High Park School

Local Governing Body

Meeting held virtually on Tuesday 7th July 2020

Meeting commenced at 6.00pm

Present: Ann Andrew (Principal – AA); Rebecca Barham (RB); Rob Canning (RC); Ann McKerchar (AM); Linda O'Neill (Chair - LON); Yusuf Rasul (Vice-Chair - YR); David Sims (DS).

In Attendance: Celine Moriarty, Clerk.

Papers circulated prior to meeting
Minutes of 2nd June
Report to Governors
Working in Base Bubble Guidelines
Working in Bubbles Guidelines
Speech & Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy modified offer

Papers tabled at meeting
None.

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed governors.

Action

69/19 Apologies for absence and their acceptance
The absence of Jayne Taylor (JT) was noted.

70/19 Notification of Any Other Business and requests for Agenda order variations
Items 75/19 to 77/19 will be discussed in 74/19, as they are included in the Principal's report.

71/19 Declarations of interest for items on this agenda
None.

72/19 Approval of the Minutes of the meeting of 2nd June
Governors approved the minutes of the LGB held on 2nd June as a true record of the proceedings; proposed by LON; seconded by YR.

73/19 Matters Arising from these minutes not elsewhere on the agenda
None.

74/19 Principal's Report
Pupils attending School:
On the 15th June the school opened 4 Bases to accommodate 40 pupils, who attend mostly full-time, which is providing better continuity for them and is more straight forward to organise for the school. The pupils are spread across the bases, the largest number

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being in Oak base (14 pupils) and the least being in Acorn Base (maximum 7 pupils). The school has the capacity to staff the bases and to cover any absence internally.

Staff:
Some staff members returned the week before the school had to close. They had either childcare issues, been shielding or felt too vulnerable, so the school is working to build their confidence. After the outbreak the system was tightened further (see the documents circulated: "*Working in Bubbles*") and people are proving very compliant with the rules, not compromising others. Every staff member comes in their own entrance; the staff members working in each base do not come in through reception anymore and different signing in systems have been implemented. Also, phones and Microsoft Teams are being used to communicate, even during the school day. The lack of face-to-face communication has been challenge for everyone.

Covid-19 Outbreak:
Since the last update to governors, another staff member tested positive to Covid-19, bringing the number of infected staff to 6. Another member of staff, who is shielding at home and has not been in school since the 20th March also tested positive. Public Health England clearly informed the school that this staff member would not have caught the virus from school. This affected one Base and also the cleaning and catering teams which meant the school had to close from Tuesday 23rd June to Friday 3rd July. Public Health England (PHE) was very clear and pragmatic all the way through and very resistant to advise AA to close the school and initially advised the school to close the relevant bubble rather than the entire school. PHE were clear that once a school is closed, it is very difficult to re-open. Indeed, there was a lot of anxious staff and AA also spoke to the Unions for both teachers and support staff due to the press interest and the reference to a member of staff in the Telegraph & Argus. Press coverage of the closure caused some concerns at Trust level, who wished to close the school for two weeks. However, AA was determined to keep the school open for the families' wellbeing. The school decided to have a deep-clean and close for the weekend only. After a meeting with the Trust, it was revealed that a further staff member who is one of the cleaners had tested positive, at this point the school was compelled to close. Since then a further staff member who had not been in school for several weeks also was tested positive, PHE is aware that this person works at the school via the test and trace system, and notified AA.
Three staff members who were ill with Covid-19 returned to school this week, looking really well, which was a positive for the other staff to see their colleagues well again. The school is now open again and the pupils are happy to return to school. Parents were supportive all the way through, without any reports of negative comments. Their concerns were for the staff rather than themselves, despite the two week closure.

AM: How were the staff members with Covid-19 affected, how severe were their symptoms?

