

**The Conference Room, Thomas Hardy School – 13<sup>th</sup> May 2020 – 4.30pm**  
**Meeting of the Thomas Hardy School Governing Body**

**Present:** Garry Batt (Chair), Mike Foley (Headteacher), Tim Gallego, Racheal Turberville-Smith, Helen Arthy, Hugh Griffiths, David Grassby, Mike Foley

**In attendance:** Vicky Smyth (Clerk), Jan McKie (Finance Director), Jon Dean, Laura Cheney, Tim Ennion (Assistant Heads), Iain Cornell (Deputy Head)

**Apologies:** Kaye Chittenden – accepted      **Late Arrivals:** Tony Foot – arrived 9.15am tech issue

Item	Minutes	Action
<b>19/159</b>	<b>Declaration of Business Interests:</b> None	
<b>19/160</b> <b>19/160.1</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the meeting:</b> were approved and signed as an accurate record</p> <p><b>Matters arising:</b></p> <p>Mr Batt gave his thanks to Mr Foley, SLT and all the staff for all they have done through this difficult time. He also reassured Governors that despite a gap in meetings, governance has been taking place.</p> <p><b>19/117:</b> Update Governors as to who is taking over Ms Ullah’s responsibilities include arranging Governors Visits - Mr Foley informed Governors that Mr Hardinge has been appointed as Assistant Head and will take on the responsibilities of the School Improvement Plan, Self-Evaluation Form and liaison with Governors. Mr Foley commended his strong start in the role and Mr Batt congratulated Mr Hardinge on his appointment.</p>	
<b>19/161</b> <b>19/161.1</b> <b>19/161.2</b>	<p><b>Headteacher’s Report</b></p> <p><b>Governance Update</b> – Mr Foley explained that he had delayed the update in order to wait for more detailed government advice to come through.</p> <p><b>Vulnerable Children</b> – At present up to 20 pupils per day are attending school, with only 1-2 per day attending during the Easter holidays. The school has been open every day to take account of keyworker and vulnerable pupil needs, except the D-Day bank holiday. Mrs Chittenden is keeping track of vulnerable pupil contact and completes a weekly spreadsheet that is returned to the Local Authority. The spreadsheet provided by the LA at first, did not bear any resemblance to the understanding of the school as to whom is vulnerable. The school’s spreadsheet is more extensive and contact is mainly made via the guidance teams and college teams. The regular work with children’s services, the family partnership zone and on MyConcern carries on. Indeed, the level of traffic on MyConcern is normal. Members of the MAT have met once and Directors twice.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Turberville-Smith enquired as to the monitoring of MyConcern. Mr Foley confirmed it is monitored daily. A referral can be made, however, the school has not had to make any referrals. Mr Foley explained that the school has a link person within the Local Authority and within the Family Partnership Zone in a new system set up during lockdown. The school have noted 2 cases of domestic unease via the subject tutors, which have been passed on. The school is also offering some additional support to a sixth former.</i></p> <p><i>Q: Ms Turberville-Smith asked whether the nature of the concerns have changed. Mr Foley noted that there are concerns about pupils struggling with the work that has been set and coping with home learning. The school has dealt with online bullying as it would had the school had been operating normally. The school has also tried to provide practical help for those that need it in accessing the internet and with equipment; over 60 laptops have</i></p>	

