

The Active Learning Trust

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST

*held on 3rd March 2021
2pm via online Video-link*

MINUTES

Trustees/Members Present: Ms L. Adams Prof. A. Boddison
Mr C. Bush Mr S. Chamberlain (CEO)
Mrs J. Cutchey Mr R. Dool (Chair)
Ms M. Lloyd Mrs C. Quinn
Mr A. Thethi Ms R. Weaver MBE

Officers Present: Mrs K. Jarvis Mr C. Paskell
Mrs J. Steel

THE KEY DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING ARE SUMMARISED BELOW	
DECISION	Approve schools reopening w/c 9 th March 2021 as recommended by SC
ACTION	Mr Chamberlain to write to central staff expressing thanks

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mr Dool thanked all for attending at short notice. He particularly welcomed Mr Anmoal Thethi to his first meeting of the Board. Other Trustees echoed Mr Dool's welcome and good wishes.

No apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting.

2. RE-OPENING W/C 8TH MARCH 2021

Mr Dool explained that the meeting had been called so that Trustees could carry out their legal responsibilities to ensure that schools are safe to re-open in-line with Government guidance. All Trustees present confirmed that they had received and read the briefing paper circulated prior to the meeting. Mr Dool asked Mr Chamberlain to go through the report and explain the proposal for re-opening of ALT schools

Mr Chamberlain opened by thanking Mr Paskell, Mrs Driver and Mrs Jarvis for their work collating information and reviewing risk assessments provided by schools. This work has ensured that schools are compliant with national guidance. It was also noted that the risks assessed have been collated from a number of sources – Government, DfE, PHE and LAs.

Mr Chamberlain made Trustees aware of some issues that have not been clarified at the time of meeting, which are likely to give concern in schools and cause anxiety for students. These include the uncertainty around GCSE and A Levels, the exam assessment model, and how any subsequent appeals will be assessed.

Secondary (inc Special) schools are also having to administer lateral flow testing for students before they return to classes and cope with the introduction of face coverings being expected in all indoor areas.

All schools are being provided with home testing kits to distribute to staff, with secondary pupils also been expected to complete bi-weekly home testing after an initial three tests in school.

Mr Chamberlain explained that each school has updated its risk assessment. This includes a review of the risks in place from January 2021, plus an additional set of areas as follows:

- Transport, including pupils who are bused to school
- Social distancing changes in guidance
- Fire evacuation procedures
- Cleaning of equipment loaned to pupils during lockdown (eg laptops)
- Wearing of face coverings in schools
- Mandatory attendance
- Testing procedures
- Re-introduction of extra-curricular activities

Mr Chamberlain was pleased to report that all schools have been assessed as compliant and ready to open.

Trustees were invited to ask questions.

Mr Dool noted that Chantry were opening for all students on 8th March, whereas the other three secondary schools were staggering reopening to allow for testing. Mr Dool asked if Chantry were taking risks by opening for all on the first day. Mr Chamberlain explained that Chantry were

completing the initial testing of pupils during the week previous to 8th March and so had no need to stagger reopening. He added that Chantry was only able to do this because students live locally, whereas other schools were reliant on local authority transport being re-introduced.

Prof Boddison asked if transport for special school pupils had been considered, if the drivers were being tested, and if schools were being expected to check that they were 'clear'. Mr Chamberlain replied that bus and taxi drivers are to be tested following a programme with the local authorities. Schools will not be asked to check on this process- only seek reassurance from the local authorities that drivers are compliant.

Mr Dool asked if Mr Chamberlain had considered whether the low number of staff that are reported to be anxious about returning is an accurate reflection. Mr Chamberlain explained that this is not a requirement area for reopening, and the question was asked of schools so that the Trust could gauge whether there are likely to be staffing issues. He went on to point out that some schools may struggle to cover staff currently classed as clinically extremely vulnerable. There is concern that further staff may be added to the shielding list, which will put more pressure on staff who are able to attend school in person.

It was noted that some staff have expressed disappointment that vaccinations have not been offered to school staff.

Mr Thethi noted that 96% of staff at the Isle of Ely Primary School feel safe in school, and wondered if there was particular good practice at this school that could be shared with other schools. Mr Chamberlain replied that good practice is evident at all schools, and different schools have different contexts. Eg IOE have a young staff, are housed in a new, part-full building, have lots of open space, and all staff have been in school throughout lockdown.

Prof Boddison commended the central team for their work. He asked if the team have any concerns for the immediate future/next six weeks. Mr Chamberlain replied by outlining some areas that may cause concern, but adding that the Trust and schools are aware of these and have plans in place for mitigation. The areas he listed were anxiety of parents, parents who chose not to return their children, exams and how to motivate Year 11 and 13. He stated that, as a Trust, we are not talking about catch up and a 'lost generation' but concentrating on returning to teaching whilst being aware of, and addressing, individual student needs.

Mr Bush asked for clarity on the Government guidance, which stated that all pupils should return to school from 8th March. Mr Chamberlain explained that *from* 8th March allowed schools to stagger reopening in secondary schools to allow the recommended testing of returning pupils to take place safely with the minimum of risk.

3. RECOMMENDATION

Mr Dool asked that the Board considered the comprehensive and detailed review and risk assessment processes and actions undertaken by schools in accordance with the DfE revised advice and guidance issued in February 2021. The advice, support and scrutiny of these plans by the CEO and his central team was noted, alongside summary reports on the schools' preparedness to open from 8 March 2021.

The Board was assured that risk assessments had been carried out and control measures were in place to ensure the Health and Safety of children, young people, staff and other school users.

The Board decided to approve the opening of schools as follows: -

1. All Primary and Special school students to return to full time on 8 March 2021.
2. Chantry Academy students to return to full time on 8 March 2021.

3. Neale Wade, LECA and Cromwell students to return to full time on a staggered basis from 8 March 2021, with all students in school from 15 March 2021.

The above recommendations were proposed by Prof Boddison, Seconded by Ms Weaver, and carried unanimously.

The Board offered its congratulations and appreciation to all central, school based staff on the significant and excellent work that has taken place under extremely challenging circumstances to help ensure children, young people, and staff are able to return to a safe and secure environment where they will again be able to grow and flourish. The Board asked the CEO to write to all staff on their behalf, expressing thanks and gratitude for the high levels of care, commitment and professionalism.

4. Any Other Business

Mrs Jarvis informed all present that the Minutes of the previous meeting had been posted on GovernorHub. She also reminded all that the next full Board Meeting will take place on 25th March 2021.