><u>Items & Questions to Raise with the Trust Board</u> * Governors raised concerns about having to make efficiency savings to offset a number of significant costs relating to Covid, which had been incurred through no choice of the school. These included the £20,000 additional catering costs to cover furlough.</p>	
11.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u> 11.1 For information, the Principal advised that survey work was being carried out on the old Clifton with Rawcliffe primary building, indicating that City of York Council were starting to look at how the</p>	

	<p>site could be developed. He noted that preliminary discussions seemed to be that they were looking at community use.</p> <p>11.2 The Chair noted that working party dates needed to be set for the summer term. It was agreed that Tuesdays were preferable, with meetings every three weeks.</p> <p>ACTION: The Principal agreed to circulate initial dates to governors for information.</p>	TE
12.	<p><u>Dates of future meetings</u> Monday 7th June 2021 at 5.00pm</p>	

The meeting closed at 6.30pm

Patrick Looker

Patrick Looker, LGC Chair

07/06/2021

Date

Vale of York Academy LGC – Action Points From the Meeting of the Local Governing Committee held on 12th April 2021

	<u>Action Point</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Timescale</u>
1	Governors agreed this would need to continue to be monitored closely, and requested an update at the next meeting on Year 10 attendance.	3	Toby Eastaugh	07/06/2021
2	The Principal agreed to share the curriculum led financial planning which was being used to set the budget as part of wider discussions at the next meeting.	6	Toby Eastaugh	07/06/2021
3	The Governance Advisor agreed to share the spring term training attendance record with the Chair.	6	Jess Swarbrick	23/04/2021
4	The Governance Advisor agreed to forward details of training opportunities to Jack Martin, newly elected staff governor.	6	Jess Swarbrick	23/04/2021
5	The Principal agreed to circulate working party meeting dates to all governors for information	11	Toby Eastaugh	23/04/2021

Items for next agenda:

- * Report on curriculum led financial modelling as part of budget discussions
- * Report from SCR audit and external safeguarding review