

Minutes of the meeting of the
Extraordinary Full Governing Body of Milverton Primary School
Held on 27th May 2020

Present

Catherine Robbins (CR)	Co-opted Governor, Chair of FGB
Matt Fisher (MF)	Headteacher
Helen Love (HL)	Governor
Farzana Meru (FM)	Governor
Nigel Perry (NP)	Governor
Zoe Morrissey (ZM)	Governor
Laura Nicol (LN)	Teacher
Danielle Belmega (DB)	Deputy Headteacher
Andrew McKirgan (AMcK)	Governor
Clare McNicolas (CMcN)	Governor
Lis Blair (LB)	Governor
Hannah Stephenson (HS)	Governor
Margaret Wagstaff (MW)	Governor
Jo Mainwaring (JM)	Governor
Tracey Brand (TB)	Governor

In attendance:

Helen Stares (C)	Clerk to the Governors
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1. **Welcome and apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that it was the first Full Governing Board meeting for Helen Love, Farzana Meru and Helen Stares.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the children returning to school on 01/06/20 and to hear the thinking regarding the completion of the risk assessment. CR noted that it felt like a momentous occasion, the school having been shut since the 20th March.

2. **Update from the Headteacher**

The Chair asked the Headteacher to outline what had been done, what discussions had taken place in school and the guidance from the Local Authority (LA) and Department for Education (DfE). The Headteacher replied as follows:

- Guidance from the DfE has been sporadic - either lots of information or none, and some can be contradictory. He is often sent from the DfE to the LA and back again
- Announcements have been made via various websites and MPS, together with the north Leamington cluster, receives a précis of this from an outside company
- The Headteacher is the chair of a consortium of local schools, which have two meetings per week to go through information updates and understand their implications, to delegate tasks and to go back with questions
- The Headteacher has completed a standardised risk assessment for the LA

which has a short deadline for return. It was pre-populated with some common issues and proposed solutions but was sparse in terms of likelihood of risk. The Headteacher completed the risk assessment first and shared it with peers, and is in daily discussions with other Headteachers. The ratings are different according to each Headteacher as it depends on perceptions and local conditions. They expect the overall assessment to be similar

- There has been a group discussion of the plan at MPS, particularly how staffing and structure would work at MPS. The Headteacher is aiming for full year groups to go in full time to make it easier for parents. Other schools are operating a rota system, although both the Government and SAGE have discouraged this.
- There will be a gradual increase in numbers to allow MPS to test how this works.
- The SLT have been in discussion to get input and ideas about different phases/year groups. They have spoken to different staff members about how they are feeling and what is required for them to go back safely.
- There is still some friction about how people feel but there is no definitive answer, as a few things are not yet in place.
- On 21/05/20 the Headteacher felt he was not qualified to make these judgments. There has been some legal wording from the NAHT about head teachers not feeling comfortable with doing these risk assessments. The Headteacher had to send the risk assessment off to the LA, and once it has been rubber-stamped by the LA the onus is placed on the LA.

The Chair asked about the timescale for the risk assessment to be returned. MF said it was ASAP, but the priority was that schools should open on 01/06/20. The LA should approve the risk assessment or make suggestions for changes. The Headteacher has sent the draft assessment, and there are suggestions from a Governor for tweaks to be made.

The Chair said that it is important to know about the consulting with the LA and local consortium. She is reassured that the onus is not on the head teacher if someone contracts COVID-19.

The Headteacher has received some not at all useful e-mails from the NEU/Unison/Unite raising concerns about safety putting additional pressures on head teachers.

A Governor asked about the mood amongst staff. The Deputy Head replied most were very anxious and everyone wants to do their best for the children but are managing their own family lives. They recognise this won't be normal and there is lots of anxiety, especially where there are family members with certain medical conditions. Phone calls to pupils have left teachers feeling partly buoyed but partly sad to not be teaching.

The same Governor asked if there is a risk of leave due to stress, and how staff could be supported. A second governor agreed that this was important, as teachers have not had a break since half-term in February. The Chair agreed that the ask of teachers had been increased and there were fewer teachers available to engage with the children not in school.

A member of teaching staff said it was really hard and that there had been informal

conversations showing people to be anxious, trying their best and being worried for their families. The current situation touches everything in life and it's very strict, but the children won't be able to socially distance. Staff will be stretched with workload pressures. The staff member also said that it was a constantly-evolving situation and could mean teachers going outside of their specialism.

