

Minutes of Governing Body meeting 21.5.20

Participants: Laura Butterfield (Chair), Ted Lowery (Vice Chair), Evelyn Davies (HT), Monte Jacobsen, Douglas Blackwood, Lindsey Dearden, Fay Jackson, Thomas Amoako, Richard Spitz, Mitchell Browning, Dan Walker, Annette Thurgood, Ewan Marshall (DHT)

1. Chairs Update

LB attended (online) the local Chairs' meeting, held on Tuesday, and reported that the local authority were supportive of schools taking individual approaches to re-opening according to their context and circumstances. She noted that School Development Plans across the network of schools are paused and that there was general concern over Head teacher workload due to the challenging issues at the moment. Discussions were had regarding delaying the entry of new children into Reception, in the next academic year, but this too may be down to individual schools to decide.

2. Current situation in school

As stated in the comprehensive Head Teachers report, the school is currently open for keyworker and vulnerable children, of whom around 20 -25 children attend daily. These children are looked after by staff volunteers in two groups. The school is unique among local schools in that it has remained open throughout the lockdown. ED wanted to particularly acknowledge the efforts of Ana Clave (IT technician) and Laggi Efthymiou (SBM) for their extensive contributions during this period.

To prepare the school for re-opening the cleaners have begun to deep clean the school and the site staff have been installing hand sanitisers in every classroom, painting social distancing markers on the school playgrounds and entrances etc.

3. Provisional Plan for re-opening

A phased approach to re-opening is proposed by the school (starting with YR6 on the 8th of June) so that adaptations can be made as YR1 (15th June) and REC (22nd June) children return. The logistics around re-opening are complex and difficult to manage. Meeting the Health and Safety requirements is also challenging especially as parents and staff are anxious about this. It was noted that a former Coldfall Teacher, Maria Santilo, passed away from Covid19 recently.

ED felt that the Health and Safety issues precluded the opening of the school's nursery. FJ stated that it was important for the school to canvas Year 6 parents on their intention to return, noting that in Haringey as a whole, around 30% of parents surveyed would be sending their children back. ED outlined that the plan was for teachers to come in next week to set up classrooms and then plan with their teams the following week. She also felt that there would need to be a culture change amongst staff in regard to hygiene and their interactions so that the school can meet Health and Safety requirements. DB summarised a lack of clear scientific evidence about whether children spread the virus at a slower/faster rate than adults and that as the scientists were unclear we should not make assumptions about transmission risks and subsequently not re-open to Rec and YR1 children on this basis. He also pointed out that London has seen a sharp drop off in deaths and infections over the last few weeks. DB was keen for his own child, in reception, to return to school. EM outlined that the environment, curriculum and interactions between pupils and staff, for the youngest children would be very different from their previous school experiences. AT asked whether children and parents would be vigilant about reporting symptoms of Covid 19. ED replied that the school were proposing a new Home School Agreement to address this and other issues.

FJ commented that a provisional timeline for parents would be useful, with the caveats that it would be subject to review and possible change. RS and LD said that they felt that parents would be back the school's plans and be as flexible as necessary, especially if the communication is clear. DB did recommend that, in his experience, high risk adults (BAME, aged, overweight) should be precluded from working with the youngest children or work from home where possible as they are more vulnerable.

There was agreement from the governors to proceed with the school's re-opening, subject to development in risk, government instruction etc.

4. Risk Assessment

A comprehensive risk assessment has been produced using the Haringey model. It highlights the difficulties around social distancing with very young children. In addition, preparing meals will be an issue due to 5 out the 8 kitchen staff being aged, BAME and or overweight. All children bringing in packed lunches was proposed but the school has to consider the universal free school meals grant it has received and the obligation to offer a meal, daily to KS1 children.

ED remarked how a parent said that she would hold the school responsibility should her vulnerable child contract Covid19. TL said that liability is unlikely to be an issue as it would be impossible to prove where infected was transmitted.

To minimise risk the school proposes to send home entire 'pods' of pupils if symptoms are displayed. They whole pod and staff attached to it would remain at home until the test result was received. Ed felt that this immediate isolation of the pod was essential to quell parental and staff anxiety. Testing is the parental responsibility. DB informed the GB that tests were approximately 70% reliable and, in his experience, it takes 48 hours for results to be returned.

5. NLC

The schools local Network Learning Community are adopting a broadly similar approach to Coldfall and have an agreed start date of the 8th of June.

6. Staff Issues

ED stated any school re-opening is also predicated on agreement from the members of the NEU and UNISON. 90% of Coldfall staff are a member of these unions. The school will be responding to their concerns by supplying the aforementioned risk assessment.

BAME staff are a concern as they are considered more vulnerable and there are additional members of staff who are anxious about using public transport, have pre-existing health conditions or live with vulnerable family members. There are some tensions evident between groups of staff who perceive others to be doing less than them e.g. cleaners and kitchen staff. FJ and LB stated that the school could not force a member of staff to come in. Each staff member will have to respond to the risk assessment on a personal level based on their unique circumstances. In addition, the school's opening preparations may be put back by staff insisting on their half term break.

7. Remote learning

Online learning for pupils is standardised across the Google Classroom and Tapestry (for REC children) platforms. Each class teacher produces two weekly videos outlining the expectations and content. There are maths problems and Green, Music and PE activities in addition to the individual class

provision. In addition, all the class teachers have telephoned every family in their class over the last 2 weeks. Tom Hassan (AHT) will be tracking what the uptake is on Google Classroom across classes and the whole school.

LD and RS agreed that the content on Google classroom good and provided structure for parents and children. They both noted that there seemed a heavy workload this week and questioned whether this was due to individual parent pressure. ED replied that the letter sent to parents clearly stated that families could choose to work on what was manageable for them.

For vulnerable children and families who do not have the hardware to access the work the school will be distributing laptops from school.

LD raised the issue of the workload issue for staff members who are providing remote learning and working with pods. The school's remote learning offer will be maintained by staff who are not working in pods, particularly for pupils in YR2, 3, 4 and 5.

8. Parental Communications

ED voiced her concern that the amount of communication could be potentially overwhelming for parents. Expectations have to be made clear regarding the schools offer, parental obligations etc.

9. Budget Concerns/Pay Freeze

The school has suffered as significant loss of income from after school clubs, dinner money, lets etc. as a result of the pandemic. The school is producing two budget profiles: the first assumes that revenue streams return to normal in September 2020 whilst the second reflects an ongoing disruption to this income. In the first scenario the school can produce a balanced budget partly by not renewing six fixed term contracts (French Teacher, part time Admin assistant and 4 Teaching Assistants) and by making reductions in any other areas possible. The second budget puts the school in a £220,000 deficit. Therefore the school has consulted with staff to consider a pay freeze on annual incremental rises up the pay scale and threshold applications. The school cannot legally freeze the annual cost of living increase due in September. It was noted that the school spends around 85% of its budget on staffing. The NEU have raised a number of questions which the school will respond to in due course. Around 12 staff have responded directly to Mrs Davies indicating their support in order to protect the provision Coldfall currently offers. LB identified that it was the lowest paid support staff who were most vulnerable to any redundancies that the school may have to make. DW was concerned that Coldfall should not be the only Haringey school implementing a pay freeze. TL and AT outlined the broader picture, within their own industries, was pay cuts and freezes for all workers.

The school has a deadline towards the end of June in which it must apply to Haringey if it has to set a deficit budget and then the school must actioOn a recovery plan. The governors agreed that this matter would be further discussed at the next finance committee meeting on June 18th.

AOB

It was noted that three members of the school staff have been infected by Covid 19 with significant symptoms.