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The Vineyard School Governing Board

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Minutes of Full Governing Board meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 at 6pm via conference call

- Present:** Kirsty MacEachen (KM)  
Anke Monestel (AM)  
Graham Stewart (GS)  
Amy Salem (AS)  
Chloe Garth (CG)  
Ruth Whymark (RW)  
Firas Ali (FA)  
Lynne Woolley (LW)  
Tara Lawson (TL)  
Antony Cook (AC)  
Melanie Bywell (MB)  
Fern Carter (FC)  
James Lane (JL)
- In Attendance:** Richard Rosewell (Associate Member) (RR)  
Anna Mantle (Clerk)
- Absent:** Simon Williams (SW)

Meeting started at 6.08pm.

Item	Action
1. <b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> Simon Williams was not available to join the call	
2. <b><u>Alternative Meeting Protocol</u></b> In light of the government restrictions on travel and social distancing requirements due to COVID-19, governors agreed that all meetings will take place via conference call until restrictions are lifted. The model virtual meeting protocol produced by AfC was circulated ahead of the meeting. <b>Governors had reviewed it in advance and unanimously agreed to adopt it.</b>	
3. <b><u>Governors' Declaration of Interests</u></b> No direct or indirect pecuniary interests were declared.	
4. <b><u>Membership of the Governing Board</u></b> GS welcomed Tara Lawson to her first full governing board meeting since being elected parent governor in December. Name: Tara Lawson Type: Parent Governor Term of office: 4 years Date elected: 9 December 2020	

	<p>No terms of office due to expire before the next meeting or the end of the academic year.</p> <p>No current vacancies on the board.</p>	
5.	<p><b><u>Minutes of the last meeting (4 December 2019)</u></b>  The matters discussed at the 4 December 2019 FGB were filed under Part II Confidential minutes. Governors agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record.</p> <p>Clerk to explore electronic docuSign capabilities.</p>	
6.	<p><b><u>Chair's Actions</u></b>  GS explained that in the fast paced, constantly changing weeks leading up to the school closure a number of operational decisions had been made by the Head Teacher following the DfE's mandate to take reasonable measures to fulfil the government's requirements. These decisions had been discussed with GS (Chair) and documented according to the DfE's guidelines so that extra expenses can be reimbursed. He summarised these decisions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skeleton staff structure set up</li> <li>• Infrastructure to support keyworker and vulnerable children includes breakfast club and after school club care, as well as school meals for all.</li> <li>• Break in contract with school meals provider.</li> <li>• Volunteer staff will be covering Easter holidays, with adjusted working pattern to take time out of school rather than paying overtime.</li> </ul> <p>GS requested that RW provide an overview of the costs incurred to date and an indication of how they sit within the school budget. SS will be asked to complete this after the Easter holidays.</p>	
7.	<p><b><u>Current situation update</u></b>  RW provided governors with an update on the situation to date. She paid tribute to the support she had received from Richard Rosewell, Charlotte Axbey and Svetlana Sanders. The whole SLT had been very committed and worked extremely hard. She also commended the whole staff team and thanked them for their professionalism and hard work through these challenging times. The compliments and grateful messages from parents and carers are testament to how hard they have worked to provide structure and stability in a testing educational environment.</p> <p>RW detailed the actions the school had taken during the weeks prior to and after half term, leading up to the school closure. Preparations for remote working and use of Google classroom were made and in the final weeks before school closure, reduced class sizes had been merged together to free up teaching resources to prepare the online learning platform.</p> <p>The number of children attending school is now approximately 20. Strict measures on social distancing for children and staff were in place, and a rota for classroom use and cleaning was in place. Staff were working on a rota of one week out of 6 in school, with back ups in place to cover for illness.</p> <p>RW updated governors that the Borough had been keen for local schools to join together to pool resources. She expressed concern that this could potentially increase the threat of infection. One local school was going to join The Vineyard during the Easter holidays because they do not have wraparound care facilities or in school catering, however they would be using a separate part of the school and not sharing resources. Safeguarding of their children would be their responsibility, in liaison with the The Vineyard's DSL.</p> <p>RW also outlined the school's provision of free school meals to the wider school community. A weekly hamper was now being provided for families in receipt of free school meals. Social distancing and cleanliness routines were in place as well.</p>	

An addendum has been made to the safeguarding child protection policy, with regards online safety and communications between school and home, as well as an update on actions to be taken with regards concerns for vulnerable children who are not in school. Updates were sent to Antony Cook (Safeguarding Governor) and Graham Stewart (Chair) for review before implementation.

