

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE ELIOT BANK AND GORDONBROCK PRIMARY SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Governing Body of the Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock Primary Schools Federation held on Thursday, 18 June 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT

Mr T. Bremner	
Ms B. Eadie	
Mr P. Fidel	Chair
Ms M. Gilmore	Executive Headteacher
Mr C. Hale	Vice Chair
Mr T. Hardy Hall	
Mr P. Jenkins	
Ms H. Keyte	
Ms K. Knowles	
Mr B. Stephen	
Ms T. Stickland	
Ms M. Worthington	

Also present:

Ms M. Barry	Deputy Headteacher, Gordonbrock
Ms A. Carter	Senior Admin Officer, Eliot Bank – for item
Ms N. Connelly	Deputy Headteacher, Gordonbrock
Ms S. McAllister	Federation Business Manager – for item
Ms L. McGuire	Deputy Headteacher, Eliot Bank
Mrs A. Osmond	Deputy Headteacher, Eliot Bank
Mrs K. Walsh	Head of School, Eliot Bank
Ms J. Wright	Head of School, Gordonbrock
Mrs J. Woods	Clerk

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the meeting took place remotely via Zoom.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / WELCOME TO PROSPECTIVE NEW GOVERNOR

Apologies for absence were received with consent from Ms Quinn.

All governors in attendance confirmed their identity and that they were participating from a secure location, and were reminded of the need to ensure confidentiality during the meeting.

Governors were reminded that they must declare conflicts and pecuniary interest before items were discussed, and must withdraw from the meeting while the item was under discussion. If there had been a change to a governor's declarable interests, the governor concerned must complete and return a new Register of Interests form.

Governors were pleased to welcome Mr Paul Jenkins, a prospective new co-opted governor, to the meeting.

2. REMOTE PARTICIPATION POLICY

In order that entire meetings could take place virtually during the COVID-19 outbreak, *the Chair had taken action under the urgency provisions to amend the Remote Participation at Meetings Policy*. A copy of the revised Policy had been circulated to all governors.

3. TO AGREE THE BUSINESS FOR THE MEETING

The order in which items were to be discussed and those items which would be considered as urgent business was agreed.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS AND MATTERS ARISING

(a) To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2019

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2019 be approved as a correct record.

(b) Matters arising

(i) Page 3, Minute 6(e) – Governance peer review model

The governance peer review had not been a priority during the closure, but Ms Gilmore said that she thought Kilmorie, one of the peer review schools, would still be a potential school to work with, and this would be followed up in due course, once the pandemic was over.

(ii) Page 7, Minute 8(a) – Accessibility Policy and Procedures

The Accessibility Policy was available on the websites for both schools. The Policy had last been reviewed in May 2019, so would next be due for review in May 2022.

4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

(a) 2019/20 budget and three year projection

Ms McAllister and Ms Carter were welcomed to the meeting for presentation of the budget plans.

The three year budget plans had been circulated to governors, together with the revenue and capital summary analysis sheets for approval. Ms McAllister reminded governors that the Resources Committee would usually scrutinise the budgets in detail and had in the past been authorised to approve the budget plans, but changes to the local authority's Scheme of Delegation now required the budget plans to be approved by the full Governing Body. Because of the pandemic and lockdown, the Resources Committee had not met this term.

Ms McAllister had met Vaughan Williams from Lewisham Finance the previous week, and the budget had been discussed in detail. Although an in year deficit was predicted for Eliot Bank for 2020/21, Mr Vaughan was happy with the budget plans and the level to which every cost code had been scrutinised, and had agreed that it would be acceptable for the budgets to be submitted following this meeting, which was slightly later than the deadline of 12 June.

Eliot Bank

Governors noted that an in year deficit had been predicted originally for 2019/20, but the financial year had ended with an in year surplus of £23,905. This gave an overall surplus of £475,737 which had been carried forward to 2020/21, and had helped to absorb some of the loss of £217,000 in funding as a result of the two bulge classes not being recycled, which would be a year on year reduction. This equated to 8% of the budget, which was a huge amount, and the carry forward had provided a valuable cushion, meaning that it had not yet been necessary to make major cuts.

Ms McAllister informed governors that if all budgets were spent in full, there would be an in year deficit of £206,939 at the end of 2020/21. If the school had not been affected by the reduction in funding, and the loss of lettings income from the after school club and breakfast club, an in year deficit would have been predicted. However, there would still be an overall end of year surplus of £268,798. Ms McAllister pointed out that the school never spent all of the budget, and she was optimistic that it would be possible to reduce the in year deficit during the year. If no further savings were made, the budget would go into deficit by £51,457 at the end of 2021/22, but if all expenditure remained static, the school would be facing a potential deficit of £477,708 the following year. Ms McAllister stressed the need to be mindful of the situation and the need to take early action, but Vaughan Williams had been very positive about the budget plan; he clearly not

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been concerned about Eliot Bank and had recognised that the school had a good buffer with the surplus.

