

ACTION POINTS

MIDDLESBROUGH VIRTUAL GOVERNING BOARD (WEBEX MEETING)

MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19 MAY 2020

ACTION POINT	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Care Staff, Foster Team and LAC manager be invited to the Webinar training tomorrow, 20 May 2020.• Mrs V Banks and Mr S Williams link into commissioning with a view to steering people in the right direction.	VB/SW
2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mrs V Banks outline statement be appended to the improvement report.	VB

MIDDLESBROUGH VIRTUAL GOVERNING BOARD (WEBEX MEETING)

MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19 MAY 2020

PRESENT:

Mrs V Banks, Acting Virtual School Headteacher, Mr B Cooper, Executive Member Social Care and Education, Mrs H Souter, Special School Representative; Mrs E Graham, Carer Representative, Mr T Dunn, Director Education (Chair), Mr R Brown, Director Prevention and Partnership, Mrs W Kelly, Headstart Program Manager and Mr S Williams, Head of LAC

OFFICIAL: Mrs C Hogarth, Governor Development Service

Meeting Commenced: 3.30pm

Meeting Closed: 4.50pm

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

RESOLVED that the apologies submitted on behalf, Mrs C Cannon, Ms A Crawshaw, Mrs J French, Mrs H Malbon and Mrs N Walker be approved by the board.

2. **COVID 19 UPDATE**

2.1 **Virtual School Response**

On Friday, 20 March 2020 due to Covid 19 all schools were 'closed' across the UK. Schools however were left open for vulnerable children and children of Key workers. Virtual school members acknowledged the fantastic work of staff in ensuring schools remained open.

Creating and reviewing of Personal Education Plans (PEPs) became particularly difficult as assessing attainment and progress in school became impractical. The Virtual School recognised that PEPS were placing an unnecessary burden on schools at this time and a decision was made to suspend all PEPs until further notice.

However to ensure students still received quality education and emotional support the Virtual school has worked with schools, social workers, the SEND team and foster carers to ensure each child has an education offer and safety plan.

2.2 **Safeguarding Children**

After the DfE issued guidance on vulnerable children attending school during COVID 19, the LA then took a decision to undertake safety plans on all vulnerable children. Information was also gathered from all schools regarding the support they were offering and information was recorded directly onto the children's electronic records to inform the safety planning process. 2700 have been completed with more currently being generated. Schools had registered problems with the time taken in receiving of and also on the quality of information of some of the reports. To address this additional support has been put into place to send these out to all schools securely. In addition bespoke coaching and mentoring from strengthening Practice for Social Workers has been commissioned to

WHO

GDO

improve the quality of their safety plans.

The completion of safety plans has been monitored on a daily basis, along with the performance regarding social work visits to ensure that all children receive the appropriate contact from their social workers at this time. Data is analysed on a daily basis and the restrictions suggested by the government in terms of care planning has been strictly adhered to.

With the temporary suspension of PEPs, the Transition plan would be looked at again on 1 June 2020.

The Board were asked whether they were satisfied with the information within the report and agreed that they were. At the beginning, with keeping children safe within Covid in mind, 1300 plans were completed for vulnerable children and these were tightly managed. Those children with social workers commenced their safety plans with multi agency input. With Covid 19 there were more risks and foci identified and numbers in need of a safety plan increased, and are increasing rapidly. There was an issue in not being able to send plans out to school within set timescales. What was also highlighted that workers were not used to sending plans out and that the quality in some of the safety plans were lacking. As discussed previously; this was being addressed

The fact that it was possible to do this many plans was an achievement in itself and this was acknowledged by the Virtual Board.

What is the difference? It is in the detail and interventions? They work well together and provide imperative information.

The links cascade into the school plan ensuring this is passed to social worker. Schools have provided fantastic good quality information. To improve this further quality teacher training has been developed and a bespoke webinar has been arranged.

Within the Inclusion and Specialist Support Services, individual 'lead professionals' (LPs) have been allocated to each setting with a child/young person with an EHCP to quality assure risk assessment produced by settings in dialogue with families and the LA. This relates to current delivery of EHCP either in settings or virtual provision out of setting/at home but does not replace the work done by social workers on social care/safety plans. There is now weekly contact with settings on the provision for each child/young person with an EHCP to monitor whether there are any issues or difficulties which need to be flagged in terms of positive working between services. More recently, where lead professionals were already attached to a setting, LPs have commenced a similar process for LACs without EHCPs. The aim is that, in addition to the safety plans produced by social care staff, there is also a robust risk assessment done, quality assured and monitored for each child/ young person.