A Governor asked if there was any buddying-up of staff members to provide support. The Headteacher said there were distinct EYFS/Y1-2 etc groups. The phase leaders in the SLT check in with the staff, most have a group to work in and he believes they are being well looked-after. A member of the teaching staff said she hoped people know who they are able to talk to. The Governor wants to keep an eye on this, as those who need help do not tend to proactively reach out for help. The Headteacher said there are two members of staff over whom he has concerns, and they are regularly going into school, which is beneficial to them.

A Governor asked about the summer holidays - if there is a second wave and an expectation for key worker children to go back. Will this have a knock-on effect on workload, and are people concerned? The Headteacher has said no to the LA about opening during the summer, as staff need a break.

A Governor asked how many children would be attending? The Headteacher replied for Reception, about 28-30 out of 45, Year One, about 25 out of 45 and Year Six, about 32 out of 45. A couple want to return later and some want to go back part-time. The key worker group is growing quickly and is likely to double in size. The Governor said that the risk assessment gives Friday to prepare and clean and asked if this is still feasible. The Headteacher said that this is still viable.

A Governor enquired why the key worker group is increasing. The Headteacher said it is currently around 27 across all years and some won't return straight away. The initial model was for two groups and then three. The key worker group goes first in the model, then Year Six, Year One and Reception. If the model cannot be staffed, Reception will not return.

A Governor asked that if there are struggles with staffing, is the LA saying the schools will have to sort this out? The Headteacher replied that the purpose of the bubbles is that staff stay in one group and cannot be shifted to another. They cannot use supply teachers either so are open to discussions as to how to manage this.

A Governor opined that there should be a weekly cut-off to parents with regards to who would be in each week. The Headteacher said that there are four bubbles per year of 7-8 children currently, so there is some flex for additional children.

A Governor enquired about some wanting part-time, and the Headteacher is fine. He said they are learning as they go. The home-learning packs follow the curriculum so support the learning in and out of school.

A Governor asked what would happen if a teacher has to self-isolate. The Headteacher said there would be a discussion on this on 28/05/20, but there's a possibility it would be him. Each bubble has an extra teacher, and he doesn't see another work-around.

A Governor asked about access to testing. The Headteacher said that if they have symptoms they have to test, and get the results in around two days. A teaching member of staff mentioned that the guidance suggests all can have access. The Governor said this provided a degree of assurance, if needed. The Chair felt that the testing sounded feasible and is more practical for schools now.

The Chair asked whether staff were reassured by the social distancing measures put in place. There was a very comprehensive document sent to all staff. The Headteacher went to the SLT last week, who had some changes to make. A teaching member of staff said the comments were that it was very thorough, well-written and raised a few questions, but overall felt assured. The Deputy Headteacher echoed this, saying it was very thorough. She acknowledges the worries but they are ready to try.

Another teaching member of staff said Year Three/Four have lots of questions to be answered as they are not yet due to go back. The Headteacher said there was a need to be dynamic and flexible to move forward.

A Governor asked about behavioural guidelines if the children were not following rules. The Headteacher replied that he wants parents to talk to children before the return. Key worker children have demonstrated that they can't socially distance. There is no point in getting cross with them, but giving out lots of reminders was the way to go. Anything else would give the wrong message about school.

A Governor said the staff want to feel safe, and the Headteacher replied that this depends on what safety is. The overriding feeling is that safety comes from being in the bubble. Someone might have symptoms in the bubble so then it is a case of being protective. A low proportion of the population have undetected symptoms, so the chances of actual transmission are reduced.

The Chair mentioned the need for the local community to understand the bubbles. The Headteacher explained that there is lots of detail about movement round the building and the layout of the rooms. Terry has done most of this setting rooms out for children to sit 2m apart. The field set-up is nearly done, just waiting for a hot water tap and some portaloos.

A Governor asked if there was enough space in the marquees to socially distance in the event of poor weather. The Headteacher said there are three 10 x 5m marquees, so there should be enough space, and there is also the hut. They need to decide tomorrow (28/05/20) about really bad weather.

A Governor asked if the staff would walk the children there, to which MF and LN answered no: parents were to take them.

