



Minutes of the video conference meeting of Tuesday the 17 November 2020, at 6.00pm

Attended by:

Tony Fallowfield (TF)
 Kirsty Cargil (KG) Deputy Headteacher
 Gill Hammett (GH)
 Jalia Kangave (JK)
 Andy Croll (AC)
 Gill Hammett (GH)
 Aisha Hoten (AH)
 Hesione Quinn (HQ) Chair
 Hildi Mitchell (HM) Headteacher
 Loren Davies (LD)
 Gaynor Newnham (GN) Senior Clerk

No.	Item
1.	<p>Apologies and thanks</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apologies were received from Laura Dinsdale, Suzanne Morgan and Ian Ayres 2. Thanks, were recorded for Laura Dinsdale contribution over the last four years, as her term of office ends on the 30th November.
2.	<p>Register of Business Interests No interests were declared in the current agenda.</p>
3.	<p>Previous Meeting Minutes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval of the minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 16th September 2020 The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to changing Deputy Headteacher to Acting Deputy Headteacher. 2. Review of actions from the previous meetings (where not covered elsewhere on the agenda) – All actions are complete or on agenda; governors were thanked for their prompt follow-up on actions
4.	<p>Governing Board Business</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Code of Conduct Please refer to the confidential minutes. 2. Governors to complete and return activity and impact statements to the clerk The clerk confirmed that statements are still awaited from AC and SM. SM's Declaration of Business Interests is also outstanding. <p style="text-align: center;">Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining governors to submit their forms (AC and SM) • Declaration of Business Interests to be completed and returned by SM. 3. Training - difficulties of accessing training when there are limited courses available - discuss ideas for alternative ways to do training.

	<p>Alternative means of approaching training were discussed; TF recommended NGA Learning Link, for which registration is free. There are 50 CPD modules including 8 induction courses, and one on financial oversight.</p> <p>This has been recommended by the LA.</p> <p>It was agreed that all governors will complete online finance training by the next meeting.</p> <p>It was explained that each school is entitled to three places per BEEM course; governors discussed a fair system of attending courses. It was agreed that the Governors Briefing can be attended according to a rota system, and that governors should feedback to the other governors after each course.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All governors will complete online finance training by the next meeting. • Governors Briefing can be attended according to a rota system • Governors should feedback to the other governors after each course. <p>4. Election of a new parent governor</p> <p>It was agreed to use Survey Monkey to conduct an online poll. GN to conduct this.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent governor election to be instigated
5.	<p>Headteacher's Report</p> <p>1. Update on school opening and risk assessment</p> <p>HM highlighted that remaining open with no cases or closures was a considerable achievement. Maintaining this will be unsustainable and challenging in the long term. Children have been keen to attend and continue their learning which is a testament to the hard work of the whole team. It was recognised that there are difficulties for an infant school; people are working very hard, on top of their normal workload. Staff wellbeing is constantly borne in mind so that all activities staff are expected to engage in are worthwhile and purposeful.</p> <p>Parental feedback has been very positive and uplifting for staff. The staff appreciate hearing the positive comments from parents.</p> <p>2. Staff Wellbeing</p> <p>It was reported that one member of the SLT has been seconded to Brunswick; she is DSL and keen to further her career, for which she will need KS2 experience.</p> <p>The move to Brunswick will be from Term 3, and this presents an opportunity for other staff to take on additional responsibility. This is positive for her and for the SLT, who will be able to work with new members of staff; John will take on SG lead, which has considerable overlap with SEND. A supply teacher who has been in the school since before lockdown will cover the secondment period.</p> <p>3. Finance and Premises</p> <p>The HT reported that the finance meeting was very helpful; it was positive and supportive for HM and AM. Governors' critical friendship will be helpful.</p> <p>Governors recorded thanks to FODIS, which has raised £6,000 for the school. Fundraising so successfully during lockdown was very impressive.</p> <p>4. Health and Safety</p>

IA completed a useful and thorough outside walk, which included discussions about developing outside provision. Questions were raised by site staff about intruders on site and there were constructive conversations. IA's presence was helpful and valuable.

IA also completed an internal visit over the phone, including an update on COVID, which was also very useful.

School Improvement

HM reported that she has reviewed the School Development Plan. To be able to focus on school development currently is proving to be very valuable. HM recorded thanks to the SLT, as focus on the objectives and the focused journey in among the stress of COVID and the daily running of the school has demonstrated considerable strength. The teams are determined to get the best for the children.

