

Southfields Academy Local Governing Body Meeting

Wednesday 25th November 2020

5.15pm

Held on Google Meet

Attendees: Jackie Valin, Wanda Golinska, Larry Davis, Marios Davis, Susan Hayday, John Moore, Mark Heathcote (from 18.05), Sian Tyler, Victoria Simpson (until 17.57), Gordon Alexander, Tara Minto, Donna Collins, Brian Varney, Andrew Dawson, Steve Elson

Apologies: Sarah Gray, Tracy Gray

Minutes: Margaret Breen

Item	Discussion	Action
1. Welcome and apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Jackie Valin (JV) apologised for the late start of the meeting due to technical difficulties.She welcomed all and noted that a new Governor, Brian Varney, had joined the LGB. Other Governors introduced themselves.	
2. Election of Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none">JV invited nominations for the election of a Chairperson. Susan Hayday (SH) nominated Sian Tyler (ST), John Moore seconded. Sian Tyler was elected.ST said the activities of the past nine months were impressive and this should be minuted. She also requested that this gratitude be passed on to staff, who were deserving of Governors' thanks and congratulations.	
3. Declaration of Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">None	
4. Minutes of last meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">JV said there were two sets of minutes – one from the last formal meeting in November 2019 as the March meeting didn't happen due to lockdown. No actions outstanding. ST will sign these when next in the Academy. The other minutes were Q&As in March. Nothing outstanding. ST will also sign these off.	
5. Matters Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none">None	
6. Headteachers' Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ST commented this was a very detailed and comprehensive report and asked Wanda Golinska (WG) for an overview, followed by questions from Governors.WG said in any other year the priorities in the report would look odd e.g. to reopen in September. Many things have had to be started from scratch. Teaching and learning is core purpose to give students a pathway to next steps it the biggest challenge. A reset button has been pressed in many areas. The DfE and Ofsted do not have much idea of what is going on in schools. Biggest challenges are around enabling of learning, which has had to restart. Adapted teaching now the norm and planning/preparation for remote teaching is a big focus. Moving forward, the challenge is not to fall back to our old ways but to invest in the development of adaptive teaching e.g. akin to lecturing.	

Deputy Headteacher, Sarah Gray, is closely monitoring teaching staff, giving feedback and corrections where staff are not following safety protocols. Teachers find this style of teaching very frustrating and difficult. WG invited questions:

ST asked regarding parental engagement and how Covid has impacted on this. WG said all subject teachers were stopped from contacting parents during lockdown to prevent a stream of calls home from different subject teachers. Pastoral team were conduit for calls. Survey of parents received huge response – 400. Suggestions taken on board. In September, return to subject teachers making calls home again, with pastoral team support. Larry Davis (LD) reported that a well-being day was held in September – students came with parents so tutors could speak to them about where child/family was in terms of well-being, learning etc. Good turnout. Parents' Forum held via Zoom – 57 joined and had their questions answered.

WG detailed other challenges: Exams and whether they will happen. Although Southfields Academy (SA) hasn't been affected greatly, many schools and students have been across the country so it seems unfair to them. Having students in school doesn't guarantee lessons as staff absence means subject specialists not always teaching. Again, SA not greatly affected by staff absence to date.

SA set up is different – many multi-academy trusts came up with blueprint where students remained in the same classroom and bubble e.g. English teacher also teaching other subjects such as science. This is workable for the short term but not for exam preparation. WG said we have been fortunate not to have students out of school and to have been able to continue to provide specialist teaching.

Other challenge is restrictions in some provisions. When students are on site, the only time they are indoors is during lessons. This means other interventions curtailed. Traditional instruments for sanctions and interventions unable to be used.

WG noted that SA students are very resilient though. Usually teachers would continue to help students outside of the classroom but this is not possible now.

WG relayed tracking data from Wandsworth:

1.9-30.11.20 students absent for Covid-related reasons

9.3% nationally

4.3% Wandsworth

1.49% Southfields Academy

Teaching staff absent for Covid-related reasons

5.6% national

3.8% Wandsworth

0.72% Southfields Academy

Support staff absent for Covid-related reasons

5.6% nationally

3.1% Wandsworth

0.91% Southfields Academy

WG said our core purpose and differentiation is a challenge because of lecture-style lessons. Preparation for Tier 2-4 also a focus.