A Governor asked if MPS had any unique challenges vs other local schools. The Headteacher said the field being away from site was one, but other schools were not using their fields. The only differences elsewhere were with the entrances, but MPS has sufficient.

A Governor asked about the provision of home-learning packs and their standard vs

other schools. Some schools are doing video lessons and a few parents believe MPS is not providing a good standard because of this. The Government has said there is no need for videos and the LA raise safeguarding concerns. The unions, staff and the Headteacher are all against this. The headteacher discussed a number of reasons why doing video lessons was not necessarily the best option for all children and families.

The Chair mentioned that the Performance & Standards Committee is meeting soon, and the Chair of that committee will put the home-learning packs on the agenda. Putting these together has been a huge challenge for the staff and the Headteacher/other teachers believe their content is a better provision than is coming from other schools, certainly in comparison to what their own children have been receiving.

The Deputy Headteacher said that the staff wanted to provide the best and that there had been lots of questions about the safety of videos. Year Five/Six children were engaging well with Yammer. They have tried to mirror the classroom as much as possible but there is no solution which would not require adult input. She recognised the difficulty for parents in helping their children to learn, but engaging in things like Yammer helps. There is no one-fits-all solution.

A member of the teaching staff reported that it is very challenging for EYFS as they teach in a play-based manner. She is seeking parental feedback on this.

A Governor described Yammer as really valuable and she has seen positive feedback on this. She is hoping for more parental engagement here.

The Deputy Headteacher has seen whole families working on projects together, which is not only heart-warming but also appreciated by the teachers.

A Governor asked that at the forthcoming P&S committee meeting there would be a range of work produced to look at.

The Headteacher reported that people on Yammer were having a good experience, but is it possible to do something different for families who were not engaging? A governor suggested a parents' survey, which the Headteacher agreed would be useful.

A member of the teaching staff talked about the Oak Academy and exploring picking out lessons from this as an option. She has found it useful as a parent as it's a different way of learning. The Deputy Headteacher mentioned the challenge of finding the relevant parts to help parents.

A Governor said that parents are feeling overwhelmed so some guidance would be good. She has a daughter in EYFS and finds it fantastic what they are doing and is understanding her daughter's strengths and development areas.

The same Governor also asked about Yammer and what the uptake was. If people are not finding it positive, what are the issues there? The Deputy Headteacher said that if they don't know what the problems are they can't be fixed.

A Governor asked about disengaged parents and how these could be identified. The Headteacher said they were getting a weekly phone-call and a member of the teaching staff said that some of the children here were being encouraged to go back into school.

A Governor asked if the families have received multiple messages. The Headteacher replied that they were getting calls from Louisa/Amanda and that one child in a unique circumstance had gone into school. Another does not send their children in and they are not sure how far to press this. The Headteacher has taken home-learning packs out in person.

A Governor said that this is a very emotive area for parents. A survey would be a good idea. There are formal governance structures in place but they need to look for other ways to evaluate, refine and amend what is being done. There has been a knee-jerk response, so how do they best engage with families again if we are in the same situation in a few months' time?

One of the Governors is a psychologist working with children and says that she is conscious MPS families are engaged, but everyone is living in a different context. She is conscious of the families with whom it is difficult to engage. It is important to understand how well the families think the packs are working as well as the community feel of the school.

The Headteacher has discussed this with the SLT and considered a video drop-in but there are difficulties in this and they are trying to find a solution. On the community side, the Headteacher finds this difficult to measure whilst everyone is isolated. There is no easy solution here.

The Chair said that as the P&S committee was due to meet on 09/06/20, that should cover these issues and the focus should go back to the immediate challenge of getting school open on 01/06/20.

The Chair asked if teachers will be wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The Headteacher said that this decision should be left up to staff, and to prepare parents and children in advance. Official guidance is that children should not be wearing masks. They will wear an apron, gloves and visor in the event that close contact is needed and the Headteacher will be on call if someone is ill. The Headteacher said it is important to strike the right balance between staff and pupils feeling safe.

A Governor asked if there would be more detailed guidance going to parents. The Headteacher was due to send it to the SLT for discussion on 28/05/20.

A Governor asked about the risk assessment to the LA. There would be some subjectivity around the assessment, so is normalisation anticipated here? It is a live document, so what is the plan to refresh it? The Headteacher is reviewing this weekly on Fridays. The LA guidance was promised but has not yet been received.

