

**Local Advisory Group Meeting  
via Google Meet**

**Wednesday 10 March 2021**

**MINUTES**

PL	Paul Lovern – Executive Head	AH	Alison Howard - Clerk
SC	Sue Cockayne – Director for LAG and Chair of LAG		
HB	Heather Bowman – Chair of Directors		
AA	Antony Allen – Parent Member Richard Crosse		
MHE	Marcella Henley – PTA Member Richard Crosse		
PBU	Phil Burrow- Parent member Richard Crosse		Abbreviations
GP	Gillian Pitchford - Community Member Kings Bromley	RC	Richard Crosse
AR	Anna Redpath - Parent Member St Mary's	SM	St Mary's
CC	Claire Clarke – PTA Member St. Mary's	TH	The Howard
MH	Marie Havelock – Community Member Colton	AS	Anson School
PB	Phil Bate – Parent Member Howard		
CM	Claire Malcolm – The Friends Member Howard	TA	Teaching Assistant
CB	Chris Billingham – Community Member Elford	SEN	Special Educational Need
EB	Emma Bowring - Headteacher Richard Crosse	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
JW	Jon Wynn – Headteacher St. Mary's	PPA	Planning, Preparation and Assessment
RM	Rachel Mills – Headteacher Howard	NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher

**Attendance :** PL, SC, HB, AA, PBU, GP, MH, PB, EB, JW, RM, AH

1. SC welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting opened with a prayer.
2. **Apologies :** There were apologies from MHE, AR, CC, CM and CB.
3. **Pecuniary Interest**  
There were no changes to Pecuniary Interest declarations.
4. **Minutes of last meeting**  
These were accepted as a true record and will be signed by SC when circumstances allow.
5. **Headteacher Reports**

**St Mary's School:** JW gave a report on SM, saying that the present aim is to provide the best quality education, now that the children have returned to school; the children came back happy and concentrating on work, and parents know they are in a safe environment. High quality support is being given to those children who need it and gaps are being identified in their learning. Children are enjoying outdoor activities and social interaction in a safe way, safety being a priority. JW thanked Miss Lambert who is now on maternity leave, but has worked hard providing support with

TAs working with vulnerable children. He also thanked Mrs Bennett and Miss Millward who are new to the school and have provided high quality online teaching and Miss Strode who has subsequently left, who has worked with an individual child.

From January until the return to school staff have worked tirelessly providing remote education in online lessons; they have seen the children every day, taken registers and arranged social groupings and interventions. TAs have been excellent, it has been a challenge for them to work in the classroom with teachers providing remote learning, but they should be very proud of their achievements. During this time, teachers have continued to assess in subjects including maths, phonics and foundation work and to assess the impact of remote learning, so they know at what stage different children are.

SM has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from questionnaires; the school has evolved during the pandemic, tweaking their approach to remote learning on the basis of parental feedback. Breakout rooms have been set up to address the needs of certain children and JW stated that no child has been left behind in learning. Vulnerable children were provided with laptops to use at home or at school. With the developments in school, there has been plenty of space for keyworkers' and vulnerable children to enjoy activities. Gaps in learning are now being addressed and work is being done on social and emotional needs.

Attendance has been very good over this period. Rev. Anne has given a lot of support, attending every worship and leading worship herself.

JW said this past year has certainly been an experience and he considered that the parents had been amazing, supporting their children and the school.

SC asked if every child had had a laptop and JW confirmed that this was the case, with laptops provided by the DfE, the school and donations from Lichfield District Council; this has made a massive difference to those children who did not have one.

HB remarked that she had seen the PTA videos on Facebook of outdoor learning using the new building and thought it looked brilliant.

**The Howard School:** RM presented her report, expressing her thanks to parents, children and also TSSMAT which had enabled TH to team up with RC to provide regular and consistent education at RC for keyworkers' and vulnerable children. With staffing problems due to Covid, TH would have had to close during the recent lockdown, but luckily children were attending RC and RM thanked RC for being so welcoming and supportive. Parents had to deliver their children to RC, but it was worth it to ensure that their children could continue their learning.

During the autumn term, the English subject team had worked hard to create a good quality reading spine, with a variety of texts and personalised options of books. Whole class reading was going well. The PPA time has been invaluable, enabling staff to plan together and have joined-up thinking; this has been a real source of strength for the teaching and support staff.