Gordon Alexander (GA) commented it was moving to hear all of this and the work of the team. He enquired about staff mental health and well-being – any signs of stress and how is this monitored? JV pointed to Tricia Nearn's report on this area. She said DHT, Sarah Gray, has responsibility for staff well-being. A recent cheese and wine event was well received. This Friday is Doughnut Friday as a treat for staff. Staff are a concern but we have enough systems in place e.g. mindfulness sessions and our open door policy. Staff are finding behaviour more challenging inside in corridors, when most staff are on duty outside. Low staff absenteeism. Donna Collins added that all staff have someone they can talk to, if necessary.

Marios Davis (MD) enquired about students who have been set back by the interruption to learning and what was being done to bring them back up to speed. WG said DfE has little data on this – pastoral, social and curriculum knowledge and skills. Curriculum leaders were asked to give feedback and plans to address this however, when staff and students returned, both wanted to move forward and not dwell on deficits. Assessments do not demonstrate huge deficits. Social skills in one area where there is a deficit – Year 7s showing a lack of social skills, akin to Year 4s, which took us by surprise. Greater nurturing needs had been anticipated and progress has been made. Older students are more concerned about their future but Years 7-9 are more resilient.

MD asked about engagement rates with remote work and communication with parents of students who were not engaging. WG said data showed 50% engagement across school but 90% in Y10 and Y12. 100% attendance at Year 12 online exams. Tutors addressed this with parents.

ST enquired about IT gaps and addressing these. JV said the DfE had promised 225 laptops but this has now been reduced to 25. We have provided IT for some 6th Formers. Other students lacking access came in to school. Currently gathering information about further need, which will go to LA. WG added that we are pausing at the moment until we verify genuine need. No remote teaching is being provided currently, as it's impossible to do alongside current provision. Will only happen if we go into Tiers 2-4.

Andrew Dawson (AD) enquired about adapted teaching methods and whether any needs outstanding. WG said staff have had a session during PPA time in September. Now using mini whiteboards in class (each child has one) as an immediate test of understanding. Marking is an issue – teachers want to differentiate so are doing double marking – Google Classrooms and books. Very hard on staff. Tara Minto (TM) added that online resources such as Google Classrooms and Educake have been helpful in supporting adaptations to teaching.

AD enquired about students being outdoors as temperatures drop. WG said an orangery was built to give additional space. Children have been asked to wear layers e.g. vests, hats and jackets. Classrooms are very cold. May move to tutors allowing students to keep coats on indoors. Staff resilient and have been asked for feedback when there are changes to protocols. Staff want to be outside. TM added that being outside has been helpful for aiding social skills with students spending more time together and engaging with each other.

AD asked how feedback was being sought. JV said we have a Risk Assessment, in the absence of a total lack of guidance from the Government. This is reviewed. WG said staff feedback either directly to her or via their line manager.

WG said Google Meet is being trialled with Year 7 to prepare for being able to work online. Policies need to be written around this. Parental feedback being sought on how the sessions have worked.

Brian Varney (BV) asked about SEND and how lack of 1-1 interventions has impacted. WG said SEND student interventions generally occur within mainstream classes, rather than 1-1. Some additional 1-1 is still happening.

MD asked about vaccine planning. JV said no information from Government or LA yet. Year 7s have just had their flu vaccinations.

AD asked if there was one person assigned to the role of Covid response. JV said this was done collaboratively.

Referring to questions submitted earlier by Victoria Simpson, JV said weather related questions had been addressed by WG earlier and we have a wet weather plan for indoors. IT provision – some kit has been purchased but access is often an issue so dongles are given to those without access. Behaviour – LD said students have been fantastic coming back although when they have become more comfortable, some behaviour issues were evident e.g. in park, local shops. This is being managed. SEND costs – JV said we have two staff undergoing SENCo training. Costs are monitored carefully for EHCPs by Gemma Le Grande who liaises with Steve Elson.

