

**The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
and the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead**

**Minutes of the Virtual School Governing Board
Virtual Meeting held: Monday 5 July 2021, 3.00 pm**

Constitution, Membership and Attendance

Director for Education Services, Kingston and Richmond	Charis Penfold
Director of Children's Social Care, Kingston and Richmond	Alison Twynam
Executive Headteacher and Associate Director of Education Standards in Care	Suzanne Parrott
Head of Governor Support	Angela Langford
Primary Headteacher (LBR)	Carmen Palmer
Secondary Headteacher (RBK)	Tom Gibson
Primary Headteacher (RBWM)	Gemma Donnelly
Foster Carer	Ruth Sinclair
Kingston and Richmond CCG	Vicky Fraser
Associate Director for Corporate Parenting (RBWM)	Marie Bell

Apologies (in bold)

Also attended: Michael Guard (Assistant Headteacher, Virtual College)
Isabel Prinsloo (AfC)
Julia Hunt (Clerk)

		Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	CP welcomed governors to the virtual meeting. Governors introduced themselves and apologies were outlined as above.	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting 29 March 2021 and Matters Arising	
2.1	Minutes of the meeting dated 29 March 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and all actions are complete. The Pupil Premium Monitoring update has been deferred until the autumn term meeting.	
3.	Key Headlines	
3.1	SEP updated governors on the following areas.	
3.2	School Stability: The school move authorisation document has now been approved for use across all operational areas.	
3.3	Following partnership working with the DfE and recommendations made in the Children in Need review, the remit of Virtual Schools has been extended and they will	

	<p>be strategically responsible for promoting the education of all children with a social worker. This has been seen as a positive development by stakeholders and new guidance and additional funding has been made available to support this. The time frame is tight as these new duties come into effect from September 21 and the DfE will visit in the autumn term to review progress. AT and CP requested that they be included in discussions about the model for supporting this new duty and how funding would be used.</p>	
3.4	SEP is developing a strategic plan drawing on the experience of other virtual schools who are already delivering this support and outlined key areas for consideration.	
3.5	<p>Over the last nine months, 42 schools across the three operational areas received extensive whole school training and coaching on Attachment Awareness. The programme has been well received and 92% of school staff believe it will directly impact their practice. Findings from this programme will contribute to ongoing research on this subject. A celebration event for schools is taking place on 6 July at the Lensbury Club.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Gemma Donnelly joined the meeting</i></p> <p>Q. Although this extension to the Virtual School's remit is very positive, what is the impact on the Designated Teacher (DT) in schools and on CLA?</p> <p>A. Guidance is expected shortly however duties will be shared across the DT and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The Virtual School will be offering paired coaching for the DSL and DT.</p> <p>Q. Will there be support ongoing for the Attachment Awareness programme?</p> <p>A. Yes. The Virtual School will be offering ongoing support and schools with a "bronze" accreditation may wish to move onto Silver and Gold accreditation in due course.</p>	
3.6	Governors discussed at length the importance of focusing on how these new duties will be carried out, what support might look like in light of the increasing number of CP and CIN children, and ensuring this is not to the detriment of existing CLA. Governors were also concerned how these new strategic priorities were going to be signed off and how funding would be allocated given the tight deadline of September 21.	
3.7	<p>SEP confirmed that presentations have been made to Virtual Schools Heads and SEP has met with the DfE as well as other LAs. SEP has a clear understanding of what needs to be done in relation to the needs of the operational areas and has produced a plan on this basis. A business case is with Lin Ferguson and this will then be discussed by Lucy Kourpas, Ian Dodds and Kevin McDaniel. Previously any sign offs were Lin Ferguson's responsibility as SEP's line manager and this could be extended to the Virtual School FGB however the role of the Board needs to be clarified in relation to this.</p> <p>Action: SEP to set up a meeting with CP, AT and Lin Ferguson to discuss the strategic priorities and to agree what goes forward to the AfC Board.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Marie Bell joined the meeting</i></p>	SEP
3.8	Michael Guard is now permanently part of the Virtual School and SEP paid tribute to his hard work. SEP outlined achievements of the Virtual College which included the strong partnership working with Richmond and Wandsworth as well as AfC regarding recruitment opportunities for care leavers.	
3.9	Reports on the three operational areas had been circulated prior to the meeting and SEP outlined the key headlines. Persistent absence in Richmond and RBWM is higher than the national average but is decreasing. School stability figures are improving; Richmond (73%) and Kingston (77%) which are an improvement on previous levels.	

