

CORE GROUP REVIEW AND PLANNING MEETING (remote)
Monday 8th June 2020 at 12 noon
Minutes

Present:

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| Simon Ball | Head of School - DCE |
| Paul Blackburn | Chair - WDCE Governors |
| Andrew Bradley | Chair of Governors – St. Wilfrids |
| Bev Burrows | Headteacher– St. Elisabeths |
| Paul Good | Chair – Trust & DCE (MDBE) |
| Lee Jamieson | Chair - St. Elisabeth's Governors |
| Hannah Large | Head of School - WDCE |
| Helena Miller | Head of School – St. Wilfrids |
| Matt Whitehead | Executive Headteacher |

In attendance

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| Kathy Crotty | Clerk |
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1. Welcome

Paul Good explained the reason for bringing the meeting forward was due to his concern about Heads having their weekends interrupted and the announcement on Friday that the R rate in the North West of England has increased above one.

2. Proposed re-admittance of pupils to Trust Schools

MW provided the latest advice from two LA's and reported not much has changed since last Friday. MCC are saying media coverage is correct but there is no data on the R rate (virus reproduction value) for local areas within the city. Manchester public health officers are reporting the rate of infection is low compared to other areas in the region. Manchester is 293.4 per 100,000 of the population, other areas are above 300 per 100,000. MCC are reporting it is safe to continue with the phased reopening of schools.

Stockport MBC are giving similar advice. The R rate for the North West is above one but they acknowledge that different areas in the NW have differing areas in the NW have different data sets. The NHS in Stockport can cope, there has been sustained and consistent reductions in key data and any new infections are

manageable. In Stockport there has been less than 10 cases per day since the 10th May 2020. There are sufficient tests to meet further demands. The LA is confident they have capacity to cope with a second peak. The data for Stockport shows cases are reducing.

Both LAs cannot guarantee there is no risk, but they believe the wider opening is manageable. The Regional School Commissioner, states an R number of one reflects a number of different factors and this is a school decision. Increases in the death rate would be a factor affecting decisions.

The Trust has received correspondence from trade unions, NAS/UWT are asking the Trust to not readmit more pupils but DCE and WDCE admitted more children last week.

The numbers of children in school varies in each of the schools. SECE has the lowest number of KW/V (key worker and vulnerable) children. A reduced or phased opening will depend on the numbers. All schools have been open for eight weeks, some schools with approximately 30 children and there have been no issues raised.

DCE has about 100 children in today and there are about 90 children in WDCE. Every school in the Trust has done all they can to reduce the risks. The risk reduction is more robust than it was in the early days. The playgrounds are now zoned and the KW/V children were not social distancing and this seems to have had no impact on infection.

Staff and trade unions are anxious. The Executive Headteacher recommended the schools in the Trust continue with the plans to admit more children into school. The children are looking forward to returning. SWCE and SECE have not had many KW/V children so they might need to take a different approach. It was reported South Manchester Heads generally are continuing with their plans. SECE and SWCE are anticipating an increase in KW children returning to school.

3. Impact of this information about the R rate on each school

St. Elisabeths

Bev Burrows outlined the plans for SECE. Reddish Heads are communicating with each other and they are concerned as they are right on the Tameside border and the primary schools have siblings in Tameside schools. Tameside MBC has delayed the introduction of more children into their schools due the increase in the R rate. LA Heads are writing to LA to suggest opening on the 22nd June 2020 to give time for the R rate to drop. The socio-economic backgrounds and higher deprivation levels of families at SECE means there is a higher risk of transmission. Reddish Vale nursery and other local schools are delaying readmittance of more children and the list was shared.

MW suggested there are different parameters for each school. For SECE, their dealing with delaying the phased reopening is less of an issue as this is consistent

with the LA and other schools in the cluster. To delay the wider opening at SECE and SWCE could occur, but for SWCE there could be a parental backlash as the other Manchester schools in the Trust have continued with the wider re-opening. The CoG from SECE reported the community feelings indicate a poor response to opening for Yr6 and he supported deferring wider opening for one week.

It was agreed St. Elisabeths would delay wider readmittance in line with other schools in the cluster and Stockport MBC guidance.

St. Wilfrids

Helena Miller reported SWCE is communicating with other Heads in the cluster and reported local schools around Northenden are delaying wider opening by two weeks. The RA (risk assessment) is robust but the R rate has affected staff anxieties. The school was relying on some staff who needed a risk assessment due to their vulnerabilities. The wider opening planned for Tuesday 9th June (tomorrow) is concerning. The risks are minimal but staff who have not been in school are becoming anxious due to the national news and local information sharing on social media about the government having not met the five measures. The KW provision has increased.

