



Full Governing Body Meeting

21 May 2020, 4:30 pm [by Zoom]

Minutes

Present: Camilla Argyle (chair), Adam Breakwell, Matthew Burns, Wes Coleman, Kerry Martin, Emma Morgan, Nicky Morgan (maternity cover staff representative), Sallie Peacock, Mark Simmons (clerk)

1. Apologies

Apologies from Lyn Broom and Jane Keenan due to work commitments and Lucy Rossiter due to maternity leave.

2. Post-Covid-19 planning

Everyone has had a copy of the revised master plan and associated documents. This is a working document, which began by asking how many people are likely to come back to school, in order to produce the risk assessment. This will need to be signed off by governors and the Local Authority, and then by insurers to assure that there is no liability for the school. Although the government guidance says that social distancing is not necessary in schools, it is required in wider society, and the school is not comfortable having very different requirements in school; 2-meter social distancing will therefore be maintained in school.

The school is now in a position to open, and to do so safely. No further children will be admitted unless a formal request is made, and in this case only on a Monday (so that consistent routines can be maintained). If more parents want to send their children to school, and that would require a new way of working, then it will take 2 weeks for school to adjust before any new admission is allowed (this includes one request so far for a new starter in Year 1). School may be able to admit an additional 10 beyond the current expected number, but if numbers increase much then school may have to reduce its current planned provision.

There will be a staff training day on Monday 1 June (when key workers' children will also be present, as has continued to be the case during lock-down), and then year groups will start in a staggered way. It was confirmed to governors that this is allowed and that the LA has confirmed that each school should choose what is best for its particular circumstance (though it can ask governors to justify why reopening is not safe, were that to be the case).

It is not yet clear whether the government will meet all its test (e.g. the 'R' value), or whether Herefordshire Council may make a different decision, so it is still unconfirmed that schools will definitely be required to open. A final decision is expected on 28 May.

Overall plan for increased return to school

There are expected to be 10-11 children in Reception, 8-9 in Year 1, 8-9 in Year 6. Maximum space in Reception would enable 12 pupils. Year 1 will split into two groups. Year 6 classroom is manageable for 12 with a 2-metre distance, and as the school hall will not be used for anything else, Year 6 could break out into that space. A maximum of 15 key workers' children is expected. This is manageable, maintaining a 2-metre distance while children are sitting at their desks. Governors asked why Reception is not being split into two groups and it was confirmed that this is because the classroom is large enough, a split would require use (and cleaning) of an additional space and more disruption in toilet usage, the tables and chairs in other classrooms would be too high, and the quality of input and therefore learning outcome will be maximised for that group if they stay together.

Year 2-5 provision will be as educational as possible based on home learning packs.

Deb is more likely to be with the key worker group given that the Reception cohort is not splitting, particularly if the key worker group splits into two (although key workers' children are currently expected to be in one classroom). Teachers can decide whether or not to have their children within their normal taught class or join with the key worker group.

One staff member has underlying health conditions and will not be coming in to work immediately after half-term, so Year 6 will initially be covered by Charlotte, Sally W and Bev.

Governors asked about PPA and home learning time, and it was confirmed that staff may be sent home if not needed in school, and PPA and home learning will be organised by staff flexibly depending on when they are required in school.

Logistics

Entry and exit timings are quite tight (trying to get as close to start time as possible and also recognising that siblings will (and should) arrive at school together. A letter is being sent to parents asking them not to send their child(ren) into school if anyone in the household is displaying any symptoms, and asking them to remind children to keep 2 metres' distance, to arrive on time at the beginning and end of the day, and (if driving) to stay in their cars and not socialise outside school. The letter confirms that every effort has been taken, but there are some areas where safety cannot be guaranteed.

Buses will run at 25% capacity, and parents are to make arrangements directly with the bus company and notify school. As the company is not expecting to use PPE on buses it is unlikely many parents will use them. Children on buses will go the hall at the end of the day and taken outside when the buses are ready. Governors recommended adding a paragraph to the parent letter to confirm that buses are not the school's responsibility, are unsupervised, and may be used for multiple schools.

KS2 toilets will be used by Y6 and the key worker group. This group is now coming in through the side entrance, so has no access to school other than to use the loo. It was agreed that there would be distance markers on the floor.

Governors asked about lunches. These will be eaten at desks, and any rubbish taken home. Lunch and play times will to some extent be staggered (Reception and Year 1 will have lunch and play time simultaneously, but socially distancing). Four separate demarcated areas in the playground will keep year groups separated, and no equipment will be in use other than that which is personally named or used by individual class 'bubbles'.