Some schools had expressed that during Covid they were being flooded with information and by temporarily suspending PEPs hopefully they would feel less bombarded. What is important is ensuring that if a child/young person was not in school that they are being seen and that there is absolute confidence that they are safe and being looked after.

2.3 Designated Teacher (DTs) Training

The Virtual School has the statutory duty to deliver teacher training ensuring that those responsible for promoting the educational achievement of looked after and previously looked after children.

Since the last meeting there has been one DT forum which was well attended. Training included at this forum were:-

- Pupil Premium Plus
- SMART targets
- Exclusions

The forum had been successful; good practice had been shared and some interesting healthy information had been disseminated regarding pupil premium SMART targets. The aim was to adapt and overcome attitudes of staff and it was interesting to see the exciting ideas that came from this session.

Due to the Covid 19 a bespoke webinar training session, in conjunction with Sheila Mulvaney, will be delivered for all DTs on Wednesday 20 May 2020 ensuring DTs are up to date and aware of responsibilities at this time. Take up of this has been good, with 36 places being booked. This webinar will be recorded, a copy of which will be made available to anyone not being able to attend the training.

The booking of 36 places for the webinar was a real success during this time and staff were commended for the hosting and promotion of this event. The areas to be covered are always looked at closely and feedback from the pupil improvement plans always continue in the background.

Have we any Social Care staff been invited? This could be a good training opportunity for Staff. This could also be extended to Foster Team and LAC manager as well as Social Care Staff and Designated Teachers. ***Is there a limit on numbers?*** No if need be there is capacity to facilitate separate meetings.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Social Care Staff, Foster Team and LAC manager be invited to the Webinar training tomorrow, 20 May 2020.
- (ii) Mrs V Banks and Mr S Williams link into commissioning with a view to steering people in the right direction.

Attendance stands at 10% with the vast majority of vulnerable children/young people being at home and not on school site. It is critical therefore that members of the virtual school Board are aware of and have an understanding of what is being done for vulnerable and also have confidence that the children and young people are being seen, looked after and being kept safe.

2.4 Foster Carers Support

During recent communication with parents/carers it became apparent that many are feeling isolated and worried - they are not doing enough to support their child's education.

In order to support parents/carers during these unprecedented times weekly Educational Support Sessions were arranged for everyone to share their concerns and provide an opportunity for Virtual School to support them and, most importantly, share the experiences and resources on how to approach home education and how education by stealth can often be the best way forward.

One governor (Carer Representative) spoke on how she personally had found this support really useful. As part of this, she had received a phone call asking if she was alright and whether she needed anything which she had appreciated.

One message to come out from ringing foster carers was the fact that they felt isolated. They had never undertaken home schooling before and needed support. In consequence, virtual sessions had been arranged. A weekly forum had also been arranged and although currently there had not been much uptake, through word of mouth, numbers were expected to rise.

Virtual School Board wished to highlight the fact the work undertaken in ensuring Carers were being adequately supported and encouraged in supporting the children in their care.

Will it be useful if send some resilience tools? That would be really useful – Currently there are limited resources and anything would be appreciated.

RESOLVED that Mrs W Kelly, Headstart Program Manager, send out resilience tools to help support children/young people with their education during Covid 19.

2.4 Tuition Provision

To ensure students have the best support possible with their education the Virtual School has been using an on line education platform called Bramble which is an interactive online classroom allowing for direct teaching to take place. It can be accessed via computer, laptop, iPad or tablet.

Each student has a bespoke programme of education and staff can continue to build relationships, carry out safeguarding checks and help bridge educational gaps.

Virtual School has the capacity to deliver 135 hours direct learning per week.

As of Thursday 7 May 2020 we are delivering 80 hours (16 young people) of education to those children who are most vulnerable and those who live in care homes.

Phase two is to support our year 10 cohort by delivering 60 hours of direct education per week (12). Phase 2 has also been extended to Year 5 (25 hours).

Virtual school has been working in conjunction with schools offering additional interventions.

Feedback from children/young people has been very positive and this was shared with members. Overall children agreed that this was a good way to work. One positive to come out of this is one young person (Y10) who previously had been disengaged from education

is looking forward to returning to school.

Discussion followed on the good work in place to ensure students have the best support possible with their education and wished to commend staff for everything undertaken to achieve this.

The feedback was excellent –could this be used as a positive example of work undertaken by Virtual School to meet the needs of children/young people?

