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The Vineyard School Governing Board

Friars Stile Road, Richmond TW10 6NE

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Minutes of Extra Full Governing Board Meeting Thursday 4 February 2021 via Zoom at 4pm

<b>Governors Present:</b>	Anke Monestel (AM) Graham Stewart (GS) Lynne Woolley (LW) Alice McArdle (AMc) Firas Ali (FA) Antony Cook (AC) – Chair Ruth Whymark (RW) – Head Teacher Kirsty MacEachen (KM) – Vice Chair Chloe Garth (CG)
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Daisy Dempster (DD) Matt Collier (MC) Richard Rosewell (Associate Member) (RR) Charlotte Axbey (CA) Anna Mantle (Clerk) Cathy Clarke (School Improvement Partner) (CC)
<b>Absent:</b>	Simon Williams (SW) James Lane (JL) Fern Carter (FC)

Meeting started at 4.05pm. It was quorate throughout.

Item	Action
<b>1. Introduction</b> AC introduced the meeting. It had been convened as an extra meeting at short notice to allow governors to be updated on the evolution of the remote learning provision on offer at The Vineyard.  Absence apologies accepted from SW, JL and FC.  Cathy Clarke (CC) introduced herself to governors and explained her role as School Improvement Partner (SIP) advisor for AfC, in which context she is attached to 12 local schools whom she visits at least once per term. She is involved in discussing school improvement, providing support and challenge and helping with the head teacher appraisal process. She had attended some of the remote learning sessions during the week preceding the meeting.	
<b>2. Papers circulated ahead of the meeting</b> Ahead of the meeting, the following documents and links were circulated:	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SIP Spring Report to Governors</li> <li>• Remote Learning Update to parents</li> <li>• Remote Learning Guide</li> </ul>	
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3.	<p><b><u>Remote Learning provision</u></b></p> <p>RR started by providing governors with insight into a remote learning session he had observed that morning. He commented that there are a number of positive aspects of remote learning that they should be trying to emulate when children return to the classroom in school. The session he had observed had made effective use of 20 minutes' focus on literacy. Children were engaged and using breakout rooms as an excellent means to facilitate small groups with no distractions which the teacher was able to support efficiently and provide constructive feedback.</p> <p>RW updated governors that the school's remote learning provision had started in January with pre-recorded lessons on video and a group registration at the start of the day, plus feedback sessions targeted at specific groups. She told governors that three weeks ago they had piloted a blended learning approach in Y2 and Y6, combining live online learning with structured homework. She explained that the sessions are short, since research shows that concentration times are much less on screens (10-12 minutes maximum). Most children undertake front-ended learning at home, with live feedback and development sessions online after undertaking the learning task independently, however children who are "working towards" or need more support to scaffold their learning are provided with a live session to help get them started.</p> <p>Directors of Learning were present on the call to provide detail and feedback on the changes being introduced.</p>	
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4.20pm Lynne Woolley joins the meeting.

3.	<p><b><u>Remote Learning provision continued</u></b></p> <p>Governors then discussed the questions that they would like answered throughout the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since each school has chosen different pathways and some are offering more "live" learning, how confident can we be that the Vineyard approach achieves the right balance for our children?</li> <li>• How are we balancing the mental health challenges posed by the lockdown as well as the academic challenges for children?</li> <li>• An overview of staff wellbeing and teacher feedback</li> <li>• Parent feedback on how they're coping.</li> </ul> <p>DD provided an overview of EYFS. She explained the range of activities and provision that the EYFS team have put together. She acknowledged that the activities cannot be child initiated like they would be in school and that a significant level of parental support will be required. She said that phonics, maths and play were the key focus. As well as a range of suggested activities, they run two daily sessions, including afternoon storytime. Next week they will be starting writing groups because this term would usually focus on a big push on writing.</p> <p>AMcA provided feedback on KS1. In Y2 the new approach had received good feedback. Children are more motivated and can get on with their own work. She commented that teachers had seen an improvement in the quality of the work submitted. She acknowledged that for Y1 they are making everything as child friendly as possible, but they are not able to do everything independently. The feedback from this year group has been generally positive. 20 minutes live session is enough to keep everyone motivated and the children enjoy the interaction in small groups.</p> <p><b>Governors asked how families with both parents working were managing and about how the school would assist children without support at home to catch up.</b></p>	
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RW said that it is a real balancing act, but that the answer is not to offer longer live sessions since that is not effective for children's learning. CC explained that it is recognised that distance learning for younger children is a real challenge. The focus remains on the essentials for learning and they will catch up on the more advanced areas when they return to school. She emphasised that children learn through play. She said that younger children should be focused on phonics and extra reading, as well as developing fine motor skills.