A Governor asked about the upfront questions about the current provision based on key worker opening? The Headteacher said the LA document had the first column populated as normal and then the second set ready for the future. Some risks may

not yet have been considered but he feels well-prepared so far. They need to demonstrate a rigorous process.

A Governor asked about lunch plans and whether Reception and Year One would be eating and having playtime simultaneously and in the same places. The Headteacher reported that there would be staggered arrivals and start times, the use of the field, and times would be swapped so there was only one week when they would be on-site together. There is also a Year Six and Key Worker lunchtime overlap which was resolved similarly - one group would use the playground whilst the other ate. Lunch would be eaten in classrooms.

A Governor asked if someone shows symptoms of COVID-19, would the entire bubble have to isolate? And there is an overlap of COVID-19 symptoms with hayfever, so how is this to be managed? The Headteacher replied that the symptomatic person would be tested and only if they were positive for COVID-19 would the whole bubble be isolated. The Chair said that for things like hayfever, guidance would become clearer as time goes on.

The Chair asked about the provision of school lunches. The Headteacher said the kitchen would continue but packed lunches would be easier to manage. The children would order in the morning and the lunches would be delivered to classrooms.

The Chair asked how bubbles were chosen. The Headteacher said that the SLT had been asked to send a mail to parents and in the case of Year Six to think about the next school they would be attending, to put children together based on this, and friendship groups.

A Governor enquired about mixing year groups for siblings. The Deputy Headteacher was not aware of any requests for this. The Headteacher asked about Key Worker children going into year groups and this is possible, but then they cannot attend on a Friday as WAM provision would mean bubbles would mix.

A Governor asked if WAM would be continuing. The Headteacher reported that it would keep going but will be making a charge from June.

A Governor also asked if there were any concerns over who was/wasn't doing home-learning packs. Additionally, guidance provided does not recommend doing a temperature check on children before entering school. The Headteacher would be discussing this on 28/05/20. He is considering checking this in class, having sought parental consent, as it is an early indicator of symptoms. With regards to the home-learning packs, there is no way of knowing who is doing them. The same Governor asked that given school would not see some children until September, is there any way of doing an interim check.

A Governor said that Yammer was a good discussion to have and a different Governor asked if families without access are being supported. A member of the teaching staff asked about teachers' calls to children and a Governor said that this reassures teachers that they are being used. A Governor also opined that for the calls, teachers should be there.

A Governor suggested a log that every child has had a call and a different Governor said this could be used to monitor usage of the home-learning packs.

A Governor thought teachers should have a chat with parents before talking to the children.

A Governor suggested compiling a list of how children have learned at home. The priority is to get them back and then have a long-term project to gather evidence of how the children have fared.

A Governor said that if we don't know who is accessing what, there are probably children missing out.

A Governor said that he is not looking to test children, but just garner feedback for further support.

The Chair said that a lot has been done on this topic and asked for any specific questions about the forthcoming return to school.

A Governor asked about the fire safety impact of doors being kept open. The Headteacher replied that this was not an issue during the day as these are linked to the alarm.

A Governor asked about parental guidance, and spoke of the importance of stressing to the parents what they need to do to keep the teachers safe, similar to the NHS posts about "stay home so we can do our job".

A Governor asked about Reception children and a date for deciding whether or not the children would be going in. The Headteacher is reviewing the plan each Friday. At the moment, it is fine to go ahead but they would need a contingency plan.

The Headteacher mentioned a school app for communications which is nearly ready to go.

The Chair reported that Nick Gibb, the Junior Schools Minister had aimed for all year groups to go into school for the last four weeks, but now is not sure that this could happen. Was there any plan for this at MPS? MF said that the three years (R, Y1 and Y6) would go in first and after three weeks an assessment would be done as to whether there were enough staff available, at least for one day. This could only work if there are sufficient staff available.

The Chair closed the meeting by offering thanks to MF and the rest of the staff who have given up so much time in half-term to do this. It was clear that a lot of work and care had gone into doing this. She said a big thank you to the staff and governors, and also asked if the governing body would support going ahead with the re-opening of school. This was met with unanimous agreement.

MF thanked everyone and said that the opinions and support was appreciated.

3. **Date of next FGBM**

The next Full Governing Body Meeting will be held on Thursday 9th July 2020.

Signed:

Dated: