

**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: Wednesday 8 December 2021, 9.30 am**

**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
<b>Secondary Headteacher (RBK)</b>	<b>Vacancy</b>
Secondary Headteacher (RBWM)	Walter Boyle
Foster Carer	Ruth Sinclair
Kingston and Richmond CCG	Deborah Clark
<b>Associate Director for Corporate Parenting (RBWM)</b>	<b>Marie Bell</b>

**Apologies (in bold)**

**Also attended:** Michael Guard (Assistant Headteacher, AfC Virtual College)  
Sara Freitag (Senior Educational Psychologist, AfC Virtual School)  
Shungu Chigocha (Team Manager - Early Help and Social Care (Adult, Children and Health Services (RBWM) (in place of Marie Bell)  
Julia Hunt (Clerk)

		Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	CP welcomed governors to the virtual meeting. Governors introduced themselves and apologies were outlined as above.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Membership Update</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	CP gave an update on current and future changes to the Board: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Walter Boyle replaces Gemma Donnelly as RBWM Headteacher representative;</li> <li>- Deborah Clark replaces Vicky Fraser as the Health representative;</li> <li>- Carmen Palmer will be standing down from the Board when she retires from Headship at the end of the summer term;</li> <li>- A Kingston Headteacher representative needs to be identified.</li> </ul> <b>Action: CP/SEP to consider and approach a Kingston Headteacher representative.</b>	<b>CP/SEP</b>

<p><b>3.</b></p> <p><b>3.1</b></p> <p><b>3.2</b></p> <p><b>3.3</b></p> <p><b>3.4</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting on 5 July 2021 and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>Minutes of the meeting dated 5 July 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.</p> <p>Item 3.7: The action for CP, AT and Lin Ferguson to meet and agree strategic priorities for the Board to focus on this academic year remains outstanding.</p> <p>Governors discussed what key priorities they believed the Board should focus on during 21/22 and the strategic direction of the Virtual School.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governors agreed a key priority should be educational outcomes and what the particular challenges are for young people within the three boroughs which may be different to those in other areas of the country;</li> <li>- The Board felt they should be clear about those for whom things have been particularly difficult over the last eighteen months, and that support is being targeted appropriately. Persistent Absence is an issue for all schools as well as the Virtual School, how are schools responding to this and can these strategies be adopted to help the Virtual School.</li> <li>- The new duties in relation to children with a social worker and how these will impact on workloads for both schools and the Virtual School.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: CP to arrange a meeting with Lin Ferguson, Alison Twynam and SEP to discuss the Board's strategic priorities.</b></p> <p>All other actions are complete. AT updated on Pupil Premium Plus later in the meeting.</p>	<p><b>CP</b></p>
<p><b>4.</b></p> <p><b>4.1</b></p> <p><b>4.1.1</b></p> <p><b>4.1.2</b></p> <p><b>4.1.3</b></p>	<p><b>Headteacher Report</b></p> <p><b>New Duties</b></p> <p>From September 21, the Virtual School's role was extended to include children with a social worker and address the barriers to good educational outcomes. How this is progressed is at the discretion of Virtual School Headteachers who have met to discuss this across London and the South East. SEP has produced the PAN London New Duties Protocol in collaboration with NAVSH. DfE guidance is clear however on what duties Virtual Schools are <u>not</u> required to provide.</p> <p>Nationally, most Virtual Schools are recruiting staff to lead in this area and some data collection will inform what is required. SEP outlined the range of measures that will need to be implemented to respond to these new duties. SEP welcomes these new duties which allow early intervention prior to coming into care which will lead to better outcomes in care. Outcomes will improve for the CIN/CP group particularly around attendance and exclusion and will promote partnership working across social care and education for this cohort.</p> <p><b>Q. What are the Virtual School's next steps?</b></p> <p>A. This term's main focus is on setting things up as there are approximately 1,000 children across the three boroughs in this cohort, and not all will be in the group for support. The Virtual School is working with Welfare Call to extract on-going attendance and exclusion data from schools and triangulating data from CIN and CP social care registers against students' UPNs.</p> <p><b>Q. It can be difficult for schools to know if a child is on a plan or not as generally there is a lack of information shared. Will there be a register schools could have access to?</b></p> <p>A. Schools should know when a child is on a plan or not but in terms of CIN, AT will explore this further.</p> <p><b>Action: AT to speak to her team about CIN consent/data protection.</b></p> <p>SEP added that Virtual Schools are working together to promote better communication from LAs and the Virtual School are looking at this as part of their training for social</p>	<p><b>AT</b></p>