Mr Fidel reminded governors that discussions had begun at the beginning of the academic year on the long term issues facing the schools, and had agreed that a working party should begin to look at the finances. Although the current position was not a surprise, the budget was not as well balanced as it had appeared to be last year. It was **RESOLVED** that membership of the working party should comprise Ms Gilmore, Mr Bremner, Mr Fidel, Ms McAllister, and Ms Carter, with the purpose of drilling down into the budget further and to look in more detail at the suggestions made by Vaughan Williams where further savings could be made before the November budget update.

Mr Hale asked if there was any clear indication of the impact of reconfiguring the school to meet the COVID-19 guidelines and the loss of income incurred. Ms Carter said that schools had not yet been told how much they would be reimbursed for these costs, but money had been set aside to cover additional expenses and an update would be given to the next meeting. Ms McAllister said that the Department for Education had indicated that schools would be able to recover the costs incurred as a result of the pandemic, but schools with healthy balances may not be reimbursed. The approximate additional costs were currently £5,000. Mr Hale expressed disappointment that schools which were well managed and had been prudent with their budgets could be penalised by the government in this way.

Ms Gilmore reminded the Governing Body that decisive action had been taken at Eliot Bank in terms of the budget. This had included making one of the nursery nurses redundant last year and reducing the Nursery to just one class. And the family support worker who had left had not been replaced. The school had been looking proactively at all ways of reducing costs, such as reducing teaching assistants, and although the teaching assistant provision had been reduced, the cuts had not been as significant as in many other schools. The Inclusion Team at Eliot Bank now comprised the SENDCO, learning mentor, and three non class based teaching assistants, which mirrored the team at Gordonbrock, but Ms Gilmore said that this was an area which could be considered further moving forward.

Mr Bremner pointed out that there had been previous discussion at the Resources Committee about what was important to the schools and what must be safeguarded. He was mindful that the forecast for the next financial year at Eliot Bank was always a concern but the school always managed to end the year in a better position than predicted, and he congratulated Ms McAllister for her prudent management of the budget. Vaughan Williams had suggested a list of areas for consideration for budget reductions, but these had all been items that were already under discussion, such as Federation staffing, sharing of resources across the Federation etc.

Gordonbrock

Ms Carter informed governors that the spreadsheet which had been circulated had been corrupted and the balances had been incorrect. There had been a surplus of £988,639 at the end of 2019/20, which would see the school in good stead for the next three years. It was predicted that there would be an in year deficit of £197,000 at the end of 2020/21 with a surplus of £791,000. The surplus would reduce to £530,000 the following year, with a surplus of £139,000 for the third year, with an in year deficit of £391,000. Ms Carter pointed out that the level of staffing had not been reduced much at Gordonbrock so far, and stressed that the school must look at reductions by the third year, and must be able to move to managing within the budget. The proportion of the budget spent on staffing was currently 79%, which was within the guidelines. This would rise to 82% and 85% over the next two years, which would be slightly above the recommended level. However, it was likely that savings could be made on the staffing budget through natural wastage; there were a number of senior teachers on the upper pay scale, and at such time as any staff left, they would be replaced with more junior staff.

It was noted that Gordonbrock would also lose income as a result of COVID-19 from the Nursery, breakfast club, and after school club.

Vaughan Williams had said that it was not necessary for schools to include contingency budgets this year, which had been around £40,000 in the case of Gordonbrock.

Ms Eadie asked whether there would be any savings as a result of COVID-19 as well as loss of income and additional expenses, for example in the use of supply staff. Ms Carter said that the school was still using supply staff, but not to the same extent. Because only 12 children could be included in each bubble, two or three times the usual number of staff were needed for each year group which would be back at school during the summer term, and some staff were still shielding, the use of some supply staff was continuing. Ms Gilmore said that the schools had continued to pay the long term supply staff who would have been likely to return in September during the period of the partial closure, because it had been agreed that it would be morally wrong not to do so, and these staff had now returned to work.

With regard to the future recruitment of teachers, Ms Gilmore said that the local authority always encouraged schools to look at the number of teachers on the upper pay scale and to consider recruiting NQTs. However, the schools in the Federation were both so successful because they had a large number of experienced and strong members of staff. They had really stepped up during the pandemic, and had been the backbone of the school over the last few months. Ms Gilmore stressed that the teachers on the upper pay scale really earned their pay increases, and it was difficult to balance the number of senior, experienced staff against more junior and less experienced teachers. **Mr Fidel agreed that the more successful schools largely depended on the amount and quality of work that was put in by experienced staff, and he agreed that it was a strength of the Federation that the schools were able to retain and train staff.**

After careful consideration of the documentation provided, it was **RESOLVED** that the budget plans for 2020/21 and the three year plans be approved for submission to the local authority.

(b) Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

The completed SFVS statements had been circulated to governors on 13 March for consideration at the spring term meeting of the Governing Body which had subsequently been cancelled due to the Coronavirus outbreak, and further copies had been circulated with the agenda. Governors noted that although the statements had been submitted to the local authority by the March deadline, formal approval was now required by the Governing Body. Ms McAllister explained how the budget figures fed into the questionnaire, and how this related to the analysis sheet. It was **RESOLVED** that the SFVS statements be approved.

