

BRINE LEAS SCHOOL

An Academy

Local Governing Board Meeting

Held on Wednesday 20th May 2020

Meeting held via Zoom: Video Conferencing

MINUTES – PART 1

Present:	Mr D Cole	(DCE)	Headteacher Governor
	Mr T Court	(TC)	Appointed Governor
	Mrs M Hennessy Jones	(MHJ)	Appointed Governor
	Cllr P Groves	(PG)	Appointed Governor
	Dr K Jones	(KJ)	Appointed Governor
	Mr T Maclellan	(TMN)	Elected Staff Governor
	Mr T Marsden	(TM)	Appointed Governor
	Mrs S Turner	(ST)	Elected Parent Governor (Chair)
	Mrs D Varley	(DV)	Elected Parent Governor
	Mr M Webb	(MW)	Appointed Governor

In Attendance: Mr A Cliffe (MAT CEO)
Mrs E Fletcher (Clerk)
Mrs J Furber (Chair of MAT Directors) – opening part of the meeting only

Please note – orange/brown text shows governor challenge/questions.

1. Apologies

The Clerk confirmed that she had received apologies in respect of Mrs A Ashley and Mrs J Thomas. Apologies were considered carefully and governors agreed to accept them for this meeting.

Outcome: Governors accepted apologies outlined above.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Clerk asked governors if they had any declarations of interest in relation to this meeting's agenda. No declarations were raised by any LGB members. ACE informed the LGB that he was Chair of Governors at Weaver Primary School but did not see a conflict pertaining to this agenda.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

A copy of the minutes from the meeting held on 26th February 2020 were provided to governors prior to the meeting and it was proposed that these were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Minutes Approved by Chair of Governors Date:

Outcome: Governors accepted the minutes presented as a true and accurate record of the meeting held on 26th February 2020.

It was highlighted that any matters arising, if any, would be picked up at the next normal business meeting as the LGB is currently focusing on urgent matters only due to the current situation.

4. Update on Current School Situation (Due to Covid-19)

DCE highlighted that some of the update was included in the Headteacher's Report, but raised the following points for governor attention:-

- DCE shared that formal guidance seems to refer to primary schools and he is currently waiting for official take on secondary school.
- The LGB were informed that the Cheshire East Local Authority went for the middle ground at their recent meeting and agreed to delay the start date for schools re-opening. This includes appearing to be supportive of the secondary sector and may agree to include the inclusion of virtual teaching.
- DCE shared that, in the meantime, the school is continuing with current arrangements although it is trying to reduce the numbers of children in school as staff need a break over half term before the re-opening work begins. DCE highlighted that it has been a long time without breaks, particularly for the leadership team who have been in every week.
- DCE highlighted that this week has been a bit of a rollercoaster with the lack of scientific advice available, potential union issue and the large numbers of guidance updates with. However, the school is available and open.
- DCE shared that his focus is now to look at the workforce with regard to returning to work, and the health and safety issues around opening.
- **TC asked for confirmation that the position as it stands is that nothing is confirmed?** DCE confirmed that this is the case. DCE informed the LGB that Year 6 transition will happen virtually as there are no planned dates for them to be in secondary school before summer. He is not expecting anything in school with Year 10 and 12 before summer and feels that anything will be virtual.
- DCE shared that he has prepared a draft roadmap and the school has kept in touch with parents. DCE will be working on this in more detail and the document will take the school through its journey to fully opening including teacher changes.
- DCE highlighted the phases of the plan:-
 1. Getting the urgent children into school;
 2. Identify and bring in the children that school would like to start working with in school;
 3. To incorporate the other children virtually or with some teaching and limited numbers in school;
 4. Fully re-opening the school to all children.
- The LGB were informed that staff have been in this week to look at their workspaces and an open email has been sent to staff to invite them to share concerns etc. DCE highlighted that the next phase for staffing will be to bring in a rota system based on the children that will be in school.
- DCE shared that he is looking how to keep social distancing assuming that is still going to be in place in schools for a long time. This will mean that some things won't happen for some time, for example, Lakeside have already cancelled the residential for Year 7 planned for October. DCE expects that the first year that normal activities can re-commence will be 2021.

