



Address:
 Waterton Academy Trust
 The Grove
 Walton
 Wakefield
 WF2 6LD

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of an Extraordinary Trust Board Meeting

DATE:

20 May 2020

TIME:

6pm

LOCATION:

Held via video conferencing
 (Microsoft Teams)

Attendees

Chair:	B Cook	
Trustees	S Bates	S Johnson
	P Beaman	J Shaw
	D Dickinson (CEO)	
Clerk:	L Clark (MAT Governance Officer)	
Apologies:		

ITEM	ACTION
<p>1. Welcome to a meeting held via video conferencing</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, explaining that the NGA updates and DfE guidelines had been circulated to Trustees and provided context to the reports which had also been on WES in advance of the meeting. It was highlighted that the CEO has been providing updates to Trustees throughout the covid-19 situation.</p> <p>All were in agreement that the Trust had responded to the situation swiftly, positively and all had shown adaptability throughout. The meeting had been called for tonight as an opportunity to review and discuss the plans of the Trust in the possible wider reopening of schools and agree on next steps.</p>	
<p>2. Apologies for Absence</p> <p>There were no apologies of absence.</p>	
<p>3. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The standing register of declarations of interest was noted.</p>	
<p>4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th April 2020 and matters arising</p> <p>Trustees reviewed and approved the minutes. It was agreed these would be signed in person by the Chair once restrictions had been lifted.</p> <p>Actions from the meetings had been undertaken and it was agreed that all had been completed in a timely manner.</p>	LC

ITEM	ACTION
<p>5. June 1st 2020</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the report which had been available on WES in advance of the meeting which outlined the preparation for phase 1 (EYFS, Y1 and Y6). The CEO confirmed that the Unions had been in continuous consultation and that workload for their requests had been significant. The Trust has since produced a detailed Q&A document for staff (also available on WES ahead of the meeting) which the Unions have been referred to.</p> <p>The government are making a key update on 28th May and therefore it was agreed that the final decision will be made and communicated on 29th May.</p> <p>It was noted that parents on the whole have been very positive, and staff have responded very well and been positive. HR were working extremely hard to work with individuals who had concerns about shielding, returning to work, and sending their own children back to school, amongst other matters, and the feedback had been positive.</p> <p>The CEO summarised the report outlining that the task is fundamentally how do the Trust prepare the schools in terms of organising staffing, classrooms, and putting pupils into ‘bubbles’ which will remain in place with no movement of staff or pupils. Each school were also using tape to indicate the direction of flow of movement around the school and to ensure 2 metre social distancing where possible. Monday 1st June would be used as an induction day for staff to ensure all were knowledgeable and confident on the policies and procedures in place, and then pupils invited back from 2nd June following the phased return outlined within the report. The CEO confirmed he was confident in staff and admin officers to implement the policies and procedures effectively and appropriately.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the survey responses across the Trust and the varying response rate (some schools with 90% response and others with very low response rates). An overview was provided by the CEO of how parents would register their child to attend school by a certain date each week and if this date was not met then they would not be entitled to a place the following week – this is to ensure that appropriate staffing numbers are in place and that size of ‘bubbles’ are safely adhered to. It was noted that ‘phase 2’ would require another significant piece of work and a full set of planning and this would be taken in line with government guidelines. The Trust have steadfastly complied with government requirements and expectations throughout, and legal advice has been taken which confirmed that it is key that the Trust continue to adhere to all the relevant guidelines, particularly when outlining their stance on the wider re-opening of schools.</p> <p>Questions were asked from Trustees regarding whether a consistent approach and message was being taken across the Trust. The CEO confirmed that there was a Trust wide approach – the Trust is the employer, and accountability lies with the Trust Board with devolved responsibilities to the CEO and SLT. HR are taking a consistent approach to any staff queries or concerns. A detailed staff feedback questionnaire had been undertaken and any concerns identified are in the process of being addressed, including ensuring all staff were aware of the counselling service which can be accessed. The Estates team were also making checks across the</p>	