HM thanked governors for their Governor Day reports, which have been very helpful.

HM also reported that use of Tapestry has been limited, but there is some progress with achieving the targets for school improvement.

HM explained that there has been a great deal of work with governors, in line with her performance management targets.

Governors **noted** that overall attendance is high, at 96.9%, but that Persistent Absence is also high, at 75.4%. Governors **asked** for an update on the strategy for addressing persistent absence (PA).

It was explained that there are 19 PA children, which is a decrease from 23. Most children's attendance is improving – as we progress through the term, percentages are rising. There were 3 children whose attendance is not improving.

There is not currently an attendance officer in place, though there is a new person who is due to start. Initial letters have been sent by the school; fixed penalty notice letters will be sent by the external. This was agreed to be positive, and better for maintaining good relationships with parents.

It was explained that 2 of the PA children have not returned to school post-COVID. They are PPG/EAL/SEND children and they affect the figs in every area. There has been work with the family and it is hoped they are close to returning to school.

AB **requested** that the attendance figures include numbers in the next report, as well as percentages. This will be actioned. It was also explained that COVID related categories will also be reported at the next meeting, to enable governors to see the numbers of children isolating, quarantining etc.

Action:

- ***Future attendance reports to include actual numbers as well as percentages.***

A governor **asked** if there could be a governor monitoring inclusion, which was agreed to be positive. It was noted that the school is doing well in this area but could always do better.

Jalia Kangave was approved as Link Governor for Inclusion/ BAME

Governors **asked** to know the positives from the return to school, which were reported, as follows:

- ✓ Progress against the SDP objectives. Writing and continuous provision have improved.
- ✓ Children are happy and safe in school. ALL staff have made that possible.

	<p>It was asked if there are positives that are ONLY due to COVID. It was reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ the use of Tapestry with the new Reception cohort has been extremely successful. Contact was maintained with the children throughout the summer break, without too great an impact on workload. The whole cohort is engaged with Tapestry – parents have been taught how to teach blending with children using short films, for example. The staff will continue with this post-COVID. ✓ The use of resources has been thought out carefully – this has been challenging and worthwhile. <p>Governors asked how to protect the capacity of the senior team. HM reported that there have been discussions about this with colleagues in other schools, though Downs is unique, as a large infant school. There may be more things to consider in the future, based on unknown outcomes, such as the PAN consultation and the DSL secondment to another school.</p> <p>It was reported that the outcome of the PAN consultation will be known on the 11th January 2021.</p> <p>Governors asked when the permanent leadership structure of the school will need to be confirmed. AB advised that any appointments would need to be made by May 2021, and the GB would need to approve any potential restructure at the 9th February meeting.</p> <p>A costed staffing structure proposal was requested for the FGB meeting on the 9th February.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a costed staffing structure proposal for the FGB meeting on the 9th February. <p>It was agreed that staff wellbeing as a Health & Safety issue and may need to be considered alongside budget decisions.</p> <p>Governors asked how it is possible to balance all the needs of the pupils. HM explained the challenge of delivering interventions within bubbles. It was also reported that there are now more children in school with challenging behaviour, which may compromise the safety of the bubbles. Ongoing Risk Assessments are needed, in view of the specific challenges of COVID. Space, and well-ventilated space, is also proving to be a challenge. Pupil progress is being discussed creatively. The loss of in-school parental help has also had an impact on the school.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Breakfast/After school clubs</p> <p>1. Update from Finance Committee on timelines</p> <p>LD explained that out-of-hours care continuing next year was planned to be discussed at the next finance meeting as there was insufficient information available to decide.</p> <p>Governors discussed the claim by Downs Junior School that TUPE regulation would apply if Downs Infant School offers permanent provision. In response to a question, it was confirmed that Downs Junior is a separate employer. There may be an issue, because the infant school is providing a service that the junior school stopped providing, though governors argued that it is not a continuation of service. The junior provision had already ceased to operate before the school decided to start a service.</p>

AB also pointed out that the HR professionals at the LA are not focussed on education.

An HR consultant for B&H and ESCC joined the meeting at 19.09 and explained that Downs Junior is asserting the case, not the LA. The junior school is saying that the work of the club is continuing, and the infant school should become the employer. The LA does not believe this to be the case, as Downs Infant is offering temporary provision, as the juniors have said they cannot take the Downs Infant children. This is not a permanent transfer of provision.

