

**Minutes**  
**Arbour Vale School Local Governing Body (LGB) meeting**  
**26 November 2020 at 4pm (held virtually)**

**Present:** John Wise [Chair] (JW)  
 Neil Sykes [Principal] (NS)  
 Prav Bassi (PB)  
 Isobel Callaby (IC)  
 Josie Jones (JJ)  
 Motomori Labode (ML)  
 David Winkler (DW)

**Also in attendance:** Tracey Goodsell [Clerk] (TG)  
 Kayleigh Franklin [OHCAT Management Accountant] (KF)  
 Katie and Alfie (School Council Representatives and Kevin Hughes)

### **1. SCHOOL COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

NS welcomed Katie and Alfie to the meeting and asked them to speak to the governors about their role as School Council Representatives. They explained the peer system to governors, where older students help younger students to get leadership roles in the school.

Katie then spoke about coming back to school after lockdown. She said that the students had received a lot of support which made them feel confident about returning. In terms of the Post-16 house, Katie said pupils were very happy to be in the house rather than the school. Alfie added that they would like more room and more seating in the garden.

They then spoke about the ICT Suite, which has been developed to aid personal learning with new computer monitors and touch screens. Katie said this is a good example of the student council asking for better equipment and the school responding to those requests.

With regard to school lunches, the students were not happy with the cold, small lunches that were being provided. Newbury Class had written a letter to NS and all students now receive a hot meal in a takeaway box. Katie and Alfie said there are still things that need to be improved, such as more choice, but the hot meals are much better.

Over the Christmas period, the school would normally perform a play for the parents and there would also be a Christmas dinner day but that will be difficult this year. However, Alfie said that the students are being encouraged to put up Christmas decorations and to get into the Christmas spirit in their classrooms.

NS said that this virtual session with Katie and Alfie had highlighted the difficulty with the poor signal at the school, which has made the use of technology for remote learning very difficult.

He said that Katie and Alfie were a credit to the school and their role has been even more important during the pandemic. He said he would take on board the request for extra seating outside the house, which he thought could be resolved quite easily.

KF had attended a meeting with NS to discuss the cleaning contract and had taken on board everything that the School Council had said.

JW stressed how valuable the School Council is. He said their input is very shrewd and relevant and provides the Senior Leadership Team with the views of the students. He thanked them for all they do and told them to keep up the good work. He suggested that the school council should come to every governing body meeting with an update. He also asked for feedback from this meeting to be taken back to the School Council.

PB added that it had been very valuable to find out what the School Council does and what the students want. She said her own class were very appreciative of the hot meals now being provided.

## **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Matt Downey, Apologies for lateness were received from David Winkler.

## **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations were made. TG asked all Governors who had not already done so to return completed Declaration of Interest forms for this year to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity.

## **4. SKILLS AUDIT ANALYSIS**

TG asked all Governors who had not already done so to return completed Skills Audit forms for this year to the Clerk at the earliest opportunity

## **5. CONSTITUTION AND APPOINTMENTS**

- i Nominations for the Chair & Vice-Chair for 2020-21 were invited. JW was proposed and seconded and recommended to the OHCAT Board for reappointment as Chair. DW was proposed and seconded and recommended to the OHCAT Board for appointment as Vice-Chair.
- ii The LGB noted the resignation of Lee Clark.

## **6. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the LGB meeting held on 2 July 2020 were **agreed** as an accurate record and would be signed by the Chair.

## 7. MATTERS ARISING

Governors confirmed their receipt of the Local Safeguarding and Wellbeing offer circulated on 4 November via GovernorHub.

## 8. FINANCE AND FUNDING

### A. Final Accounts 2019-20

KF referred governors to the summary notes on the year end accounts and said that the accounts were showing a large surplus of £465k, against an anticipated surplus of £393. This is largely due to savings recognised during the pandemic. KF stressed that OHCAT's position is to aim to deliver a balanced budget with any surplus being spent on the students to support their learning but some expenses couldn't be made because of Covid.

