



Minutes

Meeting of Fir Bank Primary School Local Advisory Committee

Thursday 9th July 2020
held at 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Mr Alex Reed	Committee Member (Chair)
	Mrs Rachael McLaughlin	Co-Headteacher and Committee Member
	Mr Rob Walker	Co-Headteacher and Committee Member
	Mrs Lorraine Bowler	Committee Member
	Dr Rachel Cowen	Committee Member
	Mr Peter Ferris	Committee Member
	Miss Jennifer Wright	Committee Member
Also Present:	Mr David Challen	Clerk to the Local Advisory Committee
	Mrs Gillian Hindle	Executive Director of Business and Human Resources
	Mrs Suzanne Millar	School Business Manager

The Chair welcomed everyone participating in this meeting of the Fir Bank Primary School Local Advisory Committee (LAC).

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 There were no apologies for absence received as all the current LAC members were involved in the meeting.
- 1.2 It was reported that Mr Paul Matthews (Vice-Chair) and Mr Stephen Kirkland (Former Site Manager) had now both left the LAC.

2 REGISTER OF BUSINESS, PECUNIARY AND PERSONAL INTERESTS

Committee members were invited to declare any additional business, pecuniary or personal interests to those which had been declared previously in the school's 'Register of Declaration of Interest'.

No additional declarations were made.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the LAC meeting held on 13th February 2020 be approved as a correct record.

4 **ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

- 4.1 Arising from minute 4.1.8 (Dates for LAC Member Visits to the School), this arrangement had been put on hold due to the school being partially closed because of the coronavirus pandemic.
- 4.2 Arising from minute 5.6 (Single Central Record (SCR)), Mrs McLaughlin confirmed that the school's Single Central Record had been reviewed and was up to date.
- 4.3 Arising from minute 5.10 (Site Manager), Mrs Bowler confirmed that a card was sent to Mr Stephen Kirkland wishing him a speedy recovery from his illness. As Stephen had now left the school, there would be a collection for him, and a formal presentation would be arranged for the Autumn term 2020.
- 4.4 Arising from minute 7.2.2 (Photocopying Costs), Mrs Millar explained that a good price had been negotiated for the previous photocopying contract, which involved an upfront rental cost and a cost for each copy made. The new contract has a different pricing structure with the cost per copy included within the rental price and this was proving to be more expensive.

Challenge/Support: LAC Members questioned what arrangements are in place for challenging the quality of the service from contractors who have been engaged by the Trust. In this case, the school would have been expecting to pay a reduced cost for photocopying, due to the economies of scale, rather than it being more expensive.

It was also noted that the LAC no longer had a representative serving as a trustee now that Mr Paul Matthews had resigned.

5 **CO-HEADTEACHER'S REPORT**

Partial Closure of Schools – 20th March 2020

- 5.1 Mr Walker informed the LAC that the school had ended this week with 10 members of staff absent. The priority had been for the school to remain open and throughout the week, staff had struggled to achieve this. Following the Government's announcement on partial school closures, staff had started to prepare for the opening of the school for the children of key workers and for vulnerable pupils.
- 5.2 Questionnaires had been sent to all parents. In response to this, none of the children of vulnerable parents wanted provision for their children and initially, 5 children of key workers had requested that their children continue to attend school.
- 5.3 Due to the high number of staff absences at the time, it was agreed that the school building should close and the provision for these pupils be based at North Chadderton School. 2/3 Fir Bank children attended initially to take advantage of this provision along with the children of key workers and vulnerable pupils from Thorp and North Chadderton. This also provided an opportunity for a deep clean of the Fir Bank building.

- 5.4 The Co-Headteachers paid tribute to the teachers and staff at North Chadderton for the support they had given in accommodating Fir Bank pupils in their building.

Wider Opening of Schools – 1st June 2020

- 5.5 Following the Government's announcement that all schools should open to Year 1, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils on 1st June 2020, several meetings had taken place, both formal and informal, with the trade unions and Trust representatives.
- 5.6 As a result of these discussions, the Trust agreed that no child should return to any of the Trust's schools until 15th June 2020 at the earliest. This was because some staff were still ill, some were in the clinically vulnerable group and one member of staff was living with a person who was shielding.
- 5.7 Detailed risk assessments and protocols had been agreed for the return of Year 6 pupils and these had been shared with staff. The school had opened successfully on 15th June 2020 with 20 out of the 31 Year 6 pupils attending. Three 'bubbles' have been established for staff and pupils and all the children have fully engaged on their return to school. As a result of their positive experience, the number of Year 6 pupils attending has increased.
- 5.8 Due to the limited accommodation available at Fir Bank, the decision was taken to continue to offer the provision for the children of key workers and for vulnerable pupils at North Chadderton School and the number of vulnerable children attending has also increased.
- 5.9 Throughout the partial closure, school staff have maintained contact with vulnerable pupils and work was set by staff and responded to.

