

Trustees (Remote) Meeting  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2020  
10.00am – 12.00pm  
Minutes

Attendance: Mr Patrick Johnson (PJ) Trustee  
Ms Louise Hutchinson (LH) Trustee  
Ms Elaine Burfitt (EB) Chair of Trustees  
Mr John Corker (JC) Trustee  
Dr M Hanbury (MH) Executive Headteacher  
Mr Cole Andrew (CA) Trustee  
Ian McKinlay (IM) Member

Apologies: Ms Helen Birkinhead (HB) Headteacher, Chatsworth High School and  
Community College

Miss J Thorp (JT) Just A Sec (Minutes)

Key: **Governor question/comment**      **Response**      **Action Required**

## 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Dr Hanbury welcomed Trustees to the meeting. Trustees were advised that Elaine Burfitt would join the meeting by telephone. Helen Birkinhead was unable to connect to Microsoft Teams and therefore, could not participate.

## 2. Chatsworth Response to Covid-19

Dr Hanbury proposed to work through the list of questions submitted by Louise Hutchinson and Trustees would then have the opportunity to ask any supplementary questions as and when.

How are you monitoring the safeguarding needs of all students / learners, but particularly those who are 'Looked After', or on child protection or child in need plans? What is the role of the LA within this?

The school is offering a scheme for pupils of key workers and vulnerable pupils. Staff from each establishment remain in regular contact with families by telephone or text. A proforma has been produced which staff complete to log the details of the conversation and this is then sent to the leadership team to monitor. Most of the feedback to date has been positive and where concerns are raised, there are procedures in place for follow up. There are communication issues in relation to a small number of families who do not speak English but staff are working to overcome these barriers.

Students who receive FSM have been allocated food vouchers already. Will more vouchers be issued by the LA if school does not re-open on 20th April, as initially planned?

The school closed on Thursday and on Friday, £3,500 worth of Aldi vouchers were collected. A group of staff then worked in pairs to deliver the vouchers to families who are entitled to free school meals. Staff adhered to the social distancing measures, contacting families via text beforehand, leaving the vouchers on the doorstep, knocking

on the door and waiting until the vouchers were collected. The vouchers equated to a month's worth of free school meals. MH is in liaison with the LA in relation to future plans.

The vouchers did not apply to Futures as the students are no longer entitled to a free school meal.

Was this for all FSM pupils in Salford or just Chatsworth?

This is not known. Salford City Council has made an arrangement with Aldi. Parents were offered the option of a grab bag or vouchers. The school did not want to transport food and parents were reluctant to come into school to collect the food so the most sensible option was to provide the vouchers to all eligible families so that parents could go and purchase their own food.

The government has also today announced a £3.00 online voucher will be allocated to free school meals families.

What is the situation with the student who had been on a fixed-term exclusion from school?

The fixed term exclusion had already come to an end by the time the school closed and therefore, the pupil is regarded as being in school as normal and will therefore receive the same input as other pupils. This pupil is not on the vulnerable list and therefore, is receiving the standard input from staff in school.

Safeguarding of staff - are staff using any form of PPE when they are working with students in school? Is there a clear understanding with the parents of students who are attending school, that if anyone in the household had symptoms, the student must not come into school?

Staff are using hand gels and wipes but there are no masks available which is concerning for the leadership team. Elaine Burfitt advised that medical staff do not use masks during medical consultations unless there is a suspicion that the individual has Covid-19 and therefore, gloves and hand gels are sufficient. Hand washing is also much more effective than gel. Hand gel is useful for staff who are out in the community, for example, making journeys to collect pupils from home.

Pupils and families have been made aware that if anyone in the family is showing symptoms, they must report it and the pupil will not be permitted to attend school.

Are pupils using school transport or taxis to get to school?

Staff are collecting pupils in a minibus or people carrier and a system is in place in between journeys to clean the vehicles. The process is that a pupil will be collected at 10.00am in a vehicle with 2 or 3 members of staff depending on the level of challenge the pupil may present. Staff are able to carry out social distancing within the vehicle. Once the pupil arrives at school, the vehicle is cleaned and the staff then go on to collect the next pupil. The minibus is used for pupils in a wheelchair. The same process is then followed when returning the pupils home.

Are there any additional costs due to increased cleaning? Are you limiting the use of specific classrooms for specific students?

The Trust has not been presented with any additional costs to date. The Facilities Management Team has been excellent in its response and is working closely with staff. The school is using one room in each corridor and all other rooms are locked which limits

the amount of cleaning to one room per corridor, the corridor area, reception and toilets. The last pupil leaves at 3.30pm and the cleaners are working between 2.25pm and 6.00pm to ensure they have enough time to carry out their duties.