A governor **asked** what the outcome might be if Downs Infant decided to establish permanent provision. It was explained that the junior could argue that the infants have opened a provision, to provide the same care the junior school was asked to provide. If their claim was successful, the infant school would take on the staff's accrued continuity of service. If the provision closed the school would be responsible for all the redundancy costs.

It was explained that Downs Junior came to HR, who sought legal advice. HR will advise the junior school that TUPE is not believed to apply.

In response to a **question** about the possible motivation for the claim, it was explained that it is likely to be due to financial pressure.

In response to a **question** about how long provision can be classed as temporary, it was reported that there is no set time period that applies in this case. To protect the school, it was advised that the infants should move away from the situation as soon as governors feel it is reasonable to do so. HR are 95% confident there is nothing for the infant school to worry about but suggested that the school could potentially withdraw provision from the 1st January to give adequate notice to parents.

Governors **asked** when the Juniors plan to restart capacity for the infants' children, which was reported to be as soon as the infant school withdraws the provision. It was **asked** of the junior provision is likely to be in line with guidelines. It was explained that this is open to interpretation – children could be kept within consistent groups, if not in year group bubbles.

A **concern was raised**, that sending the children to the junior school presents an extra layer of risk to the infant school. It was also **noted** that parents would need to be happy with the provision offered by the junior school.

The staff governor explained that some members of staff feel strongly that the school is providing something valuable for the young SEND children. HM explained that it may be possible to provide a creative solution and invite targeted children to other forms of extended school provision.

Governors **expressed concern** that the HR representative was giving mixed messages. It was explained that the school should avert any potential risk by ending the provision as soon as possible.

Governors **asked** if there would be an employment tribunal if it was later found that there should have been a TUPE, which was confirmed.

In response to a further question, it was reported that it is not known whether the junior school has had similar conversations with other local providers. (Fiveways)

Governors thanked HR for attending the meeting.
HR left at 19.26

	<p>2. Review Andy’s reflections from monitoring day (see paper provided as an annex on governor monitoring) AC reported that, at the Governor Day, it had been reported by staff that the lack of space, and the overlap of times is proving to be stressful for the staff. HM explained that there have since been changes to alleviate the issues and positives have become apparent. Some children have really benefitted from the provision, though it could possibly continue, via other targeted clubs, such as nurture, sport clubs, etc. However, the premises assistant is off with stress related to workload. The team have been working very hard all year and additional cleaning has contributed to this.</p> <p>3. Downs Play and TUPE rules - update and discussion following HM’s consultation with BHCC HR and Legal **Partially covered under agenda item 6.1**</p> <p>It was noted that the original driver was not purely to generate income for the school but was to provide flexibility for children’s wraparound care.</p> <p>Governors felt that the legal case is not convincing, though continuing with the service may lead to an employment tribunal, with high union involvement – this would be potentially time consuming and costly. There are financial and wellbeing concerns connected to maintaining the provision, though it is positive for the children. It was also agreed that a good relationship with the junior school would be desirable.</p> <p>Governors asked if it would be possible to obtain another legal view. The financial liability was also queried though, without sight of the contracts, that is an unknown. It was noted that the Junior School club staff have been furloughed; it is suspected that this is an attempt to avoid making staff redundant.</p> <p>Continuing provision at the Infant School until February half term was suggested, as was talking to the junior school before making the final decision, to ascertain their long-term view and consider if it would be better for both schools to have their own club. In addition, it was suggested that the Junior School should be asked if places will be offered to the infant school children if the infants provision stops. It was noted that the parents will need as much notice as possible, to enable alternative arrangements to be made.</p> <p>In response to a final question, it was confirmed that the staff should be happy to continue to February</p> <p>4. Agree next steps for the clubs, considering this information It was agreed to cease the extended provision at the end of Term 3. It was agreed that HM will discuss this with the Junior School headteacher on the 18th November – discussion to include whether infant children will be offered space at the junior school after-school club.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with the Junior Headteacher, to include clarification on the availability of places for Infant School children. • Extended provision to close at the end of Term 3.
7.	<p>Committee and Link Governor updates The following updates were provided:</p> <p>1. Staff wellbeing AB attended a meeting with AH and fed back to HM.</p>

