

**St James and Emmanuel MAT
Core Group Remote meeting
Wednesday 19th January 2021 at 2pm
Minutes**

Present

Simon Ball	Head of School – DCE
Paul Blackburn	Chair - WDCE
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

Apologies

Andrew Bradley	Chair – St. Wilfrids
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In attendance

Kathy Crotty	Clerk
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1. Welcome and Introductions

Paul Good thanked all participants for attending the meeting. This emergency meeting has been called as the government has decided future nursery funding will be based on the numbers of nursery children in school this week.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received and accepted from Andrew Bradley.

3. Minutes of the last meetings held 5th January 2021 & 11th January 2021.

It was agreed to defer approval to next meeting.

4. Correspondence to parents

Letters for parents about the nursery census day was shared and agreed at the meeting.

5. Schools Update regarding nursery provision

SECE

There are four nursery children currently attending the nursery provision. SECE EYFS currently offers provision for key worker and vulnerable (KW/V) children in line with the rest of the school. Remote learning is provided to children not present in the school. It is reported Covid-19 infections in Stockport are rising, the school is in central Reddish which is above average for infection rates.

A part-time member of staff who also works in a school in Derbyshire, from which she has been required to self-isolate, has been asked to not come into school. The self-isolation is due to conclude at the end of this week.

If the nursery offered more places to children, this will present a potential risk to the duty of care for staff. MW reported the Trust position is to recognise the varying risks of transmission and will support each school to keep numbers as manageable as possible for the maintenance safety and this includes this census day for the nursery children. It was acknowledged SECE has many staffing issues with more vulnerable staff than the other schools.

Q: How many section 44 notices have you received? How many are in place, and how many were rescinded?

Six staff issued section 44 notices, but none were enacted as lockdown occurred. One member of staff works in EYFS and is very anxious, and a second staff member in EYFS has her own children in the school. One specific risk assessment was undertaken with a clinically vulnerable member of staff. One staff member who did not issue a section 44 notice informed the Head she would consider resignation, due to her caring responsibilities with a vulnerable family member, should there be a significant increase in attendance whilst the present lockdown emergency continued

If all EYFS places available were taken staff deployment elsewhere in the school would be problematic.

Q: Are there any vulnerable staff in EYFS?

One staff member in EYFS is 25 weeks pregnant and is working from home. There are some support staff in school who could cover for a wider use of EYFS places on Thursday, but this is not sustainable.

Lee Jamieson in his role as CoG reported on the potential backlash from parents if children are invited in for one day.

BB reported another Head in the local area is taking the view that if a school has offered a place then this should count.

There has been no correspondence with parents and it was agreed transparency was important. PG asked the school to make it explicit to nursery parents there is an opportunity for a place, but this is not recommended by the school due to the inherent risks. Parents will be informed of the dilemma the school faces regarding funding and safety issues.

SWCE

The school had contacted other cluster schools to share information. This school plans to open to more children on Thursday, in line with other cluster schools. The nursery staff have been briefed. Only two EYFS staff are in school and currently 15 children are accessing in-school nursery provision. The other children are undertaking remote learning. The response and engagement on remote learning from parents so far has been positive. The engagement of nursery children in home learning is monitored, as in other year groups. By Thursday there are expected to be six additional children attending who can be accommodated within the ratio. Two staff will action a section 44 if the nursery has a full offer of places, whilst the rest of

the school remains open only for KW/V children. A staff member is absent on sick leave. Currently the school cannot take more than 26 children due to EYFS staffing ratios. Staff morale would be undermined if Nursery staff received differential risk treatment of their concerns.

DCE

DCE has a 26-place nursery, the lowest attendance is 9 children on Thursday 13 children are expected to be in school. Nursery has the most pressure on demand as the school has many key workers. There has been pressure from parents for places, which the school has resisted, to ensure a safe environment for all concerned. A letter is to be sent to parents outlining the present position. Clarification from the DfE about school-based nurseries has been late. The letter will inform parents of the latest government guidance along with advice about the duty of care. The children will not be denied their entitlement to attendance, but the risk to the school and wider community will be made clear.

There are no section 44 notification at DCE. Teachers are only in the building for a small amount of time and most children are receiving remote learning. There will be adequate staffing on Thursday. A tipping point might be reached when home learning and on-site provision becomes impossible to manage in a meaningful and educationally valid manner. Parents will be left to decide what they want to do in relation to their child attending nursery.

MW reported the Trust position is that it is safer for children to remain at home and this will be made explicit to families.

SECE has the highest risk of a financial loss next year, but strong evidence on the census return might diminish this.

All school nurseries in the Trust are open, but capacity is reduced following risk assessments.

PB gave his support for the course of action determined by each school given the government requirements for nursery children to be in school during a lockdown. Concern was expressed that if the nurseries are not funded adequately they will close. It was agreed historic census data is the only fair way to go forward. FSM (free school meal) census is yet to be determined.

Heads were reminded all correspondence must refer to limited access due to safety and risk in the schools and the nursery provision is not closed.

(WDCE does not have EYFS provision).

6. Date of next meeting

- Monday 25th January 2021 at 9.30am.

The meeting ended at 14:55