RM went on to say that Mrs Carter has been developing her outdoor learning provision and will liaise with SM who now have very successful outdoor learning arrangements. The children love being outdoors and outdoor learning is a priority for TH.

Attention has been paid to the mental health of the children during lockdown; children were excited to come back to school and their behaviour has been exemplary since they returned.

TH did have to close for a short time in November due to Covid, but the situation was explained to parents. Laptops were provided to families who needed them. The school worked to identify areas of development in their online teaching due to parental feedback e.g. the use of workbooks. RM considered that during this recent lockdown, children had a purposeful engagement in learning; attendance was 82% for Class 1, 86% in Class 2 and 90% in Class 3. Many interventions and one-to-one sessions took place, with one teacher visiting the house of a vulnerable child to encourage one-to-one learning. The camaraderie during online sessions was wonderful and the children's behaviour was good. This approach has paid dividends, with the children happy to return to school. RM is looking forward to AA coming to school with Greenpower; this is being planned at present.

Although children will not have the Kingswood experience this year, RM wants the children to have experiences to remember and outdoor learning will help towards this experiential learning.

**Richard Crosse School:** EB presented the report for RC, saying the support from the MAT for all the schools had been wonderful; RC had enjoyed welcoming TH during the last lockdown and were sorry to see them leave on the last day. The teamwork in the MAT with everyone working together had helped with the mental health of staff. She considered that the TAs were an absolute credit to the MAT and thanked all the teachers for their work. The TAs had been running online break-out rooms and hosting online sessions and there was also online French, worship and a visit from a university professor.

EB went on to say that the answers to the questionnaires sent out were overwhelmingly positive and there were constant conversations during the lockdowns, changing some aspects after parental responses. The parents had been very supportive, ensuring children were ready for work at a table in a quiet room. Children worked well, particularly in the mornings, but as the lockdown went on some of the younger children started to struggle to work in the afternoons. The important thing was the wellbeing of the household and activities were changed as time went on. EB thanked the teachers for being so flexible, willing to jump in and out of lessons and helping each other.

EB said that the Community World Book Day had been a great success; it had been advertised on the village Facebook page and inhabitants were asked to put a child's reading book in the window; children then used a map to walk round the village and count all the books they saw (more than 90). The children really enjoyed it and children not in school also took part with their parents.

Now children are back in school, interventions are being put in place; EB is finding that children need to build up their stamina to work for a full school day.

In conclusion, EB considered that the situation is very positive, there is good attendance, and parents, teachers and children are getting used to the 'new normal'.

HB thought it was lovely to see groups of children outside the house looking for books in the windows and this way of celebrating World Book Day should definitely be repeated.

RM said that this had also been done in Elford and had gone very well.

SC thanked the HTs for their reports and said she did not know how Headteachers have coped so well during the last year; she thanked Headteachers, all the staff, the CEO and HB, Chair of Directors, for all their hard work.

## 6. Trust Updates

PL gave a report on the Trust, giving thanks to everyone involved in the schools over the lockdowns and during the Covid epidemic. He thought the reports from Headteachers showed how together the schools are stronger; with four schools united in the Trust, they are able to deal with issues which arise. PL reminded everyone that at the start of the spring term the schools had returned for one day, before the government announced that evening that all schools would close, except for vulnerable and keyworkers' children; the SLT had an online meeting that evening to put everything in place. However, PL considered that it was a difficult situation and they could have been even better prepared if they had been given more notice. If it had been a single school, the Headteacher would have to work things out alone, but with four schools together they could collaborate to plan and make arrangements. Each school retains its unique identity, but they join together in the Trust

PL went on to say that the Trust is in a strong financial position; a financial audit had taken place and the auditors had found the Trust to be solvent, with good reserves, and they raised no issues of concern. Some of the capital in reserve will be used to improve IT infrastructure; the Covid situation has shown how reliant schools can be on IT. The Wi-Fi systems in the schools is quite old and as nowadays IT is used more and more as a tool for teaching and learning, it needs to be first-rate. The Chromebook initiative is in hand, the Chromebooks have been purchased but not yet delivered and

it is intended that the scheme will be rolled out in September for Y3 and Y4, with parents asked to purchase a Chromebook. Those pupils who already have a Chromebook will be able to bring it into school, but children cannot use their own laptops or other devices in school. The process will run over 4 years and the Trust will make funding available so that every child has access to a Chromebook in school. The support of parents is essential to make this scheme work. The Colton Trust has agreed to purchase some Chromebooks for SM. PL stressed that this does not mean that children will be on screens all the time, but will use the devices when appropriate. Parents will be asked to ensure that the Chromebooks are charged up at home. The use of online learning during the lockdowns has shown how essential this technology is and in future, when there is an emergency closure of a school e.g. because of snow, teaching can continue online. PL said that IT is a priority for the Trust.