	<p>It was explained that the staff are being open and honest, and the staff feel gratitude at being listened to. AH will continue to canvas the opinions of the staff so that there are little snapshots to gauge concerns regarding issues that may arise. The information has been interrogated and the confidentiality of staff was maintained very well.</p> <p>2. Finance committee The report of the last meeting was circulated with the meeting papers, along with the budget and Bursar's report.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Safeguarding VJ reported that she completed a monitoring visit and met the DSL to discuss safeguarding during lockdown. The governor confirmed that she is happy with the culture the school supports, and the school is as safe as possible for children. Systems, processes and procedures are in the process of being reviewed, and all actions being progressed as necessary. Workload and stress are considerable, but the DSL feels well supported.</p> <p>It was explained that the DSL will hand over to the SENCO before the secondment; there are two other members of staff trained to support. John will have additional DSL time each week, and he knows the families well.</p> <p>LA feedback on the work of the DSL has been positive.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>PAN consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review actions taken to raise awareness HM reported that the class rep's have shared information and parents have been directed to look at the website. Responses have been mixed and some parents feel that they are not affected, while others feel frustrated and have been very vocal. <p>There has been contact from the Brighton and Hove News; the parents will discuss this with her. It was agreed that this is positive, and parent voice will be more powerful.</p> <p>One governor reported that a journalist was requesting comments from the GB, and governors were reminded that the Chair is the only person allowed to represent GB views in a public forum.</p> <p>GH has visited nurseries and directed them to the website.</p> <p>It was reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AC set up a website which has been very useful. • The consultation runs for 10 more days. A countdown was suggested – it was agreed to ask the parent reps to take this on, with alerts to parents at 10, 5 and 0 days to the close of the consultation period. • There are posters on the fence; it was agreed to put signs in windows, <p>In response to a question, it was confirmed that HM has discussed with the junior school and asked the GB to respond and impress on the parents that their children will be affected by a reduction in PAN.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the parent reps to alert parents at 10, 5 and 0 days to the close of the consultation period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with a view to agree FGB response

	<p>It was agreed to stress that diversity and inclusivity would be affected by the exclusion of some geographical areas, and to mention the work of the school to become more diverse.</p> <p>It was noted that parents have a right to express a preference, but not to choose which school their children attend.</p> <p>It was agreed that the chair will complete the final draft of the response, which will be submitted to the GB to be approved.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add that diversity and inclusivity would be affected by the exclusion of some geographical areas, and to mention the work of the school to become more diverse, in the final draft. • Complete the final draft of the response, which will be submitted to the GB to be approved. • GB to approve the final draft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss/Agree – all items to be sent to BHCC separately or in a pack? Governors confirmed that they have, or will, submit individual responses. HM will also submit a response on behalf of the GB. Staff will be advised to submit individual responses. <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FGB consultation response to be submitted by HQ ▪ Staff to be advised to submit individual responses ▪ Governors to submit individual responses, if they have not already done so.
10.	<p>Governor monitoring</p> <p>The reports were all agreed to be helpful and informative. It was agreed to continue with the informal approach trialled at the Governor Day.</p> <p>The format of the Governor Day was discussed and agreed to have been helpful, particularly the feedback on the day of the meetings, while the information was fresh. Governors thanked HM for organising the session.</p> <p>HM explained that the previous system allowed governors' duty to be discharged and provided a paper trail for Ofsted; the new format is useful for the school and will be more impactful for the school, though it was noted that there is still a paper trail as the reports can be added as an appendix to the minutes. (See Appendix A, below)</p> <p>LD reported that she visited the school and felt very safe. It was good to observe the safety of the children. HM explained that visiting professionals follow the same rules as governors; there are strict rules around the routines of school visits</p> <p>Plans and focus for next monitoring day were not agreed, due to time constraints.</p>
11.	<p>AOB – urgent matters that are not included on the agenda elsewhere</p> <p>Date of next meeting: 09 Feb 2021 6pm – 8pm</p>

The meeting closed at 20.15.

No	Action	By	Status
1.	Remaining governors to submit their forms	AC/ SM	AC returned 18/11/2020
2.	Declaration of Business Interests to be completed and returned by SM	SM	
3.	All governors will complete online finance training by the next meeting.	FGB	By 9 th Feb 2021
4.	Governors Briefing can be attended according to a rota system	FGB	Ongoing
5.	Governors to feedback to the other governors after each course	FGB	Ongoing
6.	Parent governor election to be instigated	HQ	Clerk to arrange poll
7.	Future attendance reports to include actual numbers as well as percentages.	HM	
8.	Prepare a costed staffing structure proposal for the FGB meeting on the 9 th February.	HM	
9.	Discussion with the Junior Headteacher, to include clarification on the availability of places for Infant School children.	HM	
10.	Extended provision to close at the end of Term 3	HM	
11.	Ask the parent reps to alert parents at 10, 5 and 0 days to the close of the consultation period.	HM?	
12.	Add that diversity and inclusivity would be affected by the exclusion of some geographical areas, and to mention the work of the school to become more diverse, in the final draft.	HQ	
13.	Complete the final draft of the response, which will be submitted to the GB to be approved.	HQ	
14.	GB to approve the final draft	FGB	
15.	FGB consultation response to be submitted by HQ	HQ	
16.	Staff to be advised to submit individual responses	HM	
17.	Governors to submit individual responses, if they have not already done so.	FGB	

