

MENDIP EDGE FEDERATION
MINUTES OF GOVERNING BODY MEETING
Held on Tuesday 5 May 2020 at 6pm, Via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT:

Mike Brownbill, Will Ewens, Kate Golding (arrived 18.45), Tim Hawkings, Richard Holmes, Sarah Lorimer, Diane Sleeman, Adrian Warman, Maggie Wookey, John Virgin

APOLOGIES RECEIVED: Lucy Frampton, Stefan McHale

IN ATTENDANCE: Kate Persaud and Debbie Andrews (Clerk)

The Chair thanked governors for participating online via Microsoft Teams which was necessary due to prevailing government and public health advice not to meet in person to prevent spread of the Covid-19 virus.

The Chair asked each attendee to introduce themselves to the meeting and checked everyone could hear and be heard.

MEGB19/20:35 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

MEGB19/20:36 AGREEMENT OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 15 MARCH

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March were agreed and will be signed when possible after the Covid-19 lockdown is eased.

MW/WE

MEGB19/20:37 MATTERS ARISING

Headteacher questions - Mr McHale has provided a response to governors by email. Mrs Wookey and Mr Ewens will review the questions and will forward responses to governors on any questions still relevant.

Headteacher Recruitment and Standards Meeting covered as agenda items later in the meeting.

MEGB19/20:38 CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Mrs Wookey, Mrs Persaud and Mr Ewens provided governors with details of how things are going with pupils, staff and parents since the schools have been closed to all but children of key workers and vulnerable pupils, with the rest of the children working remotely at home:-

Cheddar – there are between 7-12 pupils in school at any one time consisting of 8 key worker, 5 vulnerable and 4 Shipham children. Two classrooms and the hall are used and staff are in teams on a three week rota to minimize social contact. Full-time staff work three days in a row and part-time two days with assistance from staff in the pre school. The number of pupils attending has increased since Easter and it could be that it increases further as more children struggle with working at home. The LA have provided a short list of vulnerable pupils, however a longer and dynamic list, including these children, is used by the school in response to their contact with families. These children are phoned once a week by either Mrs Wookey, Mrs Smith or the Pre School. SEND families are also rung once a week. These calls are sometimes in conjunction with Fairlands, as there are shared families. It is planned to phone all families this week to see how they are coping. It is difficult to know which pupils are accessing online learning. Some pupils have been provided with paper packs for home learning. Year 4 use Edmodo and the other years use Purple Mash to which they have logs on. There is a blog where things are shared and commented upon. There have been a few teething problems where parents cannot access. The school is trying to help and see who has registered and who is logged on. Feedback suggests that many parents are finding home schooling hard and there has been mixed feedback. Teachers are trying to be motivational with parents in a chatty way which is not always positively received.

Signed Dated

The biggest concerns are the lower achievers and pupil premium where parents cannot encourage the children to do their work.

Staff who are working have risen to the challenge. One member of staff is in the shielded group. A number of other staff fall into the vulnerable group that suffer from asthma etc. which could be a grey area for returning as they have not received formal letters of instruction to shield.

Staff seem in good spirits. Email is the main form of communication with some Teams meetings. It is difficult for certain staff, e.g. teaching assistants and lunchtime supervisors to work from home.

Starting to think about complexities of returning to school and the anxieties of staff and parents.

Fairlands – there are between 12 and 20 pupils attending on a daily basis. Tuesday is the busiest day. On average 10 key worker pupils are attending each day, with 1 pupil each from Draycott and Shipham. There are also 3 additional key worker pupils attending 2-3 days per week. There are 2 vulnerable pupils attending daily that have been identified, with 4 others attending each Tuesday. Families are starting to struggle so numbers will probably increase.

Vulnerable children who are not in school are checked upon by a phone call from the School Leadership Group or a Head of Year every week which is logged on a spreadsheet. Staff try to speak to both the child and parent where possible.

Work for pupils at home is set through an online system called Edmodo which seems effective. There has been some mixed feedback. Support staff are currently providing paper packs to 60 pupils who do not have access to Edmodo.

Staff are provided updates by email and morale seems good. Staff are working hard, often answering queries from early to late into the evening. Staff have given up holiday time to support the pupils in school.

The School Leadership Group meet every week on Zoom. Curriculum Leader and Heads of Year meetings have also taken place using Zoom. Some staff are anxious about returning, especially those that have been isolating so far. Staff are nervous when someone in school shows symptoms.

The most important thing is being prepared for re-opening. It has been agreed with the Curriculum Leaders that pupils will start new year work in September. Gaps in learning will be dealt with as things move along.

Two metre spacing has been looked at in a classroom and there were only 6-8 working spaces.

A staff governor mentioned from a school union prospective that he had received positive feedback of how Mr McHale had dealt with the situation.

A governor concurred that the schools need to be sensitive to individual circumstances and the mental well-being of staff when the schools reopen.

Draycott & Rodney Stroke and Shipham First Schools – both schools are closed; Cheddar and Fairlands are accommodating the key worker and vulnerable pupils. Mr Ewens is appreciative of their support.

A small number of Shipham staff are going in to Cheddar to support staffing there. Shipham will be open on Friday (VE Day public holiday) to support a child while their key worker parents need to work and Cheddar will be closed.