- DCE shared that dates won't be on the roadmap as we will need to react to situations as they arise and therefore, he doesn't want to be tied up with dates that have been published.
- DCE shared that he and Malbank's Headteacher are working very closely together and plan to do the exact same things with approval from both LGBs. DCE highlighted that, in addition, the NEP has been working on a common letter for primaries and DCE/JW have worked on a joint secondary letter.

DCE feels that this collaboration will be key to make people understand that the schools are working together and understand that arrangements will affect families in the area.
- DCE shared that there have been concerns from staff but he is working through these.
- **TC asked for clarification on meaning of the term 'suspension of the curriculum' and queried the implications of this for when school starts.** DCE shared that the term 'suspension' was issued by the government when they didn't know what children should be doing during closures. DCE highlighted that the Covid Bill removes all statutory accountability with the exception of the welfare of vulnerable children. DCE shared that therefore, all measures and accountability for what the school delivers have been suspended although the LA has been monitoring what is on offer to LAC, PLAC and other vulnerable children. This has been to make expectations realistic.
- **TC asked about DCE's views on the fact that different pupils will have been doing more and less than others and how will this be accounted for.** DCE shared that current guidance indicates that there will be no league tables for current Year 10 although the actual plan and how it will happen is not clear yet. DCE informed the LGB that a top-up funding is expected to support children that need a gap closing. DCE feels that his concern in this area is low as he feels BLS is experienced in closing gaps. ACE shared that the advice to primaries is currently that the emphasis should be on what the children know and where the skill gaps are and then putting in a package to plug the gaps. ACE shared that whilst this guidance hasn't gone to secondary schools yet, it is expected that the advice will be similar. DCE shared that that recommendations for Year 10 and 12 is a tutorial with a member of staff to ask about progress, what has the student been doing, what haven't they been doing, what do they know and what do they think are their knowledge gaps.
- **TC asked whether there was an indication of more online lessons, highlighting that some schools seem to have embraced this fully.** DCE shared that he has no plans to increase online lessons yet, and shared that he felt there is only one school locally doing a significant number of online classes. DCE highlighted that every school is different and although most schools are ensuring there is some online lessons for most children, some schools with higher funding have been able to buy equipment for every child and have been able to purchase online teaching systems. BLS hasn't been in that position so are catching up; all staff have appropriate devices but they haven't had the training or platform to do online lessons. DCE informed the LGB that, after half term, the aim is one recorded lesson per subject, per year group, per week. Alongside this, there are plans for one open clinic per subject per week and work will be submitted via Microsoft teams for feedback. DCE feels this is a realistic plan and this the basis for his discussions with staff. DCE informed governors that he is mindful that whatever is provided to students is not equitable for all students and this is a huge concern for him; therefore, to provide more work online is problematic for some families, whilst others have embraced this fully. DCE shared that paper documents have been provided to families that need this and estimates that around 15% of students can't access online learning fully. DCE informed the LGB that each class now has a team on Microsoft teams. **ST highlighted that safeguarding is also a big issue for online provision, and this needs consideration.** DCE shared that limited staff experience of online teaching platforms has been an issue, but this has improved with training.
- **DV suggested that, as a parent, she feels tighter deadline for online work would be beneficial as some children lose sight of these. ST shared that she feels this issue will be addressed when work starts to be submitted for feedback.** DCE highlighted that tightening deadlines has been difficult to impose due to the accessibility issue.