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AA replied that they were not severely affected and none had to be hospitalised. They suffered from headaches, cough, temperature and fatigue. Safeguarding: The regular meetings are continuing. The meetings with social care have been helpful and discussions were held on how to support families during the holidays, which is a concern. The information they share continues to help provide support for families. Some families coped very well while others are struggling. Unfortunately, some families to whom places were offered will not accept them due to the virus. **LON: Do you mean that these families had places offered for next term and will no longer be taking them up?** AA replied that these places were for this term, not for September. Behaviour: There have been very few incidents in school, due to the reduced opportunities for interaction. In Spring 1, there were 316 serious incidents and 21 physical interventions. This was before the lockdown. In Spring 2 there were 185 serious incidents and 15 physical interventions. In the last half-term, there were 44 serious incidents and only 4 physical interventions. The pupils had been taught to interact previous to the lockdown, but the current situation has limited these opportunities, but also reduced the number of incidents. Keeping Children Safe in Education is being reviewed and the changes will come into effect on 1st September. The updated policy will be emailed to governors and the Covid-19 appendix will remain in September. **LON added that best practice and guidance suggest schools continue to review safeguarding policies and ensure to keep the Covid-19 appendix.** **DS commented on the reduced number of behavioural incidents, which may not be such a positive fact, since it shows the pupils had fewer interactions. That is a key safeguarding aspect to keep an eye on.** AA replied that the pupils have been taught for years to come together and tolerate each other, to have friendships and interact with as many people as they can, but are now encouraged to keep apart. Some children had become quite sociable but are starting to shrink away from people. AA hopes that the progress previously made will spring back when the school fully re-opens. Year 14 Students & Leavers: There continues to be a lack of urgency or concern from Social Care and the LA and little progress has been made for the students leaving school. This has been a standing agenda item at AA's meetings with the LA, but this is not being pushed forward. At the last meeting governors suggested writing to the LA. LON agreed to write to the LA **DS advised to write about the impact on the health and wellbeing of the families and the potential impact on future costs for the LA**	**LON**

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as by not meeting individual needs now they are stirring up a group of young people whose likelihood of living well at home for many years is being reduced. It would be more effective to act now to avoid long lasting impacts.

AA talked of the frustrating situation of the closure of the adult provisions and the staff not even engaging on an individual level. Nobody seems to be able to push this forward in the LA, even when they agree with it. The employment of Personal Assistants to work with the leavers in the community is the only option being offered at the present time. AA is asking the school staff if they are interested in applying to work as personal assistants during the summer holidays, to provide the families with additional support. The meetings with the Social Care manager have not had an impact, which is a concern. The Department of Education (DfE) has refused to fund another year at school for the current Year 14 students and there is no mechanism to fund them from the LA's point of view.
Two students have not been to the Peer Forum to have their packages agreed, which could have been agreed months ago. The lack of known provision for September is worrying for families.

Reflections on the impact for the school communities:
The school has seen some children develop, such as one pupil who developed speech during his time at home and came back to school more settled. The staff's relationship with families have been developed over these weeks, with longer phone conversations and doorstep visits, which sometimes lasted up to 45 minutes as families appreciated the visits from familiar faces. It was an eye opener for staff to realise how isolated they can be and that some families manage in poor housing and cramped conditions, with lack of an outside space and challenging living conditions.

The end of year reports (including photographs) will go out this week. Families have been encouraged to contribute their own thoughts.

September:
It was decided to close the school on 17th July to current pupils to allow the new pupils to come in for a visit on 20th and 21st (as transitions could not be arranged this year). Also, a few of the existing pupils will come in to reconnect with school. One pupil in particular has not been in school for a long time and would benefit from a visit. AA discussed this with the Support staff and teachers' Unions. This arrangement will not change the work days for the teachers, but will for the support staff. So AA asked the support staff if they want to swap their working days to either 20th and 21st July or Tuesday/Wednesday or Thursday/Friday of the first week in September for summer schools days or training days. The Tuesday/Wednesday will be reconnecting days, for which the school will try and offer full days to families, but may offer half-days if too many families are interested.

75/19 Plans for September 2020

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The link to government guidance for special schools re-opening in September is included in AA's report. This documentation might be helpful to governors to see the guidance in terms of opening the school safely. In terms of infection control, the school already has the correct procedures in place, such as minimising contact with people, keeping people at home who are unwell, cleaning hands thoroughly, ensuring good respiratory hygiene (Catch It, Bin It, Kill It approach) and enhanced cleaning. There are also two other measures to consider: to minimise contact between individuals where possible, which will be a significant challenge in September and where necessary wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which the school is already doing. Wearing a mask is not always easy with children so the school is working on that. Additionally, social distancing is a real challenge. **DS: Have you looked at using transparent masks? Face Friendly Faces has masks with a cut-out and Clear Masks has entirely clear masks, although with fogging issues. They may be more expensive but it could be helpful to consider these.** AA replied that this could be possible for a small number of pupils. The school has to risk assess and AA assessed it at a moderate level but cannot be certain. LON added that the best approach is to continually review and risk assess. In September the school will try to keep to the Base bubbles but there will need to be some crossover so the therapists can work effectively. A modified offer is provided but this is not how the school wishes to work on a long term basis. As time goes on and the infection rate declines the school will be more confident in having crossover between bubbles. This will be restricted to primary and secondary sections being well apart, with two bubbles in each section, with a very limited crossover between bubbles and no contact between primary and secondary sections. The number of visitors will be restricted too, similar to now. This creates difficulties as parents cannot attend meetings, which is an essential part of school and part of being effective. **LON: Could use you the separate building if necessary?** AA replied that it could be used and visitors in the main building could be limited. At the moment no visitors are allowed. <u>New Pupils in September:</u> 11 new pupils are starting in September, including younger pupils, which is unusual for High Park: three Reception, two Year 1 and one Year 2. There are also 5 pupils in the secondary school section. This shift to younger pupils may be due to more pupils waiting for special school places. It seems these children fit the criteria for this school. *A confidential matter was discussed and is reflected in a separate minute*.	