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<p>schools to ensure consistency of approaches across sites.</p> <p>Queries were raised about movement of staff between sites, and social distancing of pupils particularly those in EYFS, and those with SEND. The CEO explained that staff will not be moving between sites and that risk assessments specific to each school would be undertaken on a weekly basis to ensure staffing ratios and numbers were appropriate for that site. Some children with SEND require physical contact and this will be managed with support staff and teachers on a case by case basis. Although PPE is not advised it may be necessary for some aspects of intimate care for pupils with SEND or those within EYFS. Social distancing will be very difficult with EYFS children but Headteachers will work with staff to raise awareness and explain to children in an age appropriate way. In response to further questions it was confirmed that children of key workers will still be attending school as they have been doing throughout the situation following the same procedures. However, these children will either remain in their 'bubble' of key worker children or be moved to a year group 'bubble' but there will be no movement between them. It may be difficult to operate wraparound provision as this will be difficult to staff as there can be no movement of staff between groups of children.</p> <p>Trustees asked questions about the sources of guidance and evidence on which to base the decision of re-opening schools, including guidance from the Local Authority, NGA, Public Health England (PHE), British Medical Association (BMA), as well as the government guidelines. It was noted that there was variance between the stances and advice from each organisation which also made it difficult to correlate evidence, and that the stance in England was currently different to that of Wales and Scotland.</p> <p>Trustees debated at length the reliability of data / scientific evidence available and the uncertainty of whether schools could be a truly safe environment. There was confidence in the risk assessments completed by the Trust and the mitigation in place, but all agreed that this could not guarantee absolute safety from the virus. There was debate around PPE and social distancing as these have been key measures in containing the spread of the virus, but both were not possible or applicable in a school setting, which had been acknowledged by the government. Parental choice was also discussed and it was noted that there would be no fines from the local authority for those choosing not to send their child back to school. Worst case scenarios were also considered and the impact this would have across the Trust including emotional wellbeing. Tracking and tracing was also discussed and the impact that this will have. Safeguarding implications of not opening schools was also considered in relation to vulnerable or disadvantaged pupils. Throughout all discussions the emotional wellbeing of children and staff was reiterated, regarding the possible implications of opening or not opening.</p> <p>It was noted that schools have been open to the children of key workers and to vulnerable pupils throughout the closure of schools, and there has been the obligation to do this and all guidance has been followed. The phased re-opening would be an extension of this and would continue to follow robust policies and procedures.</p> <p>In response to questions about home learning it was confirmed that the work life</p>	

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<p>balance of teachers is vital and there would not be the time or expectation for teachers to produce significant amounts of bespoke home learning whilst they were in school teaching. Other sources of home learning would also be utilised and arrangements for PPA would be put in place – this could not be cover arrangements due to the mixing of staff, but could include for example an early finish on a Friday. The need for the Headteacher, SLT or DSL (designated safeguarding lead) to be in school every day was considered, but the CEO confirmed that not everyone is likely to be needed in school every day and that schools can work together if for example there was a safeguarding concern. There would be a need for the Head or a member of the SLT to be on site each day.</p> <p>The CEO reiterated that the Trust's planning is in line with all the current government guidelines, that the Unions are comfortable with the work to date and that all risk assessments are site specific, thorough and robust. Trustees considered their moral obligation and responsibility to educate and provide opportunities for all pupils, and sought to balance this with their moral obligation to ensure safety of children, staff and the wider community. It was discussed that whatever decision was made that the CEO would prepare a statement to be approved by Trustees.</p> <p>There was further discussion regarding a number of issues and concerns including PPE and the current advice that this should not be worn in schools unless in a situation where intimate care was necessary. The complications which can occur in children if they have coronavirus (Kawasaki disease) was highlighted and that there is still not enough known about this. The possibility of waiting until later in June to open schools and the likelihood of any stronger scientific evidence was considered, but again it was agreed that no firm conclusions could be drawn.</p> <p>In response to a question it was confirmed that each school had used the risk assessment template and completed it within the context of their own school. Each school had significant differences dependant on their settings which included size of site, number of classrooms, ability to move around the school, the staggering of drop offs and collections.</p> <p>Trustees noted their responsibilities as the accountable body, and considered the decision in principle to open up schools to EYFS, Y1 and Y6, highlighting the breadth of the discussion and the ethical and moral concerns that have been shared. Within a highly political landscape and currently without firm scientific evidence to categorically state that schools would be a safe environment, some Trustees found it difficult to confirm with certainty that the schools within the Trust should be opened more widely. However, Trustees were in agreement that the work undertaken by the Trust was huge and that they had full confidence that risk would be mitigated insofar as there was control. However, there was concern that government advice was driven by a range of factors such as the economy and the political landscape and that whilst the safety of children and staff had been taken into account the scientific knowledge was still not absolute. Whilst risk can be mitigated this is not an absolute and it was felt that the safety of children and staff could not be guaranteed.</p> <p>Trustees concluded that the robust discussion and challenge was a crucial aspect of their work, and that the planning work to date including the risk assessments provided significant assurance that the Trust was mitigating risk and were following</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
all key government guidelines. It was agreed that a final decision on the wider re-opening of schools in line with the government guidelines would be addressed on 29 th May following the government's review of the lockdown and further advice on schools re-opening on 28 th May. A meeting was scheduled for 29 th May at 7am.	
6. CEO Update The CEO drew attention to the report on WES, highlighting that the budget discussions are ongoing – budgets are extremely challenging, and there will be some re-visits following initial plans and discussions, but there will be no in-year deficits. Feedback will be provided in detail to the Hub Board. It was agreed that due to the current intense workload for all that the Governors' Conference will not be progressed at present.	
7. Any other business	
None.	
8. Feedback to / from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Concerns, Comments	
This was not applicable at present as the Trust Board will be meeting again on 29 th May.	
9. Identification of Confidential Items	
None.	
10. Confirmation of Date and Time of Next Meeting	
Tuesday 14 th July 2020 – 6pm It was agreed that there was a possibility that this will be held via video conferencing.	

MEETING CLOSED 8:00 pm

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 29 April 2020

Agenda Item N ^o	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
4	Sign previous minutes – clerk to arrange	LC	In due course
5	scheduled a meeting for 29 th May at 7am.	LC	asap