



**Minutes of the Avenue Junior School**

**Full Governing Board Extraordinary Virtual Meeting**

**on Tuesday 26th May 2020 at 9.30 am**

**GOVERNORS PRESENT:** Nania Poulson (Chair), Mike Grimble, Debbie Dismore (EHT) Lisa Crossman, Ally Ireson, Margaret Bird, Rachel Paley, Mike Hooper (H of S), Jo Thompson, Nicola Teasdale, Sian Jones.

**Clerk:** Sheila Lewis-Smith

**Purpose of the Meeting**

**To examine the documented risk assessment in relation to school re-opening to more pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020**

No	Item
1	<b>Welcome and Apologies / Consent for Absences</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apologies were received and accepted from Pete Hundleby and Jason Menezes. JM offered to conduct a Health and Safety walk around the school in relation to the Risk Assessment under consideration.</li> <li>• Absences - Sam Rowbury, Baiba Zivtins and Graham Moss.</li> <li>• The meeting was quorate.</li> </ul>
2	<b>Declaration of Business Interests / Conflict of Interest</b> <i>To give governors the opportunity to declare any new business interest or potential conflict of interest arising from the agenda for the meeting.</i>
	None declared.
3	<b>Examination the documented risk assessment in relation to school re-opening to more pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020</b>
	NP explained the context of the meeting, which was to examine the documented risk assessment in relation to the school opening to more pupils from 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2020. National Governance Association (NGA) guidance was being followed in relation to the role of governance at this time.  It was stressed that whilst this was an operational issue to be addressed by the Senior

Leadership of the school, the governing board had a corporate entity responsibility for the Health and Safety in the school.

Two documents had been made available on Governor Hub for information prior to the meeting; i) Health and Safety Assessment COVID ii) Increasing School Provision Checklist 22.5.20.

NP advised governors that they should be assessing the Risk Assessment against a number of key points, as suggested by the NGA.

- a) That it is based on a credible framework.
- b) That it takes account of relevant advice given by local health and safety teams, including the Local Authority, (LA)
- c) That it takes into account feedback obtained through the engagement and wider discussions with parents, staff and union representatives about opening safely for more pupils.
- d) That it aligns with the school's plan to increase the number of pupils gradually and methodically.
- e) Makes informed assumptions about the take-up of places.
- f) Considers remote education which may or may not be able to continue for children not in school
- g) Considers the specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

In response to d), MH has devised a logistics plan which is to take Year 6 in on a phased and gradual way. This will give the SLT time to learn from the situation and react as needed.

In response to e), MH said that Year 6 parents had been sent a form regarding the take-up of places. 82 responses had been received out of 120 pupils. 67 had said yes to attending and 15 had declined to return their children to school. It was anticipated that around 25 would eventually not take up places.

**Governors agreed that items a) to g) inclusively had been addressed in the two documents provided.**

In addition, the governors went on to consider the robustness of the various measures; in particular –

- The measures that can be implemented to minimise the contact and mixing of pupils and staff.
- The procedures the school is able to put in place to ensure good hygiene practices
- The procedures the school is able to put in place to ensure adequate and regular cleaning
- The measures that the school is able to take to minimise the risk of contact with anyone with Covid-19 symptoms
- Additional measures put in place to protect staff and pupils, such as those who are shielding or with health issues.
- Work with other school-based provision.

**Q: What is an acceptable ratio of children to staff member for you? What is the tolerance for staff sickness/isolation that means that the ratio would not be sustainable? How would**

**you “deselect” children to make the ration sustainable?**

A: In order to maintain social distancing, the ratio is 1:10 in a “bubble”, possibly with a Teaching Assistant in each classroom. It would not be possible to change the pupils in the bubble, as this would involve mixing more children. 12 teachers would be required to run 12 groups of 10. However, it was felt unlikely that all 120 pupils would attend, so this would give spare capacity in terms of staffing. If there is an issue with ratios, children would have to attend on a rota, with the children of key workers given priority.

**Q: What happens if a child breaches physical distancing / is violent / spits etc.?**

A: The Behaviour Policy has been reviewed in light of the Covid situation and children would be sent home. Personal Protective Equipment is available where staff can foresee such events. If the child has SEND, conversations are had with the parents. Some EHCP children are attending on reduced hours or not in, by agreement with the parents. The LA Inclusion Team is working on providing advice but if they are unsafe, they will not be in school.

