

LONDON BOROUGH OF REDBRIDGE

Governing Body of Gilbert Colvin Primary School

Minutes of the Meeting of Wednesday 6th May 2020 Held at 1:30pm by Teleconference

Present: Rajpal Padam
Mark Hemsley Headteacher
Kerry Simpkins
Fatima Bibi-Mannan
Kathryn Davey
Marianne Agwada
Carel Buxton Chair

In Attendance: Anne Fitzpatrick DHT
Greg Robbins Clerk

Apologies: James Clements

305) Declaration of Interests.

There were no new declarations of interest.

306) Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from James Clements which were accepted and his absence condoned.

The chair thanked the headteacher and all the staff for their work in keeping the school supporting the community.

307) Membership

a) Expiration of Terms of Office of Authority Governor

Carel Buxton's term of office was due to expire on 12th July 2020. The school was in good hands and she did not wish to stand again.

The headteacher thanked Carel Buxton both professionally and personally for all her support, though she would still have another meeting.

b) Expiration of Term of Office of Staff Governor

Kathryn Davey's term of office was due to expire in 31st August 2020. The chair thanked her for her insightful contributions. She too would have one further meeting.

Nominations would be called for and an election held in due course.

c) Co-opted Governor Vacancy

There was one vacancy for a co-opted governor. This would not be considered until September.

308) Minutes of the Meeting of 27th January 2020

a) The minutes were re-numbered 285 – 304. A fresh copy would be provided. The minutes were approved and signed by the chair.

309) Matters Arising

- a) Item 5b / 289b - Safeguarding. All governors had now read and understood KCSIE. They would need to confirm in writing that they had completed the online training when the school re-opened.
- b) Item 8 ii)/292 ii) – GDPR. The action plan would be carried over.
- c) Item 10 a vi)/ 294 a vi) – Work on the canopy had been delayed due to school closure.
- d) Item 11/295 – Discussion on committees and working parties had been deferred until September.
- e) Item 12/296 – Discussion on link governors was deferred.

310) Headteacher Report

a) Staffing

The school is working with 25% of staff attending on a rota basis. Around 7-10 children are attending. 50% of staff could be available if needed and 25% cannot attend because of the health risk.

There had been one resignation previously who had asked to withdraw their resignation, which had been approved. There were other staff considering alternatives which would not be possible at this time.

- i) Governors noted that vulnerable staff might not be able to return, even if the school opened. This would need to be part of the planning.
- ii) The chair observed that many staff would have been through traumatising situations or had been living alone, so staff could also need support when they returned too. This could be a much longer term issue. The school was keeping staff updated regularly about developments and staff were in contact with each other through a number of social media platforms. Staff with childcare needs, who shielded older relatives in the home or who would have long public transport journeys were not being included on the rota. Many staff actually wanted to come in to help.

b) Home Learning

Packs of home-learning work had been provided. These were being sent weekly, with links to online resources. There was an emphasis on avoiding a need for home printing. It was not possible to specify specific times for learning as the school did not know what the circumstances were in each home. Not all families were logging in, so what had been learned would be different across classes and this would be a challenge when school re-opens. There is more direct contact with vulnerable students. Some laptops had been loaned to families where this was needed. More targeted work was being provided to children on EHC plans. Families were supplying pictures of what their children were doing. Teachers would send video greetings to their classes.

c) School Opening

There had been more take-up of places by key worker families than vulnerable families. There were two cleaners doing a fantastic job. The school was open over Easter as a hub. Glade, Mossford and Fairlop were within this group – twenty children were expected but lower numbers actually attended – four was the lowest.

The local authority had been very supportive with daily updates from Colin Stewart. The authority had paid for the holiday provisions and insisted that staff had breaks.

- i) Governors welcomed the support from Elaine Norman and Colin Stewart and asked for their thanks to be passed on.

- ii) Governors asked how the school was teaching such a small number of children across such a range. The children all need to be socially isolated on mats in the hall. There is physical activity with Jo Witt. This provided routine and was popular. The children are then split into infants and juniors with one teacher and one TA each. The headteacher and DHT do break duties. The children use computers to do the same lessons as those doing home learning at their own levels. In the afternoons there is outdoor learning, including gardening and sowing seeds and vegetables. Activities such as art and cooking still required social distancing. Children are collected between 3 and 3:15pm. The children had formed very nice groups with strong relationships. Staff document the work done with the children so other staff can follow up.
- iii) Governors asked who was maintaining oversight of LAC children. This was a joint effort and there was regular contact with social workers. There were risk assessments. This did not only apply to LAC children, but also other vulnerable children. There were also issues of increased domestic violence. When schools returned, priorities would be different with more emphasis on mental health and transitioning back into a school routine than purely academic progress.
- iv) Governors asked what form the contact with families took. Sometimes this was through the social workers or it could be direct to the family. This was by phone call. This had led to loans of laptops where needed. The school dinner voucher system had proved a nightmare to administer and support with. One family was being encouraged to access in-school education part time due to their learning needs.
- v) Governors asked if phone calls were enough to identify safeguarding needs, or if videocalls would be possible. This depended on the preferences of parents. There were protocols in the authority about when home visits/calls would be needed, but these would lead to referrals to social services. Those that the school was most concerned about were already known to the school and social services, but in emergency situations the police could be informed. It was not the school's place to investigate, however.
- vi) Governors were concerned that there could be an influx of referrals after the school re-opened. This was possible, though if children made disclosures, it may be some time before they did this as they would need to re-establish relationships first.

d) Admissions

There had been several children formally admitted. Notifications had been sent to parents of children due to start in September. Arrangements would need to be made for transition meetings.