Appendix A - Governor monitoring day – 05 November 2020

Monitoring activity: Breakfast & After-school childcare provision

Met with Hannah, Jade (breakfast) & Catherine (after school)

Breakfast:

- * 10–17 children arriving at 8PM
- * 3 bubbles by year group, COVID precautions followed very carefully
- * Crumpets/toast/cereal provided, children wash up own bowls, plates & cutlery
- * Colouring, blocks & LEGO after food

After-school:

- * 7–24 children arrive in three classrooms (by year group bubble) off hall
- * Setup of food and activities happens as regular class are released to parents

Observations:

- * Children are very settled
- * Parental feedback good

Difficulties:

- * TAs who have taking on this additional role feel they are stretched and not helping their teachers as they would wish, particularly in prep and transition times.
- * Teachers lose their classroom after school hours to do preparation for the next day and for quiet planning. Alongside continuous provision and 'losing a TA' pre and post school there is less time to adequately prepare.

Reflections

My impression was this is stretching & stressing the involved/impacted staff to a degree that is not sustainable and some of the stressors need to be addressed in the short term.

Monitoring activity: Discuss remote learning policy and examples of learning

Kirsty sent through on email some examples of home learning plans together with some examples of pupils learning and parent comments. Following the discussion Kirsty also sent me the review that SLT conducted of home learning in 'Bubble School', which was used to refine the current home learning policy and practice.

- Year Group leaders are responsible for providing the plans which are available for parents/children and they can access them electronically through Tapestry or parents can have paper copies (so far there have been no requests for paper copies).
- Good level of response when children have been self-isolating
- Relatively low numbers of pupils absent during first half term.
- No known issues around not being able to access due to lack of notebook or WIFI. Tapestry was chosen as it's easy to access on a mobile phone. Gabby was very positive about Tapestry and how this works in Reception.
- Easier to manage than anticipated and not perceived as being an onerous task currently.

Reflection:

- It's clear that home learning is now well established and being used by parents/children.
- I think that there is good provision for home learning, easy to access and parents/pupils are using it as intended.
- The school is not offering online lessons as SLT have decided this is not appropriate for infant children and I am sure that most infant schools would agree with this view.

For GB follow up:

- How consistently Tapestry is being used across the school, as it's on the SDP.

Monitoring activity - Gabby & Gemma - Staff voice on continuous provision

- Both Gabby and Gemma were very positive about CP and said that it is exactly what the children needed how much they have benefited from this approach.
- YR team are more confident about CP, feel that it is going well and say they have the resources they need, and they have had some CPD recently. Gabby shared some lovely examples of CP that she had printed off for me to look at.
- Y1 has been more of a challenge, they are less confident as a team about CP (although Gemma personally feels confident with her background in early years) and some have expressed anxiety about how they will deliver the Y1 curriculum through CP. Some CPD has been delivered, but Gemma says she has not had time to watch the virtual Alistair Brice Clegg session. Lack of resources also identified as a barrier. However, they are now on order.
- In a meeting later with Susie she enthused about CP and said she was very dubious to start with and didn't really know what she was doing, but now feels much more confident and can see the benefits for children.

Reflections:

- This is a big change for KS1, and some are finding it more of a challenge than others.
- Y1 team can see the benefits for pupils and the overall view is more positive than it was when the staff well-being survey was conducted earlier in the half term.
- Opportunities for sharing best practice have been hampered by the pandemic restrictions.
- As a governor I feel well informed and have a good understanding of where the school is in delivering high quality learning for all pupils through CP.

Follow up for GB

- Views of Y1 team later in the year. Do we need to look at the budget to ensure that KS1 have the resources they need?

Monitoring activity - Jon, Susie, Lynn - TA/INA discussion on appraisal and training to include challenges of delivering interventions.

