

Directors' Note for Portfolio Groups

Portfolio title: Witheridge LGB

Date of meeting: 25th March 2021

Attended by (all virtually): Sue Wells (chair), Lucy Ratcliffe, Kathryn Stewart, Adrian Wells, Sue Wells, Darren Henson, Verity Goss (clerk)

Brief overview of discussion

Procedural items

Welcome and apologies

SW welcomed all to the meeting. AW led the opening prayer.

Declaration of business interests

None declared.

Sign off previous minutes

Agreed as an accurate record of the meeting with correction to spelling of AW's name.

Matters brought forward

None not later on the agenda.

Correspondence

None received.

Monitoring and Accountability

Data Review: Spring term progress

LR encouraged LGB members to ask questions throughout the report, rather than feeling they had to wait until the end. A local governor asked for clarification on a news report they had seen on Ofsted inspections – LR confirmed that there would be no formal Ofsted inspections until September.

Data review – LR reported that it had not been seen as beneficial to the children to be assessed immediately they returned to school after lockdown, which meant there was no assessment data for the spring term. It had been good for children to come back to school and be immersed in their topics. This had been the case with all TEAM schools. It was intended that assessments would take place in June, later than the normal time for SATs. This would allow time

to cover aspects of the curriculum that children had not been able to cover at home. The school would also complete the phonics and multiplication checks in June, which was not a requirement this year.

Transition to in person lessons from 8th March

LR reported that staff at school felt that the transition to in person lessons had been really successful – children had been keen to come back and see their friends, and were positive about their learning. There had been virtual parent meetings the week before children returned to school – this had given an opportunity for parents to raise any specific concerns that they had had about their children returning.

A parent governor reported that from what they had observed children had been keen to return to school, some had been nervous but were pleased to return. They felt that the parent meetings had been useful, and brought up good things to talk about.

Were staff comfortable being back with full face to face teaching? LR explained that staff meetings had continued through lockdown, and there had also been a TA meeting where staff were able to ask any questions they had. LR felt that this had helped settle any nerves. The risk assessment was still in place, and the school was as safe as it could be made. LR felt that as part of TEAM staff were well looked after and felt able to voice any concerns that they had.

What support is in place if staff need it? LR explained that the TEAM HR manager was very supportive, and would come in to meetings if needed with members of staff, and was proactive in keeping in touch with members of staff who might be a bit vulnerable because of something going on outside of school. Recently there had been introduced a wellbeing champion for staff, as well as the existing wellbeing champion for children. This had been worked on since lockdown – a staff member was receiving additional training to make sure that they are able to support the staff who need it. *Was this the mental health first aid training?* LR confirmed this was part of the training. Across the schools staff had been keen to take on this role.

LR explained that the Wellbeing Day, which staff had greatly appreciated the previous year, was being continued in 2021.

Attendance

Whole school attendance since 8th March was 98%, showing that children were engaged in school. Since September attendance was 95%, which was slightly lower than LR would like, but not at a level to cause concern. LR reminded local governors that absence due to Covid did not affect attendance figures.

Group Specific learning support

LR explained that catch up funding was being used in a number of ways to support the children. Reception children were being supported through the Nuffield project, which was a speech and language intervention programme. Witheridge had been chosen as a trial school, and staff had been keen to take part as Speech and Language had been a previous concern in the school. The project had been due to start in January, but had been delayed due the lockdown. Each child had three sessions a week. Specific children in KS1 and KS2 were also receiving support, and intervention groups were still in place.

Are there any plans for catch up in the summer holidays, as seen in the press? LR stated this had not been talked about at SLT level – the difficulty would be in staffing this. It was not yet known if there would be additional catch up funding. A governor raised concern for staff wellbeing if they were required to work over the summer.

Engagement & Safeguarding during Lockdown and after 8th March

LR stated that engagement had been strong – children were happy to be back in school and were keen to learn. There had been some minor behaviour issues, but in general school behaviour was good.

How did staff monitor the levels of engagement during lockdown? LR explained that the use of Google Classrooms had meant that staff had been able to see exactly what work children had done – they could see how much work had been returned, and also who had joined in the live sessions (or had contacted staff to let them know they weren't able to join in). LR explained the monitoring of engagement, and how staff supported families who were not engaging.