(c) Scheme for Financing Schools

As noted above, the local authority had agreed a new Scheme of Delegation, which made changes to the budget setting process and the approval of the SFVS returns, and it was necessary for the new Scheme to be adopted formally by the Governing Body. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the Scheme for Financing Schools be adopted.

The new Scheme had been discussed at the February meeting of the Resources Committee, and the main issue arising from the changes was the need to amend the Committee's terms of reference to reflect this. Ms McAllister said that she would be reviewing the Federation Financial Management Policy for discussion at the autumn term meeting of the Resources Committee, and this would then be submitted to the Governing Body for formal approval in November.

(d) Catering contract

Mr Fidel had circulated documents to all governors to update them on the current position regarding the catering contract. It was **RESOLVED** that authority be delegated to the Strategic Group to take action as appropriate on behalf of the Governing Body in relation to the contract.

6. GOVERNING BODY

(a) Changes to the Governing Body

Governors were reminded that there were three vacancies for co-opted governors, who included a member of staff from Eliot Bank, and one parent representative from each parent community. In addition, it was noted that Mr Hayles had not attended any meetings of the Governing Body or sent apologies for absence for a period of six months, and his membership had therefore lapsed, which created another vacancy for a co-opted governor.

The Chair and Executive Headteacher had both been in contact with Paul Jenkins, a Gordonbrock parent, and agreed that his range of skills and expertise would be an asset to the Governing Body. Mr Jenkins had been due to attend the March meeting of the Governing Body, which had been cancelled due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and was still keen to be considered for the appropriate vacancy. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that Mr Jenkins be appointed as a co-opted governor for a four year period of office with immediate effect.

It was noted that the induction training for new governors would take place remotely on 7 and 9 July, and Mr Jenkins said that he hoped to attend.

Ms Walsh had invited expressions of interest at Eliot Bank for the vacancy for a co-opted governor to be filled by a member of staff, but no-one had come forward. She agreed to ask the staff again.

(b) DBS checks

Governors were reminded that it was now a legal requirement for all governors to have a valid DBS certificate in place, and new governors must arrange for this to be carried out within 21 days of their appointment. Mr Jenkins was asked to contact Ms Carter to begin the process.

It was noted that Mr Hale had now completed the renewal of his check, and he undertook to show his certificate to Ms Carter as soon as possible.

(c) Governing Body self review

All governing bodies were encouraged to review their performance annually in accordance with the Department for Education's Competency Framework for Governance, including whether or not they had carried out their statutory duties during the year. As previously discussed, it had been the intention to carry out a peer review with another school, but this was currently on hold as a result of the pandemic. ***Although he recognised that this was not the right time to carry out the review, Mr Hale was keen that the Governing Body should not lose sight of this, and suggested that, once the schools had fully reopened in the autumn term, it might be a useful exercise for governors to reflect on the lessons learnt from the past few months.***

(d) Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Governors were reminded that the term of office for the Chair and Vice Chair would end at the first meeting in the autumn term, and consideration was given to the election procedures for both of these posts. It was **RESOLVED** that the following procedures for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair be endorsed without amendment, as set out below.

- Term of office – one year.
- If the term of office of Chair or Vice Chair is broken, the Governing Body will appoint a successor initially only for the remaining period of office.
- Nomination and self-nomination for appointment to be made at the meeting.
- Election procedure to be by secret ballot, but in the event of a single nomination, the Governing Body will vote on the nomination by a show of hands.

7. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES, LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS, VISITS TO THE SCHOOL, AND TRAINING SINCE THE LAST MEETING

(a) Reports from committees

(i) Strategic Group

The minutes of the meetings held on 31 January and 6 March 2020 were received. The Strategic Group had received a detailed report from the SENDCOs on the cross Federation SEND audit at the January meeting, and had discussed the quality of teaching and learning, staffing and recruitment, and a range of safeguarding issues. There had also been discussion about the changes to the Ofsted inspection framework and the new relationships, sex, and health education guidance. At the March meeting, the Strategic Group had received an update on the quality of teaching and learning, staffing and recruitment, and had discussed a number of safeguarding matters. Governors had also discussed the appointment of an Air Quality Champion, the health and safety self audits, and measures which were in place to limit the spread of the Coronavirus.

The Strategic Group had met via Zoom on 28 May, but the minutes of this meeting had not yet been approved for circulation.

(ii) Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 February 2020 were received. The summer term meeting had been postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The Committee had carried out a comprehensive review of the budgets at the February meeting and had discussed the 2020/21 budgets and three year plans. There had also been discussion about a range of staffing issues and premises and health and safety issues. The Committee had also discussed the changes to the catering contract.

(b) Review of committee membership and link governor responsibilities

The membership of committees and link governor responsibilities were reviewed. It was agreed that Ms Knowles should be appointed to the Strategic Group, and there was discussion about the need to replace Neville Hayles as the link governor for looked after children. Ms Stickland reminded governors that she had agreed to take on this role on a temporary basis, and was willing to continue if no other governor wanted to take over. Ms Gilmore said that ***Mr Fidel had been visiting both schools on a weekly basis and had been discussing the looked after children as part of the discussion around vulnerable children.***

(c) Visits to the school, meetings attended, and other activities

Governors were reminded that a number of visits had taken place, the details of which were recorded in the minutes of meetings of the Strategic Group.