Responding to questions from GA on the impact of Covid on SEND, JV invited GA to come in and meet with Gemma Le Grande in the SEND department. Also covered in report. BLM – JV said Sarah Gray and Karen Marshall are working on this. WG added at the time of George Floyd's death, carefully prepared virtual assemblies were held. A staff working group has been formed and the first INSET provided reading materials for staff to engage with. GA asked via chat regarding bullying and whether it had increased with more stressed students. DVS said there was some evident in the lower years but this has been dealt with. GA commented that perhaps the Board could revisit BLM. JV said she was happy to do this but said that SA was a very inclusive school.

Mark Heathcote (MH) enquired about careers and future prospects for students. WG said the number of opportunities were rapidly declining. Assistant Headteacher has been assigned to look at this to identify local and national opportunities. May look at new themes and new focus/areas of the curriculum e.g. media industry is recreating itself and maybe we need to align ourselves with what arises.

John Moore (JM) asked about assessment in the summer and contingencies for next summer. WG said there was uncertainty around exams next summer but she doesn't know if the DfE is quick enough to respond. Courses could be made modular, as in the past. WG has asked Heads of Departments to keep assessments and create a portfolio so we have evidence when assigning grades.

JM asked if WG was happy with what A Level and GCSE students ended up with and about pressure on the curriculum for exams when the destination is unknown. WG said Ofqual had told exam boards to alter specifications e.g. geography field element removed but they cannot keep up. They are still testing the benefits of being in the EU. Students are being prepared for learning at home.

	AD enquired about use of biometrics and associated risks. JV said it had been a nightmare getting it in place but it was working now. WG added it does service a purpose if it works.	
7. Financial report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve Elson (SE) reported on two audits that had taken place recently <ol style="list-style-type: none"> External – regular audit by Laudau Baker. Likes like an underspend of £200k to end of August. Didn't spend during Covid and good financial planning. Given two low level recommendations. Internal – more in depth. Two recommendations but a clean bill of health on both audits. SE referred to forecast – aiming for breakeven or an underspend, if possible. Referring to Cashflow, SE said this is fairly consistent. 40k in interest is generated. Mark Heathcote said prediction had been breakeven would be reached for another year. School was ahead of the game and should be congratulated. SE thanked MH and said this was the result of hard work from the finance team. ST referenced and asked for details on plans for large capital expenditure items. JV said major defects at the school were covered by Lend Lease – substandard work which will be remedied by them. JV said the only other major expenditure was the 'orangery' but that was done at a good price over the summer and it has been a godsend in keeping students apart when eating. No other major works planned. SE referred to two issues re football pitch and pool. The pitch will have to be relayed soon – money in budget for that. Pool, now 50-60 years old, will need work and there is money in the reserves for this. GA asked for clarification on the difference between the audits. SE said the external audit was similar to what a private company would have e.g. £10k a small amount in this context. The internal one was more detailed and looked at individual invoices and more usual for a school. Will happen three times a year. ST relayed thanks to SE and the finance team for their work. 	
8. Standing items to report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ECM – JV said this will form part of the Governing report and all components will go into the main Governing Body meeting. Terms of reference to be checked for this to happen. Premises – Main job has been to prepare for Covid and manage cleaning regime. ST enquired about any PPE provision issues. JV said there were none. 	JV to check ToR
9. AOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referencing BLM, GA suggested this could be discussed at a later date e.g. how Governing body could be strengthened to reflect diversity. ST asked if there were positives to have arisen out of recent experiences that could be of benefit in the future. JV said the new dining system is 100% better and staff duty is now a pleasant experience. Development of the curriculum is exciting. WG said there are things that won't be thrown away e.g. virtual meetings and changes to parents' evening. She said staff are nervous and have to make sure desks etc. are cleaned properly and can't cross the line when children are in the room. Staff do not get breaks as they are either teaching, spraying desks or marshalling students. 	
10. Confidential items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	
11. Date of next meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wednesday 17th March 2021, hopefully in person. 	