Did different families have different levels of support at home? LR confirmed that this was the case, and was to be expected – parents were not trained to teach, but were doing the best they could. LR stated that there were gaps in children's learning, as expected. Although there had not been formal assessment since the return to school, staff could observe where the gaps were and work to support these without having to do an official assessment.

Curriculum Two Year Rolling Programme

LR explained that this was a slight change, as previously the school had had a four year rolling programme in place. Research suggested that teachers teach something better the second time they do so. LR stated in her experience that four year programmes got changed before they were able to start again, and there would be better opportunities to revisit topics with a two year programme. LR stated that this was not a finalised document, and it would continue to be reviewed while in use. LR explained how it was possible to track a particular child's journey through the curriculum, and see how topics were revisited in different ways. This gave opportunities to revisit and embed their learning. Curriculum Maestro had been used to help set it up. LR explained the planned introduction of 'speak like an expert', as a way of revisiting what had been done in previous years and practising their knowledge.

LR stated that even though the plan was still being worked on, she had wanted to share it to demonstrate to local governors the way that staff were developing the curriculum.

Local governors felt that the plan looked clear and based on evidence of how children learn. LR stated that it was also encouraged for teachers to talk about their successful lessons and share with others. The opportunities to revisit lessons was appreciated.

Premises / Health and Safety (inc new playgrounds)

LR reminded local governors that PE funding was received by the school every year to help further the development of physical education in school. Although the planned expenditure couldn't take place last year, the funding had been rolled over to be used this year. It was planned to use this towards

new playground equipment – quotes were being put together.

The EYFS outside area was now fenced safely – the children were really enjoying the outside space. It was hoped to also purchase smaller playground equipment for the EYFS.

Was this adding to current equipment, or replacing it? LR stated that some pieces would be kept, but others were approaching the end of their life so would be replaced. Children had been asked to give suggestions of the equipment that they wanted, which had been taken into consideration.

Policy Review

- PHSE

LR explained that guidance around PHSE, specifically RSE had changed recently. The development of this had been taking place for some time, and had been interrupted by Covid. The policies had been put together across all TEAM schools, taking into account church schools/non church schools, as there were slight differences in how it was approached. LR explained that the guidance included thinking about healthy relationships with others from an early age, and gave examples of how they were included in the EYFS curriculum as part of thinking about the world.

What was the local church involvement stated in the policy? LR explained that the PHSE association were keen that children did not just hear one viewpoint, but it was helpful to hear from a trusted adult that wasn't a teacher, and it would include visits from NHS workers, fire department etc.

Local governors agreed the policy.

- Assessment and Feedback

LR stated that this had been in development since September, and had been updated to reflect practise in the school. Policy stated that the LGB were responsible for being familiar with statutory and non statutory assessment in the school – training would be available for LGB members to fully understand the assessments.

Local governors agreed the policy.

MAT Issues

Report on TEAM SIP team, spring term

LR explained the different sections of the SIP, which explained local governor responsibilities.

Local governors felt it would be useful to have a sessions where they could roleplay being asked the type of questions Ofsted would ask, to get a more rounded idea of what areas Ofsted would want to be included. Local governors felt it would also be useful to have copies of any data shared at the meeting, ideally in advance, to be able to support the school the best way they could.

Blue Sky Education – Resources and training opportunities (chair)

SW explained BlueSky to local governors. SW stated she was finding it easy to use, with good resources. Currently a lot of courses were online and at no cost, so were very easy to access. Local governors were encouraged to take part in relevant courses.

Report on TEAM Trustees meeting 23rd March

Relevant points covered in earlier items.

Strategic

Review pupil numbers, projected numbers, pre-school numbers

Currently 89 on roll, (111 including pre-school). After Easter expected to be 120 including pre-school. Pre-school currently full on two days. LR confirmed that this was due to the maximum capacity of the room, rather than staffing. Pre-school was doing well, and parents were expressing interest early – already had some enquiries for children to start in January 2023.

Matter brought forward by the chair

Q Card – SW explained these gave examples of the sort of questions governors could ask to challenge the head of school about specific topics, and it was not intended that all questions would be used at once. SW felt that these had helped in forming challenging questions.

Date of next meetings: Thursday 13th May, 5.30pm, Ofsted questions session. Thursday 15th July, 5.30pm, LGB.