Staggered timings also help to maintain social distancing in the staff room. The photocopier is now in the main hall (with hand sanitiser provided), to reduce the need to use the staff room.

Di will clean before and after school. Until now this has taken about 1.5 hours a day, which will increase – but this will be offset by the fact that only about half of the school is occupied. Staff will be asked to use sanitiser to clean door handles, light switches etc..

The office door will be left open, and the reception window kept shut. Parents will not normally be allowed into school, nor children into the office except for a medical emergency. The 2-metre rule will apply in the area outside school for parents / visitors. Registers will be kept by email.

Governors acknowledged that it will be difficult and upsetting for some children that hugging will not be allowed. Herefordshire County Educational Psychologist Kamran Khan's PowerPoint presentation addressing this has been sent to parents.

Timetable & curriculum

PE with Joe Wicks will continue and like acts of worship will be in classrooms rather than in the hall. Doors and windows will be open as much as possible. Staff are free to do outside learning (in their own spaces) and will be monitoring to ensure that social distancing is maintained outside as well as can be managed in the classroom. The risks should reduce as children get used to new ways of working.

School will adhere to a balanced curriculum which reflects the time of year but will be more limited given that each child will have his/her own resources and that children not be able to share books. There will be a focus on phonics and reading comprehension for the younger groups. Marking will largely be replaced by oral feedback, unless books have not been touched for 72 hours (e.g. marking Thursday's books on Sunday afternoons); stamps will also be used to minimise contact. Emma has filmed a very helpful video showing how it will work.

Books taken home will be in a poly-pocket with a child's name; books will be returned on Mondays and be replaced on Thursdays (but with more books in the meantime, so that children have enough books at home). Oxford OWL will also be used, as a good back-up online resource.

Health & safety

Governors asked about the supply of personal protective equipment. PPE was ordered as soon as the announcement was made, and hand sanitising gel and spray, face masks etc. have all been delivered. The school is only waiting for visors (for occasions when social distancing cannot be maintained).

Each classroom will have its own First Aid kit (the same First Aid kit as used to be taken on school trips). First Aid will be given in class rather than in the disabled toilet, and the latter will be used for children who have to self-isolate (until they are taken home), given that the library is now being used for storage.

Staff have been asked to return to classrooms during half term to remove soft furnishings and any toys that can't be cleaned after each use (e.g. Lego bricks), and have been asked to come in as early in the week as possible so that there can be a deep clean at the end of the week.

Governors asked about any children with additional needs. It was noted that one recent starter may need to resume medication, but as the child is not in one of the key returning teaching groups this should make the situation more manageable. Handling breaks social distancing (though will be done with as much reduced risk as possible), and parents will be reminded that children do not have to be in school if they cannot do so while maintaining social distancing. One child has diabetes but this presents no additional risk. Governors agreed that it is impossible for all variables to be controlled, and that the focus must be on controlling what happens in school, and the messaging.

Governors agreed with the head teacher's assessment that the plan represents a good, safe way of providing education to returning year groups, and that the Local Authority is likely to approve it.

Additional questions

Governors questioned what is expected for the new school year, and suggested it seems likely that a mixture of in-school and home learning if all year groups return, as is planned in Scotland.

The response of unions and the concerns of staff were discussed, including different staffing options such for those in jobshares, secondment between schools (which Orleton is keen to avoid), the scientific basis for the decision, and the lack of leadership from central and local government. Orleton staff expressed gratitude to Adam and Emma for protecting staff by taking on the burden of providing for key workers' children. Teaching staff are concerned that teachers and other school staff are at high risk (around two thirds the rate of NHS staff), and that there is insufficient evidence about the risk of transmission, and would prefer to wait to see what happens with the 'R' rate and what other schools do, and to start with Reception to see that systems and protocols are working. Staff are union members and watching closely what unions suggest (with further announcements expected in the coming week), but certainly want to ensure that 1 June is a training day (as planned), that PPE is available for interactions with all those with EHCPs, and that there is no requirement to clean toilets between use.

Concern was also expressed that more families may wish to send their children back to school when they see how the new system is working. It was agreed that within the current guidelines the school is able to decline these requests in order to manage risk, and recognising that not all families are taking social distancing seriously.

It was agreed that the risk assessments have been thorough, and have helped plan how to manage the school with social distancing even if the final decision on 28 May delays opening, and to prepare for whenever full opening becomes compulsory. Governors agreed that on balance school is as safe as possible, and appreciated that teachers will be working in a new and very different environment, but remained unconvinced that school should re-open immediately after half-term.

3. Any other business

None.

4. Date of next meeting

2 July 2021