**ST MARY’S AND ST JOSEPH’S RC FEDERATION**

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ST MARY’S STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE THAT TOOK PLACE AT 6PM ON THURSDAY 4 MARCH 2021 – PUBLIC VERSION**

Present: 7 governors, clerk to the governing body

Apologies: Nil.

In attendance: senior member of school staff.

**ITEM 1 – OPENING PRAYER**

1. A governor opened the meeting with a prayer.

**ITEM 2 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. There were no apologies for absence. Governors introduced themselves. The chair outlined how she ran her committee meetings.

**ITEM 3 – DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

3. The chair had intended to propose her organisation to the school as a Maths tutor but she is not now going to take it forward.

**ITEM 4 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2020**

4. The clerk had neglected to distribute the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2020 with the other papers for this meeting for which he apologised. He did send them out on the day of this meeting so they were able to be read and agreed.

**ITEM 5 – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2020**

5. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2020.

**ITEM 6 – REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROVISION**

6. The chair introduced the subject by saying that a great deal of work had been done on this subject and she wanted to do it justice. The senior member of the school staff introduced himself to those governors who did not know him.

7. The senior member of the school staff had sent a great deal of information out to governors. He provided the background to remote provision, going back to March 2020 and the initial lockdown. The topic had been a standing item on the agenda for the weekly meetings of the school senior leadership team, plus it was covered during his weekly meetings with the headteacher. The process had evolved as time progressed, and in particular when Microsoft Teams was introduced.

8. By January 2021 remote provision had greatly expanded. It had plenty of strengths, but also certain weaknesses. A governor asked if the school had gone through the curriculum with teaching staff. The senior member of the school staff replied that he had and that it was part of the process. He gave the subject of Computer Science as an example. A governor commented that it was lovely to such positivity in the documents provided.

9. The senior member of the school staff went on to cover the whole school SEF. He had worked hard to communicate with all parties, children, parents, staff, the LA etc. The whole school SEF was considered. It included a great deal of evidence, including leadership, communication, monitoring and evaluation, pupil engagement, curriculum planning and delivery, and safeguarding and wellbeing. The school had self-evaluated in all of these areas, and, in most areas, had made good provision with minor gaps. Peter Wallace asked about the evaluation and could the school follow the assessment policy? The senior member of the school staff replied that he could, it had been a challenge, but now it was a relative strength.

10. A governor asked about feedback on assessment. She had heard anecdotally that it was limited. The senior member of the school staff responded that there was much more focus on years 10 and 11 than on the other year groups. The headteacher remarked that it was hard to quantify. Pupils need feedback or they swiftly lose interest. A governor informed governors that initially she did not put assignments on Teams but used the old-fashioned method of printing, assessing, commenting, scanning and returning to pupil. Now she was more up to date and used Teams.

11. The senior member of the school staff highlighted the strengths of Teams on remote provision. Remote programmes had followed core teaching as far as possible. Departments were able to adapt at different levels, eg it was different for practical as opposed to academic subjects. People become more proficient with increased use of Teams. The use of Teams in future was to be considered. Lessons were prepared in real detail and, with approximately 2/3 of lessons going out live, there was much more live provision than during the first lockdown. Some lessons were blended – a mix of live and recorded. Different strategies could be utilised for teaching and learning. There was ongoing communication with students, and clarity of instruction. The quality of feedback and marking was improved. A wider range and variety of tasks was possible. There was consistency of routine. Time in a lesson was allowed to apply learning – this was useful to avoid homework overload. It was possible to share students’ successes. The delegation of responsibility had worked very well. Close monitoring by heads of department was possible.

12. The provision and support of students in school had been fantastic – excellent work by TAs. Heads of year had worked hard to keep on top of the pastoral work.

13. A governor observed that there was a great deal to take forward to improve teaching and learning in the future. The chair said that it would be interesting to hear at future meetings how remote provision had crept into teaching and learning.

14. Remote provision would continue when school returned on 8 March. All teachers were to continue with it to accommodate absent pupils. A governor said that lessons might well be recorded and then put on line for these pupils.