- Good quality CPD, JH being very honest with the SEN team about the challenges of finance and the need to deliver support with the resources that are available in school.
- Very good strong team ethos, both TAs report they are well supported, valued and feel they have a positive contribution to make to the wider team.
- Discussions already underway about how the school will manage the increased number of ECHPs 2020/21 with the resources they have as there is unlikely to be the capacity to provide 1 to 1.
- Higher level of pupils with S&L challenges currently in school – maybe as a result of not having access to the role models in school for 6 months. This is being well managed with appropriate support in place.
- Intervention support has been focussed on Y2 this term – next term to move to Y1 & YR. Y2 pupils who continue to need support/interventions will be continuing to have access to support programmes as needed.
- Challenges has been around space to deliver interventions – the Bake-Off tent has meant that TAs not in a Year Group bubble can spend 15 mins with a group in a different class/bubble – e.g. Lynn with Maths Explorers. At the start this focus was on catch up moved this half term to pre-teaching.
- JH reports that having 4 days per week to lead SEN has been welcome, 3 days on day to day leadership and one day spent on developing the structural changes that are needed. Being a CT one day a week is challenging but would be reluctant to give this up as it provides the opportunity to maintain classroom practice and deliver best practice for support/intervention and understand the challenges that class teachers are having.
- TAs/HLTAs now all included in the performance appraisal process – more CPD planned for appraisal team leaders and the benefits of this now all being online has made it more accessible to staff due to the reduction in time needed to attend CPD.

Reflections:

- Both Lynn and Susie were really enthusiastic about their roles and say that Jon has helped them to see their strengths and skills and how these can be used
- Appraisal process is now in place for TA/INAs, which has had a positive impact on how TAs/INAs feel about their role and the impact they have on children.
- It was clear to me that there has been a cultural change in the SEND team since I last spoke to Lynn, which is really good to hear.
- As a governor I have a really good view of how interventions are currently being led and managed.

GB to follow up

- SENDCo has some excellent clear strategic plans, it will be good for as a GB to see how these plans develop over the next 12 months.

Monitoring Activity - Observation of staff training on using Working/English Walls for teaching story writing

Telephone conversation with Alison Harrex to discuss raising attainment in writing.

Key points

I observed a really inspiring presentation by Alison on a new approach to story writing. She is so passionate about writing and conveyed this brilliantly at the training session.

It had been felt that introducing a more structured and standardised approach to story writing would benefit the pupils and would help the teachers to monitor progression more easily.

A colour coded English wall has been introduced so that all pupils become familiar and confident with the five parts of story writing (orange for opening, blue for build-up, purple for problem, red for resolution and emerald green for ending). It's a really effective visual aid.

Staff seemed really engaged at the training and Alison gave lots of practical tips and advice as well as explaining clearly the ideas behind the new approach. All staff were encouraged to try things out and share their findings with their colleagues. I came away with a strong sense of cohesion and support amongst the staff.

Alison and I discussed the session and about how the new approach has been received. It feels very positive at this stage. We also chatted briefly about how Alison is managing with all the extra pressure that she and her colleagues are under at the moment. Alison said that she feels on top of things at the moment and is really happy to be in school with the children, which is obviously great – but I think we all need to be mindful that the pressures on staff are huge and constantly changing.

Next steps

I feel very reassured that the school continues to aspire to ever greater things (in this case the raising of the standard of story writing). I'd suggest that we revisit this later in the year - perhaps mid-way through the summer term - to ensure that all staff are on board and feeling confident teaching story writing and that progression has been seen.

Monitoring Activity: Observation of Continuous Provision (Year 1)

Meeting with Kirsty Lean (Deputy Headteacher)

Key points from conversations:

Kirsty provided a clear and succinct explanation of Continuous Provision and how this was being developed at DIS - extending the already well-established concept from EYFS into Year 1 and beyond.

Kirsty explained the key objectives which provide a whole education, early develop key learning skills and fulfil PSE curriculum such as independent learning, questioning,

collaboration and resilience which are essential throughout the whole learning journey into adulthood.

Discussed teacher workload and required extent of planning, innovation and set-up to make accessible to all and ensure age appropriate tasks are provided.

Discussed barriers and areas for development including CPD, staff buy-in, planning, need for resources and for staff to learn a new way of teaching and pupils to learn a new way of learning.

Queried difficulty in assessing and addressing varied learning loss, absence of transition period from EYFS and Year 1 and readjustment to learning environment after length of time at home due to Covid-19. It was explained that Continuous Provision had been key in assisting the smooth transition period both from learning phase and home learning to return to school.