Challenge/Support: LAC Members questioned the Co-Headteachers about the following issues:

- 5.10 North Chadderton School had been open to the children of key workers and for vulnerable pupils between 9.00am and 2.30pm. There had been no provision for any pupils over the half term holiday due to a member of staff at North Chadderton testing positive for COVID-19.
- 5.11 A LAC member questioned how those staff, who were back in school, were feeling. The Co-Headteachers explained that there had been three training sessions held with staff to build up their confidence before returning to school and that they had felt more secure once they had seen the risk assessment and the protocols that would be in place.

To ensure that no staff were working across both schools and crossing 'bubbles', two rotas had been established, one for staff working at North Chadderton and one for staff working at Fir Bank.

- 5.12 Individual risk assessments have been carried out with vulnerable staff and whilst most staff have now returned to school, two teaching assistants are working from home to support teachers in school.

Pupil Wellbeing

- 5.13 All pupils and families had been contacted during the partial closure either by face-to-face, email or text. Work has been set for pupils with paper copies sent home. There had been weekly phone calls from class teachers and additional provision arranged for SEN and vulnerable pupils. Parents had also been kept updated through The Fir Bank Flyer.
- 5.14 The numbers of vulnerable children attending North Chadderton had steadily grown and now 17/18 pupils are attending regularly.
- 5.15 A 30-hour mental health and wellbeing programme (Relax Kids) had been purchased and would be delivered in September 2020.
- 5.16 There had been a weekly Science investigation for pupils on Twitter and a virtual sports week held. There are plans in place for an end of year event for all Year 6 pupils.

Challenge/Support: LAC Members questioned the Co-Headteachers about the following issues related to pupil wellbeing:

- 5.17 With regard to a question about the numbers of pupils engaged in the work sent home, the Co-Headteachers explained that they had not set rigid expectations on pupils to respond to the learning sent home, as the circumstances for each individual child will have been different, and the spectrum of engagement has been wide.

A LAC member expressed a concern that some of the work submitted by pupils was not responded to and due to the difficult circumstances that some families were facing during lockdown, it should not be assumed that any child not returning work set by staff should reflect the attitude of their parents. It was suggested that the school needed to have high quality back up plans in place for September, including more learning in the virtual space.

Mrs McLaughlin explained that it was a Trust decision not to deliver virtual lessons during the partial closure and whilst the Trust and the school are planning for a full return of pupils in September 2020, she would pass on these concerns to central Trust staff.

ACTION: Mrs R McLaughlin

- 5.18 The LAC held a detailed and in-depth discussion about home learning during which the following issues were considered:
 - 5.18.1 The funding available for virtual learning platforms.
 - 5.18.2 The difficulties encountered with the use of Google Classroom.
 - 5.18.3 Even if the school fully reopens in September, there will be a need to plan for effective home learning to support any 'bubble' that may possibly have to be sent home. Parents need broader guidance of what they need to do in these circumstances.
 - 5.18.4 By September, all staff will have participated in the webinar on Schools Reopening after COVID-19.

- 5.19 The LAC thanked the Co-Headteachers for all they had done to support families and pupils during these unprecedented times.

6 SUMMER PROVISION

- 6.1 The LAC was informed that all three Trust Schools will be closed during the Summer holiday and the LA would take on the responsibility for the provision for vulnerable children during this period.
- 6.2 The Trust and schools are working on a new risk assessment and revised protocols in readiness for September 2020 and it is hoped that these may be available to circulate to parents before the end of term.
- 6.3 At this stage, the school is not planning for a staggered start but is planning for a staggered finish at the end of the school day to prevent a bottleneck of parents gathering. Breakfast club would be offered for pupils during the second week back.
- 6.4 It had been considered whether pupils should return in September to their original classes, but this would involve too many changes for the children. Instead, staff would write a letter to their current class and to their new class to help with this transition