Trying to assess how one family allocated a social worker are coping at home.

It has been hard to find the balance with home learning. Class Dojo, the online platform used is going well. A couple of comments have been received with parents wanting more structure and some children are not able to do the work. Reassuring parents that the gap will be closed when the children return to school.

Signed Dated

Families are checked upon by the leadership teams and the teachers.
Staff morale seems fine with the use of messages and Zoom calls.
The Year 4's are desperate to come back to say goodbye before transition.

The WLT have made contact with the headteachers regarding the ordering of PPE equipment.

A governor asked what happens if vulnerable families cannot be contacted. Mrs Wookey replied that the staff keep trying and it is one of the strengths of the Mendip Edge that the contact can be shared where siblings are in different Mendip Edge schools.

A governor asked whether if a member of staff tests positive it needs to be reported under RIDDOR. Mrs Andrews will check this situation with WLT. Mr Ewens added that we need to be careful of the added risk of legionella in school buildings which are left vacant for long periods.

DA

A governor asked how staff have been using their time and whether the school closures offer any opportunity to tackle paperwork projects. Mr Virgin replied that from his point of view he has been re-writing schemes of learning, giving jobs to teaching members in his department, undertaking some mapping and planning for September. Mrs Wookey commented that communication has taken up a lot of time.

The governors thanked the headteachers and staff for their hard work at this very difficult time.

MEGB19/20:39 WESSEX LEARNING TRUST

The remaining issues regarding conversion were able to be resolved and the Federation joined the Wessex Learning Trust on 1 April. In particular it was recognised that there had been additional clarity on the financial position of Fairlands prior to the conversion being finalised.

The transition has not been as smooth as we would have liked due to the pandemic. It feels like a lot of things are in limbo, e.g training on the new financial system.

Staff letters needed to be issued but this was difficult when the admin staff are working from home.

There are some positive things happening and Mrs Andrews shared that she had received Trust documents including policies and logos. There will also be a portal for governor minutes and agendas which is being set up. There should be new email addresses at the end of the year.

There has been no adverse reaction from staff or parents/carers regarding the conversion.

MEGB19/20:40 REPORTS

Finance Committee – as per the minutes of the meeting held on 21 April.

The draft budgets and SFVS were agreed by the Committee.

The Committee had agreed to invite Nicola Windridge, WLT Finance Officer, to the next finance meeting but she was unable to make the meeting date.

The meeting may need to be moved to approve the 2020/21 full year budget anyway, so the Committee will ask if Nicola can make a revised date.

Foundation Committee – meeting to be held on 15 May on either Zoom or Teams.

Governor support – information has been provided to governors via Mrs Andrews from SSE Governance

Governor visits – on hold during Covid-19 school closures.

Safeguarding – the safeguarding audits have all been completed and were circulated with the agenda. Mrs Sleeman commented that she is encouraged to hear from the headteachers what they are doing to safeguard pupils during the pandemic.

Signed Dated

Mrs Sleeman queried with Mr Ewens that his governors section of the Shipham audit was 38% when arrangements are the same as in other schools which had achieved higher scores. Mr Ewens will re-visit and contact Mrs Sleeman directly. WE

Mrs Sleeman asked if the WLT have a job description for the DSL and Mrs Andrews will check this with them. DA

Standards – Mrs Andrews will arrange a date for the group to meet via Teams. DA

The Chair asked governors if there were any other matters to discuss before a final agenda item for the Headteacher recruitment working group only.

Rev Hawkings, Mrs Lorimer, Mrs Persaud, and Mr Virgin left the meeting and the Chair thanked everyone for their involvement in the Teams meeting.

MEGB19/20:41 HEADTEACHER RECRUITMENT

Mrs Wookey provided an up date following her decision to resign at the end of the summer term. Mr Warman commented that it is not the right time to recruit as candidates will want to see the school in operation and governors will want to meet the candidates. However, there needs to be a robust arrangement for the Autumn term.

The headteacher role at Cheddar has evolved considerably over time and is felt not to be sustainable in its current form. Governors will look at the right long term solution and the leadership structure, which will need to be affordable. Governors agreed the intention to be prepared with a leadership structure and recruitment pack which can be released when the time is right.

The WLT will lead a recruitment timetable with assistance from their HR Manager and admin staff using established templates and forms. The local Mendip Edge Governing Body and Cheddar School will provide input on the application pack and selection process.

Mr Warman, Mrs Wookey and Mrs Golding will look at a long term leadership structure looking at affordable and sensible scenarios. AW/MW /KG

Governors recognised that parents have not yet been informed of Mrs Wookey's resignation due to timings of the Covid-19 lockdown and uncertainty of next steps. It was also recognised that staff would benefit from an update on the recruitment process and plans for September. Mrs Wookey's new employer plans to announce her appointment this week. It was agreed that Mrs Wookey will write to parents and advise them of her resignation and that governors are making plans for suitable cover and recruitment, as required, as guidelines around lockdown evolve. Mr Warman will update staff when there are more established plans for recruitment. MW AW

The Chair thanked governors for their involvement and the meeting was closed.

Signed Dated