There was a discussion about whether parents of children in EYFS understand the focus of the school curriculum on child-initiated play interspersed with short bursts of more formal learning, and the importance of outdoor play to develop gross motor skills.

**Governors asked what support the school was providing for EAL children to develop their phonics.**

DD commented that parents had a lot of support through Read Write Inc and Oxford Owl and that many EAL families had commented that the process of supporting their child's phonics learning at home had helped them to understand it better.

MC provided feedback on upper KS2. The feedback on the changes to the remote learning provision is positive. The children love interacting with each other and it helps them to feel connected. He said that it is much better for their wellbeing, and that although teachers had been unsure about how the sessions would work at the start, it is a much more fun and engaging way to deliver online learning, and the small group interaction allows them to be more effective. He also told governors about Friday wellbeing sessions that are run as a drop in for children who want to join them.

CA provided feedback on staff wellbeing. She said that there is a feeling of cohesion and camaraderie at school. She also said that the children who are in school are benefiting from the concentrated support.

**Governors asked about the numbers in school.**

The majority of the children with EHCPs and SEND are in school. This means that all support staff are in school (unless they are shielding), which is significantly different from the first lockdown. 15% of children are in school. These numbers are reviewed on a three weekly basis and places prioritised for those most in need. 2 bubbles are currently out of school and 9 members of staff are isolating at the moment. Balancing staff health and wellbeing with offering the best for all the children is a constant challenge.

RW thanked all staff for their fortitude and their support of each other and consideration for all the children's educational and pastoral needs.

**Governors asked whether there had been any challenges with technology.**

CA explained that the school had been given 12 chromebooks by the government and that the school had been able to offer a quick turnaround for families in need of IT support. The school had pro-actively contacted families to offer IT support if they thought it might be needed. She added that the support staff had been delivering printed packs to families without printers and the IT manager had been helping with IT set up over the phone.

**Governors asked whether there were children whose safeguarding situation the school was worried about.**

CA replied that no-one was off the radar this time. They are in daily contact with the few families that they are concerned about.

RW said that there had been some families in touch about safeguarding concerns. She had raised the profile of safeguarding and domestic violence reporting via the School Ping messaging system to make sure families were aware of the route in to support available via the school.

**Governors asked whether children were aware about how they could raise issues.**

CA explained that vulnerable children have visible key adults who pro-actively make connections with them regularly. She said that the usual ELSA programme does not work on Zoom or socially distanced, so pro-active 1-2-1 support is offered and the TAs are becoming key adults for remote children.

**Governors asked about how confident the staff are that they are catching children who are falling behind.**

MC explained that they keep a register of everyone attending live sessions and they also keep a note of which children are participating and fully engaged in the sessions. They follow up with children who are missing and reach out to offer support to those whose engagement is falling. Work is also submitted on Dojo, and this is used to gauge engagement.

5pm AM, AC and CG leave.

**3. Remote Learning continued**

Governors asked about the criteria for selecting children to attend school.

RW said that she was trying to keep to bubbles of 15. The broad definition of "keyworker" in the government guidance is challenging. She said that she had been forced to make some very difficult decisions and understood the distress for parents, however having a lot of children in school defeats the object of lockdown. She said that she was applying the rules transparently and fairly, and the majority of parents were understanding and following the guidance. She said that the school always prioritised vulnerable children in school.

CC commented that average attendance in Richmond/Kingston is 11%-15%. She also emphasised the high level of anxiety amongst teachers and school staff.

There was a discussion about when governors should review the progress of the remote learning provision. It was agreed to review after half term whether another meeting should be convened after 8 March, depending on whether there is a full return to school in early March or not.

Governors thanked staff for their time and for all their hard work.

5.24pm Meeting ends.