- DCE highlighted that BLS is not a fully online or offline school, and he doesn't have a full cohort of staff. He therefore cannot provide the same depth or quantity of work as he could before the closure. DCE highlighted that he has been trying to focus on maintaining the breadth of education during this period.
- DV questioned the future and shared her understanding that online learning will still be a big feature in schooling in September. DCE confirmed this is the case and now that work has been done on Microsoft teams and with staffing capacity increasing, this will be a different situation going forward.
- KJ shared a view that at the moment, it is not about having a teacher to deliver the material, it is about having the material presented in the most appropriate way and currently it is more like treading water to keeping the children working and then having a day in school on a rota, when it is appropriate. DCE agreed and shared that the idea that students are being homeschooled is a myth; it is keeping them in the habit of learning, moving forward and then when teaching can take place the school can get them going at pace.
- TMN asked whether DCE expected any staff to potentially kick back and say they didn't accept doing online learning because recording themselves wasn't what they had 'signed up for'. DCE shared that he had no issues around this, but shared that staff had been provided an opportunity to share concerns. DCE reiterated that the official union stance is contradictory and shared that two main unions have split views with regard to guidance. DCE felt that the staff at BLS are using their moral compass and the vast majority of staff want to see children move on. DCE shared that whilst this being an issue has been at the back of his mind, it has not a huge concern. In addition, DCE highlighted that it could be one teacher from a department doing every lesson if this is what is agreed in that department, it doesn't have to be normal class teacher physically teaching their lesson, and it could be another person teaching their lesson if that is what is agreed.

5. Sub Committee Feedback

This was included in the Headteacher's Report. However, DCE highlighted the following reports which were attached for governors information:-

- Management Accounts (discussed under HT Report)
- Exclusions Report (full year with comparison to last year)
- Safeguarding Report

DCE highlighted that these meetings needed to be reinstated as he felt one was needed prior to the end of the academic year.

Outcome: DCE and The Clerk to liaise with regard to a suitable point for these to take place and The Clerk to then liaise with the chairs of sub-committees to set the dates.

6. Whole School Development Plan

DCE shared that the plan submitted in July will not be the same format as there is very little to conclude on the original plan given the current unprecedented situation. ST highlighted that performance management for this academic year will need to be reviewed as teachers will have been set targets and things have changed beyond anyone's control. DCE shared that he feels the process will need to be done on a similar basis to someone on maternity, i.e. where were they up to at the point of school closure. No other comments or questions were raised.

7. Headteacher's Report

A copy of the Head's report was provided prior to the meeting. DCE highlighted that it is an unusual report but has been set out following guidance around reporting areas for this period.

DCE highlighted that the guidance states that LGB's should focus on business critical decisions and this is the reason that there has been no sub-committees, although some reporting has been provided. DCE highlighted the following from the report for LGB attention:-

- Management Accounts – DCE informed the LGB that there has only been one month to see what the impact of Covid-19 closures has been and that is April. DCE highlighted that some income has gone up and some down, and confirmed that, currently, the net effect is not negative and is broadly balanced. DCE shared that with regard to exams fees, there has been no money back yet, although it is expected that some costs will be refunded. DCE shared that they will need to wait and see what else happens with regard to costings as there has been some unexpected expenditure but equally there have been no cover costs etc. DCE informed the LGB that, as a result, the forecast is slightly better but in terms of the management accounts reports, there is no significant points to mention. Questions were invited but none were raised at the meeting.
- DCE informed the LGB that recruitment for all vacancies has taken place virtually, with the exception of the SLT vacancy as DCE didn't feel the right candidate had come forward. As an alternative solution, he has advertised for some temporary internal posts to join the extended leadership team. DCE shared that four people have been appointed - Mr Ward as Pastoral Lead, Mrs Dawson as Engagement Lead, Mr Mottram as Transition Lead and Mr Maclellan as Post-16 Lead.
- Centre assessed grades – DCE informed the LGB that the school is at the final stage of their part of the process. DCE has done his moderation and there is some tweaking to do before the report is submitted. DCE shared that he doesn't anticipate that they will be found to have fallen foul of the measures in place, i.e. taking into account the 3-year history, as they have been extremely careful. DCE is proud of staff involved and feels that this process has got staff pretty close to the improvements needed with internal predictions. DCE shared that the rank order can't be changed but the grades can be.
- EHCP, Vulnerable and Key workers children – DCE informed the LGB that EHCP responsibility has always rested with LA and therefore the school is not responsible for the plan, but they are responsible for providing the education contained within the plan. DCE shared that the LA haven't felt that needed to provide a centre based provision for these children and therefore the school hasn't been required to ensure that they have attended school throughout this period. DCE shared that with regard to vulnerable children, there is no update other than what has already been discussed. The school now needs to physically see all these children, although many have already been seen, and others have had other forms of contact. The school needs to accept that some will not have done any work and prepare for this.
- Safeguarding – DCE reiterated that the school has had regular contact with all vulnerable children and although there were issues with social care in first few weeks, this has been addressed and they have been involved in getting children who should be in school, into school.
- Buildings – DCE shared that there has not been too much work needed in school due to the small numbers. Children have been in the hall to do Jo Wicks PE and then in the canteen for food. DCE shared that this has shown how small the canteen is and it can only take about 50 with social distancing measures in place. Normally 750 children go through the canteen. The LGB shared that handwash, stickers/signs and tape etc. have all been ordered, the buildings and site team are ready to go but the size is an issue. Most classes would need to be split into three. Which means three rooms and three members of staff.

