

**Local Advisory Group Meeting
via Google Meet**

Wednesday 7 October 2020

MINUTES

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| 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 | | |
| NC | Neil Crawley - Community Member Richard Crosse | | |
| AR | Anna Redpath - Parent Member St Mary's | | |
| CC | Claire Clarke – PTA Member St. Mary's | | Abbreviations |
| MH | Marie Havelock – Community Member St. Mary's | RC | Richard Crosse |
| PB | Phil Bate – Parent Member Howard | SM | St Mary's |
| CM | Claire Malcolm – The Friends Member Howard | TH | The Howard |
| CB | Chris Billingham – Community Member Howard | AS | Anson School |
| EB | Emma Bowring - Headteacher Richard Crosse | SEND | Special Educational Needs and Disabilities |
| JW | Jon Wynn – Headteacher St. Mary's | | |
| RM | Rachel Mills – Headteacher Howard | | |

Attendance : PL, SC, AA, MHE, PBU, AR, MH, PB, CB, EB, JW, RM, AH

1. SC welcomed everyone to the meeting. The meeting opened with a prayer.
2. **Apologies :** There were apologies from CC and CM, who had both sent in reports for the meeting.
3. **Pecuniary Interest**
There were no changes to Pecuniary Interest declarations. AH asked everyone to check the TSSMAT website <https://www.tssmat.staffs.sch.uk/governance/reports-documents/pecuniary-interest-register> for the annual review of their declarations and inform AH of any changes.
4. **Minutes of last meeting**
These were accepted as a true record and will be signed by SC when circumstances allow.
5. **Headteacher Reports**

Richard Crosse School: EB presented the report for RC, outlining the measures taken following the Covic-19 lockdown in the summer term: children from Reception, Y1 and Y6 attended, with children from Y2 and Y5 on rotation and those from Y3 and Y4 attending some outdoor events. Since the re-opening of the school this term, the children have adapted well to the new routines with staggered

starts, different timings during the day and children in 'bubbles'. There have been no positive Covid-19 cases, but some self-isolating due to circumstances. A virtual Harvest Festival service is planned for the following day, there have been virtual daily Acts of Worship and a weekly virtual MAT Act of Worship, where the children have enjoyed seeing each other. Y6 have led some services, reading Bible Stories.

LAG members expressed their appreciation of the work done by RC over this difficult period. MHE thanked the school for doing an amazing job, saying her child was in Y6 last year and she feels her child has been shaped by the school and prepared for future life, as a moral person and academically, also in music and in sport. Her child appreciated the Leavers' Hoodies and the Bibles given out at the Leavers outdoor celebration. She thanked Mrs Baldock for taking the Y6 class photos, Miss Jarrett and Mrs Bowring for all their work and Vicki Spencer-Kibble for the many outdoor activities with the children.

AA said the home schooling experience had had its ups and downs, but getting all the children back to school had paid dividends, with the children happy to return and being engaged in learning. PBU echoed the previous remarks, saying the school had done very well during the lockdown period, providing work and support. However he asked whether more could be done to help families with less access to technology who have been trying to do lessons on smartphones and other devices.

PL gave a warm welcome to EB on her appointment as Headteacher at RC, saying she has ensured a settled start to the new academic year.

The Howard School: RM reported that 100% of Reception, Y1 and Y6 children attended during the summer term, with Y5 children attending part-time and other children attending 'Keep in Touch' days. As the May Queen celebrations had not taken place in May, there were May Queen events and a Leavers' Service on the last day of term. Y6 children took part in a socially distanced sleepover in a tent. The return to school this term has been a huge success; there is an attendance rate of 95%, with 100% attending so far this week. RM considers that parents feel confident that the school is a safe place. The main priority is the nurture and wellbeing of the children; there is a recovery curriculum, with children catching up. Forest School, as an outdoor classroom, and the use of Chromebooks and Google Classroom form part of a broad and balanced curriculum. A recent Roald Dahl day, with a quiz across the MAT, was enjoyed by the pupils.

PB said the school did really well during the summer term to provide work and support for the children. His child in Y5 enjoyed a Google Meet with classmates every week. PB considers that TH did far more for the pupils than many secondary schools and the school should be proud of its achievements.

St Mary's School: JW said the Headteachers across the MAT had worked brilliantly together during this difficult time; he appreciated that PL enabled RC to open through Easter for all the keyworkers' children from the MAT to attend. He considered that all the staff had been wonderful. It was good that Y6 children were able to return to school for their last term and parents were happy that this had happened. All the children came to school in some form or other during the summer term. SM had now settled back into the new term and was running well, with 'bubbles' of children and catch-up programmes in place. Attendance rates are high, with some self-isolating due to circumstances.

SC thanked the HTs for their reports and expressed her appreciation of all the hard work they and their staff had put in over the recent months.

6. Trust Updates

PL stated that the main priority for the Trust was to get children back in school as safely as possible; the MAT was taking a strict approach to keeping the children and staff in bubbles without outside contact. This meant that there are at present no music lessons from peripatetic staff who are

travelling around schools, although this is being reviewed to see if it can be done safely. There are increasing numbers of Covid-19 cases in the community, so it is important to keep the children and adults safe in school.

With regards to PBU's comments about IT, PL agreed that the use of IT has a powerful effect, particularly in times of lockdown. The MAT is developing its digital strategy and has consulted with parents about the use of Chromebooks which would enable all pupils to access IT at the same level. PL has reviewed the parents' responses and reported to the Board of Directors on this. The Trust cannot afford to fund a Chromebook for every child; it has been proposed that, subject to Board approval, the scheme should be rolled out to Y3 and Y4 children and in future every child starting Y3 will have a Chromebook to use. PL agreed with parental opinion that, for children at present in Y5 and Y6, there is too short a time to justify the cost. Parents will be asked to buy the devices, but disadvantaged children will be given free access to a Chromebook. Children will be able to bring in their own Chromebook, but no other device from home, but their Chromebooks will have to be adapted to have the same software, filters and TSSMAT password for use. At the end of Y6, the devices can be returned to the factory settings to enable them to be used as normal. PL considered that the use of and access to IT were essential and the Chromebooks would also improve the use of IT in school.

