

**St James and Emmanuel MAT
Core Group Zoom meeting
Monday 13th July 2020 at 13.00
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. Welcome Introductions

Paul Good welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Actions from the last minutes

Action: MW to ask the DfE who will be defined as a designated KW (key worker) in September.

MW has contacted the DfE and is still waiting for a response.

Action: MW to share the google platform link to be included in the planning for a future closedown.

This has been actioned.

Action: MW to share the DfE offer for G Suite with DCE; SECE; and SWCE.

This has been actioned

Action: HM to share the SWCE Behaviour Policy when amended.

The amendments to the Behaviour Policy are in progress.

3. Covid-19 amendments to the Admission arrangements to Trust Schools for 2021 due the closure of Places of Public Worship.

- In relation to the admissions policies, the Diocese have an agreed format for LGBs, this is generalised and allows for variations according to general circumstances. The chair and Executive Headteacher prefer to adopt the Diocesan policies and apply their recommended amendments to the schools in SJE Trust. These amendments have been approved at a number of key levels, the Diocese, School's Adjudicator and the RSC. The admission criteria for schools requires verified church attendance which is often based on a number of stamped attendances at services. It is not possible with the closure of churches in March, due to the pandemic, for the required attendances to be achieved hence the need for amendments. The decision is for the clergy to make the decision as they will know their families, it is a church matter to identify eligibility. School admissions are a legal process so if there was a desire to change the policy a consultation is needed; this means the sensible way forward is to look at church attendance during the time when the church was open for worship.
- DCE is most in demand, but the great majority of places are filled by siblings or proven church links have already been verified for allocated nursery place. DCE has near 50 registered attendances.

Action: SB & HL to send the most up to date supplementary forms to MW.

The Core group agreed to the Diocesan variation to the admissions policy in relation to the pandemic and church closures and agreed to recommend this to the three schools (DCE; WDCE and SWCE)

Action: Clerk to add this agenda item (changes to admission arrangements) to LGB meetings scheduled for this week

BB raised the question of the status of SECE which was VC and is not sure if the school now is VA. Potentially this trust will bring SECE to the same status as SWCE. Church attendance is an independent category in the admissions criteria but most school places are not allocated on church attendance. The religious status of the school tends to affect the appointment of foundation governors. BB informed the committee SECE would welcome a move to a different status.

4. Before and after school provision

The growth in the school population in September is dramatic so a gradual opening of services makes sense. This enables the school leadership to monitor the management of risks with the different admission arrangements for the bubbles. Heads felt the schools will vary their provision slightly reflecting local need.

WDCE

After school provision will be offered in September but the bubbles will not be mixing. The breakfast clubs will not open for the first two weeks to ensure sanitisation processes are working well. HL reported the concerns for WDCE was the extra cleaning routine needed. Five of the after-school club activities usually offered each week will not be available as these are usually in the hall. Outdoor activities will continue.

DCE

Kids Club is running independently of the school. The breakfast club offering will be reviewed. Take-up is expected to be high as parents are returning to work. Morning kids club starts at 7.30am and the cleaners will have time to clean the hall. Breakfast club will reduce the people in the waiting area before school opens.

SWCE

The after-school club is opening on the first day and the breakfast club is being opened in stages. Parents are currently being asked about their need.

SECE

SECE does not offer after-school clubs but offers ad-hoc clubs and this usually start after three weeks of school opening, this is expected to start after half term. Breakfast club is being planned to start from day one. Reception children are not all back until week three due to the staggered stay and play arrangements.

The Executive Headteacher supported the different arrangements as this meets local needs but recognised there might be some dissatisfied parents at WDCE who may be aware of arrangements at DCE. There are different reasons for the different provision and Heads may have to explain this to parents.

The Core group agreed to the individual arrangements for each school for before and after school care.

The Executive Headteacher gave formal thanks to all four Heads for their work in organising this provision whilst having high numbers of children in attendance. The SJE Trust has more than 60% attendance during this closedown period.

5. Children's well-being

WDCE

There are 45 out of 60 Yr2 children in school. The school will use the PHSE curriculum in September to focus on well-being. (Trauma aware not trauma led). Parents have been surveyed and the summaries will be shared when analysed.

DCE

100% of children have had the opportunity to return to school and 85% to 90% of children have returned to school for some of the time. Yr2 are in school today and the parents and children were very positive. The school will now focus on the children who have not returned to school.

The Ofsted parent view questionnaire with added Covid-19 questions has been administered. This was online and the responses have been different than usual. Some responses were completed late at night and there were some negative responses. The online survey seems to be done very promptly or not at all but the school will use this method of administering the survey again. The dissatisfaction might also reflect attitudes to the government policy during this lockdown period rather than the school response which parents generally have been very supportive of.

SECE

The children and staff are happy to be back at school and the children are enjoying being with different children in the key worker bubbles. Parents are collecting reports from school and are very upbeat. Circle time will be reinstated.

The school sent out bereavement packages early in the term and the new child and family support service staff member and the SENDCO are acquiring materials from the EP service (Educational Psychology). Children will be identified for support.

The new PSHE curriculum (Jigsaw) is ready for September 2020 and has a focus on well-being.