- Home learning – DCE shared that this has already been discussed, but confirmed that the school will keep trying to improve what is on offer.
- Re-opening Roadmap – DCE shared that he needs to know that the LGB feel it is suitable. A verbal indication of what the roadmap is has already been given via the current situation updated, however, the written version has not been presented.
- DCE shared that one supplementary issue is around collaboration and DCE shared that this has become more difficult as people want to do different things but he remains working closely with Malbank. The LGB were asked to consider whether they are satisfied that, as a minimum, the CE advice is being followed, i.e. that children would not be on site until 15th June at the earliest. DCE confirmed that the recent CE letter has been shared with the LGB today. The LGB were informed that the message for key workers has been to keep children at home but it is now moving to send children to school. DCE shared that to have those children in school with other children means that he would need to keep them separate which is possible, and the staffing levels suggest we could treble that number in school with the current format. ST reminded governors of the verbal explanation of the roadmap and it was recommended that the LGB agree the verbal roadmap in principle, so that DCE can refine it. It was suggested that this could then go onto Governorhub for a quick turnaround approval. DCE highlighted the two key questions for LGB to consider:- Do they agreed that it is a no to reopening on 1st June and yes to 15th. **KJ suggested that there will be staff who have been told to shield themselves until 15th June so, on that basis, the 15th seems a sensible date.** DCE shared that he still needs to resolve the union issues, speak to parents and make the school suitable for children and was therefore not certain about the 15th being possible but felt that this is the earliest possible date. **ST shared concern that putting a date on the actual reopening document and felt this should only be done if DCE feels that it is safe to do so.** It was agreed that the letter to parents will be sent to ST and ACE for approval before it is sent out. DCE states that the letter needs to highlight to parents that the school needs to be safe in order for it to open. DCE shared that 16 out of all the secondary schools in CE are planning to go to the LGB to say the same. DCE stated that he still needs to wait for the government guidance and the scientific guidance which is due on 28th May as this may have a huge impact.

Outcome: All agreed with the roadmap in principle with 15th June as the earliest possible re-opening date.

Outcome: DCE to continue to work on the roadmap and share the final version with the LGB for approval.

Outcome: DCE to share the proposed letter to parents with ST and ACE (via the Clerk) for approval.

- Health and Safety - DCE shared that he plans to have 3 weeks' worth of any equipment deemed necessary to protect health and safety. He confirmed that he has also been in consultation with the cleaning contractors and staff on health and safety issues. DCE highlighted that the school needs to ensure that people are safe and it responds to people's concerns around PPE etc. DCE shared that the official guidance on PPE is not clear, but what is clear is that the school still has a responsibility to determine whether it is safe to open and the behaviour policy will need some significant changes for children not following social distancing measures.
- Shielding Staff – DCE informed the LGB that he will need to ask people about their fitness for work and working out the difference between the different categories for staff who have medical conditions. DCE chose to let pregnant staff in school before the government said they should shield and, at some point, he may need to put measures and decisions into place for some staff that may not be well received.

- Transport - DV asked whether there had been a decision on whether this will be available. DCE confirmed that there has been no decision on this yet but shared that this is due to be discussed next week. DCE highlighted that school transport is an LA issue completely and the school does not have an input into this.