	<p>RBWM's Spring '21 figures are strong at 81.8% raised from 71% in Summer 2020 potentially due to their early adoption of the school stability authorisation document.</p> <p>Q. The persistent absence numbers are concerning, are the current strategies making a difference?</p> <p>A. Attendance deep dives took place over half term and children are rewarded for any improvement in their attendance. SEP believes COVID is the main factor and is confident the correct measures are in place to address this however will ask the team to revisit this.</p> <p>Q. It would be helpful if numbers were included to give context to the percentages?</p> <p>A. The presentation slides give the key headlines, more detail can be found in the actual report.</p> <p>3.10 Governors discussed whether an increase in Section 20s in RBWM had had an impact as these children often have persistent absence issues before coming into care and perhaps some work on identifying attendance issues early for CIC and CN children could be considered going forward. One of the DfE expectations for Virtual School Heads with the extension of the role to support CIN and CP children is to achieve better intelligence for CIN and CP attendance and exclusion. This early intervention is likely to impact on outcomes for CLA.</p> <p>Q. Can an audit report for each of these cases be provided to ensure the agencies working with the child are working together to get that child back into school?</p> <p>A. Yes</p> <p>Action: SEP to circulate audit reports for Richmond and RBWM persistent absence to the Board.</p> <p>3.11 Q Is the persistent absence a result of unmet needs? Is there any work being done around this?</p> <p>A. 15 cases are new into care for the last 2 weeks in Kingston, most are in Year 11 and have a range of issues.</p> <p>Governors discussed the strategic aspects of CIN and CP Attachment Awareness programme and hope this programme will support these children. It was recognised there is some work to be done by Virtual School on speech and language. SEP confirmed she had discussed CIN and CP absence data with colleagues and would like to extend the Welfare Cloud service to these children to enable the Virtual School to work out an action plan.</p> <p>Q. Lots of schools are assessing children at the end of KS1 and 2, even though there is no formal assessment process and I am worried that the report said there is no data. Schools' assessments of the children would be useful to know, and whether COVID has impacted on their attainment.</p> <p>A. It is more that there is no national data, but assessment/progress information is reported in the PEPs on a termly basis and the Virtual School has learning and progress meetings. The Virtual School is collecting end of year data and will produce key stage reports. SEP believes COVID was not necessarily a deficit year for looked after children as they have thrived in smaller classrooms where teacher time is more available.</p> <p>Action: SEP to update the Board on outcomes in the Autumn meeting.</p>	<p>SEP</p> <p>SEP</p>
<p>4. 4.1</p>	<p>Virtual College update</p> <p>Michael Guard's update focused on the transition stage for those CLA in Years 6-13 and an overview of destinations for those post 16. The figures outlined are very fluid as circumstances are changing almost daily.</p>	

4.2	Year 6 into 7: 6 out of 24 children are without a place however are new into care. Years 11 into 12: 7 of 59 children are without a place but 3 are new into care. Years 12 into 13: 10 out of 84 are without a place but 2 are new into care.	
4.3	MG outlined how the amount of time in care has an impact on whether a young person has an offer.	
4.4	The Virtual School has a high percentage of Year 11 into 12 who have SEN or an EHC and Year 6 and 11 in RBWM has a higher cohort number which is a change over the last few years.	
4.5	<p>MG outlined the process to support a young person's destination choice and how the VS works with teams, schools and the SEN team to identify the most appropriate educational setting. Significant work by the team has led to the numbers of NEETs continuing to decrease. It is important to note that placement moves create instability and it is vital that the right school is identified, not just a school. The Virtual School is not always included in these conversations but things are improving Post 16.</p> <p>Q. In terms of children with SEN support and transition - are we confident that we are working with all partners around the table?</p> <p>A. Systems are better for those children with an EHCP and work needs to improve across the Board on a more holistic approach and thinking long term about what these young people want as a young adult. SEP confirmed that much of the Virtual School's work is tailored to the child and the Virtual school provides small group transition training alongside Virtual School EPs to foster carers and DTs to support Year 6 children and those moving from Years 11 into 12.</p>	
5.	AOB	
5.1	<p>Board Membership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tom Gibson will be leaving his Headship at Holy Cross in July and another Kingston Secondary Headteacher will need to be identified. <p>Action: SEP/CP to liaise with Kingston Secondary Heads to identify a replacement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gemma Donnelly wishes to step down at the end of the academic year but would be happy to continue until another HT representative from RBWM is identified. CP thanked Gemma Donnelly for her contribution over the last three years. SEP suggested some Headteachers in RBWM who could be approached to join the Board. <p>Action: Gemma Donnelly to make contact with RBWM Headteachers and feedback any interest to SEP.</p>	SEP/CP
5.2	<p>Governors discussed agendas for future meetings and UASC is to be included in the autumn agenda. This would be a general discussion on the approach across the boroughs.</p> <p>Action: Clerk to include UASC on the agenda for the autumn term.</p>	GD
5.3	<p>Governors discussed meeting arrangements for next year and it was agreed a hybrid approach would be adopted.</p> <p>Action: Clerk to set meeting dates and ensure meeting rooms can accommodate hybrid meetings to allow governors the flexibility to join the meeting in person or virtually.</p>	Clerk
5.4	SEP updated governors about a funding bid the Virtual School has made to the DfE in relation to Post 16 PPG.	Clerk

The meeting ended at 4.45 pm

Signed by the Chair _____

Date _____

Summary of Actions

3.7	SEP to set up a meeting with CP, AT and Lin Ferguson to discuss the strategic priorities and to agree what goes forward to the AfC Board.	SEP
3.10	SEP to circulate audit reports for Richmond and RBWM persistent absence to the Board.	SEP
3.11	SEP to update the Board on outcomes in the Autumn meeting.	SEP
5.1	SEP/CP to liaise with Kingston Secondary Heads to identify a replacement. Gemma Donnelly to make contact with RBWM Headteachers and feedback any interest to SEP.	SEP/CP GD
5.2	Clerk to include UASC on the agenda for the Autumn Term.	Clerk
5.3	Clerk to set meeting dates and ensure meeting rooms can accommodate hybrid meetings to allow governors the flexibility to join the meeting in person or virtually	Clerk