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<p><b>19/161.3</b></p>	<p>been loaned out.</p> <p><b>Free School Meals</b> – Mr Foley opined that the hidden gem of this situation is the work that Laura Cheney, Karen Weir and Lou Thompson have been doing respecting food hampers for families entitled to free school meals. There are approximately 11% of pupils in school entitled to free school meals. The voucher scheme has experienced difficulties such as: vouchers not arriving, the website crashing, the vouchers not being processed with families embarrassed at having to leave food behind, as well as there being no safeguards to stop the vouchers being spent on the wrong things. The school opted to provide food hampers. Twelve schools have families collecting parcels each Thursday, as well as hampers being delivered all over the county to families that cannot collect. This has resulted in face-to-face contact with the most vulnerable families at a safe distance and has allowed staff to get to know them better. Mr Foley informed Governors of the contents of the hampers. He added that the pandemic had highlighted the digital divide. The school has applied to a new government scheme created as a result of this. Mr Holt attends the hamper collection point each Thursday to help families with technical problems with their own equipment or to prepare laptops for collection.</p> <p><i>Q: Mr Batt opined that this is an area Governors should continue to look at once the pandemic is over.</i> Mr Foley agreed. He stated that the IT team have been incredible.</p> <p><i>Governors asked that their thanks be recorded in the minutes.</i></p> <p>Dr Ennion added that the IT team had responded in such a quick way, to get services up and running that would normally take months. They have been working incredibly long hours and weekends.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy asked how many pupils are in receipt of free school meals.</i> Ms Cheney confirmed it was approximately 150. Ms Cheney added that 211 hampers are distributed. There are a few extras each week as she is aware of a few students that are in need but not in receipt of free school meals. There are a few sixth formers also in receipt of bursaries. About 100 of those receiving hampers are Hardyes' pupils.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy queried the difference between the two figures.</i> Ms Cheney commented that Ms Weir is doing a fantastic job but some families had refused the hampers. Mr Foley added that everyone who has needed or wanted a hamper has received one. Ms Cheney commented that one family received an e-gift card as they live too far away for a hamper.</p>	
<p><b>161.4</b></p>	<p><b>Setting of Work</b> – Mr Foley informed governors that setting of work has been unbelievably complex. Student feedback has been mixed, with some saying too much and some not enough. A team meeting takes place each Monday with SLT, the College Heads and the SENCO. Vulnerable pupils is the first item on the agenda. The feedback from parents is regularly monitored and there was a strong feeling last week that people were feeling really stretched. Tracking students and ensuring they have completed their set work is time consuming. Vicky Needham who works for the teaching school has been collecting and filtering excellent studies, research and examples of practice and sharing among staff. Mr Foley opined that this is something that must not be lost once the pandemic is over. Dr Ennion commented that teachers have working against a huge digital divide that has come to the forefront because of the pandemic. The staff are working in uncharted territory and have been</p>	

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refining and ditching practice that doesn't work. He added that accessibility from home is key. The first 2 weeks were difficult – pupils had inadequate broadband or were lacking the technology. Parents asked the school to keep it simple so staff reverted to email which is effective though not glamorous. Contact is once a week with explicit details of the tasks and when they should be returned. The services on the portal have been further developed by IT and it is being used by Year 12 as a virtual learning platform. The difficult aspect has been keeping an eye on mood and workload of staff too. Teams is now being used more widely, particularly by EforE. Online learning will never be an overall strategy due to the underlying issue of the digital divide. The gap would grow between those that have all the equipment and support and those that do not. The school have tried to pitch the remote learning to keep the gap as small as possible.

*Q: Ms Arthy enquired as to the staff.* Dr Ennion confirmed that staff are still spending the equivalent time as before during the working week. Once per week they email work to the student, keeping it simple. The school is allowing the different departments to set work and use tech in the way that is right for them. The expectations around feedback and marking is the focus at the moment.

*Q: Ms Arthy enquired as to staff welfare.* Dr Ennion confirmed that SLT stay in touch with middle leaders regularly. They ask for feedback respecting workload and this is shared with the wider team at the Monday meetings. Mr Foley added that normal line management continues. Ms Cheney added that everyone has to check in once a week to make sure they are ok and to feedback any work issues. Mr Cornell added staff that are ill, may have symptoms or are experiencing stress are tracked.

*Q: Ms Arthy asked if there had been any cases of COVID-19 among staff.* Mr Foley confirmed there had been one with others displaying symptoms but no confirmation. One other is in hospital at present.

*Q: Mr Gallego enquired as to the Year 11 pupils and what has been arranged for them.* Mr Foley explained that enrichment activities for those coming to sixth form in September have been circulated. The school has also been in touch with Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College regarding similar preparation tasks for their courses in September.

*Q: Mr Turberville-Smith asked how pupils that might be falling behind are being monitored.* Mr Foley informed Governors that the subject teachers have been asked to go through their students and to let tutors know if any are not completing their work. There may be a valid reason they are not able to complete work. Tutors will take this info and look for patterns. They will contact the students. More serious concerns will be passed to college leaders. If it is just an issue with one subject, this will be passed back to the subject tutor to follow up.