Mr Fidel had circulated two reports to governors since the beginning of the lockdown, and Ms Eadie's report on a curriculum visit to Gordonbrock, which had been carried out before the lockdown, had been circulated to all governors.

Mr Hale and Mr Fidel had visited Gordonbrock and Eliot Bank respectively to carry out health and safety checks. Mr Hale said that he had visited Gordonbrock just before the school had reopened more widely to Year 6. He had met Glen Goode and had scrutinised the risk assessments and associated documents, and although he had been aware of the excellent work that had been taking place, he had found it reassuring to see for himself the work that was being carried out.

(d) Governing Body training

It was noted that a reduced online training programme had been organised for the summer term and details had been included in the governors' bulletins; the programme included the new governors' induction training on 7 and 9 July.

8. REPORT ON INITIAL CRITICAL WORKER OPENING AND SUBSEQUENT WIDER SCHOOL REOPENING

Mr Fidel's report on the partial school closure report covering the partial school closure report from 20 April to 12 June had been circulated to all governors. He had been talking to the Senior Leadership Team on a weekly basis, and had been particularly interested to hear about teacher workload, the impact on the Senior Leadership Team, and staffing issues. The role of the Senior Leadership Team had changed beyond recognition, and senior staff had been dealing with new, unknown, and confusing issues. They were trying to follow the government guidance, and make the best strategic decisions.

Mr Fidel's report summarised the steps taken since April and gave information on the number of vulnerable children and children of key workers who had been attending school, and the preparations which had taken place to open the school more widely from June.

9. COVID-19 / EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER'S UPDATE

(a) Executive Headteacher's verbal update, including staffing issues

Ms Gilmore said that the period since late March had been extremely difficult and confusing, with very little guidance from the local authority, and constantly changing government guidance. Lewisham had adopted the position that decisions on wider reopening should be made by individual schools having regard to risk assessments, and if schools felt that it was safe for children to return on a phased basis, they could do so. Ms Gilmore drew governors' attention to Mr Fidel's report, which included details of the number of children who had attending both schools. She had spoken to the local authority the previous week, and had been informed that 20,000 of the 32,000 young people in Lewisham who were of statutory school age were primary pupils, and a total of 1,500 of these children had been back at school that week. When she had looked at the figures for Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock, Ms Gilmore had realised that attendance at the Federation's schools accounted for over 10% of all children at school in Lewisham.

There were currently 234 children out of a total roll of 648 attending school at Gordonbrock, broken down as follows: 60 children in Reception, 48 children in Year 1, 58 children in Year 6, and 68 key worker children; in addition 10 key worker children were attending the Nursery. Ms Gilmore said that most of the children were coping well with being back in school.

At Eliot Bank, a total of 134 children out of 434 were attending school: of these, 28 were in Reception, 33 in Year 1, 41 in Year 6, and 38 key worker children. Ms Gilmore recognised that it was very disappointing for children from other year groups not to have been able to return, but had written to parents again to explain that while both schools would love to welcome all children back, this was not possible because of the number of rooms and staff available to work with the smaller number of children in the bubbles. At Gordonbrock, three staff rooms were now in use to manage social distancing, and Eliot Bank was using two staff rooms; isolation rooms had also been set up for pupils and staff who became unwell.

Ms Gilmore said that staffing changed on a daily basis depending on individuals' personal circumstances, and it was recognised that everyone had faced very challenging situations. Seven staff at Eliot Bank were not in work for different reasons; two were teachers (one of whom was class based) and five were support staff. At Gordonbrock, 14 staff were not in work because of challenging circumstances; these included 5 class based teachers and nine support staff. The situation had fluctuated and some of the staff who were currently not in school were expected to return in due course. ***Ms Stickland asked whether they were likely to return before the end of term;*** Ms Gilmore said that this was not clear, and some staff were unhappy at returning to work at present but were monitoring their personal circumstances. However, she did not expect the majority of these staff would return before September and was working on the assumption that they would not be back for planning purposes.

Ms Stickland asked whether the staff who were not in school were working from home. Ms Gilmore confirmed that all staff were working from home, although this was more challenging for

teaching assistants. Ms Wright said that the Deputy Heads had organised CPD for teaching assistants who were working at home.

Mr Bremner recognised that there were clearly huge issues around vulnerable children, and asked if any particular work was being done with this group. He also asked about the level of contact being made with children who were not coming into school and those finding life very difficult during lockdown. Ms Gilmore said that the Deputies would address this when discussing the remote learning offer.

Staffing

One teacher, who had only been at Eliot Bank for one year, was leaving for personal circumstances and would be replaced by Mary Quinn when she returned from maternity leave.

One teacher was leaving Gordonbrock at the end of term and was returning to Australia to be with her family. Ms Gilmore said that there was also a maternity leave, which would hopefully be covered by a teacher returning from maternity leave and a PPA teacher.

