

**St James and Emmanuel MAT  
Core Group Remote meeting  
Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 9.30am  
Minutes**

**Present**

Simon Ball	Head of School – DCE
Paul Blackburn	Chair – WDCE
Andrew Bradley	Chair – 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 and Introductions**

This was a meeting with no formal agenda to enable leaders to discuss lateral flow tests and half term provision.

**2. Lateral Flow Test**

Matt Whitehead reported he has taken the test and this is straightforward procedure with clear descriptions and processes. The administration for schools might be an issue. The LFT is voluntary for staff. The office will need to keep a spreadsheet of names and dates with “lot number” which seems to be the same number for the school batch. Each staff member is expected to report directly to the NHS and this was an efficient process. Most of the administration seems to be left to staff not an office administrator.

**Q: What happens if a staff member tests positive?**

The tests are variable and false negatives can occur. A positive test requires immediate isolation and then you have to book the usual PCR test. The bubble is closed but if the PCR test is negative the bubble can return sooner. This might produce issues of clarity in the correspondence with parents.

**Q: Is this test for staff and not pupils?**

Yes, one positive test means everyone has to isolate. This test should give reassurance for staff who are with vulnerable people. The test can detect the virus in asymptomatic people.

**Q: Can this test be done at home?**

Yes, this test can be done anywhere. The advice is for the teacher to take the test the night before or early morning so they know whether to come into school. It was felt this is not a replacement for wearing a mask but gives an extra level of protection. The current bubbles are small and parents can be informed the lateral flow test might not be 100% accurate.

**Q: What is the frequency of the testing regime?**

The tests are to be taken twice a week.

The tests include Manchester Fayre and all staff including any contractors on site.

DCE will set up a dedicated email address (test.results@). Schools only need to know the positive results. Every result does have to be recorded with the NHS and the assumption is the NHS must need to know the level of testing occurring.

There were mixed results from the Liverpool trials and the accuracy was reported at approximately between 50-70%.

SWCE & WDCE have not yet had the delivery of the sets but the schools are all set up and ready to go. SECE and DCE have had the tests delivered.

There is a GDPR notice included as schools will hold the results information for 12 months, the NHS will keep this data for eight years. The recommendation is to take the test twice a week. The policing of this is not the responsibility of the school. It is not clear why the school needs to keep a spreadsheet when the information is sent to the NHS.

**Q: Will staff take the tests on the same time?**

DCE staff have been asked to take the test on a Sunday night and Wednesday night. Testing on the same night avoids sporadic responses.

SWCE staff are testing different days between the EYFS building and the main building. Within each building staff will do the tests on the same day.

The Trust encourages the administration of the test. The operational application will be determined the school.

**Q: Why is there a need for all staff to respond via email, does it not need to be just the positives?**

The spreadsheet completed by the school records negatives too and PHE want this information

**Q: Do staff who are permanently working from home have to take the test?**

Yes, to make the system fair.

**Action: MW to produce a Trust wide letter about the lateral flow testing for parents in the event of a staff member testing positive on the LFT but then subsequently returning a negative PCR test.**

### 3. Half term Provision

The profession is expecting an earlier decision than usual from the Government about half term opening. The expectation is this current lockdown is expected to continue for a longer term. Leaders were concerned about the wellbeing of staff who are working very hard providing remote learning. In their view staff need a break and any DfE direction to work through half term would stretch the goodwill of staff.

The view was expressed that schools do not need to open over half-term as childcare bubbles outside of school now exist for the first time. Home learning is a challenge for nursery children. Families can connect with other families.

All staff, either in school or working from home are trying hard to maintain education for children and families. A half term rota would mix bubbles and this might impact on staff anxieties. Members were keen for the Trust to advocate the same position on school opening. The children in school would have to avoid mixing which is not good for well-being. NHS staff have not been asked to cancel holidays this time, previously this decision impacted on the demand for places.

**Q: Can people who are vaccinated childmind?**

Yes, but the vaccination does not stop you becoming infected with Covid. Chairs of Governors were keen for the schools to close.

Last Easter there was a staff rota and the children were not following the national curriculum, now the staff are delivering the national curriculum and need a break. Kids Club might be an option more preferable to children who need a break from lessons.

There was consensus about not teaching during half-term. The well-being of staff and children is paramount; staff and children need a break. Staff have adapted well to home learning and the new challenges of working in a different way. Parents would normally have cover for school holidays.

If schools are required by the Government to open, the Trust has the option to open one building using Kids Club staff. Contingency arrangements may need to be established.

It was noted the trade union position has changed over the last twelve months and the expectation is they would be demanding schools to close over half-term.

There is some indication that after half-term there is an expectation all children return to school and this may need some planning. The school risk assessments work well and there is little room for manoeuvre to change this to accommodate a full return. The health and safety is paramount and remains the priority. Schools in the Trust have not had many bubble closures or staff with positive tests compared to other schools in the city.

If the Government decided teachers and school staff could be vaccinated this might change the plans, but there is a three-week lag for protection. This would mean full opening after Easter. The highest priority groups should be vaccinated by the 15<sup>th</sup> February and the expectation is there will then be a review of the vaccination priorities.

**The Trust position is for the Schools to close for half-term and for parents to make other arrangements.**

#### **4. Nursery admissions and the impact of Covid**

Nursery admissions at SWCE are reduced, the school only has 11 out of 39 places allocated. After a media campaign there are currently only 23 applications. Other schools have not yet dealt with this issue due to Covid priorities. The school admissions closing date has now passed.

## 5. AOB

### Audit of accounts

The final pensions report has finally arrived and the SECE pension deficit is the smallest in the Trust. These have to be submitted to the auditors this week.

### Remote learning engagement

All schools in the Trust have over 90% engagement. SECE is finding some families are not engaging. SWCE is in a similar position and home visits are occurring. SWCE has 95% engagement and this is monitored on the day. WDCE has the odd family not engaging and the monitoring is weekly to accommodate family timetables. In WDCE laptops have recently arrived which should improve engagement. DCE has approximately 96% engagement. The school continues to provide work to all families but some children are engaging in a limited way. Many parents are working from home and cannot home-school children to the same extent.

### Parents evenings

It was clarified this is an operational decision. Heads discussed whether you can assess the children's work when there are different levels of support from parents. Heads discussed if a parents evening was needed as there are weekly calls to parents. It was suggested a "check -in" occurs covering a progress report from September to December 2020. It was agreed that assessment of home learning would not be discussed with parents, as parental support varies. Home learning engagement would be discussed with parents and advice offered. It was suggested Heads select a week when the class teacher would contact every parent to provide consultation. The school day may not work for all parents there should be flexibility with the offer evening calls.

The Chair of the Trust noted the Trust is blessed with creative staff and pupils bringing much joy to the children in very difficult circumstances.

### Approval of previous minutes

It was agreed the next meeting would formally approve the minutes of the meetings held 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021; 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021; 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

## 6. Date of next meeting

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 9.30

*The meeting ended at 10:50*

### **Summary of actions**

- Action: MW to produce a Trust wide letter about the lateral flow testing for parents in the event that a member of staff tests positive on the lateral flow test and then negative on the more dependable PCR test.