PBU thanked PL for his response and said he was sure the use of Chromebooks would be very beneficial for the children.

AA asked how much the Chromebooks would be used in school and PL confirmed that they would be a very useful tool to use when appropriate. Children would not be using them all the time, but research has shown that children need their own devices and this improves the provision of the curriculum. JW stressed that there should be a careful balance in school, but there are many opportunities to use IT in school, with a great number of resources to access to enrich the curriculum. At present there is a shortage of IT equipment in the MAT for children to undertake individual research on topics. EB agreed, saying that a lack of IT equipment is limiting the effect of interventions with disadvantaged and SEND children. PL considered that, at a cost of £300 per Chromebook, the use of the device over 4 years was good value.

AA said it was important to get the message across to parents that the Chromebooks were important for use in school, not just at home and not only due to possible school closures and future lockdowns. It should be emphasised that this scheme would improve digital IT literacy, general schoolwork and educational standards.

RM stated that this scheme has been considered in the recent past, but Covid-19 has given it new urgency. PL confirmed to MHE that it is planned for Y3 and Y4 to start the scheme this year, if given Board approval.

7. Community Updates

Richard Crosse/Kings Bromley: MHE said it had been a challenging time for PTA fundraising. There was a focus on the 59 Club and the PTA planned to publicise on the school newsletter the different schemes in use (Amazon etc) for parents to contribute towards school funds. There was no Chocolate Bingo or Summer Fayre, but it is hoped that some presents will be given out at Christmas and craft items will be used on the last day of term. There is now a Gift Aid scheme for the PTA and they can apply to the Co-op to be a chosen charity. Christmas cards are now being designed by the pupils. The PTA has funded new books (£1400), shelving and the Leavers' gifts and is now looking to use the present funds for possible projects such as IT or outdoor spaces.

AA asked other MAT schools for ideas for virtual PTA events.

The Howard/Elford: CM's report on the PTA was read out, saying that the AGM had recently taken place and all the committee places were filled. There are plans for a clothing collection, selling books to recycle, a big breakfast event (possibly takeaway/delivery), takeaway supper and virtual raffle and Easter Bingo. Children are designing Christmas cards for sale. An application to the Waitrose/John Lewis community funding scheme was successful and £333 will be used for

equipment for Forest School. An amazing £51,000 has been raised for the classroom appeal, but unfortunately the cost of the classroom has been projected to be £350,000 and so it has been decided that this is not a viable fundraising project. People can apply to reclaim their donations, and the remaining money will be spent on school projects.

CB reported that she had heard only positive comments within the community about the school and its actions during the lockdown. She knows that the children wanted to return to school and she congratulated the school on all the hard work and support given over the last six months.

St Mary's/Colton: CC's report was read out, saying that all PTA events had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 epidemic. The application to Tesco Bags of Help appeal was successful, but the scheme was curtailed due to the virus; however £1166 was received for PTA funds and put towards the outdoor horticultural learning area. For the Y6 Leavers, hoodies and a visit by an ice-cream van were purchased for the Leavers celebrations. Two basketball hoops have been bought by the PTA. Future plans are uncertain, but virtual coffee mornings (and evenings) are taking place. The PTA AGM will be held virtually in November and various events are planned including a Cash for Clothes collection, Christmas jumper day and a virtual Christmas raffle. Children are designing Christmas cards and new PTA mugs are being produced. There will be a virtual 10km charity run in November. To encourage more parental participation, a PTA Facebook page is planned. The PTA expressed their appreciation of all that the MAT has done during lockdown and since the school has reopened. MH informed LAG members that she has been in lockdown over this period, but has been delighted to hear the children in the school playground. She thanked the staff for their hard work. After discussions with the vicar, it was decided that each child will have an individual bag of Christingle items to make their own Christingle. MH considered that Covid-19 has given the village and church a different outlook, but it is reassuring to know that the children are being well looked after. She will contact the village charities to enquire about possible funding for the school. MH has missed the opportunities to volunteer in school, but enjoyed taking part in her first virtual meeting! AR thanked SM for giving her son the stability of providing schooling during lockdown and she was looking forward to the Chromebooks scheme.

8. Any other business

PL said that Christmas activities were being discussed by the MAT at present. EB thanked everyone for their support in her new role as Headteacher of RC. RM considered that everyone in the MAT has worked together and thanked people for this. JW regarded the volunteers and PTA as invaluable to the schools.

MHE pointed out that there was a 20mph speed sign outside RC on the way from Lichfield, but not on the side from Yoxall; at present some children are entering the school from the Lichfield Road and parents are anxious about the traffic. EB said she would contact Staffordshire Highways about this.

AA asked whether volunteers could come into school to read with the children, but PL said that at present he was trying to limit the number of people coming into school to keep everyone safe. AA asked whether Achievement Assemblies could be reinstated, and EB said that she hoped to start these up again, depending on how successful the Harvest Festival virtual event was. AA expressed his wish to help with virtual PTA events; MHE said a meeting was planned with EB to discuss the use of PTA funds and events would be discussed. A virtual MAT quiz for all four schools was mooted. SC thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for all the positive comments.

9. Date and location of next meeting;

10 March 2021 4pm at TH or by Google Meet

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

Date.....