RESOLVED that Mrs V Banks outline statement be appended to the improvement report.

2.5 Laptop Provision

The government had pledged that every child with a social worker would have a laptop which in Middlesbrough is a significant number of laptops. In theory all LAC in foster care will have access to a laptop as part of the agreement with the LA. In reality three to four children may have access to one shared iPad or laptop which is not ideal. Currently the Virtual School is looking at a reasonable and fair assessment for distribution of the laptops driven by need.

Governing Board's approval was sought for the rationale for the distribution of the Laptops and they confirmed that they were happy with this proposal.

2.6 Distribution of books, study materials and on line learning resources

In line with attachment aware trauma informed practice and the legal and moral duty to promote education, the Virtual School has made every effort to ensure children and young people feel remembered and loved, especially during this time of increased isolation. Every child in the care of Middlesbrough Local Authority has received a parcel containing stationery, a reading book and a letter.

One foster carer shared the joy her young person experienced in receiving a personalised letter and parcel and in unpacking the parcel of pencil case, contents and books.

Educational resource packs have also been created accessible via the Council website with everything from Early Years to Year 11. There are also resources for foster carers to help them deliver home education.

It is also pleasing to see that phrase 'Safe and loved' The children are loved and maybe this is not expressed as much as we should.

Discussion followed on the importance of having the right writing materials to be able to undertake schoolwork. The hub had taken great pleasure in making up the pencil cases which had contained everything they would need and more.

To engage and encourage children in learning, innovative ideas are constantly being thought of by the Virtual school. One proving particularly successful was the running of a weekly competition where students are asked to

1. Go to www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize and register their details to create a Bitesize account.
2. Pick a topic, complete the tasks and take the quiz at the end.
3. When they get all the answers right, take a screen shot and email it to Virtual School.

Every Friday names are entered into a prize draw.

2.6 Attendance

Risk assessments are in place and just like in school if children/young people are not in school everything is done to ensure they are safe

Overall attendance

- The average attendance was calculated by using the total number of days students could have attended school (1668 days) and how many days were actually attended (241). Resulting in an average attendance of 14.45%
- Out of the 417 students, 68 attended an education establishment (16.3%)
- 4 students attended for 1 day per week
- 7 students attended for 2 days per week
- 5 students attended for 3 days per week
- 52 students attended for 4 days per week
- Key Stage 1 had the highest attendance 26.02%
- **Attendance for Y11 was 15.38% - It was nice to see Y11 continuing in education.**

Does the 15.38% represent children online? - No - Out of the 39 students, six attended an education establishment (15.38%). All six students attended for four days per week.

Post 16 Cohort is the most vulnerable group and although as a group we know that NEETS and Adult Learning is involved – further information is needed to be confident that their needs are being met.

Is LCS updated? During this time it seems prudent to record any contact with a vulnerable child as further evidence that the child has been seen.

There are new guidelines awaited on Post 16 and although there are strong rumours on the remit and what this looks like, until the guidance is received concrete plans cannot be set.

Headteachers have raised their concerns regarding Y6/Y7 transition about what is happening to reassure children as normal arrangement cannot happen. What is happening is work using the virtual platform, introducing teachers, introducing friendship groups, virtual tour of schools etc. LAC will be provided with uniform and timetables.

All children/young people will receive a transition pack to help them transitioning back into school after Coronavirus lockdown.

One governor gave thanks for the informative report and confirmed that he had more confidence in answering questions and challenges on what is being doing for the vulnerable children/young people in Middlesbrough and asked whether the report could be made public so that everyone is aware of the very good work that is going on.

The Chair on behalf of the Governing Board registered their thanks for the excellent and concise report on the work of the Virtual school which clearly stated the Virtual School's response to Covid 19.

The Board also wished to record the value placed on the Risk Management work undertaken by Mrs V Banks.

The Chair opened the meeting to any further questions and any challenge governors may have following which it was

RESOLVED that the Virtual School Governing Board were satisfied with the Schools response to Covid 19.

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items for consideration under any other business.

4. APPROVAL OF DOCUMENTS FOR INSPECTION

RESOLVED that the agenda, supporting documents and draft minutes of the current meeting (when approved by the Chair) be made available electronically for inspection in school.

5. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that the next meeting of the Virtual School Governing Board be held in July 2020 date and time to be confirmed.

6. THANKS

The Chair recorded her thanks to Governors for their attendance.

Meeting Closed: 4.50pm

Approved by the Governing Body on _____ (date)

Signature (Chair) _____ Name _____