

GREAT CHESTERFORD [C. of E.] PRIMARY ACADEMY

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

Minutes of the video conference meeting at 6pm held on 21 May 2020

Membership		Office	Term
* Jennifer Fullerty	Foundation		21/02/2021
Alex Jeewan	Foundation	Incumbent	Ex-Officio
Bob Rust	Foundation		21/02/2021
Gary Benn	General Member		21/02/2021
Adele Peters	General Member	Chair	21/02/2021
Jan Menell	General Member		21/02/2021
Sarah Mitchell	General Member	Headteacher	Ex-Officio
Andrew Taylor	General Member		21/02/2021
Nicholas Rowe	Parent	Vice - Chair	21/02/2021
Laura Saunders	Parent		01/09/2023
Rachel Thackray	Co-opted		01/09/2023
Amy Sargeant	Staff	Deputy Headteacher	21/02/2021
Natalie Starbuck	Staff		21/02/2021

In Attendance

Tom Bennett Clerk

* indicates absence

The Rev. Alex Jeewan opened the meeting with a prayer.

Action

16/20 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Jennifer Fullerty.

17/20 Notification of business interests

Gary Benn declared that his wife worked for the Academy and he worked for Eddisons that provided services to the Academy.

No other governor declared a potential conflict of interest with any items to be discussed at the meeting or that they had given or received any gifts or hospitality that could or be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with the Academy's matters.

MAIN BUSINESS

18/20 Risk Assessment

General

The meeting received and noted the COVID19: Re-opening Risk Assessment and Action Plan.

The Headteacher advised the risk assessment was based on a template provided by Essex CC and was consistent in approach with risk assessments being used by other local schools in the cluster.

The draft risk assessment had been reviewed at a meeting with the MAT Business manager and MAT Office manager – it had also been updated with feedback received from teaching staff following the latest staff meeting on extending the school provision.

The Deputy Headteacher and the governor and MAT director responsible for Health and Safety, Gary Benn, had reviewed the space and layout at the school and had carried out a scenario check of the risk assessment and action plan.

A sub committee of governors and the leadership team had scrutinised the draft risk assessment in detail and were content with the assessment and planned actions for each key area.

Air conditioning units

One area of concern had been the spread of the virus through the air conditioning units and it had been agreed not to use the air conditioning until the school had received a report from the air conditioning installation and maintenance engineers, expected soon. Gary Benn **agreed** to notify the LGB when further information was received.

Classroom size/pupil numbers

The governors considered the proposed number of children per classroom.

The risk assessment and action plan specified a maximum of 15 persons including pupils and teaching staff at any one time. This was based on guidance from DFE that children should be taught in half classes up to a maximum of 15 persons plus teaching staff.

The size and capacity of each class allowing two metres social distance for each person in the class differed from a minimum of 11 and a maximum of 17 people.

It was noted the current guidance from the DFE did not specify the minimum distance between people in a classroom but stated school governors were responsible for implementing and following their own risk assessment.

It was noted Reception Class had access to a covered outside space and its own playground that could be used to allow enough space between each person in the classroom.

As for any potential risk, the governors need to be confident that all pupils and staff would be as safe as possible in extending provision and that measures in place ensure any risks, including spread of COVID 19, are at an absolute minimum.

Parents needed to have faith and trust in the school and its plans to reopen.

The key was the quality of the assessment for each eventuality and the ability to make the right judgement at the time. This would be dependent on the number of children returning. At the time of the meeting, it was reported the school was aware that 12 pupils had shown interest in returning to Reception and 17 for Year 1.

It was likely that more “critical workers” would take up places after half term as more parents return to the workplace.

If more than 15 parents of pupils per class wanted to return, the other option to consider was having a weekly rota for schooling, deep cleaning the school over the weekend prior to admitting the second group.

The meeting discussed whether to cap the number of children returning.

The HT felt the school should not “close the door” to pupils and should remain flexible and accommodate all who wanted to return, safely.

The assessment and action plan were based on creating “bubbles” for each group of pupils and teaching staff and keeping them isolated from other bubbles to minimise the spread of the virus. Some classrooms were self-contained and had their own toilets while other classrooms normally share toilets. Planning has taken account of toilet provision so that each “bubble” has its own. Staggered starts, breaks, lunch and end times will also prevent “bubbles” from coming into contact with others. Lunch will be eaten in the “bubble’s” classroom or outside.