KF added that the formal health grade for the school was graded as Inadequate last year but this year it is graded Good. NS said that a lot of work has been done by KF and her team as well as the school staff to achieve this outcome.

Governors **RECEIVED** the final accounts for 2019-20

### B. Management Accounts

KF explained that these accounts are for period one. There have been some teething problems with the new finance system but Period 2 should be ready soon.

She referred governors to the summary notes on the management accounts and confirmed that the school's financial position is good during a difficult year where there has been a considerable level of uncertainty.

NS said that the numbers on roll are currently at 321 and there are 3 offers in the system. The school should reach 324 students this side of Christmas which will further strengthen the school's financial position.

He added that he had met with KF at the beginning of September to discuss current staff vacancies, but they had taken the decision to delay making any appointments as it wasn't possible to predict how many students would return after the lockdown period. 14 staff have been appointed to permanent posts and will start in January. Attendance is currently at 86% and the school would normally expect 90% attendance. The school is now incurring agency costs, but if the agency staff are good the school will make them permanent.

JW thanked KF for her clear and comprehensive report. The accounts show a steady and consistent trend of improvement and is a testament to all the hard work being done to manage the school's finances.

Governors **RECEIVED** the management accounts.

## 9A. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

### Key Objectives Achieved

NS explained that his report has been structured alongside the portfolio holders. He asked for the minutes to record his thanks to the leadership and middle leadership teams who have contributed to the portfolio visits. NS said that these visits were very productive in terms of CPD for senior staff. The leadership team have also been able to seek advice from governors, for example they have approached JJ for advice based on her skillset.

NS said staff have gone above and beyond during this pandemic. They have risen to the challenge and have used their time effectively for detailed planning. NS said he was immensely proud of the staff and students during this difficult time.

The virtual learning platform has been very important in terms of providing creative learning for the students. All schools in OHCAT have achieved a universal offer of support.

NS spoke about the transition in September and said he would have expected more behavioural issues from the ASD students who need structure and routine, but in fact, these had been minimal, and the school had seen a reduction in intervention compared with this time last year. PB said that the students had valued coming back after lockdown and the atmosphere was calm, with students being grateful for the routine. NS agreed and said the School Improvement Partner for Slough had commented on the calmness around the school when she came to visit. NS said the priority over the next 12 months is to invest in IT, CPD and embedding the curriculum.

In terms of Health and Safety, NS reported that Slough has now put into Tier 3 and he lives in the West Country which is also in Tier 3.

NS said he thought it was unlikely that the school will receive an Ofsted visit before the summer term, which will give the school even more time to get to Outstanding.

JW said that it was disappointing that governors haven't been able to come into school to get a 'feel' of the place, particularly new governors. Nevertheless, the virtual meetings have given governors a sense of the current situation.

NS said there is some work to do on the website, but he commended the videos to the new governors, particularly the outreach one. JJ said it would be helpful for governors to be informed when the videos are

uploaded. NS said he also sends a weekly staff bulletin and would copy governors into that too

**Action: NS to ensure governors are informed when the videos are uploaded and are sent the weekly staff bulletin.**

## **PF1: Ethos, Vision and Strategy**

### **A. Strategy and Sustainability**

NS said that the School Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) will be updated and circulated in January. There had been excellent contributions from Phase Leaders and Key Stage Leaders.

JW asked governors to make sure they look at this document before the next informal LGB meeting in January.

NS said that progress on the School Development Improvement Plan (SDIP) has stalled due to staff absence. In the two days before half term, 37% of staff were absent, which obviously impacts on moving plans forward.

The vision for OHC&AT's three-year strategy is CREATE (Create, Respectful, Equitable, Advocacy, Team working and Enabling). NS said he wants the school to align its vision with OHC&AT and he asked governors to familiarise themselves with this document.

With regard to stakeholder interface, NS said that work has been undertaken to update the website, in line with the OHCAT corporate style.

### **B. School/ College Management**

NS said he has a strong SLT supporting him who have committed to staying with the school for the next academic year, which is important.

### **C. Risk Management**

NS said that the OHC&AT CEO, John Prior had met with him last week and he had been very supportive and complimentary about the school.