15. Surveys had been carried out to canvass opinion across all 5 year groups (2 teaching groups were targeted) and teaching staff. In the staff survey, staff had been grateful to have been asked for feedback, in particular for their comments at the end of the survey. 30% of teachers had found remote provision very difficult, while 40% had adjusted well. Comments included that some staff had enjoyed the challenge, most had developed new skills, and the practical subjects were a particular challenge.

16. A 90% response had been achieved from the student surveys. Year 7 were very positive – it was noted that most said what they thought the school would want to hear. Examples of questions asked included, first, do you enjoy remote learning? To which 85% of year 7, 57% of year 9 and 45% of year 11 replied that they did. Another question was how much time did you spend in remote learning? 85% of year 7 spent 3-5 hours a day and 15% spent more than 5 hours; 47 % of year 9 spent 3-5 hours a day and 43% spent more than 5 hours a day; and 35% of year 11 spent 3-5 hours a day and 60% spent more than 5 hours a day. A third question asked if students learned as much using remote provision. 80% of year 7, 40%of year 9 and 25% of year 11 said that they had learned as much using remote provision as in live lessons. Finally, did students find it difficult to be away from school? 0% of year 7, 25% of year 9 and 35% of year 11 answered that they found it very difficult to be away from school. Marian Smith remarked that year 11 were missing out on the experience of last year at school and all that went along with that.

17. The headteacher observed that uncertainty about exam provision was a contributory factor. The chair stated with regard to the teacher survey that it was very positive that they were asked for their views. She thanked the senior member of the school staff for his very comprehensive report.

**ITEM7 – PUPIL PREMIUM**

18. A governor said these were exciting times for pupil premium. What constituted vulnerable children had changed as it had been identified that other factors might affect what caused disadvantage, eg no IT at home, shared room at home etc. He was reflecting on how best the school could use pupil premium in the future. Social, physical and emotional disadvantages needed to be considered along with academic disadvantage. The catch-up required by students as a result of lockdown might not be as extensive as was originally thought.

19. The school had employed 2 pastoral managers on fixed term contracts and they were developing relationships with the pupils with whom they would work when the students returned on 8 March. Two school counsellors were working via Teams which was proving to be better than nothing but not as good as face to face sessions. Some children were coming into school to receive their on-line counselling. The school nurse was a valuable resource. She was independent of the school and was in school weekly.

20 We could expect a lot of anxious children on their return on 8 March.

21. With regard to academic support, online tuition in maths had been provided – this may be extended to include science. The school had received 89 laptops via the DfE. Study support sessions were being organised. Year 10 were looking forward to 2022. The headteacher commented that the pupil premium cohort in year 11 had done well in the mock exams. The chair said that the committee might focus on pupil premium at the next meeting to see how things have moved on.

**ITEM 8 – ADDITIONAL COVID-19 FUNDING**

22. The headteacher introduced his COVID-19 Catch-Up plan which had originally been constructed in September 2020. The school would receive an additional £59k income in the school year and this was his plan for spending it to get the most out of it. Some needs had already been achieved, some were ongoing, and some would not be achieved as the children had not been in school since early January. We would be held to account as to how we had spent this additional funding.

23. Year 7 students had completed the CATS testing and scores had been communicated to parents. One to one tutors were being used in English and Maths, and he aimed to continue with these once school had resumed. Departments had received an additional 20% on top of their original budgets. IT hardware was being purchased to facilitate effective remote provision, and staff training was being conducted via twilight sessions. The head of year 9 had arranged for resilience training and support for his year group. This would be extended to cover years 8 and 10.

24. The heads of year had been under a great deal of pressure and as a result 2 temporary pastoral managers had been recruited to take some of the load off them.

**ITEM 9 – PARENTS’ EVENINGS**

25. A governor briefed the other governors that parents’ evenings for the foreseeable future would be held on Teams. Parents would communicate with form tutors rather than individual subject teachers. He noted that parents should not hear about poor attendance for the first time at a parents’ evening and they really should be involved earlier.