The meeting discussed using Portakabin toilets and was unsure on their availability and cost due to the potential high demand. It was also felt that this provision was not easily accessed by the youngest pupils.

The Headteacher said returning to school would be a big transition for pupils in Reception. It would be not realistic to expect pupils in Reception and Year 1 maintain a two-metre distance from each other.

Creating protective “bubbles” had been planned to help overcome the problems of children maintaining a two-metre distance. It was important to maintain no mixing between each “bubble”.

The meeting considered the situation of an initial low take-up of places that would grow in following weeks and the risk of those returning spreading the virus within the “bubbles”. The meeting considered asking parents to self-isolate their families for 14 days or insist on children returning being tested for the virus.

It was felt the school could not insist on children being tested but could ask parents to declare that their children are well by signing an updated home school agreement. It was **agreed** to update the school agreement, cross reference it to the risk assessment and action plan and circulate it to all governors.

HT

Governors also needed to ensure the safety of children of key workers and vulnerable children already at school and those not returning and continuing with home learning.

It was noted the school used the same insurance providers as other schools that included public and employee liability cover. It was **agreed** to confirm and advise governors and whether the cover extended to cases arising from a pandemic.

HT

The Headteacher advised the school would proactively monitor the numbers per classroom and class size and take a pragmatic view and advise governors should lower numbers per classroom be necessary.

It was **agreed**:

- a) To approve the COVID19: Re-opening Risk Assessment and Action Plan.
- b) To Reopen the school for Reception and Year 1 and offer schooling for their children in two classes of up to a maximum of 15 pupils and two staff for each age group , subject to final confirmation at the next meeting on Friday 29 May 2020 and new government's advice and other relevant factors.
- c) To take a practical/ pragmatic view, once the school knows how many children are returning, on the maximum number each classroom that maintains a safe environment for pupils and teachers.

Option of no school on Wednesday afternoons

The meeting discussed closing the school on Wednesday afternoon to allow teaching staff time to plan, prepare and assess [PPA]schoolwork for both those returning to school as well as those continuing to home learn. Teachers were already under a lot of pressure in providing home learning and keeping in contact with pupils and parents.

The Headteacher reported some parents had asked for more home learning and some for less. The school needed to strike the right balance between supporting pupils' home learning and those returning to school. It was important to make it worthwhile for those children returning to school and help them rebuild social interactions and relationships with other pupils and staff as well as to allow parents to return to work. It was planned to maintain the same level of home learning.

The meeting considered whether the school should close on Fridays, as several other schools had decided to, rather than Wednesdays.

It was felt that a mid-week closure would be more beneficial to staff and pupils.

It was **agreed** to close the school on Wednesday afternoons.

Communication to parents/staff

The meeting considered and made several amendments to the following draft letters:

- A general letter to all parents setting out the work undertaken, and the arrangements being put in place to allow a safe return for Reception and Year 1 pupils.
- A letter to Reception and Year 1 parents providing further details of how the school would be operating and asking them to confirm whether their children would be returning to school at this time.

The governors also **agreed** that a separate letter should be sent to Year 6 parents.

It was **agreed**:

- a) the school should take a wider view than the government's advice on re-opening and to re-open only when the leadership team and governors felt it was safe to open and remain open.
- b) To send out all the letters to parents by the close of the next working day and after they had been discussed with staff.

Date of re-opening

It was **agreed**:

- a) Reception pupils should return on Thursday 4th June 2020 for half days only to help them to settle in and adapt to the changed school environment.
- b) Year 1 pupils should return on Monday 8th June 2020 for half days only.
- c) Reception and Year 1 pupils to move to full day schooling on Monday 15th June 2020, with staggered start/finish times.

MAT Board

Andrew Taylor set out the respective roles of the MAT's Board of Directors and the Academy's LGBs.

The meeting noted the Board of Directors was responsible for the Health and Safety being operated across the MAT and the adequacy of the risk assessments carried out and the planned arrangements to keep staff and pupils safe.

The responsibility on the re-opening of each academy remained with the LGBs of each academy.

19/20 Date/time of future meetings

It was **agreed** to have a meeting on Friday **29 May 2020 at 8:30 hrs**

Approved by the Local Governing Body on 29th May 2020