SWCE

Comprehensive staff training about preparing children for their return to school has been delivered and this was led by Sarah Stevenson. Parent anxieties are expected to be an issue in the school, the staff expect the children to be fine. The parent survey has been administered. The school is preparing to work with the vulnerable families to build confidence about returning to school.

The Executive Headteacher reported his experience from all schools echoes the information from the Heads that the children in school have settled well. The bereavement issue is not fully known to the school so the new resources and curriculum is to be applauded.

The key issue is to manage those children who have missed so much learning and there will have to be a delicate balance as some pressure will be required but not too much.

The parental surveys have to be reviewed in the context of the global pandemic which some people have struggled with. Conversations with parents at the gates have been very positive.

6. Social media & e-safety

WDCE

HL reported the need for a parent workshop and the priority for e-safety with parents. The e-safety guidance on the school websites need to be checked to see if it needs updating. The most important method has been to have conversations with children who often did not understand who is a friend and what is safe. Empowering and educating the children is the key to reducing risks from internet access.

DCE

This does not appear to be an issue in DCE. School newsletters do alert parents to be vigilant.

SECE

At the beginning of lockdown information about e-safety was shared with families and there appears to be no issues. The school is currently reviewing the acceptable user policies. There are many internet safety posters available and these will be utilised.

SWCE

The school does address online safety but the children still may be accessing inappropriate websites as not all parents monitor their children. The school can advise and inform. Many children are naïve and need educating.

It was noted how hard it is to keep abreast of internet developments and new sites accessed by young people. Governors expressed their gratitude for the high degree of vigilance undertaken by school staff.

7. Further plans for September 2020

WDCE

HL will inform staff by Friday of this week of the arrangements for September 2020.

DCE

SB is expecting September 2020 to be easier; many children have been in school since the 2nd June, and the children are tired and there is more reluctance. Currently there is one child per table, in September there will be two children per table.

SECE

Guidance was shared about the NEU conditions to be met in September and St E is planning to open for all children at the start of the new year with some phased transition for new year groups such as Nursery and Reception to enable the children to settle. (see attached NEU guidance)

SWCE

The risk assessments are being tweaking in time for the LGB on Thursday and will be presented to staff on Friday. The bubble will be a phase given the mixed age groups.

Governors asked if any staff will be travelling to places where they may need quarantining should the school be informed. The guidance covers quarantine and SWCE has invited staff to inform the school if they are holidaying in areas where they might need to be quarantined on return.

Formal thanks were given to each school leadership for their work in preparing for September 2020.

8. Finance

- LGBs will be asked to ratify the three-year budgets at the meetings this week. The average school budget is approximately £50,000 higher than projected due to the pandemic reducing expenditure. The current forecasts are more positive.
- DCE is approximately £50,000 better but is still in deficit. SWCE had a projected deficit of approximately £10,000 and the current projections are a surplus of approximately more than £60,000. WDCE had a projected deficit of £39,000 and there is currently a projected £26,000 surplus. The SECE budget was finalised in December 2019/ January 2020 and there was a projected surplus of £76,000. This is now a projected surplus of approximately £100,000. This might change but is not expected to change dramatically. All schools have a healthy carry forward.
- The DfE is focusing on next years budget rather than the three-year projections. The assumptions for Yr2 and Yr3 are often pointless as there are so many unknowns. Sports premium has only just been notified to schools and this is £20,000 for each school. Teachers pay and pensions and the possible grants to offset costs are still assumed.
- The budget set for next year will be realistic. The in-year budget for SECE has a £20,000 surplus according to assumptions. WDCE is projecting a £70,000 surplus budget reflecting this school is awarded more money due to its free school status and this is the final year of this advantageous funding. SWCE projects a £15,000 surplus. The DCE budget is minus £22,000 but this will change in September and October as the Kids Club income has not been included. Also there has been some recent staffing changes, and this will make this close to a balanced budget.
The new CFO is starting in September 2020.

The core group noted the current budget and the three-year budgets

9. AOB

- Nick Bundock issued an advertisement for new Governors and has received six strong applications. Governors vacancies need to be sent to the Executive Headteacher.
- Jean Robinson is retiring in September and the school is undertaking a replacement celebration for her 36-year service for the school. The Trust currently has no

mechanism as gifts are not allowed from school finances. Recognising long service is being considered. The gifts and hospitality policy allows for small gifts. The chair reported the need for a mechanism which recognises long service as the LA used to mark these occasions with a gift.

Action: MW to check with auditors if the school can purchase small gifts for staff (not alcohol).

- The Executive Headteacher on behalf of the Trust will be sending a letter to school staff and to parents at the end of term.

The Chair gave a huge thanks to all school leaders for working with this face changing environment and staff have remained positive. The chair asked staff to enjoy their well-deserved summer break

10. Closing prayer

Paul Good led the closing prayer

The meeting closed at 14:35

Summary of actions

- Action: SB & HL to send the most up to date supplementary forms to MW.
- Action: Clerk to add this agenda item (changes to admission arrangements) to LGB meetings scheduled for this week
- Action: MW to check with auditors if the school can purchase small gifts for staff (not alcohol).