RR updated governors that RW's swift action and decision-making ensured that the school kept pace and was in a good position to cope with the changing situation.

AS provided feedback that despite uncertainty and anxiety at the start of the school closure, a routine was now being established. She was feeling positive about the shift the staff had made to using Google classroom and said that everyone had worked together as a team, which had made a real difference.

**Governors asked what home school provision looks like.**

RW explained there is a suggested timetable for each phase which provides two hours of focused activity for each day. There is a combination of low threshold activities that should be easy for all to access and some high challenge activities which pupils can engage in to enhance learning. The aim is that this should not be overwhelming for parents and should be enjoyable for children. They aim to provide suggested activities for the Easter holidays as an alternative to screen time. In school children are following a similar structure, with physical exercise and time outside included in the programme.

General feedback from governors who are parents at the school was very positive. They expressed how impressed they are with the resources available and felt the flexibility of the activities provided enough challenge without putting them under too much pressure.

There was some feedback that class WhatsApp groups indicated some parents were not engaging in home schooling. **Governors asked how the school planned to deal with the difference in levels of the children when they return to school.**

RW explained that a home learning policy is being developed that will set out guidance on what should be provided at home. The school does have mechanisms for monitoring frequency of logging into online systems and will be checking in with children. Class Dojos will also be introduced next week, and there will be an expectation that work will be handed in.

RW highlighted that the school's concerns were firstly to ensure safeguarding and secondly to support children who were not accessing any of the curriculum.

AS indicated that teachers were now considering how they could support specific groups and cover off areas that would have been taught in school. She gave her maths intervention group as an example. She has plans to record questions to help them consolidate their skills on a regular basis.

RW was keen to emphasise that it is important to manage expectations at the moment. It is not possible to teach children remotely in the same way as they would at school. It is also important to remember that some vulnerable children do not have access to the internet, and many families are juggling working from home with home schooling. Mental health is also a key consideration at this time.

RW explained that the teachers' focus at the moment is on building the home learning curriculum based on research-led remote learning teaching pedagogy.

7.25pm Anke Monestel leaves.

**7. Current situation update – continued**

It was agreed that it would be useful to set up a short parent survey to gather feedback on provision so far in order to capture the positives as well as points for improvement.

	<p>KM to circulate draft questions to all governors. Survey to go out with newsletter on Friday 3 April.</p> <p>Governors asked about staff wellbeing and provision to manage remote teams.</p> <p>RW explained that staff wellbeing was very important. There are a number of counselling support services that staff have access to. There is also a process in place for all team leaders to check in regularly with their teams each week, and regular all school conference call meetings.</p>	
8.	<p><b><u>Budget 2020-21</u></b> The draft 2020-2021 budget had been circulated ahead of the meeting and reviewed in detail at the Resources Committee (25 March 2020). GS provided an overview of the current situation, explaining that it is in a better position than expected, finishing with an estimated £60k surplus at the end of the 19-20 financial year.</p>	
9.	<p><b><u>School Financial Value Standard</u></b> This had been circulated by email to all governors ahead of the meeting and reviewed in detail at the Resources Committee. The RAG dashboard shows the relative cost of staffing as a “red” flag. Governors had discussed this in detail at the Resources Committee. It was agreed that the professionalism and experience of the staff at The Vineyard, as demonstrated during these challenging times, is a worthwhile resource to invest in, however staffing costs will be kept under review.</p> <p>MB (Chair of Resources Committee) expressed her thanks to SS (School Business Manager) for her hard work.</p> <p><b>Governors agreed the SFVS.</b></p>	
11.	<p><b><u>Policies</u></b></p> <p><b>Complaints Policy</b> Circulated ahead of the meeting and was extensively reviewed last year. RW provided feedback that the policy has been working well to help depersonalise the complaints process and is being used to deal with concerns early to prevent problems escalating.</p> <p><b>Governors approved the policy.</b> Review frequency: Annual</p>	

Meeting concluded 7.55pm

**Date of next meeting: Wednesday 17 June at 6pm**

**Summary of action points:**

Action point	Responsibility
Explore Docusign capabilities	Clerk
File December minutes	Clerk
Update Complaint policy coversheet	Clerk
Add e-Safety policy to September agenda	Clerk
File alternative meeting protocol	Clerk