**Q: If a child was to be sent home, would this count as exclusion?**

A: This still needs clarification from the LA.

If a child were to become upset and could not be comforted at the 2 metre distance required, the parents would be called; the school would do all it could to support the child.

The use of the “bubble” of children tries to address social distancing but this could be difficult to maintain consistently. DD said that the children could be involved with working on reminders about social distancing. MH said staff have already devised rules for playing games.

**Q: Will practices be reviewed and built into the logistics plan?**

A: This will be done on a daily basis – hence the gradual increase in numbers taken into school. A new plan will be devised if needed; the school is awaiting an update to DfE guidance, expected before the end of May.

**Q: How much physical restraint to you envisage being needed for the Year 6 cohort?**

A: There are no pupils in Year 6 with physical restraint on a Behaviour Plan but it is anticipated that given the nature of children, social distancing could be an issue. The school / SENDCo is working with parents/staff to get children with EHCP back into school.

**Q: What is the view of staff including Senior Leaders re expanding provision from both a physical and mental health perspective?**

A: There has been a staff questionnaire and virtual meetings with staff and union representative. Nine responses have been received, all of which were confident with the SLT and that appropriate measures were being put in place. More staff replies were still to be received. All vulnerable staff will stay at home. DD commented that she and MH felt it was a huge responsibility, bringing back children to school.

**Q: Where does the school stand legally re: safety in the workplace e.g. if a worker / pupil contracts Covid at school. Is the LA or school, or no one, legally responsible?**

A: NP had already explained the corporate responsibility held by the governing board. Unions

had said that this was a LA responsibility but DD and MH would have welcomed more advice and clarity from the LA. Again, DD stressed the huge responsibility she felt as a senior leader in a maintained school, where information was slow in arriving.

**Q: Is there an email trail to show the school has made contact with the LA regarding issues/concerns?**

A: Yes. DD has raised issues via the Cluster Link, Sue Dale, who has been excellent in taking questions and finding out answers. The replies from the LA have been quite generic, so not particularly helpful.

**Q: If the school decides it cannot open safely, what are the legal / financial repercussions or penalties?**

A: It is not known what the government might do about schools that do not reopen but at the moment schools are not having their budgets taken away. Some have been offered supply staff, if that has been the issue, but there is not an endless supply of teachers and staff.

**Q: To what extent is data modelling on the likely evolution of the infection rate in schools factoring into the discussion of whether it's the right time to open to additional children? What is the SLT's opinion of Independent SAGE group's suggestion that the rate that children would acquire the infection in school looks likely to halve if opening is left for a further two weeks beyond 1st June? (Based on current national data: 1st June = 1 to 2 per 100 likely to get infected; 15th June = less than 1 per 100 infected)**

A: DD said that one of the most important factors was how families acted at home. If social distancing was not in place, this could bring Covid back into the school, regardless of the measures put in at school. Governors said that it would be worth reiterating the social distancing message to parents and cited the example of children gathering after school in Heigham Park. MH observed that there was a balance between the benefits of attending school and the risk of Covid.

**Q: What is the position on families who want to hold off on returning their Y6 children to school until they're more comfortable with the local/national picture on infection rates?**

A: Firstly, there is no penalty for keeping children off school at present.

A governor said that there was some confusion amongst parents as to whether children could attend school later in the term, perhaps after a few more weeks. MH and DD said that this was possible, but new "bubbles" would need to be developed, as children could not be mixed. Parents would need to state their preferences in order for the school to make appropriate plans to admit the children. The school could not manage with children attending spasmodically. MH agreed to develop this question in the FAQs that had been devised for parents. It was suggested that set starting dates could be agreed with parents.