### **D. Portfolio Report**

DW referred to the portfolio report of the virtual meeting held on 21 October and highlighted the importance of the school website and the work being undertaken by the staff well-being group

## **PF2: Quality of Provision**

### **A. Effectiveness of Leadership and Management**

NS reported that he has a strong leadership and middle leadership team who are driving change management through their teams. There is high engagement in CPD, with some of them undertaking the NQPSL qualification.

NS said he is committed to the successional leadership model and aims to ensure Leadership and Management (which includes governors), is judged to be outstanding under the Ofsted criteria.

### **B. Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

NS said that the school uses OHCAT's TES (Teacher Evaluation Schedule) model which is an excellent monitoring tool to assess the quality of teaching. The tool offers a 360-degree review of individuals based on 12 key strands. In addition, the school has rebranded the TES as 'Train, Excel and Showcase'. The scheduling of the TES has naturally suffered because of Covid but it is hoped the new branding will 're-invigorate' the process.

The development of the VLE has been significant. NS said he had been very impressed with the innovation and creativity adopted by the teachers to ensure remote learning is appropriate and accessible.

Pupil progress and achievement data has been harvested. This has been shared with JW but has not yet been moderated. NS said he hoped to bring this data to the next governors' meeting, but early indications are that 86% of students will exceed their targets (last year this figure was at 84%).

### **C. Pupil Behaviour, Attitude and Personal Development**

Students have taken the lead in delivering the well-being message.

Governors were pleased to note the comparative data table for behaviour, which showed an improvement since last year, despite the challenging circumstances.

JW said he had met virtually with Sarah Brooks for his portfolio visit when they had discussed the curriculum development, particularly focusing on the VLE and the introduction of core subjects.

NS said it is now important to move onto the implementation and impact of the new curriculum.

ML said he had experienced issues with the VLE particularly in terms of accessing it for his daughter's remote learning platform, See Saw. PB said

she would arrange a session with ML to help with this issue. NS said that the See Saw technology is new and he recognised that parents and students need support to use it but this has been difficult as it has not been possible to offer face-to-face workshops. He added that the government is keen to ensure that suitable technology is accessible for all students and has provided funding for equipment etc.

There are also some issues with Zoom, the virtual meetings platform which is a problem with the Firewall of the OHCAT IT system. The school is working with the contractors to resolve the problem but some of the issues lie with the thickness of the walls in the school which results in a weak IT signal. It is unlikely work for this will be complete until February half term.

IC said she has experienced the same issue at her own school. They are using Zoom for delivering lessons, but she warned against using it for 1:1 meetings with students as the safeguarding protections aren't secure enough.

### **PF3 Finance, premises and resources**

#### **A. Finance**

Governors noted the information in NS' report and KF's previous report on the management accounts.

#### **D. Premises**

NS recorded his thanks to Pinnacle for the high standard of cleaning they have provided.

The school is operating a highly effective track and trace system which has reduced the risk of spread of the virus in school.

The library and IT suite have been refurbished.

Arbour Vale House has been re-branded and opened as a Post-16 MLD centre.

#### **E. Health and Safety**

NS stressed the importance of being vigilant every day to ensure the safety of students, many of whom have serious underlying health conditions. The school works closely with the Public Health authorities.

ML said he had visited the school in October and had been very impressed with the strategies put in place. He said that there had not been a planned fire drill due to Covid but there had been a 'real' fire drill in the school yesterday where the school was evacuated successfully.



NS said staff are wearing masks in all the communal areas. Masks are not compulsory for students, but they can choose to wear them if they want to.

Covid risk assessments are updated regularly.

Governors applauded NS for all that he is doing to ensure the safety of students and staff in the school.

## **PF4 Child Protection and Safeguarding**

### **A. Child Protection**

NS said that Michelle Healy-Wallace is an excellent Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and her team is working hard to support the students during this difficult time. There has been significant improvement in safeguarding since Ofsted last judged the school to be failing in this area.

A section 175 review has been completed. This is a checklist of matters that need to be put in place and evidenced. The school gained a 99.5% positive outcome.