**ITEM 10 – OPTIONS**

26. A virtual year 9 options evening took place on 25 February. There were initial problems with parents accessing Teams via external email addresses but 2 members of staff in the finance office had worked very hard to create new email addresses for all parents so that the evening could take place. In the event, the evening went without a hitch, perhaps better than previous options evenings. Parents signed up for subjects in which their children were interested. Approximately 70 forms had been returned to date. The deadline for their return was 12 March

**ITEM 11 – PREPARATION FOR YEAR 11 GRADES**

27. The headteacher stated that it was very important to have a high level of monitoring and evaluation. This year would be teacher assessed grades using a range of evidence. The school would use the FFT benchmarking service again, as last year. Transparency was key, and the source of evidence needed to be shared with year 11 students so that they were aware on what their grades were based.

28. Grades must be consistent within departments but not necessarily between departments as different departments could use different sources of evidence. Grades would be based on what students knew on 18 June 2021 and the most recent and relevant evidence was to be used to justify the grades awarded. This was to be communicated to both year 11 students and their parents.

29. St Mary’s was in a strong position following the mock exams that had taken place before Christmas. The headteacher remarked that he was pleased with this year’s year 11, as were the heads of department. He felt they were an exceptional year 11 who were working hard.

30. Results would be announced on 12 August – earlier than was customary. All children had the right to appeal their grades, in contract with other years. There was a lot of work still to be done, but the headteacher fully expected very good, and well deserved, GCSE grades this summer.

31. The chair asked what the appeals process was. She was concerned that appeals could become very personal as the students would know who had allocated the grade. The headteacher responded, had the correct process been followed? If so, the appeal was to be sent to the respective exam board who would determine if the school had arrived at a reasonable judgement. Their verdict would be conveyed to both staff and student.

32. A governor suggested that it would be better if teachers did not suggest grades to students early on as they could be taken as gospel. The headteacher was also resisting pressure from the colleges to advise them of predicted grades in order to avoid conflict later.

**ITEM 12 – RETURN TO SCHOOL**

33. The headteacher advised governors that there was no right way to return all children to school. St Mary’s was aiming to get all children back by Wednesday 10 March, with all having been tested for the virus. Years 10 and 11 would return on 8 March, year 8 and 9 on 9 March and year 7 on 10 March. Students were required to undertake 3 tests, after which they would be issued home self-testing kits.

34. Should a student test positive, they would be isolated and sent home to self-isolate for 10 days. To date, 80% of parents had agreed for their child to be tested but there were some robust objectors to the test. The registration for the test was the slowest part of the process.

35. Year group ‘bubbles’ would be maintained. One member of staff had had COVID-19 but only worked with a small number of students so not many had to self-isolate. Wearing of face coverings would be mandatory. A whole staff Teams meeting had taken place on 25 February letting staff know what was going to happen. The headteacher hoped that we would be more or less back to normal on return after the Easter holidays. He outlined measures that were being taken to make the school a safe place in which to work and study.

**ITEM 13 – GOVERNANCE**

36. The chair advised governors that all committees had been tasked with looking at governance, essentially how they operated. She stated that the standards and curriculum committee met 4 times a year, with the first meeting early in September consisting solely of a review of the previous term’s exam results. The remaining 3 meetings followed a work plan. In addition, the committee considered attendance, pupil progress, and approved policies germane to standards and curriculum. In normal times, each meeting also had a presentation by a head of department on their department. Finally, the committee was responsible for scrutinising the school development plan, linking it with results and using it to determine which departments would benefit from having a link governor. She, as chair of the committee, reported to the termly meeting of the full governing body.

37. The chair asked committee members if they were content with their role, terms of reference and how the committee linked to the full governing body. The headteacher observed that the committee was very useful as it was currently operated, it kept on top of priorities, and that he felt that not a great of change was required. All other committee members were content with the committee as it was.

**ITEM 14 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

38. There was no other business. A governor said that he had been very impressed with the way the school staff had responded to the very challenging circumstances of the past year.

**ITEM 15 - ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

39. The next meeting will take place 6pm on Thursday 24 June 2021, virtual or otherwise to be determined nearer to the time.

**ITEM 16 – CLOSING PRAYER**

40. A governor closed the meeting with a prayer.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm.

Brendan Finlow

Bursar and Clerk to the Governing Body

March 2021

Certificate:

The above minutes are an accurate record of the meeting of the Standards and Curriculum Committee held on 4 March 2021.

Signed: ………………..… Chair June 2021

Distribution:

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