PL reported that he is retiring at the end of the summer holiday; it has been a difficult decision, but he is proud that TSSMAT is in such a strong position. He is confident that the Directors will make a good appointment of a CEO who will continue to take the Trust forward.

With regards to PPA time on a Friday afternoon, which has been taking place during the last year, PL informed LAG members that he and staff wish this to continue. He feels that it has enormous benefit for staff, allowing them to work together, rather than work in isolation during individual PPA time. The more that people work together, the better it is and it is invaluable to get everything prepared for the coming week. Childcare is offered from 1.30 - 3.30pm, with subsidised care. PL considers that children are not disadvantaged by this, as the school day in TSSMAT starts earlier, at 8.30am, than at many other schools. The MAT will consult with parents and PL appreciates that this system may not suit everyone, but he feels that support is being offered to parents with childcare arrangements and children will benefit from this with better quality teaching and learning.

SC wondered whether, as parents have already experienced this change, they may accept it going forward. PL stated that this was the start of the consultation period and asked parents to contact him with any queries.

PB thought that this system had worked well, the children work hard during the week and it is a bonus to finish early on a Friday. He considered that it was beneficial for teachers and their classes and also has allowed for thorough cleaning of the schools each week during lockdown.

PBu endorsed PB's comments, saying this would be the new normal with a relatively small adjustment in the hours of lessons. He thought it allowed staff to discuss in groups, in a collaborative way. After many weeks of lockdown home teaching, he appreciated what a difficult task the teachers have.

PL added that it also allows TAs, who are integral to children's learning, to share any issues or ideas with teachers and enables personalised learning.

AA agreed that the previous system of PPA time with a teacher working in isolation and not consulting with others was not good; it is easier for teachers to coordinate if there are more staff, but in small schools this is not always possible. He had a couple of concerns: the impact on parents who want to go to work and the care provision which would have to cover two hours or longer if after-school care was being used. He considered that there was less structured activity in Care Club and children could get bored. PL said that the structure of Care Club would be reconsidered and EB added that the first hour is now used as a Homework Club, with children working on spellings, reading and online activities. Although there has not been a massive uptake on the Friday afternoon care provision, this may be due to people working from home at present.

JW added that they have had two new NQTs at SM and in these unprecedented times they would have found it difficult to settle into their teaching roles; however the PPA time has allowed them to work with experienced staff and they are making great progress in learning to teach because of this.

SC agreed that teamwork is important.

**7. Community Updates**

**Richard Crosse/Kings Bromley:** MHE had sent in a report, attached to these minutes.

AA thought that the Assemblies online had been really good and positive. He thanked the staff for the online Christmas service, which had gone very well and was enjoyed by parents, grandparents and the children; EB was congratulated on her Hand Chime. He asked whether the maths books completed during lockdown had been marked and EB confirmed that the books had been reviewed by staff and this informed the interventions taking place to support children who had struggled with some parts of the curriculum. AA had appreciated the extra sessions, especially the outside speaker who was a professor from the Met. Office. He recognised the amount of effort and planning which had gone into the teaching and learning and thanked the staff.

GP, as a new LAG member and representative of Kings Bromley Parish Council, was welcomed to the group; she said that people should contact her if they wish any issues to be discussed at the Parish Council meetings.

**The Howard/Elford:** CM's report had been sent in and is attached to these minutes.

**St Mary's/Colton:** CC's report had been sent in and is attached to these minutes

MH said she was saddened not to be in school at present. Rev. Anne had sent out emails and arranged Zoom meetings to give support. MH noted that many children at SM are from outside the area, but parents of these children are keen to get involved in church activities. She considered that it was important to keep the school open and the children from outside Colton are helping to keep numbers up. It is important that SM can work together with three other schools. She thanked everyone in the MAT for all their hard work.

**8. Any other business**

LAG members wished to express their thanks for all the efforts and hard work by TSSMAT staff. SC concluded by saying she looked forward to meeting in person before too long.

**9. Date and location of next meeting;**

23 June 4pm at SM or by Google Meet

Signed.....  
Sue Cockayne, Chair of Local Advisory Group

Date.....