Are staff reporting if they are poorly or confirmed covid-19 or is this not considered to be irrelevant now?

Staff continue to report in daily if they, or a member of their household are unwell. Unless they inform otherwise, all staff are assumed to be available.

Vicky McRae is responsible for HR and is co-ordinating a spreadsheet on a daily basis which she sends to MH and HB.

What if a family member has been found to have the virus and a member of staff or pupil has attended school – will the school continue to be open or will you consider closure? A policy is in place in terms of staff and pupils reporting absence but there is no policy for the Trust reporting to staff and parents which may need to be considered.

Mr Corker expressed concern that if a family member has the virus, there is a chance that the pupil or member of staff may have spread the virus prior to symptoms becoming evident. In this situation, there should be a clear directive as to how the Trust would respond. Trustees agreed that the contagion aspect of the virus is paramount in the decision making process.

MH suggested that this would need to be a Trustee and LA decision. He would commence immediate dialogue with EB as a representative from Public Health England for advice.

Are you aware of anyone in the school community that has the virus?

Yes. However, none of these individuals have taken part in the programme as staff or pupils. One withdrew from the programme before it started because of a vulnerable family member.

All staff have been very cautious and the situation is being monitored closely.

Would Trustees be of the view that the school should close if anyone who has attended (staff or pupils) is infected with the virus?

EB explained that this would depend on when the individual last had contact with others present. LH felt that the school would have to close in this instance. There is a risk that staff or pupils could be asymptomatic carriers of the virus and the fact that some pupils are unable to communicate means that they may have symptoms that they are unable to express. Therefore, to protect staff and pupils, LH felt that any confirmed cases are reported, the school should close.

Do the procedures for collecting and returning pupils include asking family members specifically if anyone is displaying symptoms?

Not to date but this could be introduced. The school is working with parents with whom staff have very strong and close relationships and therefore, it is expected that parents would be open and honest but the question could also be asked specifically each day.

How are staff adapting to working from home? Are there any budget implications - phone bills, physical resources?

Staff are coping as well as they can under the circumstances. Teachers are busy preparing work for pupils and planning for their return. It is expected that this will fill approximately six weeks of their time as an interim measure. For teaching assistants, it is much more difficult to give them tasks to complete at home as their primary function is supporting pupils in school. There will be some Educare online training courses that teaching assistants can complete but at some point, these will run out. Approximately 20 teaching assistants are involved in the programme and as the situation progresses and improves, it is hoped that staff can start to be directed to contribute more to the programme.

In terms of curriculum development, could you continue with small groups of staff working remotely on different areas of the curriculum?

Yes, the initial priority is to enable the school to deliver a service to pupils but moving forward, more remote methods will look to be used to continue the work on the improvement priorities.

Staff at Chatsworth Futures are in the process of writing schemes of work for the summer which can be transferred into the autumn term.

Depending on how long term this situation is, do you have plan for an online CPD system?

The Trust uses Educare which offers some good quality modules. In addition to this, staff may be asked to take part in some SALT training, signing practice and autism training. The fact that pupils may not return to school until September will provide an opportunity to develop the skills of staff in preparation for their return.

Business Officer Rachel Hill is taking on responsibility for the Trust website. She has also been involved in obtaining and organising delivery of the Aldi vouchers. Updating the website will be a key role for her going forward to ensure it is compliant and relevant. This can be completed from home.

All families have had a comprehensive package of links and activities sent to them. The school uses the Seesaw app for learning activities.

LH confirmed that the information sent to families during this initial period had been very useful as a starting point and it was positive that these activities had been backed up by phone calls from teachers giving parents the opportunity to raise any questions.

Would it be possible for some themes to be created so that all students are working on the same themes and activities? This may support community cohesion.

This is a lovely idea and would be nice for the pupils and teachers to work on one theme together. The pupils could then revisit the topic in autumn.

What are the expectations of the Trust regarding staff working from home? Staff may have limited resources, a home environment that is not conducive to home-working, or children to care for. However, they are still being paid (devil's advocate).

This is not really an issue staff in general but could be for a small number of vulnerable families who struggle to access technology. The school is using phone calls and texts to remain in contact with families but if they do not accept calls, staff will write to them or visit if there is no other option.

It is acknowledged that some families will struggle to access online learning and a decision may have to be made at some stage as to whether the school allocates them a laptop to use during this period. However, this will come with a risk that the laptop is not returned at the end of the year. The matter will be discussed further with the IT Lead.

To date, all staff have been able to access their work via their personal or school device and there have been no issues with communication between staff and leaders so far.

Are staff still being paid?