Challenge/Support: LAC Members questioned the Co-Headteachers about the following issues related to the return to school in September:

- 6.5 The class 'bubbles' established on the return to school in September would be based on class units i.e. Years 1/2, Years 3/4 and Years 5/6 will be in 'bubbles'.
- 6.6 It is acknowledged that children will enter different 'bubbles' when childminders pick up children after school and it will be a challenge to maintain these 'bubbles' in the after-school provision. There is a meeting with the playgroup leader next week to see if it will be possible to adhere to the school's agreed protocols within the accommodation available. The priority for the school will be to minimise the crossing of 'bubbles' wherever possible. A LAC member asked the Co-Headteachers to do what was necessary to ensure that the after-school provision was preserved.
- 6.7 The staggered finish times may impact on some families with children in different classes meaning that they may have to wait a little longer at the end of the school day.
- 6.8 There has been a lot of cleaning taking place, the costs of which will be met from the school's budget. Many of the cleaners also work in the school kitchen so their catering hours have been reassigned to cleaning. However, from September, these staff will resume their normal catering duties and it will be necessary to purchase additional cleaning time.
- 6.9 With regard to any additional funding available to support these additional costs, the DfE has indicated that schools can only claim additional cleaning time where they have had a confirmed case of COVID-19 and cannot claim additional funding if their in-year surplus balances are projected to be higher than originally planned. The LA has provided the school with some PPE equipment and hand sanitiser.

- 6.10 A LAC member questioned how parents were feeling about returning their children to the school in September and about the levels of anxiety within the school community. LAC members suggested that there was some work to be done about building parent confidence in advance of the school fully reopening in September. The Co-Headteachers detailed all the communication that had taken place to reassure parents in advance of Year 6 pupils returning to school and it had been positive that 20 of the 31 pupils had come back. The Co-Headteachers agreed to look further at how they could offer reassurance to other parents.

ACTION: Co-Headteachers

- 6.11 As far as is possible in the circumstances, staff will be trying to make the school provision as normal as it can be. It was suggested that this was the message that parents needed to hear as they will not be able to come into school as they normally do for assemblies etc. The new risk assessments and protocols would be shared with parents as soon as possible.
- 6.12 The Trust had sent out a questionnaire to test parental confidence and of the 50% returned, parental confidence was split evenly. It was agreed that a further questionnaire be sent out to get parental views on the risk assessment and protocols, once these had been agreed and circulated. Fixed penalty notices would be put in place again from September for the unauthorised absence of pupils.

ACTION: Co-Headteachers

7 STAFFING

Mr Walker updated the LAC on the most recent staffing changes:

- 7.1 Mrs Debra <<>> would be leaving at the end of term and Mr Anthony Jones had been appointed to Year 5 from September 2020.
- 7.2 After 16 years' service at the school, Mr Stephen Kirkland has retired through ill health. He will be replaced as the Site Manager by Mr Mark Spiller on a thirty hours per week, all year-round contract. Mr Spiller will commence his duties during week 5 of the Summer break.
- 7.3 Ms Lindsey Harrop will be employed on a permanent contract as a mid-day supervisor.
- 7.4 **Challenge/Support:** A LAC member suggested that it would be useful to arrange for exit interviews to be carried out with those staff who are leaving and the Co-Headteachers agreed to follow this up.

ACTION: Co-Headteachers

8 SCHOOL BUDGET UPDATE

(Mrs Gillian Hindle joined the meeting for this item of business).

- 8.1 **Challenge/Support:** A LAC member questioned Mrs Hindle about the increase in the photocopying costs referred to earlier in the meeting. Mrs Hindle explained that she did not have the detailed figures to hand and would ask Mrs Christine Copson (Trust Senior Director of Finance) to investigate this issue.

ACTION: Mrs G Hindle/Mrs C Copson

8.2 Mrs Suzanne Millar took the LAC through the budget figures for the current financial year:

8.2.1 The budget predicted an in-year surplus of £13,012 by the end of the year and this may possibly increase to £26,000.

8.2.2 Whilst the school had lost income through lettings and catering, savings had been made through not immediately replacing the site manager, supply costs, insurance claim income and the cost of supporting an ECHP pupil.

8.3 **Challenge/Support:** LAC members questioned Mrs Millar about the budget figures:

8.4 With regard to a question about repaying parents the money for trips that have now been cancelled, Mrs Millar explained that she would be communicating with parents once the figures had been finalised.

