



Company No.: 08036395

MINUTES

Non-Confidential Minutes of the Eden Academy Board of Trustees, held via Zoom on Thursday 7th January 2021 starting at 6:30pm

Attendance:

Angela St. John	ASJ	Trustee
Barry Nolan	BN	Trustee (Chair) & Academy Member
Brian Eaton	BE	Trustee
Helen Milner	HM	Trustee
Jamie Clarke	JC	Trustee (Deputy Chair)
Karen Deacon	KD	Trustee
Mari Ladu	ML	Trustee
Mary Canavan	MC	Trustee
Vicky Collis	VC	Trustee
Also present		
Keith Holroyd	KJH	Governance and Policy Officer - Clerk
Susan Douglas	SD	CEO & Accounting Officer

The meeting was declared quorate

Ref.	Discussions and decisions	Action
37/2020-21	Welcome, introductions and apologies and the Board's acceptance or rejection for any absences There were no apologies, all Trustees being present.	
38/2020-21	Declaration of interests and offer/receipt of gifts or hospitality There were no new declarations.	
39/2020-21	Update on Covid and arrangements for the return of pupils SD updated Trustees on the current position with regard to the return to school. Testing An asymptomatic testing programme for secondary schools was announced by the DfE on the last day of the autumn term to cover:	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mass testing of all secondary school age children, including those in special schools; • Serial testing for those in close contact with a known Covid case; and • Weekly testing for staff. <p>The testing equipment and test packs were delivered on Mon 4th Jan. Cabinet and Heads took the decision not to bring secondary pupils back on the 1st day of term as the testing arrangements would not be in place; a position which was subsequently confirmed by DfE guidance. A similar decision was taken in respect of our primary-aged children, whilst we undertook testing of all staff at the start of term and considered available staffing levels. Where our schools which do not have access to tests, the local authority has agreed to provide these at their facility at the Civic Centre. All staff have now undertaken their first tests and there have been no positive results reported.</p> <p>The process of setting up testing centres has not been easy, requiring establishing the physical layout and training staff. SD confirmed that all our secondary schools (including all through schools with secondary provision) now have all the equipment and tests needed.</p> <p>Cabinet and Heads do not wish to implement the serial testing our young people if they come into close contact with a positive case. Their advice is that this could be traumatic for many of our pupils and may promote negative connotations for them between unpleasant clinical procedures and coming to school. These pupils will be advised to stay at home and will receive appropriate home-based provision.</p> <p>Tests are intended to be self-administered. This would not be possible for many of our young people and need to be undertaken by someone else. Current DfE advice is both unclear and concerning regarding the delivery of tests by non-clinical staff given the nature of the procedure. Northumberland CC and LB Hillingdon have agreed that this can be undertaken by school nurses. No such advice has been forthcoming from Cumbria CC and Pentland Field School do not have a school nurse. At Hexham Priory and Pentland Field Schools, pupil testing is therefore currently not happening until the advice or support arrangements are clarified; the usual range of symptomatic indicators continues to be used.</p> <p>Trustees discussed of issues around testing including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of staff that have been tested and the first round of results; • The period of time any children who have come into contact with someone following a positive test would remain at home receiving home-based provision; 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for parental/pupil consent for pupils both under and over the age of 16; and • The current position relating to non-clinical staff administering tests, the need for clinical training and risk assessment. <p>Returning pupils</p> <p>Trustees noted the DfE’s current position that all children with an EHCP are classed as ‘vulnerable’ and should therefore attend school and agreed that this definition of is problematic.</p> <p>Trustees also noted that the schools do not have sufficient staff to bring all pupils back safely since shielding has been reintroduced for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) staff under the latest national lockdown requirements and tighter restrictions apply to social distancing provisions for pregnant women over 28 weeks which would not be feasible in our schools. In addition there are staff currently self-isolating and others who are recovering from Covid as well as those off-sick for non-Covid reasons. It was noted that some unions had also been running a campaign to advise their members that they can refuse to return school due to health and safety concerns, quoting Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996. The Heads have received several such letters, all of which did though, state that the staff member concerned would be happy to work from home and many which said they would return to school if numbers on-site are reduced.</p> <p>On this basis, Cabinet and Heads had determined that it would not be possible to bring all children back into school safely, and to ensure that appropriate home-provision was made available to those who could not attend.</p> <p>Schools are also being as compassionate and supportive as possible with clinically vulnerable staff, or those living with CEV family members, and assigning these to the home-learning teams wherever possible.</p> <p>Shielding has been reintroduced for CEV children and we are taking a flexible approach to those families where children are living with family members and are therefore shielding. We are also seeking to take a compassionate line with families who may have significant other concerns about their children returning at this time.</p> <p>Trustees noted that all families have now been contacted and discussions have taken place to determine their position and wishes in terms of the children returning to school. Having assimilated this against staff availability, all of our schools are now able to offer some face-to-face education from next week for every family that wants it. Our most vulnerable children and those of keyworkers will come in full-time, and others will be offered a mix of in-school and at-home provision. This will also enable us to ensure that the at-home provision is of high quality and include tuition, therapy and access to assemblies.</p>	