However, the most significant change at Gordonbrock was that Nicky Connolly was leaving for personal reasons. Ms Gilmore paid tribute to her excellent work and commitment to the school, her work on the curriculum, and reminded governors that she had been instrumental in the school's outstanding inspection judgment.

Mr Fidel said that he was very sad that Ms Connolly was leaving, and discussions had initially taken place about recruitment, although it had been recognised that this would be difficult during the lockdown period. However, Ms Gilmore had then received a phone call from Mark Ridler, whose move out of London had not worked as well as he had hoped, and who was now looking for a teaching post back in the area. Advice had been sought from the Clerk, Governors' Services, and Lewisham HR, and ***the Chair had taken action under the urgency procedures to appoint Mr Ridler as Interim Deputy Headteacher.*** It had been pointed out that it was unlikely there would have been many applications for the post during lockdown, and there would be an additional financial cost to the school if a temporary appointment had been made through an agency. ***Mr Fidel had discussed the situation with the Strategic Group, who had supported his action.*** He said that the permanent post would be advertised externally towards the end of the autumn term, which would give internal and external applicants the opportunity to apply.

Ms Gilmore said that a significant part of Mr Ridler's role would be to continue to develop the remote learning offer and interactive ways of working, which would fall within his areas of expertise.

(b) Update from Chair on any action taken under the urgency procedures

Apart from approving the Remote Attendance Policy and approving the appointment of Mr Ridler as Interim Deputy Head at Gordonbrock, Mr Fidel had not taken any other action under the urgency procedures.

(c) Business Continuity Plan

Ms Gilmore informed governors that the Business Continuity Plan had been reviewed and updated as necessary.

10. SAFEGUARDING

(a) DSL arrangements during the COVID-19 period

The DSL arrangements were included in the addendum to the Safeguarding Policy which had been circulated to all governors.

(b) Contact with families generally and arrangements to support students, especially those who meet the vulnerable definition

Ms Barry outlined the arrangements for contacting vulnerable families. Regular contact had been taking place, on a daily basis in some circumstances, with vulnerable children, who included those on Child Protection Plans, Child in Need Plans, children on the edge of Children's Social Care involvement, those considered to be vulnerable by the school, children where early help referrals had been made, children with EHCPs, special needs, or on free schools meals. Children who were unable to access the remote learning were supported through regular delivery of paper work packs.

Regular calls were made by a designated member of the Senior Leadership Team, the learning mentor, or SENDCO, to check on the welfare of families, and to make contact with IAPS counselling service, domestic violence support, or contacting GPs. Staff had been in regular contact with Children's Social Care, and emergency checks had been made where needed. The Senior Leadership Team had made a number of home visits to check on children's wellbeing, particularly the most vulnerable.

Staff had continued to attend and contribute to core group meetings for Children in Need and Child Protection Plans, and had also provided support for providing iPads, phones, and access to home learning. The school had made use of the government's technology scheme and had secured laptops for one child in Year 6 and another in Year 5, which would be much appreciated by the families concerned.

Bereavement support had been provided where needed, and age appropriate literature had been provided. Contact had been maintained and time was allocated to follow up on issues to listen to children and provide support information.

Kagan strategies had been shared with parents, with guidance on maths strategies and any other home learning that they may be struggling with. Some families were very anxious about their children returning to school, and work had taken place around boosting resilience. Some parents had feelings of guilt because they felt that they had not done enough work with their children, whilst others felt that they had been working their children too hard and pushing them too much.

Staff had been providing support in many different ways, and had been working tirelessly with EBSA, FoG, and Chartwells. Food packs had been delivered to families, and a total of 94 families had been supported at Eliot Bank and 104 at Gordonbrock since March.

Sainsburys vouchers had been provided to every family entitled to free school meals, those waiting for approval, and those who had said that they needed support. However, the government had changed their advice on how much of the cost they would cover, by which time the vouchers had already been given. The schools were now using Edenred for vouchers for the children who were entitled to them, but Ms Barry said that the scheme was not fit for purpose and the company had not been able to cope with the number of orders. There had been waiting times of up to three hours for Edenred, so staff had tended to access the company late at night. Phone calls had also been made to parents in the evenings to support them in redeeming vouchers and to redeem them on behalf of some families. There had also been issues where Edenred had not processed vouchers, and it had been necessary to provide vouchers to avoid families going hungry. Eliot Bank had been using the food bank to provide surplus food donated by Lidl, and Lisa Carney had been instrumental in organising deliveries. The hygiene bank had also been very busy and had provided additional support at Eliot Bank.

Ms Barry said that staff across the Federation had been very flexible and had taken on any challenge that had been presented.

Ms McGuire explained the work that had been taking place with the SENDCOs to maintain their input and the expertise available to support SEND children and to keep contact ongoing. They had been in regular contact with all children on the SEN Register since March during the

lockdown, and had been able to pick up on concerns and anxieties from parents and children. Annual reviews had taken place, and questionnaires had been completed by children across both schools. It was noted that both schools had completed EHCP assessments during the lockdown period.