	<p>workers. SEP will be encouraging Headteachers to get in touch with the Virtual School as they now have a list of who have been “stepped up” and “stepped down”. AfC colleagues agreed these new duties had significant implications and needed further discussion outside of the meeting with the relevant teams. There needs to be clarity on the expectations from each of the services to avoid duplication.</p> <p><b>Action: AT to set up a meeting with AfC colleagues to discuss the new Virtual School duties and the implications.</b></p>	AT
4.1.4	<p>Since July SEP has been meeting services and once an Assistant Headteacher for the new service is in place they will be able to map out what is already being provided and avoid duplication. The aim is to appoint a new Assistant Headteacher to lead on this and the plan is to extend the current approach and promote attachment aware practice for this cohort.</p> <p><b>Q. Will you be working with EWOs?</b> A Yes.</p>	
4.2	<b>Response to the pandemic</b>	
4.2.1	SEP summarised the support provided by the Virtual School during the pandemic and outlined how spreadsheets and subsequent reports identified whether students were in school or at home; how much education they were engaged in and RAG rated the risk to education and placement stability.	
4.2.2	The Virtual College opened in Autumn Term 2020 enabling AfC Virtual School to extend support to all Care Leavers. In addition the ‘Year of Stability’ was an initiative where the Virtual School worked with social care partners and schools to highlight the importance of a stable education. Stability in RBWM increased by 10% and by 6% in Kingston. The presentation outlined further details of the steps to recovery from the pandemic for pupils and strategically for the Virtual School.	
4.2.3	Key headlines for the summer term were shared and Governors were concerned over Richmond’s persistent absence figures which were at 20%. SEP noted that this figure was for the summer term and the figures for November had improved.	
4.3	<b>Action: The March FGB meeting to have an attendance focus to review progress</b>	Clerk
	<b>Attachment Awareness Schools Award (AASA)</b>	
4.3.1	Sara Freitag gave an update on the AASA evaluations. Responses from those who completed the award were very positive and all were able to identify a positive impact in their schools.	
4.3.2	As part of the Award, schools undertook an Attachment Audit and then used this to identify a whole school change project. Many projects focused on developing policy and school systems, many transformed their environment and some focused on the direct impact of pupils in their school. Schools were encouraged to ensure whole school attendance, including inviting school governors, support staff and office based staff.	
4.3.3	Designated Teachers showed an increase in confidence and schools reported on the benefits of the whole school sharing a common language. All Designated Teachers who completed the evaluation plan to further embed or develop their project or attachment aware practice in their schools in future years as a result of being part of the AASA. EPs working with schools felt that the project was having a positive impact.	
4.3.4	It will take time to truly evaluate how practice has been embedded. The Virtual School plans to follow up with participating schools after 6 months and 12 months following completion of the AASA, to further understand the long term impact.	
	<b>Q. It would be great to do some work with parents and evaluate the impact of the</b>	

