

HODGSON ACADEMY (02502)

Governors Meeting

ACTION

Minutes of the meeting of the full governing body held via zoom on Tuesday 2nd February 2021 at 4.30pm.

Present:

Mrs N Galloway (Chair)
Mrs H Benwell
Mr C McConnachie
Mr C Feeney
Mrs J Harvey
Mr C Jackson
Mr I Lindsay
Mrs A Preston
Mr T Rimmer
Mrs J Vila
Mr A Walker
Mr I Siddall (Headteacher)

Also Present:

Mrs E Wallace (Clerk to Governors)
Mr P Marsden (Observer – Deputy Headteacher)
Mr M Pickles (Observer – Finance Director)

Apologies:

No apologies of absence received.

The meeting was conducted via the Zoom platform. The Chair welcomed participants to the meeting and asked all to note the following guidance which had been issued with the agenda

Please note the Department for Education ‘urges governing boards to be pragmatic in what they cover in meetings during this time, and to be proportionate in the decisions that they are planning to take’. They expect governors to focus on ‘urgent, time-bound decisions’ and understand boards will want to ‘defer non urgent decisions/agenda items until future meetings’.

In addition, the National Governance Association (NGA) has advised paperwork be scaled back and verbal updates be provided wherever possible during this time.

2a. Governors declaration of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

b. Membership of the governing body

The Chair acknowledged the vacancy for a parent governor and discussed the option for this to be advertised again upon the return of schools.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on Tuesday 1st December, having been circulated be approved and signed by the chair.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters to be discussed from the previous meeting held on Tuesday 1st December 2020.

A governor requested an update on ICT equipment.

Mr Pickles responded, explaining a similar number of laptops from the first lockdown had again been issued to students. He explained the Academy also had laptops from the DFE which totalled 80 altogether. Mr Pickles added there had been no situations where the school could not assist families.

5. Headteacher's Verbal Update

Mr Siddall explained in regards to safeguarding, all vulnerable students had been contacted by the Academy via Pastoral or DSL on numerous occasions and where phone calls were not answered, home visits were made and referrals where appropriate.

Mr Siddall discussed more laptops had been distributed than the first lockdown. He added this was due to the prevalence of online learning and requests from parents for laptops had increased as some households have 2 or more children.

Mr Siddall explained a weekly update is sent out via email to parents every week, keeping them informed of everything that is going on, acknowledging national developments, explaining online parents evening etc.

Mr Siddall discussed risk assessments and explained these are dependent on how the schools are guided to re-open. Mr Siddall suggested a governor visit the Academy site, to discuss risk assessments and view how they would be implemented. The Chair agreed she would visit.

Mr Marsden continued discussions regarding remote learning. He explained the Academy was ready to run full school days via online platforms. He added this did not result in students on screen for 5 hours, it consisted of a mixed economy of online learning and uploading work to teachers. The Academy invited parents to complete an online survey in regards to their children's online learning. The feedback was very positive with 95% of parents agreeing the provision was good or extremely good. Constructive criticism included too much screen time, where senior leaders have discussed with some teaching staff strategies on altering lessons slightly.

Mr Marsden explained during a week there are approximately 60 students accessing the key worker provision, which has remained steady. He added the Academy were trying to keep students learning from home where possible, in line with Government guidance. Mr Marsden discussed some students receiving phone calls home to help maintain their focus.

A governor congratulated the Academy on their online provision.

A governor questioned whether the Academy had encountered any problems regarding wifi.

Mr Marsden explained there had been a handful of cases where dongles had been distributed to students in regards to internet issues. He added if students did not have internet access at all, then they would be brought into the Academy under the vulnerable students category.

6. Admissions Policy 2021/2022

After being circulated prior to the meeting, this was approved and signed by the governing board. Mr Pickles explained the additional paragraphs to be added to the policy.

A governor asked if students aged outside of the normal age group section was a school decision or county decision.

Mr Pickles explained ultimately it was the Academy's decision, as we are the admissions authority.

7. Buildings/Refurbishment 2021

Governors were sent a document regarding buildings/refurbishment prior to the meeting. Mr Siddall gave governors the opportunity to ask questions.

A governor queried when phase 1 would commence.

Mr Siddall explained once approval is received from governors, phase 1 will commence.

A governor asked for plans regarding the music rooms to be explained.

Mr Siddall discussed the relocation of one of the music rooms to be located where the other music room is situated. He continued to explain that as it stands currently, the space is not an efficient use of resource and therefore requires investment to improve the music department and make better use of classroom space.

A governor queried whether the upstairs conference room would be lost due to the music room change.

Mr Siddall stated the conference room will be relocated but not lost.