Regular calls and bespoke conversations had taken place to meet the needs of families, which varied every day, and the SENDCOs had been contacting families regularly with updates. They had also had a regular and continuous dialogue with outside agencies, such as speech and learning therapy, occupational therapy, and the Educational Psychology Service. Additional speech and learning therapy had been put in place for individual children, and the SENDCOs had worked closely with Lewisham outreach services.

There had been involvement with Children's Social Care with some children, and support had been provided with housing and welfare issues. Ms McGuire said that she had also been in contact with the London Borough of Southwark regarding one child, as well as with Drumbeat. The SENDCOs had been working to keep all lines of communication open and had been liaising with the Senior Leadership Team so that everyone was aware of the support that children were receiving.

Teaching assistants were being supported with CPD and a regular online support package. Positive feedback had been received on the CPD, and the staff had felt that it would be very useful when they returned to school.

The secondary transfer process was ongoing and time consuming, and there had been close contact with the local authority's SEND adviser. Individual appointments had been arranged for all SEND children, with bespoke transfers. The parents had completed forms, and telephone discussions had taken place, which would be followed up with Zoom meetings the following week. Work was also taking place with the secondary schools to ensure that they had all relevant information for when the children started in September.

Mr Fidel thanked Ms Barry and Ms McGuire, and governors recognised the amount of detailed work that had taken place because of the pandemic. He pointed out that many press reports had suggested that teachers were doing very little work, but this was really not the case at Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock, where staff had worked tirelessly with a huge workload, with very little direction from Lewisham. The Edenred voucher scheme had also been a major issue, with staff taking on the burden of ensuring that all families in the school communities were fed. Governors wished to record their thanks to all members of staff involved.

Ms Stickland asked whether the schools were in contact with mutual aid groups, many of which were organised by road. Ms Barry said that she thought one very vulnerable family was working with one of these organisations, and Jean Allen had been involved. Ms Gilmore thanked Ms Stickland for the large amount of helpful resources which she had sent on trauma and supporting children's mental health, and for also checking on the Senior Leadership Team's wellbeing.

Ms McGuire informed governors that the Children's Centre at Eliot Bank had been closed during the lockdown but had opened for vulnerable families to access the food bank. So far 263 families, with 588 members, had been making regular visits to the Kelvin Grove food bank, which had had a real impact in the community. Since the lockdown, 32 new referrals had been made to the Children's Centre and Ms McGuire had been in regular contact with the Children's Centre Lead. Once the lockdown had ended, meetings would take place to discuss families who had accessed the Children's Centre and whether there was anything that Eliot Bank needed to pick up on in school.

Mr Fidel said that 198 families had accessed the food voucher scheme. It was noted that there had been a small increase in the number of pupils entitled to free school meals (FSM) at both schools, and the schools were supporting 53 children at Eliot Bank and 79 at Gordonbrock for free school meals whether or not they were eligible.

(d) Online learning – home learning arrangements

Ms Osmond informed governors that in the final days before the lockdown, all children had been sent home with individual learning packs, age appropriate books, stationery, and log ins for Mathematics and other resources, and teachers had been setting weekly differentiated maths tests. The main learning offer had been through the website, as well as regular text messages, and emails to parents which directed them to the website. However, some families were unable to access the online resources or collect papers packs, and in these circumstances, members of the Senior Leadership Team had delivered resources. A draft timetable had been sent out at the beginning of the lockdown suggesting how parents may wish to structure the day, but the schools had been very sensitive to the pressures which many families were facing, particularly those who were working from home. To avoid adding undue stress, the schools had not insisted that work was completed at a particular time or to specific deadlines, and had recognised that families were under pressure, falling behind with deadlines may make people feel that they were not coping. Minimum expectations had been set, but a wide range of resources was available on the websites, and there was ample work for those who wanted to do more than the minimum expectation. The websites included year group tasks, maths resources, a link to the Philosophy Foundation, a link to Take One Picture, weekly thinking and creative tasks, links to the DfE website and other recommended websites; there were also some activities which were intended just for fun. Ms Osmond said that some parents were not happy with the home learning being based online, but the schools printed out paper copies of resources if families were unable to access the website, which were either collected from the gate or delivered to homes.

The online offer had evolved during the lockdown, and children were set four specific tasks linked to the summer curriculum. The work had been individualised with audio links so that children could hear their teacher and have a commentary. The schools had also invested in White Rose maths, which was run by a fantastic organisation. The scheme had initially been used for maths mastery but had been extended because of the way in which it helped with fluency and reasoning. Four teaching videos were uploaded each week with related worksheets, which helped to take some of the pressure off parents in providing support.

The schools had close links with the Philosophy Foundation, who had worked in the schools, and who were keen to be involved in the weekly tasks.

The schools would usually be involved in Take One Picture at this time of year, where children responded to a picture selected by the National Gallery. One of the teachers who was currently unable to return to school was preparing a Power Point presentation each week so that the children could take part at home as well as those who were in school, and it was hoped that the children would send in their work to enable a virtual exhibition to be hosted.

Teachers were sending out weekly 'keeping in touch' letters, which provided a line of communication from teachers to students, which enabled children to talk about what they remember, what they were learning, and to celebrate the work that had been submitted. The link to the DfE website provided a great deal of support for phonics and reading for parents.