*Q: Ms Turberville-Smith enquired as to whether attendance and the completion of set work has been good.* Mr Foley confirmed it has been good in general. He opined that he himself has been guilty of piling on work in the first two weeks in the same way as teachers often over prepare for a supply lesson, which had been a problem almost across the board. Workload has been reviewed in line with feedback from students. He added that the problem is more likely to be overload than complaints from staff about non-completion of

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<p><b>19/161.5</b></p>	<p>work. Only 1 student is actively not completing work.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy enquired as to the mood of the pupils 7-8 weeks in and whether the novelty of lockdown is wearing off.</i> Mr Foley agreed that fatigue is setting in. For staff, everything takes 10 times longer than it usually would; staff recruitment was given as an example. The main feedback has been that pupils are overloaded, stressed out about falling behind and worried when they don't understand something. Work has been adjusted according to the feel. As soon as possible after the Monday meetings, a staff update is shared to keep staff informed.</p> <p><b>Setting of grades</b> - Mr Foley informed Governors that he had started the process early. The examining boards have said they will start collecting grades from 29<sup>th</sup> May. The school has set an internal deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> May. Staff have to give a pupil a grade, then rank them within the grade. For example, all those awarded a 5 grade will then be ranked in order. This will be the same for A Levels. A room has been set up in the sixth form for staff to work at a safe social distance. No coursework has been sent to the boards though coursework marks have been taken into account in the grading. SLT are trying to advise and guide but are uncertain as to what happens. The other issue is the transition of Year 11's to sixth form and Year 13's to university. He explained that the government have offered pupils a chance to re-sit in the autumn if they are unhappy with their results. Professor Griffiths explained to Governors what is happening at the university at which he works. His department has been given a larger quota. Some places are for foreign students that may not be able to come. Teaching will be online as will exams, which will be open book. They will be set questions, the answers for which cannot easily be looked up. At present, they are working on the assumption that students will not return physically till January. Mr Foley commented that the school is receiving a mixed picture with some universities planning for January return and some not.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy asked if the plans of students had changed because of the pandemic.</i> Mr Foley confirmed staff will ask the students this next week. He will also make sure that the school has a full team of staff to advise and guide on results day. Mr Cornell added that anecdotally, students' plans seem to be unchanged. Mr Foley highlighted that the experience will be very different; no freshers week for example.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy returned to the subject of retakes and sought clarification on the current position.</i> Mr Foley advised Governors that the government position of retakes for those unsatisfied with their grades still stands, however the exam boards are unhappy as they were not consulted. There were several factors that still needed consideration – 1) how many retakes will there be – will it be economically viable to run a full programme of exams? 2) where will the boards get the examiners - they are usually teachers who will be teaching at that time of the year 3) Schools – if the schools are socially distancing their pupils, where will they fit those wishing to retake exams? The exam boards are also asking for any losses to be underwritten by the government.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy asked whether there would be a Year 14 or whether the school will be at its limit.</i> Mr Foley stated that Year 14 is always on a case by case basis. The school will be at capacity but he is always happy to talk to students and work on the basis of need. Mr Gallego commented on the impact of the</p>	
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<p><b>19/161.6</b></p>	<p>virus to Year 13s that might have wanted to take a gap year – they cannot travel and there is no work, particularly in hospitality.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Turberville-Smith enquired as to when the results would be released.</i> Mr Foley confirmed the school has been given the same two Thursdays in August as usual for results.</p> <p><b>Plans for re-opening the school</b> – Mr Cornell informed Governors of the two levels at which SLT have been planning, one for next half term and the other for September. Clare Noble has been working with Year 8's on transition and made 85 phone calls yesterday. The guidance from the DfE was more relevant for primary schools. Small groups for Year 12 is possible but Year 10 will be more difficult to manage, especially when taking into consideration the added complications of buses and corridors. A risk assessment was received from the LA yesterday upon which SLT will start work on Monday. The guidance is minimal and the unions are telling their members not to engage with school re-opening at all.</p> <p><i>Q: Mr Grassby asked if there was different advice for Year 4 and Year 8 to take account of the system.</i> Mr Foley stated that the LA are going to go back to central government respecting the three-tier system. He has a meeting this afternoon with Rachael Brown, Catherine Smith and Saira Sawtell to discuss re-opening. Mr Cornell noted that the government had thought about the three-tier system initially, but proceeded without separate advice.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy queried further the impact of the advice from the teachers on the school and asked whether all teachers are part of the union.</i> Mr Foley commented that the school needs a week to allow the guidance to sink in and that he is keen not to react to what is in the papers. If teachers were to refuse to return to work on the advice of unions, this would constitute industrial action and there is a process that they would need to go through to allow this to happen. The school will work through things sensibly and Mr Foley asserted that he is available for staff to contact him with their worries and concerns. He has made it clear that schools will need forewarning of an opening date to allow for staff training before they return. He noted it will be understandably difficult for those that haven't been in work for many weeks. The school is in a slightly better position as Year 11 and Year 13 would not normally be in school at this time of the year.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy enquired as to the number of staff with health conditions.</i> Mr Foley stated that two staff members have confirmed that they have people at home that must shield. Mr Cornell added that there are a large number of staff with underlying health conditions such as diabetes or asthma. Ms Turberville-Smith commented that there are those that receive shielding letters who must shield, however, there are others that have factors that put them at greater risk such as heart disease, diabetes, men over 50, those from ethnic minority backgrounds etc. As a GP, she has experienced negotiations with employers – considering sick notes for those with risk factors though not advised to shield in employment where social distancing cannot be practiced. Mr Foley noted that it is very difficult to properly social distance in school and some pupils feel as if they are immune and it is not their illness. Ms Turberville-Smith advised that the school should split into smaller teams or 'bubbles' to reduce risk if at all possible. Mr Foley confirmed that he and Mr Cornell are looking at this. There will be a focus on hygiene with hand gel</p>	
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dispensers in every classroom, all taps and dryers have been checked and repaired if necessary and signs to remind of handwashing, not touching face and catching coughs and sneezes will be displayed throughout the school. Ms Turberville-Smith advised that social contacts should be limited. PPE and masks are still in short supply - cloth masks are of limited use and surgical masks are only useful for 20 minutes; if a person is not confident in the fitting and wearing of them, they can increase the amount that people touch their face. Keeping a distance of two metres and frequent handwashing are still the best defences against the spread of COVID-19. The 2m distance is most effective in face-to-face contact rather than passing in corridors. Mr Foley thanked Ms Turberville-Smith and noted the needs of the physically disabled students, which result in close physical contact being unavoidable. The school has its own masks, aprons and gloves but whether this will be sufficient is something they are still working on with the LA for reassurance. One child has already confirmed that they will not be returning to school as they are too vulnerable.