8. Draft School Calendar 2020-21

A copy of the draft calendar was provided prior to the meeting and DCE highlighted that the LGB were being asked to approve the types of events rather than the dates of the events, as the dates are not set in stone. DCE highlighted that this is a very draft model which may take until September to ratify. LGB were notified that the flow is the same as last year.

No comments were raised and governors understood that this was not a formal calendar at this stage.

Outcome: LGB approved the draft school calendar on a temporary basis until the final version is drawn up for formal approval.

9. Policy Approval/Acceptance

BLS Safeguarding Policy Addendum

The LGB were asked to accept the appendix to the existing policy on the understanding that this has had approval from the Trust. **KJ highlighted that PWD's email is incorrect and requires updating and also confirmed that he can be contacted via The Clerk also. In addition, KJ highlighted a typing error on page 3 second para.**

Outcome: LGB accepted the Safeguarding Addendum subject to the above changes, and agreed to look at making it generic in future so it can become a permanent appendix.

MAT Appraisal Policy

The LGB were asked to accept the new Appraisal policy which has been approved by the Trust.

Outcome: LGB accepted the new Appraisal Policy

BLS Admissions Policy 2022-23

The LGB were asked to accept the Admissions Policy as approved by the Trust.

Outcome: LGB accepted the Admissions Policy for 2022-23

MAT Complaints Policy

The LGB were asked to accept the updated MAT Complaints Policy which had been recently approved by the Trust. **KJ asked about the wording in relation to the timings associated with the policy. DCE confirmed that these were set out by the legal team who wrote the original policy. KJ suggested that, in para 2.4, it is an additional right to have an interpreter rather than it being instead of a person for moral support.** All agreed with this suggestion and this will go to the Trust for approval before publication.

Outcome: The Clerk to put the change above to the Trust and subject to this, the LGB accepted the updated Complaints Policy.

BLS Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy

The LGB were asked to accept the updated policy, which had been approved by the Trust, on the understanding that it required the newly approved appendix adding to it. **KJ requested that the wording of the 2nd Para in Section 16 be revised to make clearer sense.**

Outcome: LGB accepted the updated Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy subject to the above change and the addition of the newly approved appendix.

Other BLS Policies Due for Review

DCE highlighted the list of policies provided to the LGB prior to the meeting and shared that at the moment, he does not envisage any operational changes to these documents so therefore requested that the LGB accept these will be formally reviewed/approved outside the normal internal policy schedule. It was highlighted that no policy is outside the statutory review period.

Governors were satisfied with this and **ST requested that some are put forward to the LGB in July. DV asked whether any from the list will need to be changed anyway due to Covid-19.** DCE felt that this was not the case, although some may need a small variation. It was agreed that DCE will look carefully through the list and put some through to July and the others will have their review date extended for up to six months.

Outcome: DCE to look through the list of policies due for review and put the most urgent ones through for approval in July.

Outcome: LGB approved an extension to the review date for all policies due for review this academic year, expect for those going for approval in July.

10. Governance

LGB were informed that there is still one vacancy following a recent resignation and it was agreed to try to commence recruitment to this position in September.

11. MAT Update

A report from the CEO was provided to the LGB prior to the meeting. In addition, ACE highlighted the following:-

- The Trust have agreed for chairs action to be allowed during the current period. It was highlighted that this did not necessarily need to be a resolution, but the Trust wanted to ensure that relevant people have the power to support urgent decisions.
- The Trust's decision to approve a name change when other schools join was highlighted. It was agreed that the Trust will write to staff at BLS to confirm this decision, now that the LGB had been informed.

- ACE highlighted his feelings about the current situation for exam year groups and highlighted that the Trust fully appreciates the work done by the school regarding this. ST expressed thanks to DCE also. DCE shared that he felt very well supported during these very challenging times.

12. Future Meetings

Wednesday 8th July 2020 at 3.45 pm
Governors should note that sub-committees will be arranged for a suitable date prior to the July LGB.

End of Meeting (no Part 2)