Ms Connolly stressed that it was important to clarify that very careful consideration had been given on what should be put on the websites, and the Senior Leadership Team had looked for the best websites and drip fed these to parents. Home learning letters had been sent out every 2-3 weeks, which introduced new resources that had been added to the websites, and explained how these could be used. Resources which had been highlighted included the BBC bitesize daily offering and Hamilton Trust maths. It had been important to ensure that signposting was carried out properly and parents did not have to filter the content. All of the links to resources were categorised by year group, subjects etc, and every effort had been made to make these as clear as possible.

In addition, weekly newsletters were sent which offered more ideas, and celebrations, as well as memories from this time last year. Three special editions had been produced, including a

wellbeing special, and all included general news and updates. The newsletters also provided an opportunity for children to share their work.

More recently, a You Tube channel had been introduced with weekly updates from all year groups. Each year group had a story time session, and weekly teaching tasks were being added. The channel was now becoming more streamlined and was becoming increasingly important.

Ms Connolly then spoke about the virtual learning platform going forward. The Federation had not had a platform in place that all teachers were familiar with before the lockdown, and it was essential to put a long term solution in place. She had looked at a number of different virtual learning environments (VLEs) and it had been agreed that the schools would use Google Classroom. An application had been made for DfE funding using an IT solutions company and the LGFL, and once the final data sharing had taken place, a handover meeting would take place followed by the set up proves. Staff training would begin in the next few weeks, and user agreements would be prepared for parents. Ms Connolly said that she hoped to have a learning offer available on Google Classroom by the end of term, and a lot of work would be offered from September. It was also important that teachers began to have individual conversations with children in their class, and a letter had been sent that day to let parents know that the schools would be using Google Classroom and the arrangements that would be made.

Mr Hardy Hall said that he had been pleased when the schools had started to use You Tube, but he stressed that it was important for staff to monitor how effective they were in terms of reaching the children, and he was conscious that the number of children who had accessed the videos had dropped off in later videos. A great deal of time and effort went into making the videos and he asked what could be done to promote the videos to encourage more children to watch them. Ms Gilmore said that once Google Classroom was operational, it may not be necessary to continue to use the You Tube channel. Ms Connolly said that when the videos were uploaded each week, every parent received a text message to alert them, and links were emailed to them. There had been a great deal of positive feedback from parents and children, and she said that she would give further thought on how to promote them more effectively. **Ms Worthington asked about the sharing of resources between the schools and whether children from one school could see the videos from the other school.** It was noted that they could be accessed via the website, and teachers had been encouraged to look at each other's videos, which had been produced very much with individual communities in mind. **Ms Worthington suggested that there would be a reduction in workload if shared videos could be produced;** Ms Osmond pointed out that children were very excited to see their own teachers. Ms Gilmore added that the children were generally more interested in listening to stories than watching lessons, and the videos had been produced in response to what parents and children had wanted.

Ms Worthington asked for more information on Google Classroom. Ms Osmond said that it had been essential to have a VLE in place in the event of a bubble having to shut down or a second spike, and this must be future proofed. The schools were not trying to do anything really new, but would be moving work that was being done anyway to that forum. **Ms Eadie was aware that it was possible to track the engagement of pupils on Google Classroom and see how much of a particular assignment had been completed, and she asked if that was possible at present.** Ms Gilmore said that this could not currently be done, but the schools were aware of which children could not engage and produced paper pack for these families.

Ms Stickland asked if other schools were using Google Classroom, and if would be possible to see examples of how they were using it. Ms Gilmore said that a number of colleagues were using this VLE, but the issue was when the right time would be to introduce it.

Ms Gilmore informed governors that the children were very settled in both schools because of the hard work carried out by staff. The Senior Leadership Team walked round the sites during the day to monitor social distancing, and were acutely aware of the children who were not coming

back to school and the need to provide a VLE package and face to face contact before the end of the year if possible.

Ms Worthington asked if Google Classroom would help to address the divergence in the children's learning experiences, and was mindful that they would be engaging in different work and experiences, and would come back to school with different knowledge. The government had suggested that this could be addressed through summer school, and Mr Fidel had asked for information on the local authority's plans, but no guidance had been forthcoming. Although all concerned recognised the advantages of the online learning systems, it was not possible to create a classroom atmosphere of classroom activities no matter how much technology was used. He said that equality of delivery was very difficult to ensure and it was not possible to make the same provision for all children when they could not see and talk to each other in the usual way. Staff would continue to work together, using Kagan, to resolve problems as they arose.

Mr Fidel urged governors to look at the range of work available on the websites, and thanked staff for their very helpful presentations.

(e) Update to Safeguarding Policy

An addendum to the Safeguarding Policy had been circulated to all governors, which reinforced safeguarding procedures during the pandemic, and gave information on Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputies.