Reflections:

It was clear that a considerable amount of carefully planned work had gone in to coaching the children into safe working practice (walking, sanitising, coats on when outside,) and have been led and shown how to independently opt for and engage in their chosen learning activities.

Kirsty's passion and drive for Continuous Provision at DIS is infectious and will undoubtedly pervade the learning culture over time, negating any early caution from staff who are having to learn and adapt to a novel way of teaching the curriculum.

I observed a well-established system of learning. A large class of very young pupils were seamlessly moving from learning task to learning task (a varied range of activities were available) at their own pace. All children, both inside and outside, were engaged in a meaningful learning exercise throughout the observation. Staff were observing and facilitating as required. There was no indication that the journey was in its early stages of implementation.

It was a pleasure to see children choosing to learn and interact independently. Inclusivity was apparent and I observed children of differing abilities supporting one another in their learning and play and bringing aspects of more traditional classroom learning and extending this into their independent learning time of their own accord.

I am confident that excellent progress towards the development plan objective has been made to the end of term and anticipate further progress and establishment throughout the year.

Issues:

There are some expected barriers, but Kirsty has identified these and has clear plans in place to address them – teacher support and CPD, staff buy-in, resource management, further careful planning and ensuring consistency across each individual classroom environment and experience.

Monitoring activity: I met with Y1 and Y2 school councils (separately) to hear them talk about their transition back into school.

Key points:

The children were, without exception, engaged and enthusiastic in their participation. It was very clear that they are all very happy to be back in school and are enjoying their experience. They talked positively about their learning, and it was particularly important to them that they were back with all their friends.

Of the two groups, Y2 raised more objections to the new Covid arrangements:

- The classroom arrangements (not sharing resources)
- Not being able to take books home as often
- Lack of equipment at PE and playtimes
- The way they come into school (it takes a long time apparently!)
- Classes not mixing (because they can't play with friends in other classes)

Y1 were positive about everything! The difference in experience of the younger and older children was remarkable.

Y2 reported that home learning was largely a negative experience for them, whereas Y1 enjoyed it.

Y2 liked that the teachers were eating with them at lunch time, Y1 didn't seem to have noticed!

The bedtime story was very well received by all the children.

Reflections:

Listening to the children was a lovely experience. They were all bright, engaged, articulate and respectful both of each other and Dr Mitchell. I got a real sense of the school's atmosphere and ethos from seeing their interactions.

It was evident that the children all understand a lot about the virus, transmission, what you can/can't do, when they had done things they shouldn't have done (like going to friends' houses in lockdown...)

I wonder if Y1 having had time back in school at the end of their YR made all the difference to their transition back into the "whole school". I got the sense that Y2 had expected everything to be the same, and so the differences stood out more in their minds.

Hildi said that the Y2 children's list of concerns was basically the same as the adults. I wonder if the adults could reflect on whether they are unconsciously influencing the children's thinking.

Overall I was reassured that the children are handling the situation well, and that although things are not 100% the same they are still able to thrive.

Issues/follow up:

I think the school council should feature in the next governor day as a follow up.

Governor Day Meeting on Delivery and Assessment of Curriculum 05.11.2020

Present: Tracey and Jalia (Phone call)

What is working well?

The children are very happy to be back in school and eager to learn. Teachers were concerned that children would find it difficult to transition back to school after being home for a long time. However, the children have quickly adjusted, and they engage with enthusiasm.

While children took some time to adjust to things like handwashing, going to the lunch hall and wiping tables, most of them are now used to the routine, which creates more time for learning.

Teachers now also have a better grip on new ways of doing things. For example, quarantining books when they come back, organising reading corners, sending books home. It took a bit of a while to get used to the new systems but now that they have been set up, they are working quite well.

Curriculum Delivery

The focus for the first half of the term was to undertake a baseline assessment to establish where the different children were at, given how long they were away from school following the lock-down. The assessment revealed two main things. First, there is polarisation in classes, particularly as far as reading is concerned. The baseline assessments revealed that some children were engaged in a lot more learning (particularly reading) during lockdown and so had made significant progress. On the other hand, there were children who did not seem to have engaged in much learning and so had either made no progress or, in some cases, had gone backwards. As a result, there are less children in the middle. The second observation related to writing and maths. Here, less polarisation was found. Instead, most children are slightly below where they would be expected to be at this point in time.

The good news is that children are eager to learn, and teachers already saw significant progress being made in the first half of the autumn 2020 term.