Andrew Bradley felt the decision is difficult and recommended on balance to go forward with the planned reopening. If parents are not confident, they will not send their children to school. Staff confidence is an issue and this will have to be monitored. Staff need to be reminded about social media information. There are pockets in the community where social distancing is not occurring and this is a worry for staff. If there is any evidence of infection rates increasing then the school has to be prepared to close.

There have been home visits and staff are reporting back in a variety of locations, families are not following guidelines and this is affecting staff anxiety. The trade union guidance is to not return to work if the R rate is above one, which it is. It was reiterated there have been no issues at DCE and WDCE with the wider opening.

For SWCE, a delay to the 22nd June is very different than Manchester, and MW suggested they move in tandem with other Northenden primary schools. There have been some parents who have contacted the school for a place have now said they are not taking their place due to the R rate. Delaying readmitting more children to the 15th June would give a one-week delay and this was supported. The school will still readmit KW children on request. It was felt it was important to not dissipate the current enthusiasm from staff.

It was agreed St. Wilfrids will delay wider opening for one week given there is an increase in KW children this week, and will readmit more Yr6 children on the 15th June and Yr1 the on the 17th June.

DCE and WDCE

The question was asked if there have been any parents who have changed their mind about their children returning to school due to R rate rising. This has not happened. In DCE all children who said they wanted a place have come into school today despite the R rate rising. There are still KW parents contacting the school for a place so the pupil numbers are increasing. IN WDCE the Yr1 children and reception children came back to school last week. Only three children from reception chose not to come back, and all Yr1 children returned. KW children are increasing and the school is at capacity for all three bubbles.

It was agreed DCE and WDCE to continue with the current plans.

4. General discussion

It was noted there are inconsistencies regarding the bubbles of 15, and KW children have not been in bubbles. In DCE, three staff are returning to work tomorrow and a fourth member later this week. Staff in different schools may question the differences in the different schools. There will be anomalies and differences reflecting the point of opening and the R rate at that time. The LA has confirmed the schools do not need to close based on this latest information about the R rate which is a regional figure. SWCE AND SECE are looking at wider admittance after the new R rate information was received. There was little support for readmittance after 22nd June as this is so late in the term.

The review of school openings will occur as the R rate information is shared, if this rises this creates an issue but there are other factors to be taken into consideration. The R rate is currently between 0.7 and 0.9 nationally and if this rises to 1.0 there might be a national directive. Manchester and Stockport LAs are saying their regions are declining despite the overall North West figures.

It was noted when shops open next week the demand for places will increase as other workers will need places for their children. However, the year groups not included in the wider opening are not going to be allocated a place if their working parents are not key workers.

It was clarified delayed admittance of more children does not need the risk assessments to change and the health and safety measures remain the same.

It was suggested SLT at SECE need to meet on a Monday to meet to make decisions so new admissions need to on a Tuesday. If there is a sudden spike there will have to be quick decisions. There are 8 Yr 6 children (out of 36?) who have indicated they are returning to SECE.

In answer to the questions about a KW increase at SECE BB reported there has been more requests from parents who are TAs. Provision has been made for the increase in EYFS and KS1 group and a KS2 group for the KW children. These are low numbers. DCE and WDCE have had higher numbers and the contagion rates have not been an issue. This message needs to be shared with the staff and the community.

Hannah Large reported on staff well-being and morale. The WDCE experience has been much hard work in the planning but the actual readmittance has worked well. The staff have been more reassured by coming into school.

The NAHT branch officer, Sam Offord has asked PHE for specific data for localities to help inform decisions.

BB reported staff have requested PPE today and some staff are wearing masks and aprons. It was accepted this is a personal decision.

PG informed the meeting there is no strategic thinking at national level about the progression of the wider opening of schools. PG shared anxieties including the summer months. The Trust needs to start thinking about September re-opening and provision for key workers children over the summer.

The question was asked if there are any issues around pick up time and drop off time. In WDCE some reception children came early but the school is using a one-way system, HL informed other heads the staggered starts are important. There have been no issues of children clinging or parents staying. Clear advice was given by HL to bring all children in on the same day with staggered times for starting and ending.

DCE and WDCE had produced information and a video for families to explain the new arrangements for coming into school. As soon as parents understood where to stand all went well. Parents waved children into the playground and there were no issues. The children have been less clingy, parents have prepared them well. The school had indicated they could not take children from parents. The start and end times are the vulnerable times of the day.

The continuance of the Core Groups is to be discussed by Trustees at the meeting scheduled for this Wednesday and Trustees will consider holding remote meetings for LGB.

5. Date and time of next meeting

Monday 15th June 2020 at 12 noon. The clerk will send the Zoom invitation on the morning of the meeting.

6. Closing Prayer

Andrew Bradley led the closing prayer

Meeting closed at 13.25