	<p><b>school's engagement in the award, as a parent of children in these schools?</b></p> <p>A. Significant numbers have been doing emotion coaching workshops for parents and carers.</p> <p><b>Q. The feedback is great, how do we link this up with social care for those children in foster care and Child Protection? We also need to think about engaging social care staff, there is a real opportunity there?</b></p> <p>A. We have linked in with the Emotional Health Service so they know which schools are engaging but we should inform social workers about children who are in those schools. SEP confirmed it will be discussed on PEPS and highlights shared with various teams to spread the word. One of the benefits of the CIN/CP new duty will be enhanced provision, and collaboration with different groups, for the AASA programme.</p>	
<b>4.4</b>	<b><i>Virtual College and Transition Hub</i></b>	
<b>4.4.1</b>	Michael Guard summarised the progress made within AfC's Transition Hub and Virtual College during the 2020/21 academic year and outlined the aims and initiatives to be undertaken during the 2021/22 academic year.	
<b>4.4.2</b>	<p>The Transition Hub is funded in a variety of ways to support young people at secondary level recently into care and at risk of exclusion or criminal activity. Young people receive six weeks of intensive support followed by a review in six months. Last year's success secured funding for a further year as part of a national research project. For 21/22, objectives include embedding the in reach project at Turing House and developing support for UASC and sharing this learning across the Virtual School.</p> <p><b>Q Is there an opportunity for those in the Transition Hub to meet face to face?</b></p> <p>A. Yes, the Transition Hub has a physical base.</p>	
<b>4.4.3</b>	<p>The Virtual College was established in Autumn Term 2020. Overall the NEET figures are reducing and significantly below national for care leavers, but there is still more to do. Part of the college's role is to support young people in their journey into adulthood and the Academic Pathways to Success initiative has been designed and assigned to each young person to ensure no one is left behind. Objectives for 21/22 include expanding the influence and attendance of the Executive Board, embedding work experience support for young people aged 14-25 and developing the Attachment Aware Community project.</p> <p><b>Q. You had 24 in the Hub this year, what are the numbers for next year?</b></p> <p>A. This year the model is more "opt out" than "opt in" but this will have an impact on capacity.</p>	
<b>4.4.4</b>	<p>SEP updated Governors on the recruitment plan for care leavers. In Richmond and Wandsworth Councils, care leavers who apply for a particular role are being prioritised. At AfC, there is now an opportunity for care leavers to self declare on their application forms if they want to. If they are appointed, The Virtual School will train their manager in attachment awareness to support the young person.</p> <p><b>Q Is there a target number of applicants?</b></p> <p>A. Approximately 4.</p>	
<b>4.4.5</b>	<p>The kickstart programme has been a vital tool and has enabled AfC to give young people opportunities. Training is also underway to ensure CVs from those in care are not dismissed out of hand just because their CVs are less conventional than others.</p>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Pupil Premium Plus Update</b>	
<b>5.1</b>	AT updated governors on the meeting held with SEP earlier in the summer term and a report was circulated to governors prior to this meeting. The meeting was thorough	

<b>5.2</b>	and went through the budget for 20/21 and how PPG was being spent. There is weekly monitoring of the finance and a good control system is in place. Governors discussed the top slicing for certain projects and whether the Board should have any involvement in how these are chosen in order to monitor which strategies are having the maximum impact. SEP welcomes challenge from the Board but how the funds are allocated are the decision of the Virtual School Headteacher. <b>ACTION: CP to raise Pupil Premium Plus allocation during the Lin Ferguson meeting.</b>	<b>CP</b>
<b>6.</b> <b>6.1</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b> Tuesday 22 March (9.30 - 11 am)	

The meeting ended at 11 am.

Signed by the Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Summary of Actions**

<b>2.1</b>	<b>CP/SEP to consider and approach a Kingston Headteacher representative.</b>	<b>CP/SEP</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>CP to arrange a meeting with Lin Ferguson and SEP to discuss the Board's strategic priorities.</b>	<b>CP</b>
<b>4.1.2</b>	<b>AT to speak to her team about CIN consent/data protection.</b>	<b>AT</b>
<b>4.1.3</b>	<b>AT to set up a meeting with AfC colleagues to discuss the new Virtual School duties.</b>	<b>AT</b>
<b>4.2.3</b>	<b>The March FGB meeting to have an attendance focus to review progress</b>	<b>Clerk</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>CP to raise Pupil Premium Plus allocation during the Lin Ferguson meeting.</b>	<b>CP</b>