Ms Gilmore stressed the importance of behaviour for teachers. She reminded governors that teachers were in the front line and some were very worried about how they should monitor behaviour and what action they should take if children did not follow social distancing guidelines or stay in their zones in the playground. It was therefore important to have a clear set of guidelines and steps to follow; although many of the guidelines were unchanged, the Senior Leadership Team would take rapid steps with regard to poor behaviour and would escalate concerns to parents more quickly to ensure staff felt appropriately safeguarded. Ms Gilmore said that the children had been very well behaved so far and there had been no incidents where it had been necessary to contact parents. It was **RESOLVED** that the addendum to the Safeguarding Policy be approved.

11. PERFORMANCE RELATED PAY AND APPRAISAL

(a) Governor appraisers

Governors considered the appointment of the governor appraisers to carry out the review of the Executive Headteacher's performance and set objectives for the new academic year. It was **RESOLVED** that Mr Fidel, Mr Bremner, Ms Stickland, and Mr Henry be confirmed as the governor appraisers, and Kathy Palmer be appointed as the external adviser for 2020/21.

(b) Pay Committee and Pay Appeals Committee

Governors reviewed the membership of the Resources Committee, which had responsibility for considering the teaching staff pay awards, and Pay Appeals Committee. It was **RESOLVED** that the current membership of the Resources Committee and the Pay Appeals Committee should remain unchanged.

(c) Policy review

The arrangements to review the Performance Appraisal Policy and Pay Policy were discussed, and it was **RESOLVED** that both policies should be considered by the Resources Committee, and that recommendations should be made to the Governing Body in respect of the Pay Policy.

(d) Review of staff appraisal and performance related pay awards

Governors were asked to consider arrangements to receive the Headteacher's anonymised written report on staff appraisal, and it was **RESOLVED** that the report would be submitted to the Resources Committee in the autumn term.

Mr Hardy Hall asked how the teacher appraisal process would be carried out this year, bearing in mind that teachers would not have been able to meet their targets, many of which would no longer be relevant. Ms Gilmore said that although some schools had changed their targets at the start of the pandemic, the Federation had not done so, and the original targets had remained in place. It was recognised that some targets would be very difficult to meet, but teachers had been able to work as normal for half of the year. However, unless there were particular performance issues, a recommendation would be made to governors that teachers should automatically progress where there was scope for them to do so.

12. SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

(a) Safeguarding reports

Copies of the summer term safeguarding reports for both schools had been circulated to all governors. The reports gave details of the referrals made, the number of existing and new children on child protection plans and child in need plans, and meetings attended. The reports also included details of the number of looked after children, children with personal education plans, EHCPs and assessments, attendance, and persistent absence. Details of policy reviews and training were also included.

(b) Educational visits report to governors

Governors were reminded that an annual report should be received on school visits, and it was **RESOLVED** that this would be included in the Head of Schools' reports at the appropriate time.

(c) Health and safety update

Mr Fidel and Hale had visited Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock respectively to discuss health and safety issues with Mr Goode. Mr Fidel said that he had passed a number of other local schools recently and had not seen any indication of safety procedures relating to COVID-19 on their gates, such as not entering the premises if children/parents had any symptoms, or of the introduction of one way systems. **He recognised the amount of work being undertaken by Mr Goode and the premises team in setting up the bubbles and social distancing measures, and congratulated all staff concerned for the way in which safety measures had been planned and implemented.**

Ms Eadie asked if the risk assessments should be shared with governors or if they could be agreed by the Chair. Mr Goode had been working on a risk assessment for COVID-19 before the lockdown, and had then received the model risk assessments from Lewisham. He had worked with Claire Firmin to prepare a wide range of risk assessments to cover all aspects of the schools. Ms Gilmore said that she was happy to make the risk assessments available to governors, but it was noted that the Chair had been through them in detail, and had signed them off. It was **RESOLVED** that the action taken by the Chair to agree the risk assessments be endorsed.

13. SCHOOL TERM AND HOLIDAY DATES

Governors' attention was drawn to the school term and holiday dates for 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, and 2023/24, which had been published on the Lewisham website, and the dates were noted

14. URGENT BUSINESS

At the request of some governors, Mr Fidel had circulated copies of the results of the survey carried out with parents on their views about the return to school. He pointed out that a number of comments had been included at the end of the summary, and he asked that governors should not share these with anyone else and should delete them from their electronic copies of the report.

Mr Fidel thanked governors for their attendance, and all governors expressed their appreciation to Ms Connelly for her service to the school, as a teacher, Deputy Headteacher, and as a governor, and wished her well for the future.

15. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was **RESOLVED** that the following dates and times be agreed for meetings of the Governing Body and Resources Committee for the 2020/21 academic year.

Governing Body

Thursday, 3 December 2020 at Gordonbrock

Monday 15 March 2021 at Eliot Bank

Thursday 10 June 2021 at Gordonbrock

Resources Committee

Thursday, 19 November 2020 at Gordonbrock

Monday 22 February 2021 at Eliot Bank

Thursday, 27 May 2021 at Gordonbrock

All meetings to start at 6.00 p.m.

These minutes were approved at the virtual meeting of the Governing Body held on 3 December 2020. In view of the ongoing pandemic, governors asked the Clerk to sign the minutes on behalf of the Chair.

 Jackie Woods, Clerk to the Governing Body

Signed on behalf of Peter Fidel, Chair of the Governing Body 3 December 2020