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	<p>Trustees noted that the latest guidance, issued by the DfE at 4pm today (7th Jan), reflects and supports this position. Trustees were also informed that the union advice in regard to Section 44 notices has now been withdrawn.</p> <p>Trustees noted the exceptional performance of the schools in being able to provide the proposed level of face-to-face provision and discussed the take-up from parents which is significantly higher than immediately after the initial return from the spring lockdown in June. This reflects the level of parental and staff confidence in the safety of our schools and their operating protocols, which weekly testing of staff can only reinforce. It was anticipated that numbers of both staff and children in school will increase between now and half-term, subject to there being no significant numbers of positive tests. Trustees discussed the small tolerance in staff availability which dictates the balance between in-school and at-home provision. The position will be reviewed weekly.</p> <p>Support for families</p> <p>Trustees welcomed the fact that for the south schools, the food bank has been re-established and all our most needy families will receive a food parcel, whilst vouchers will be provided from the northern schools. Nationally funded food vouchers will again be available from next week for those eligible for free school meals.</p> <p>Vaccines</p> <p>Trustees discussed whether teaching staff are likely to be prioritised for the vaccine and noted that following a national petition, this will be debated in parliament next week; a position supported by several unions. The view of the sector body, the Confederation of School Trusts, is that should a vaccines rollout be made available for school staff, it prioritises special school and EYFS staff as they have the most hands on contact with children.</p> <p>Trustees discussed when our existing CEV staff might receive their first dose and noted that school nurses have been trained to deliver the vaccine.</p> <p>Trustees also considered the Trust's position on staff who may refuse the vaccine.</p> <p>Trustees agreed the arrangements at the schools in making in-school provision available based on a combination of staff availability, parental wishes, those children assessed as being our most vulnerable, children of key/critical workers, the wider health and safety of pupils and staff and the need to appropriately resource home-learning provision for pupils who are shielding or otherwise not in school. It was further agreed that BN would be kept appraised on the level of in-school provision and pupil attendance and that a further Board meeting would be convened in the event of any</p>	

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	<p>significant changes to these plans, such as a requirement for any full school closures as outlined in the decision-making framework previously agreed by the Board.</p> <p>Trustees thanked SD, Heads and Cabinet colleagues for the amazing work they have undertaken to enable children to return to school.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the support available to SD and the Heads and capacity at a senior level both within schools and the Cabinet. Trustees also discussed what might happen if we are required to provide provision over the February half-term and noted that some initial planning would now start to cover off any such requirement.</p>	

There are no confidential minutes for this meeting.

Meeting closed at 7:29pm

The Eden Academy Trust is a charitable company, limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales
Register number: 08036395
Registered office: Grangewood School, Fore Street,
Eastcote, Pinner HA5 2JQ

DECISION SUMMARY

Agenda item x/2020-21		Decision
39	Update on Covid and arrangements for the return of pupils	Trustees agreed the arrangements at the schools in making in-school provision available based on a combination of staff availability, parental wishes, those children assessed as being our most vulnerable, children of key/critical workers, the wider health and safety of pupils and staff and the need to appropriately resource home-learning provision for pupils who are shielding or otherwise not in school. It was further agreed that BN would be kept apprised on the level of in-school provision and pupil attendance and that a further Board meeting would be convened in the event of any significant changes to these plans, such as a requirement for any full school closures as outlined in the decision-making framework previously agreed by the Board.