*Q: Mr Conibear referred to the use of video conferencing and whether this could be utilised for vulnerable pupils.* Mr Foley confirmed that lessons have been recorded so that pupils can listen when needed. Podcasts have been more successful than live lessons, which haven't worked across school.

*Q: Ms Arthy commented whether it was down to the individual teachers to determine the modalities of teaching.* Mr Foley stated that it is down to the different departments. Live lessons work well in maths for example, where Mr Cornell takes a problem and works it out on the 'board' via screen share. The school is encouraging innovation and experimentation.

*Q: Ms Arthy asked if live lessons are mainly happening with Year 12's for example via teams.* Dr Ennion explained that research shows it works better with smaller groups. Sixth formers also tend to have better tech at home.

*Q: Mr Grassby enquired as to the number of staff in school.* Mr Foley confirmed that the SLT, College Leaders and Teaching Assistants had been in school on a rota to support pupils. Some canteen staff had been in preparing the food hampers and some office staff. All other staff had been working from home. Mr Grassby referred to those staff that had been coming in to grade their students and noted this might help to reduce the fear of return. Mr Foley agreed that there is some fear among staff and that there will be a staff briefing and training at least a week before the school reopens to disseminate the new rules. The school will need to get staff acclimatised again.

**19/161.7 Staffing** – Mr Foley informed the Board that there are adverts out at the moment. Two maths teachers, two science teachers, two PE teachers and one business teacher have been recruited. He wishes to reassure staff that normal life is going on. There is a danger we will focus only on the virus. He advised Governors that Katie Stafford has been appointed an Assistant Head at Magna School in Poole and will leave at the end of the year. Mr Foley stated that he is aware that staff and Governors will want to celebrate the contribution made to the school by Katie, Mel, Kaye and all the other staff that have moved on during this difficult time, when it is appropriate to do so.

*Q: Mr Batt commented on the gap left in sixth form.* Mr Foley reassured Mr Batt that the Head of Sixth Form role has been shared with Mr Nicholls for some time and that he has no immediate concerns in this regard.