**Q: What's the protocol for shutting the school again in response to an increase of the infection rate/an increase in school-based cases of Covid? What is 'too high', and who calls it?**

A: This is an operational decision that would be made by the Executive Head and Head of School, based on future risk assessments. In this event, DD would discuss the issues with the Co-Chairs of Governors to explain the situation. This decision would then be communicated

<p>to parents.</p> <p><b>Q: Ventilation seems to be an important means of mitigating the spread of the virus; apologies if I missed it but there doesn't seem to be specific mention of as many doors and windows as possible being kept open in classrooms?</b></p> <p>A: It is planned to keep the building as ventilated as possible.</p> <p><b>Q: Has the LA or another authority has provided the school with current information about infection rates in Norwich - will it do so? How frequently will be this provided? How will the school know what the local level of risk is at any given point? Who will decide if the risk exceeds a safe operating limit?</b></p> <p>A: There has been no specific information from the LA regarding rates of infection or medical information. The school knows the same information as the general public.</p> <p>Governors expressed their shock that there was no centralised information. DD said that the unions had looked for scientific evidence and had struggled.</p> <p><b>Q: If a member of staff or a pupil becomes symptomatic, will they be required to have a test for Covid-19? What happens if a child returns a few days after having a fever but has not had a test?</b></p> <p>A: They would be required to isolate for the required time. The school would require them to access tests; the staff test outcomes are shared with the school.</p> <p><b>Q: Is there specific guidance on children with asthma?</b></p> <p>A: There is no specific DfE guidance on asthma (but it can be found on Asthma UK) and we would not give any as we are not medical professionals. Where children fit into a vulnerable category (asthma would be included here) then what we have advised is medical advice is sought. Everyone's asthma is different &amp; the degree of severity is different so that decision would have to be made by parents and discussed with us as necessary.</p> <p><b>Q: Is there a minimum take-up number for the school re-opening all else being OK? If very few return would they come under the current key-worker provision?</b></p> <p>A: There is no minimum take up for us to reopen - however it is looking like a vast majority take up</p> <p><b>Q: Will the curriculum be the same for the home learners as the children in school?</b></p> <p>A: Yes. There will be Maths and English and a Curriculum project. The offer is the same, so as not to disadvantage any children. This would address issues of children who did not initially decide to return to school missing any of the planned work.</p> <p><b>Q: Transition to secondary school- has there been any contact with the secondary schools?</b></p> <p>A: Yes, the Norwich Opportunity Area schools are trying to organise transition opportunities. The City of Norwich School is planning on half a day of contact for each child and has made contact with parents and children via an email and a video message.</p> <p>With regards to pupils due to enter Year 3, MH and the Head of Recreation Road School are liaising and a meeting is planned between staff on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. Transition activities might include a virtual tour of the school, small groups of parents invited to virtual meetings and pastoral</p>
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	<p>staff making contact with parents.</p> <p>SJ observed that a local secondary school is only offering restricted sessions for 3 days a week and by invitation only on 2 days of the week. The offer that Avenue Junior School is planning a credit to the school and a huge piece of work.</p> <p><b>Q: Would DD and MH feel more confident if the re-opening date was delayed until 8<sup>th</sup> June, not the 1<sup>st</sup> June?</b></p> <p>A: We want to get started and learn from the experience. It still might be that the group due to start on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June might have to be delayed but having the keyworkers' children in has given a good background to the experience. A slower, gradual start will help the school to know if they are prepared and confident to build up the numbers.</p> <p><b>Q: Is it worth considering grouping all the vulnerable children together?</b></p> <p>A: Although the school has some information about vulnerable children, it is not possible to know all the information about families. Governors said that the school had done the risk assessment and all it could to safeguard everyone but it should be recognised that social distancing could be compromised, given the nature of the children.</p> <p>MG observed that the purpose of governors scrutinising the Risk Assessment was to ensure the school had considered all aspects it possibly could. It was noted that the Risk Assessments had not been moderated by the LA. It was suggested that governors / school should register their disappointment with the way advice from the LA had been managed. MG said that there were groups of governors and headteachers meeting at a local and county wide level.</p> <p>DD summed up by saying that she had contacted the LA via the cluster to raise concerns around the lack of clarity and information provided to schools. Not enough data had been received in order to inform decisions. The school needed to be confident that it had reliable information from the LA, and this was not felt to have been the case.</p> <p>DD said she and MH would remain constantly vigilant regarding risk and would close the school if it was deemed necessary to keep pupils and staff safe.</p> <p><b>Having scrutinised the Risk Assessment and raised questions, the governors agreed to support the decisions of the Senior Leadership Team with regard to the plans made to re-open the school to more pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.</b></p>
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Meeting closed at 10.35

Signed as a true and accurate record.		Date
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