- i) Governors asked if there was any possibility of children skipping a year as they would have missed so much. While it was not known when schools might return to normal, this was unlikely. This was more likely to be dealt with by a national approach, though no advice had been received.

e) Future Plans

Redbridge was one of the only authorities in the country to have all of its schools open for a (reduced) provision. An announcement was expected from the government, though some statements that children would not transmit disease were questionable. If they announced a partial re-opening it might be for one or two year groups at a time, so the school was planning to have ten children to a classroom for two year groups. This would require twelve classrooms.

- i) Governors asked if PPE would be required for staff. This was not clear. The school had ordered 1000 masks from China. New protocols would be needed.
- ii) Governors observed that many families would not be prepared to send their children to school.

f) Thanks

The headteacher thanked staff for rising to the occasion and being very positive in very difficult circumstances. He was proud of all of his staff.

311) Safeguarding

This had been covered within the headteacher report (310 above).

312) Year End and Budget Plan

a) Budget 2020-2021

The headteacher had been working with Steve Hibbon.

The carry-forward from last year (2019-20) was £103,730, higher than the £85K predicted, but this was because it included DFC (devolved capital funding) that was already committed. The school ended the year with a small in-year deficit which was financed from the carry-forward.

The predicted carry forward at 31/3/21 was £68K. This would again mean that some surplus had been spent. By 2022-23 a balance of only £13K was predicted – after that an actual deficit was predicted. It would therefore be important that a finance committee was established to scrutinise this more closely.

- i) Governors asked if the school could afford projects like a nursery canopy, which should not have proceeded without seeing plans or estimates. The money on the canopy, edible playground and whiteboards was all taken from one-off payments – specifically Philip Hammond’s “little extras” funding. Permanent staff should not be funded through one-off grants. Staff costs and other overheads had increased significantly in recent years and the school had unfilled capacity, which affected its funding.
- ii) Governors noted that sufficient staff would be needed if there were to be a full cohort of children. The headteacher explained that nevertheless, expenditure was exceeding income. The school had made some savings in achieving value for money. There had been cuts to CPD, supply cover and the curriculum, but there might still need to be some savings through a restructure.
- iii) Governors queried whether there could be savings on school meals. Like a number of other lines, this would be balanced by an income lower down in the spreadsheet and school meals was an in/out item. A finance committee would be able to look at this in greater detail. There were gains and losses – Kids in Charge were not paying to use the school, but the school was not paying for supply staff. The school would need to find ways to make cuts that would have a minimum impact on children. If a member of SLT left, they might not be replaced, experienced staff might be replaced by people lower on the pay scale and outside music classes might not be afforded. Welfare of staff had to remain high on the agenda and any process had to be fair and transparent.
- iv) Governors asked if any staff could be furloughed. This was not possible because the school receives public funding and so is not eligible for this support. This even applied to

supply staff who had been employed long-term. Covid-19 was not allowed to be a way of saving money.

- v) Governors enquired whether the government would not support schools until normality returned. This was not clear – already public resources were being used to support businesses and employees. Public priorities after the crisis might be changed.
- vi) Governors asked what the admissions would be like for next year. Specific numbers were not available – about 23 or 24 out of 39 nursery places and only 36 reception places had been accepted. This was partly due to not all responses being received yet and parents having different priorities during the lockdown.

Agreed: The budget for 2020/21 was approved

b) Year End Closure

The close of year accounts had been provided.

Agreed: The end of year accounts were approved.

c) SFVS

This document sets out the ways in which financial accountability is ensured.

Agreed: The SFVS document was approved and would be signed by the chair.

313) Committees and Working Parties

Agreed: There would be two committees, one each for Curriculum and Finance.

Action: Governors would consider which committee they would join and membership would be confirmed at the next meeting, which would be held by Zoom.

314) Chair's Action

There was nothing to report.

315) Time and Date of the Next Meeting

Dates are set annually for the following year. Governors must confirm or suggest changes then and once they are in the calendar only vary them when absolutely essential.

Summer Term

Wednesday 8th July 2020 time tbc

316) Agenda Items for Future Meetings

Travel Plan (deferred)

GB Committees

Link Governors

The meeting closed at 3:10pm.