*Q: Ms Arthy highlighted the importance of Ms Chittenden's role and asked if Mr*

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	<p><i>Foley would be recruiting externally or promoting within school.</i> Mr Foley confirmed that the post would be advertised as soon as possible and an appointment made by the end of term for an Assistant Head with responsibility for SEN and Inclusion. The four guidance leaders are trained to the same level as Mrs Chittenden. He stated that there has been lots of succession planning carried out and it is testament to Ms Chittenden, the tight ship she is leaving behind.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy enquired as to SEN in light of Ms Orchard leaving.</i> Mr Foley explained that Elaine Hurley is a trained SENCO and has stepped up to replace Ms Orchard. A new deputy will be appointed and also trained as a SENCO.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy asked if the SENCO will cover safeguarding.</i> Mr Foley stated that he would want to appoint the last Assistant Head before deciding which member of SLT will take this responsibility. Mr Batt commented on the length of service of Ms Chittenden. Mr Foley confirmed that she is the longest serving member of staff at 36 years. Governors agreed this is something that should be celebrated.</p>	
<p><b>19/162</b></p>	<p><b>School Improvement Plan</b> – Mr Foley informed Governors that some priorities had been set at the last Monday meeting and there will be a draft ready for the next meeting. Mr Hardinge informed Governors that he had looked at a plan for the next 3 years rather than on a year-to-year basis. He has been in communication with the curriculum leaders, department heads and other staff. He is sticking closely to the points in the plan, linking whole school priorities better to individual department priorities. Mr Hardinge added that he is in conversation with Vicky Needham and Dr Ennion in order to tie the SIP into CPD and performance management more closely. He feels it is better to start much earlier so it can be circulated to staff before the start of term in September.</p> <p><i>Q: Ms Arthy raised the importance of the Governor walkabout visits and how helpful and valuable they are in helping Governors connect with what is going on in school. She asked Mr Hardinge to consider to how they can continue virtually or in any other way at this time.</i></p>	
<p><b>19/163</b>  <b>19/163.1</b>   <b>19/163.2</b></p>	<p><b>Finance and Operations Update</b></p> <p><b>Budget Monitoring</b> – Ms McKie informed Governors that the THS budget was looking healthy before COVID-19. The predicted in-year deficit of c£140k was forecast to reduce to £65k by the end of the year. However, there are many things related to COVID-19 that have interfered with this: loss of canteen income, loss of lettings income, extra IT costs, £18k in alcohol gel and dispensers to name a few. Furlough cannot be used as the school is still getting their full monthly funding from the government. She explained that the possibility of recompense for additional costs relies, at present, on the 20/21 budget position. However, as the school is likely to have a surplus budget next year, we are barred from applying.</p> <p><i>Q: Mr Conibear enquired as to the increase in income.</i> Mrs McKie explained that the school will be getting more money from the government next year therefore, is not allowed to add to the resulting surplus by claiming expenses for the additional cost of the pandemic. This also seems to be a position applicable to MATs so it may mean that none of the schools in the MAT will be able to apply.</p> <p><b>Contracts and Purchasing</b> – Mrs McKie informed Governors that the tender</p>	

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<p><b>19/163.3</b></p>	<p>for the reprographics contract is currently out with 11 bids to work through.</p> <p><b>Budget 2020-21</b> – Mrs McKie reminded Governors that the school is already aware of an increase in funds due to the increase in sixth form pupil numbers, However, the difference in funds between 19-20 and 20-21 will be approximately £1.1million due to additional funding from the government. She asked Governors to bear in mind that the pandemic may affect funding further into the future. Mr Foley added that now the school is carrying such a significant surplus, it means it is able to consider spending the funds on some of the long-standing projects that need investment. Mrs McKie noted that one month’s salaries in reserves is the advice for MATs from the auditors. Mr Foley advised Governors that staff laptops is an example of where money can be spent. The Theatre refurbishment is also a consideration, however, the carry forward must not be lost.</p> <p><i>Q: Mr Batt commented that it would be easy to diminish the surplus but the school must be mindful of the future.</i> Governors thanked Mrs McKie and the Finance team for their diligence. Mr Foley thanked the Governing Board for supporting his strategy.</p>	
<p><b>19/163.4</b></p>	<p><b>Investments</b> – Mrs McKie advised Governors of the current position of investments. She commented that moving to a Flagstone portfolio had been beneficial and worthwhile.</p>	
<p><b>19/164</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business</b> None</p>	

**Action Log**

Person	Action	Timing	Outcome/Update
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