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Pupil Funding Bands - April 2020 onwards:

There are now 6 funding bands instead of 7. There is a lot of work around the criteria for each band, but the Lead SEND Officer informed AA that Band 4 is for specialist placements. So all the pupils of this school should be banded 4 Low, Medium or High. In the new model, the closest fit may also be found by combining ('stacking') more than one band value for children with complex needs. The school does not yet have clarity on how the stacking works and how to apply for stacking. There are a number of children who need funding beyond Band 4 High -the old range 7, which is protected. This work is on-going and very slow. On 1st April everything was transferred across onto the new funding bands. The school has requested additional funding for several pupils and has not find out the outcome. The DAP Heads are in the process of writing a strong letter in terms of pupil funding and places as there has been a large issue at another school. The LA is continuing not to plan ahead for special places, which can be frustrating for schools, which are at full capacity.

LON: Regarding communities and the impact for schools, in Governor Matters it highlights the importance of schools in their communities at this particular time and also with the academic year without test and exam results it is high time not to rely on Ofsted and league tables and that governing bodies should be able to take their rightful place more than they have been able to in the past.

AA replied that it is important to see schools as a whole rather than just academic progress. Mainstream schools are thinking of a recovery curriculum, but for High Park, the core of the curriculum is wellbeing and emotional regulations and learning skills for life. So in terms of planning for September, not many adjustments will be needed in the curriculum as it is very responsive and personalised. The school will adjust it according to individual pupils.

LON: It is important that the staff and family relationship have strengthened. Some parents do not necessarily engage in school because of home commitments, so it is reassuring that parents will be more open perhaps to staff and school in general. Consequently, there may be an increase in parents attending meetings. It is also important for the staff to be aware of the pupils' living conditions.

AA added that the staff met parents they had never seen before, which gives a more rounded view of the families, which helps the staff support them better.

DS: Looking at the numbers for September and the requirements of the guidance is quite a challenge for looking after the staff in September.

AA replied that this is the biggest challenge and the number of staff in school presents the biggest risk. So training and monitoring how people are applying the strategies to keep themselves safe is going to be a big part of what the school does. For instance, cleaning of equipment is going to still be important to keep the risks down. AA had many conversations with teachers to have a way of overseeing that in a meaningful way and

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to have continuous discussions with staff about why this is important. This needs to be at the top of their agenda. **DS added that this will be putting a lot of pressure on staff, and the wellbeing of staff will be equally important in September. Also, for a special school, this will put pressure on staff which will lead to burn out. So how do we bring training for staff and develop a pool of staff to continue and engage with teachers in training.** AA replied that she has considered the apprentice route and has used apprentices in the admin team. This could be considered for classroom staff. Staff wellbeing activities will be key and it has been key all the way through. Now that the Base teams are re-established staff members feel happier. They feel more connected with each other in their individual teams, so that is a positive. People working on short rotas make the situation more difficult. The guidance is that schools should not have rotas. The expectation is that everybody will be back to work full-time. The school needs to think about wellbeing and burn-out and how to support staff to manage workload and to be as effective as they can while taking into account their own circumstances. **YR: RC, could you give your insight on the experience for staff and the longevity of it? Going through AA's report, it seems a difficult process and it seems it will continue to be so.** RC replied that it has been an anxious and unpredictable time but that it has improved. There were rumours of some staff being unhappy and stressed but this was not experienced directly. Everyone seems fine now and people seem to have gotten used to it. People are the most anxious on their first day back. AA replied that some staff members came back after a long time off and are now more relaxed. **YR: Public Health England did say it is more difficult to re-open the school than to keep it going. Do you think there are any differentials in terms of experiences of the challenges across different staffing types, such as teachers versus support staff and senior versus middle leaders?** RC replied that regarding teachers, they were very well informed and were very vocal. **LON: RC, you mentioned communication was very good, is it not the teachers' responsibility to communicate to the support staff in their base?** RC replied that the challenge comes from being at home; it has been difficult. There have been a lot of instructions from the leadership to remain in communication with their own individual bases, but this is not always easily done. A lot of the support staff members do not access email. It is easy to keep the team on board while in school but it can be difficult from home.	