### **B Attendance Autumn term 2020**

Attendance is rising and is currently at 86%. The absence figures include Covid related absence due to self-isolation.

IC commented that the attendance figures are good. She also explained the acronyms shown in the child protection table.

She said that although Child Protection (CP) figures have increased since last year, they are still low.

Child in Need (CIN) figures are quite high, but this is to be expected and have only risen by one since this time last year. NS said that the school adopts a multi-agency, proactive approach. IC agreed that the school is very observant to any issues.

IC had also spoken to Michelle about the Edupod, which is an OHC&AT Mental Health survey which she has delegated to another member of her team. She said this a comprehensive survey to support mental health and she encouraged governors to respond.

IC concluded by saying that she was very impressed with Michelle's professionalism and management of safeguarding in the school.

JW agreed and said that safeguarding has been a big success story over the last couple of years. He thanked IC for contributing her expertise in this area.



**PF5: Admissions and Marketing**  
**Portfolio Governors: Josie Jones and John Wise**

**A. Admissions**

Admission figures are strong, and the school is predicting 328 students already for next September. NS said that this is an indication of the school's improved reputation.

**B. Stakeholder Engagement**

Parents have confidence in the school and parental engagement is outstanding. The school has significantly increased its engagement with parents with social coffee morning and training/workshop opportunities. These initiatives have continued during lockdown, with online events held for parents.

**C. Student Voice**

NS referred governors to the comment from the SIP about the calm feel around the school which he had included in his report. He added that he had enormous pride in the students who are a credit to the school.

There have been no Stage 2 formal complaints, and significantly there haven't been any for the last 15 months.

JJ said it was evident that the staff have great ideas to engage the wider community.

JW commented on the work of Julie Foot who is focussing on the staff voice and staff well-being. He said he looked forward to hearing more about this as it develops.

**PF6: Human Resources**  
**Portfolio Governors Josie Jones and John Wise**

**Staffing**

Governors recognised that the high turnover of staff is reducing. NS commented that the role of TA is nationally low paid, and their job is difficult. He said that he hoped that the wellbeing offer will improve staff retention. He said that the impact of Covid cannot be under-estimated. JJ said that the resilience of staff impacts on the students and should be commended. She stressed the importance of governors making themselves familiar with the well-being offer.

**9B. DASHBOARD**

Governors **NOTED** the data included in the Dashboard.

## 10. GOVERNOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

NS said he intended to continue with the governor training meeting on 28.1.21 (virtual) which will focus on governors' strategic understanding of the strengths of the school and where the evidence can be found. Governors also need to be knowledgeable about the areas for improvement and what the school is doing to address these areas.

## 11. PAY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Governors received a verbal report from JW on the annual meeting of the Pay Committee, and their recommendations/approvals. JW said that there was a comprehensive performance management process in the school and the judgements were fair and robust. The Pay Committee received clear advice about salary progression.

## 12. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Governors noted the policies and procedures approved by the OHC&AT Board at their meeting on 3rd July 2020.

NS said that SLT will produce a one-page summary of all policies for governors linked to the portfolio areas. These should be available early next term.

## 13. KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION SEPTEMBER 2020

Governors **NOTED** that 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' has been updated with effect from September 2020. The latest version is available on GovernorHub.

All relevant OHC&AT policies have been amended to reflect the changes. A summary of the changes has been circulated to Safeguarding Portfolio governors.

NS directed all governors to read, sign and send a copy to him. IC suggested that governors should concentrate on reading Part I and Annexe A. The changes are highlighted.

**Action: Susanne Wicks, Governance Manager to email all governors to request them to do this.**

## 14. GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK OCTOBER 2020

Governors **NOTED** that the Governance Handbook has been updated with effect from October 2020. The latest version is available on GovernorHub.

## 15. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Governors **NOTED** the following meeting dates:

- Formal Meetings: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021 (4pm start)
- Informal meetings: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2021, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2021 (4pm start)

**16. CONFIDENTIALITY**

A discussion around a safeguarding incident is recorded in a confidential minute.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.

**Chair**-----

**Date**-----