

CORE GROUP REVIEW AND PLANNING MEETING (remote)
Monday 11th 2020 at 2pm
Minutes

Present:

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

Kathy Crotty	Clerk
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1. Introductions and attendance

Paul Good welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Update on each school

WDCE – Hannah Large

There are 26 children in school today and another family coming into school tomorrow. There are 33 children expected this week. There are no changes to home schooling since last week.

DCE – Simon Ball

There are rising numbers of children in school and the Trust schools seem to have higher numbers than other local schools. There were 29 children in school today. There are 50 children entitled to a place and more families are taking this up. There is a slow increase in numbers.

Home learning is running smoothly and is well set up. All staff are in a routine.

SECE – Bev Burrows

There are eight children in school today and the numbers have increased to a maximum of 12. About half of children are engaging with learning via Seesaw. One

house call has occurred as the school was unable to make contact. The school is checking which families will need a place over the half term holidays as the school is due for a two- week holiday returning back on the 8th June 2020.

SWCE – Helena Miller

The numbers have dropped and there are about 12 children less than usual. There are no changes regarding home learning. Parents (apart from one) seem happy with the work set. SWCE also has a two-week holiday scheduled.

3. Response to latest information on lockdown

MW reported the instructions from the Prime Minister from the announcement last night were unclear and reservations were outlined. All school must open knowing social distancing is not possible. The current expectations mean every classroom would be utilised at 15 children in a class and this still does not enable a two-meter distance. All staff would be required to be in school meaning Yrs2 to Yrs5 would not have teachers allocated for their home learning. This also assumes full staffing.

Toileting and cleaning are issues for schools.

The rationale for Reception and Yr1 children to return to school was questioned as these age groups are impossible to socially distance. The rationale for Yr6 was also questioned as it is the Yr5 who will be required to undertake SATS next year. It was suggested the younger children being returned to school was related to academic development.

NAHT have produced a list of questions for the government and this was shared with the committee.

WDCE – Hannah Large

WDCE has fifty or sixty key worker families who are expected to take up their places.

DCE – Simon Ball

SB reported there might be some spacing possible, but not two meters. The virus will be around for a long time and DCE will manage the situation as required even though this is an old building. There are issues about staffing smaller classes and the challenge of home learning. It was stated some European countries have a distance less than two meters, however even spreading children a meter apart is difficult. Breaks will have to be staggered to avoid congestion.

SECE – Bev Burrows

In SECE one classroom can only fit eight children if the two-meter distance was applied. The issues identified by NAHT are paramount and final guidelines are needed. There are practicalities such as does the school need to order individual pencil cases and tape the school to mark out distances.

SWCE – Helena Miller

There are more questions than answers and staff are anxious. The building presents some practical challenges if the school attempts to socially distance children.

Paul Good noted as the work force re-engages then school places will be needed. The choice of younger children returning to school first is not the same approach as in Europe and Yr2 children returning first might have made more sense. The advice is

questionable and there has been minimal consultation. There is a concern this could present public liability issues for the Trust.

It was suggested social distancing might not be the most important issue and hygiene might be the issue to be managed. Children might have to wear masks. MW confirmed hygiene is key, but culpability is also an issue. MW felt clearer advice is needed from the DfE and guidance will be implemented as best as it can be. The next three weeks are crucial in the decision-making process. If there are spikes in the transmission of Covid-19 then this phasing will not progress.

The Government has given three weeks' notice of opening schools as asked for previously. The DfE are apparently sending a 50 page document today. It was noted Germany has relaxed measures, but schools are not yet open for younger; children this takes place at the end of May. Some evidence points to the transmission rate of Covid-19 rising again in certain hot spots. The view was expressed that this is a gamble to send the younger age groups back into school. If the government is being guided by Scandinavian Countries experience, it was noted their class sizes are nearer 20.

4. Finance Update

MW had shared the end of April report in advance of the meeting and this report covers eight months of the year.

WDCE: There is no deficit but over the summer term the school is paying Kids Club staff and there is no income. This might create a deficit of approximately £30,000 but there is still a healthy carry forward of approximately £280,000.

DCE: The non-staff costs in DCE are reducing and this gives a projected deficit of between £55,000 and £60,000 rather than the projected £70,000. The deficit is being addressed and there is a projected carry forward of approximately £100,000 to take into 2020-21.

SECE: The accounts for SECE are from November 2019 and currently show an in-year surplus of £57,000. Staff costs higher but non-staff costs are lower. There is a projected £70,000 surplus projected add to the carry forward.

SWCE: The projections show a break-even budget instead of a slight deficit. The school is projected to carry forward approximately £180,000.

The question was asked about provision for additional cleaning and PPE and MW reported masks have already been purchased for staff at WDCE and DCE. Children would need to provide their own. Invoices will be kept separate as Covid-19 related costs are expected to be reimbursed. LJ reported on cleaning products available which claim to last up to 30 days. These are expensive but are advertised as being able to deal with viruses. The question was asked if schools have to purchase these or will the Trust purchase them and Heads were asked to wait and see what the government advises before decisions are taken.

5. Vulnerable children

Issues are recorded in the Confidential Part 2 minutes.

6. Staffing issues relating to school opening

Some staffing items are reported in the Part 2 Confidential Minutes
The CFO has been appointed and the interviews went well.
Manchester Teachers Alliance are looking to place students with the Trust.

7. Governance issues

This is reported in the Confidential Part 2 minutes.

8. Date and time next meeting

Monday 18th May at 1.30

(With the proviso that this committee might have to meet earlier depending on the content of the DfE guideline document).

9. AOB

Children at DCE and WDCE were praised for their recording words for the National Academy online assemblies.

10. Closing prayer

The closing prayer was led by Andrew Bradley. The theme related to the Feast Day of Julian of Norwich.