As far as year 2 is concerned, a number of things have been done:

Phonics: Teachers are carrying on with the plan for year 2 phonics. However, much of the first half of the autumn term was spent on catch up with Year 1 phonics.

Maths: Teachers have had to make adjustments to the curriculum to ensure that children are secure with basics such as addition and place value before moving on to year 2 Maths.

Writing: The first half of term was spent on going over year 1 common exception words. They are now starting with year 2 words.

Assessment

Phonics: There will be phonics screening for Year 2s in a few weeks' time.

Maths: Year 2 is using White Rose worksheets to help with the assessment. The assessment will be conducted by choosing 6 children from each class to back up teacher assessment.

Writing: One of the observations that has been made is that most of the children do not have stamina for longer pieces of writing, so teachers will be working on that for Year 2.

One of the goals is to move to Tapestry as a tool of assessment. However, some teachers are yet to get an understanding of how this can be delivered. Some of the teachers feel that more work is needed around consultation on how Tapestry will work so that there is a whole school arrangement and understanding of how it can be applied as a useful tool of assessment. Teachers know that the system is there, but some do not know about how it works and there is a feeling among some teachers that a lot is being asked of them in the pandemic. They wonder whether some of the changes, including Tapestry, can be postponed to a time when things have calmed down.

Challenges

While the school has done a great job of making teachers feel safe, some teachers are, understandably, finding the Covid-19 situation more challenging than others.

There have been some challenges with the take up of continuous provision, which the SLT is addressing. One of the challenges for Year 2 was the feeling that they were suddenly informed that they would need to do continuous provision yet some of the teachers did not understand how it would be relevant for that year group. There was a feeling among some teachers that they were being criticised for questioning it, without being told what they were doing wrong. However, the teachers acknowledge that HM is open to listening to concerns raised and welcomes feedback. They are aware that the issue is being looked into by SLT.

The impact of having no volunteers in the school is being felt, particularly in as far as reading is concerned. The reading army was very supportive and a lot of progress in reading had been made because of them, but they can no longer be on school grounds. Teachers now have to be super organised and know which children need to read their words every day, which can sometimes be challenging. Children are also finding it hard not to be able to use the library because they had started getting used to it.

Longer term: Spring and Summer

With the uncertainty surrounding Covid, it is difficult to plan for the spring and summer terms. The focus is going to continue being making children enjoy learning and not to become disengaged. Teachers will continue to have expectations of children and do their best to get the best out of the children, recognising that children have got to be well, in order for them to do well.

Teachers would love to say that by the end of spring, all children would be at the level they would have been if there had been no Covid. That would be the aim, but how feasible it is will depend on what happens in the coming months. Teachers don't want to stress either the children all themselves out.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges that have been caused by Covid, Tracey said that personally, she was really pleased with everything and that she was happy to be back at school and particularly pleased with how engaged the children were with their learning!

Monitoring activity: PE/Sports/physical exercise

Bubble School

Smaller numbers of children allowed for more exercise opportunities and use of apparatus. Yoga was introduced. For those not in school and missing out Aisha organised a virtual Sports Day

Current

Since September there has been no indoor activities e.g. gym or dance, at this time of year children would normally be working for Let's Dance at the Dome. Outdoor activities are limited by the weather and constrained by the children being increasingly "bundled up". Lunchtimes are quite active, however, as in bubbles of only 60 the children have more physical space.

Just before Half Term Aisha and Hildi launched Real Play as an extension of the existing interactive Jasmine platform. All parents now have a home log in so they can access the platform and do activities that they would do at school at any time including weekends, holidays and [hopefully not] lockdowns. There are explanatory videos for activities and an Inclusion tab so, again with video explanation, exercises tailored to those with disabilities can be accessed.

Aisha felt that perhaps the launch had been lost a little in all the other information giving just before half term, so a reminder and re- launch was planned via Tapestry. For future cohorts Real Play will be embedded from the start in Reception.

Currently there is a dance component in the Year 2 project "All the world's a stage"

Future

Recently Aisha and Alison attended Real Foundation training. This is Early Years specific and designed to introduce basic skills at an early stage and develop core strength.

Reflection

Despite previous and current constraints, the school is working hard to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of all pupils. The enthusiasm of the teaching staff prompted by Aisha ensures that current PE requirements are at least fulfilled and, in many cases, exceeded.

Aisha, Alison and Hildi are proactive in seeking out ways that the school can constantly improve its provision. Well done!