

Directors' Note for Portfolio Groups

Portfolio title: Brayford/Umberleigh LGB

Date of meeting: 25th June 2020, 2.00pm, Held Virtually

Attended by: Corrine Smith (head of school), Rhian Nicholas (CEO), Penny Wignall, Sue Davies, Melani Marcolini, Verity Goss (clerk),

Briony Parsons (trust business manager, until 2.29pm)



Brief overview of discussion

Procedural items

Welcome and apologies

PW welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Helen Cooke, Charlotte Janisch, Rachael Weeks and Lucy House. PW noted it was unfortunate that there had been a number of short notice apologies, but it was agreed to continue with the meeting to update on the current situation in the schools.

Sign off previous minutes

To be agreed at next meeting.

Matters arising brought forward by Chair

None.

Correspondence

None.

Monitoring and Accountability

Covid 19 Challenges

CS stated that the main objective at present was to ensure that the children were happy and healthy. Staff had found it hard when schools had had to close in March. CS explained the difficulties in setting work for home, due to the differences in home circumstances for different children. CS explained the communication with parents during this time, and ensuring that parents were able to communicate with school staff.

CS explained that staff were aware going into lockdown of some families that would find the time very difficult. CS explained support offered to these families.

CS reported that most children in the eligible year groups had returned to school, and that both schools would be welcoming back children from all year groups from Monday. This was possible due to the small class sizes and the spaces available at the schools. CS confirmed that staff were keen to do this, and that there was a lot of confidence from parents. Governors thanked CS and all schools staff for putting in the work needed to ensure the safety of children and the confidence of the parents. CS confirmed that children who remained at home would still be provided with work to do, which would be similar to the work children were doing in the classroom.

Staffing – at initial reopening there had been reduced staffing, which helped to present a calm environment to the children. All staff were now back to working their contracted hours in their normal roles. CS explained how staff who had initially had anxieties had been supported and helped to resolve their anxieties. RN stated that during lockdown some Brayford/Umberleigh staff had helped to cover keyworker children provision at Pilton Bluecoat, while others had continued to provide and support home learning.

SD highlighted the workload of the leadership team throughout, citing the guidance documents that were frequently updated.

Umberleigh ceiling – quote to install false ceilings in hall and classroom had been accepted, and was under budget. Work was due to commence at the beginning of the summer holidays.

Park and Play – ESFA had given permission to proceed with the land purchase, with a lease agreement with the village hall. A meeting with the buying hub from the ESFA had been arranged, which would run the tender process for the work. Governors were pleased with this result.

Possible extension at Brumblebees – currently waiting on results of CIF bids for other projects within TEAM, after which the architect would be asked to come out and give advice on the ideas for use of the space. A similar project was currently being looked at in another school.

BP left 2.29pm.

Curriculum update – Curriculum Maestro

CS explained that staff had chosen topics for the summer term that could also be done at home. The infant classes had looked at nature, including minibeasts and animals, while the juniors had included Europe and rainforests. CS stated that staff had tried to make the work as interesting and appealing as possible, making use of mathletics and other websites that children might enjoy using, including game based activities.

Staff had been mindful that some children may have struggled with motivation at home. All children had had internet access – some had needed to borrow laptops from the school. CS reported that there had been varied participation in work sent home – a number of families had

focussed more on life skills and other experiences.

CS reported that the children who had returned to school were happy to be back in school and seeing their friends. Children were very good at ensuring distancing and handwashing. CS reported that for most the time at home had been positive, with many children doing activities they did not normally have time to do.

CS explained what was being offered instead of the normal transition days for children joining YR this year, including video tours of the classroom/telephoning parents. CS stated some children may start in September with half days until children were used to it. Nine children would be starting reception in Umberleigh, and five in Brayford.

Curriculum Maestro – CS reported that staff were starting to use this to plan out the topics they would be using in September. Overarching theme in autumn term was ‘saving the world’, which would be geography and science based. Staff were being careful to plan similar topics in different year groups, which would be helpful for children talking to each other about their learning, in assemblies and for sharing trips. CS gave examples of the topics chosen.

CS explained that the Curriculum Maestro planning started with a memorable experience, and had a section at the end where children reflected on all they had done through the topic, which was similar to how TEAM had handled topics in the past. Curriculum Maestro also enabled staff to track progression within a subject through a child’s time at school, and also linked books and lessons in different subjects that linked to the topic. Curriculum Maestro also highlighted what areas had not been covered, and was also able to record data/attainment.

Governors felt that the e-mails sent home addressed to children had been very positive, and helped children know staff were still thinking of them. It was felt to be positive that children were able to return before the summer holiday. All were aware that there would be levels for a lot of children – staff were very aware of children’s mental health and wellbeing at this time. It was known that pastoral support would be very important as children returned to school. Children in different circumstances (eg rural/urban) would likely have had different experiences of lockdown, so would need different support. It was hoped that overall children would have had a positive experience over lockdown, with increased time spent with their family.

Safeguarding – partly discussed earlier in the meeting. SD reported that she felt very confident in the leadership team, who were extremely mindful of vulnerable children, and had done their best to provide all the support that they could.

Schools reopening update – included in earlier item.

Numbers –

Umberleigh – expected 45 in September, with ten Brumblebees.

Brayford – expected 34 in September, with 5 Brumblebees. A few new families had moved to the area. Possibility of being able to display a board at the football ground in South Molton – cost to be investigated.

Numbers were looking positive for both schools, although staff were aware it would be difficult if children were still required to be in bubbles of 15 in September.

Staff welfare – discussed in earlier item.

CS felt it was important to note the support that had been received from the other schools and the TEAM central staff, and felt the school communities had been very fortunate in this.

RN stated that she was proud of how all the heads of school had worked through this time, making the best of the challenging circumstances.

Governors thanked CS, school staff and all at TEAM.

Meeting ended 3.19pm