Yes, many staff have reflected how fortunate they are to be salaried employees. There will be some challenges around the budget as a result of the situation but the Trust is duty bound to cover the costs and staff salaries.

How are the SLT (including you two) bearing up?

The tragic passing of Wendy Maher has had a significant impact on all staff and the leadership team. She had a very close relationship with Beth Cocken and will be sadly missed. Her death has had a huge impact on Futures staff and as a sign of respect, the decision was taken not to open yesterday.

In terms of the Covid-19 crisis, leaders are trained to deal with crisis management and in the short term, the planning has been very effective. However, the challenge will be maintaining the focus. As leaders of the organisations, it will be difficult to continue to find things that give the Principals a sense of purpose in the longer term once the fire-fighting stage is over. The longer the situation continues for, the more difficult it becomes to maintain the focus.

Are you still paying for music & art therapy etc?

Yes at the moment

I assume that Vicky is aware that, in the current situation, the filing of accounts to Companies House can be delayed by 3 months (but you need to apply for an extension). Also, submission of information regarding the gender pay gap has been suspended for this year

JC confirmed that the accounts have already been filed. In terms of the gender pay gap, this is only relevant to companies with 250+ employees. MH confirmed that the Trust employs approximately 110 people and therefore, this would not apply.

Have you made any decision regarding the Easter holidays and whether the school will remain open?

Initial discussions have taken place with EB and the two Principals. Many schools are planning to open in Salford.

Union advice from Unison is that as pupils would not ordinarily be in school, and vulnerable pupils will continue to have a package of support over the holiday period, schools should not open. A counter argument to this is that care packages are now extremely stretched and this is not a normal holiday. For example, the Woodlands provision has closed and services such as Leisure for Autism will not run over the holidays meaning that pupils cannot access this support.

EB expressed concerns regarding a noted reduction in the number of safeguarding referrals (35%) which suggests that the majority of referrals were being made by schools.

The fact that these have reduced so significantly is causing concerns in relation to the safety of children. Therefore, the importance of schools being open for vulnerable pupils was highlighted.

It is acknowledged that key workers and pupils need the school to be open but the impact on staff wellbeing must also be considered.

MH was of the view that the school should remain open during this period but would be guided by Trustees.

JC commented that Trustees must be mindful of the longer term need for the school to be able to provide for these families. The country is likely to be at the peak of the virus in the next few weeks and to stop the spread, it is important to stay at home as much as possible. Therefore, if the school is closed during the peak, this would enable the school to then reopen after Easter and continue to provide a service to vulnerable pupils. However, if the school remains open throughout the peak and a member of staff or a pupil contracts the virus, the school would have to close.

PJ suggested a compromise with the school opening for one week of the holidays. MH responded that this option had been discussed with HB. However, the union advice is that staff would have to volunteer to work during the holiday and the Trust would then have to pay them separately.

Unions have also advised that teaching assistants could not be offered time off in lieu if they worked the holidays which adds to the complication.

The scheme currently has more teachers than teaching assistants working on it. The teaching assistants that are currently supporting the programme are very skilled in dealing with the more challenging pupils so some staff with more generic skills have not been called upon at this stage.

EB stated her preference for the school to remain open during the Easter break and suggested further liaison with the unions to allow this to happen.

CA pointed out that union advice is only advice and there is no reason that the school and its staff could not come to a mutual agreement that is beneficial to both.

IM felt that the dilemma between providing a service for the pupils, allowing staff a break and managing the risk of spreading the virus was a difficult one. The fact that the school would normally close for Easter and that parents would expect this may be an argument for closing. Staff would then be able to return from the Easter break refreshed and able to cope better with the pressures of the summer term.

JC was uncomfortable at the prospect of remaining open for the full two weeks given that the country is approaching the peak.

MH advised that staff are not working full days during their rota days but may work for eight hours over two days in an effort to have them in the building for the least amount of time possible. Pupils are in the building for a total of three hours per day.

**Approved:** Following a vote on whether to open the school for 1 week or 2 weeks Trustees, by a majority of 4 to 2 voted to close the school w/c 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020 for one week and to reopen w/c 13<sup>th</sup> April 2020

**Action:** MH to discuss the plans with unions and relay the response to Trustees via email

**3. AOB**

Trustees were thanked for their support.

Trustees offered thanks to the staff team for their efforts to date.

**Addendum to Minutes from Elaine Burfitt – 20<sup>th</sup> April 2020**

As an addendum there has been a change in PPE advice since the meeting, we are now using masks for all patient contacts. I wonder if there is guidance out there regarding PPE for special school staff, given the nature of the children that attend.

**Summary of actions**

Item	Action	Who
2	MH to discuss the plans with unions and relay the response to Trustees via email	MH