A governor asked about the drawings of the new canteen and lifespan of new canteen building.

Mr Siddall explained the Academy was looking at a steel structure with glass Perspex to allow in plenty of light and feel spacious. He added a brick structure would not be in keeping with the aesthetic of the Academy due to its location.

Mr Pickles explained the new canteen will be built on unused ground and added it would be a lot larger than the current dining room. He explained he would report back to governors regarding the lifespan of the building.

Mr Pickles

A governor questioned whether planning permission was needed to erect the building and had a similar building been viewed elsewhere.

Mr Siddall stated he had viewed a similar structure in another school, which worked extremely well and was used for the same purpose.

Mr Pickles added the Site Premises Manager was working with contractors to identify whether planning permission was required with it being a single story building.

A governor queried plans regarding the reading garden.

Mr Siddall replied, explaining the reading garden will be re-located to a different part of the school where it is quieter and more accessible to students.

A governor asked about the drainage issue near B-Block.

Mr Pickles explained new drainage had been fitted by the corner of B-Block and all works completed in an around that area would only improve drainage in this location.

The Chair showed gratitude in the finances of the Academy in allowing students a better school environment both physically and mentally.

8. Finance and Governance Update

Mr Pickles started discussions comparing the academy to last year, in terms of all works around the academy being halted. He added the works around the Academy have been budgeted for and a financial hit was expected from the current pandemic as lettings are unable to go ahead.

Mr Pickles discussed savings the Academy will encounter including energy costs and examination fees, although students will need to be entered, exam boards will issue refunds which is expected to be between £20,000 - £25,000.

Mr Pickles added the Academy is a NHS testing site for staff, which incurs a slight cost, however this is being managed. He explained the Academy is slightly over staffed with cleaners, with this a necessity to be able to maintain and ensure cleaning is kept to a high standard.

A governor asked about the government's catch-up grant.

Mr Pickles explained every 3 months the Academy receives £22,000 from the government. He explained the first payment from the government was mainly spent on the current Year 11. Mr Pickles explained the grant is not solely for the loss of education but equally for the pastoral side to maintain students mental well-being.

A governor asked if the catch-up grant will be monitored, in terms of how it is spent.

Mr Pickles explained that the Academy will report how the money has been spent and what impact it has had.

A governor questioned how money regarding pupil premium had been distributed and if its allocation had altered.

Mr Pickles informed governors, teaching assistants are engaging with remote learning particularly with those with more complex learning needs. He added some of these students were in school under the vulnerable category where they were still receiving one to one learning.

A governor asked how the NHS testing worked within the Academy.

Mr Pickles discussed testing is offered twice weekly. He added the staff involved with this, had undergone a comprehensive online learning package. Mr Pickles added the team of staff chosen to assist with this have been extremely organised and they have done a fantastic job. He added the situation regarding mass testing is currently unclear and the Academy is awaiting further guidance.

A governor queried the increase in students eligible for free school meals.

Mr Pickles responded explaining this figure had risen by 100% compared to 5/6 years ago. He added this was due to a change in the new universal credit roll out. He continued explaining some of the figure is also due to the current climate due to Covid.

9. Confidential

There were no items discussed or on the agenda deemed to be of a confidential nature.

10. Any Other Business

The Chair explained she had attended two webinars regarding governors supporting staff mental health and wellbeing. The Chair discussed the webinars and options of showing staff support in a proportionate way. Mrs Galloway asked governors, during the pandemic to channel all communication to the Headteacher through herself, in order to not overwhelm Mr Siddall and prevent multiple questions/queries of a similar nature being repeated.

A governor queried whether this request was inclusive of governors with specific roles e.g. Safeguarding and SEND.

The Chair replied explaining this did not include communication required for governors to fulfil their committee membership roles.

A governor asked whether this would mean questions would be filtered.

The Chair stated this was solely for the purpose of reducing workload and any questions presented to The Chair would be passed onto the Headteacher and any feedback reported back to governors. She added all questions are valid and important and trust should be instilled in the chair to voice and raise governors questions.

A governor questioned how long The Chair envisaged the channelling of communication to last.

Mrs Galloway stated it would be appropriate for this to last the duration of the Covid pandemic.

A governor suggested this situation should be renewed at each governors meeting, until it has ceased.

All Governors agreed.

Mr Siddall stated, this allows The Chair to have an overall view of the governing body. He added it allows Mrs Galloway to reflect the concerns of the governing body without multiple replies to different governors on the same subject and perhaps not allowing the issue or problem to have the due weight it deserves.

11. Date and time of next meeting

The next full governors meeting will be held on Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 4.30pm.