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LON: If a lot a staff do not have access to emails, is there a way to communicate via text messages?
AA replied that they do use a text message system. Staff members do read emails but may not necessarily respond. The school also has a staff Facebook page to share information. Staff members use it for wellbeing activities but the school uses it to communicate.

LON: RC, you talked of rumours, what kind were they, as it may sound negative?
RC replied that it was more hearsay than rumours. People questioned the efficiency of the bubbles and if they were protective. It is very difficult to know what people's opinion really are.

AA added that this issue came from anxiety as people were frightened when they found out there was a case in school. Once staff members were informed of the colleagues affected, it helped the situation. Some had not been distancing and were concerned. The colleagues with Covid-19 all agreed to share their names within school. The bubble working has shown that even though they were not tight bubbles, the affected people were all in Oak Base and the likely source for the cleaner came from outside of school. It was contained in one place.

RB: It is probably better that it happened now when there was less staff in school than later on as you know it can be contained in one area. If it was to happen again you know it is safe to close a bubble. The more staff in school, the more anxious people will be around that. If everyone was back, if you know it can be contained in a base, you have an example to refer back to on how it was contained.
AA added that Public Health England was very clear that outbreaks will happen. Staff seeing colleagues who were ill come back looking well and continue to function is reassuring.
Staff wellbeing and supporting staff to remember to look after themselves will be at the forefront in September.

AM informed governors of the School Governor Service training courses on "Wellbeing and Mental Health" and "Maintaining Good Governance in Covid-19 Time". These are relevant courses for the current time.
RC (wellbeing governor) and AM expressed interest in booking the wellbeing training.

76/19 Presentation on New Pupil Funding Bands
Discussed in 75/19.

77/19 Safeguarding Report
Discussed in 75/19.

78/19 Risk Register

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The risk register was not updated this time as the Covid-19 register took precedence.

AM stated that three policies have attached appendices which need to be kept updated. LON: The guidance and best practice is to keep the appendices and to update them based on current advice from the DfE and Public Health England.

Action

79/19 School Improvement Plan

AA informed governors that she had not yet written the School Improvement Plan as the focus needs to be on the start of the new academic year. It will be a changing situation and staff and pupils' wellbeing will feature highly. The way the governing body functions in this situation will also need to be considered as school visits, for instance, will be more difficult if this situation continues. Overall, the autumn term will be very disrupted and possibly beyond that term.

LON: The situation can change daily and it is difficult to put a definitive plan in place at the moment. There are many unknowns for the summer and September.
AA: In terms of curriculum, it will be about re-establishing the core strategies so everybody has a secure provision which meets their needs when they return to school. The curriculum will be adaptable according to the pupils' situation when they return to school. The school will need to be able to respond to the required needs, and this is where the Therapeutic Behaviour team will be critical in supporting them and supporting the classroom staff.

LON: Have you had any resignation?
AA replied that:

- There has been only one resignation from a Learning Support Assistant, who had found another employment.
- One staff member is taking an examination on 8th July and will start the School Direct programme.
- One casual staff member who only works two days a week has decided to retire.
- The SEND internship is ending and a new SEND Intern starts in September. Having psychology students in school is very beneficial.

80/19 Policy Review

None.

81/19 Any Other Business referred from item 70/19 above

AA will keep governors updated during the summer holidays.
LON: Some of the Trust schools are not fully closing during the summer holidays (they were shut during the other holidays when this school was open) but High Park decided to close to ensure the staff has a holiday.

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	AA replied that the decision was taken a few weeks ago not to open in the summer. The senior leadership team could not manage a summer opening and the staff need to be well for the start of the year. **LON: How many pupils are you expecting in September?** AA replied that she is expecting most pupils. Only a minority of families will need more time. The media and the local community have an influence, and seeing the schools back to normal might give these families more confidence. The school will encourage families to send their children to school.	
82/19	**Date of Next Meeting: <u>Wednesday 23rd September 2020</u> @ 6pm, to be held virtually.** It was decided to keep meeting virtually for the autumn term and possibly longer term. AA thanked the governing body for their support this year. **The Chair closed the meeting at 7.20pm.**	

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