ACTION: Mrs S Millar

8.5 With the in-year surplus predicted by the end of 2019/2020, the school will have approximately £100,000 in surplus balances and a plan is needed for how this will be used. The Trust has agreed that schools can retain their own surplus balances. It was noted that there may be costs to the school of putting in place the Nursery provision.

8.6 In the budget projections for the next five years, an in-year budget surplus of £3,043 is predicted during 2020/2021 and an in-year surplus of £9,901 during 2021/2022. The playgroup costings are not included in the projected budget figures for 2021/2022 and a business model has not yet been built in for the Nursery.

The LAC discussed the impact on the budget of future pupil numbers and the playgroup income compared to the Nursery income. Whilst it was suggested that a member of staff may be moved across from the main school to the Nursery in 2021, in addition to recruiting a teacher, Mrs Hindle explained that it may be necessary to TUPE the current playgroup staff across to the new Nursery. Mrs Hindle agreed to take legal advice in respect of this issue as the school was taking over the provision, even though it was being delivered as a separate entity and had decided to close.

ACTION: Mrs G Hindle

Mrs Hindle explained that she was waiting for the LA to issue an agreement in principle for the establishment of the Nursery at the school.

8.7 Mrs Millar agreed to investigate why the Pupil versus Teacher costs reduces in 2023/2024 in comparison to the previous year.

ACTION: Mrs S Millar

8.8 It was reported that the Trust was unconcerned at this stage about the projected in-year budget deficits from 2022/2023 onwards due to the uncertainties around future funding arrangements.

- 8.9 The COVID-19 catch up funding is not included in the figures circulated and will be additional income for the school.
- 8.10 A LAC member questioned the analysis provided on staffing costs and how this compared to the percentage spent on staffing in other similar schools.

9 NURSERY

- 9.1 This had been discussed during the consideration of the agenda item on the school budget. It has been established that the Nursery will not be a new build and will need to be provided for within the existing accommodation.

(Mrs Hindle was thanked for her participation and left the meeting at this point).

- 9.2 **Challenge/Support:** A question was raised about whether building regulation approval was needed to create the new learning area and Mrs Millar reported that she is still awaiting the Council to respond to her.

Subject to gaining the necessary approval, it was hoped that the work could be completed by Easter 2021 and provision for the costs of the work required had been included in the budget plan for 2020/2021.

10 APPOINTMENT OF LAC CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

- 10.1 The Chair reminded members that he would be leaving the LAC at the end of term and as Mr Matthews had also resigned during the year, the LAC would need a new Chair and Vice-Chair from the beginning of next term

- 10.2 As there would then be three vacancies on the LAC, members discussed different ways of recruiting new members with the necessary skills required.

- 10.3 **Challenge/Support:** A question was raised about whether the school should automatically have a place reserved for a representative of the school on the Trust Board, to fill the place vacated by Mr Matthews. The Clerk agreed to follow this up with the Trust.

ACTION: Clerk

- 10.4 Dr Rachel Cowen offered to serve as Chair of the LAC, on a trial basis, on the understanding that the school would be given a place for a school representative on the Trust Board. Miss Jennifer Wright also offered to serve as Vice-Chair on a trial basis.

- 10.5 The Co-Headteachers thanked Mr Reed for all the support that he had given them during his time as Chair and thanked Dr Cowen and Miss Wright for putting themselves forward as Chair and Vice-Chair. In response, Mr Reed thanked the LAC for the support given to him as Chair and commented on how well Mrs McLaughlin and Mr Walker had made the Co-Headship arrangement work so successfully.

11 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

11.1 Link to Finance/Risk

Mrs Bowler offered to take over Mr Matthew’s LAC link to finance and risk and offered to join the Trust’s Finance/Risk Committee when this is established.

11.2 Date and Time of Next LAC Meeting

RESOLVED: that the next LAC meeting be held on Thursday 15 October 2020 at 5.00pm.

11.3 GovernorHub

The Clerk explained that it was hoped to have GovernorHub in place for September 2020 and governors agreed to invite Mrs Eppleston to the next meeting to demonstrate how it will work to support LAC members.

12 **CONFIDENTIALITY**

There were no items of confidentiality.

(There being no further business, Committee members were thanked for their participation and the meeting was declared closed).

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____