

**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: Tuesday 4 July 2023, 9.30 am**

Constitution, Membership and Attendance

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| Director for Education Services, Kingston and Richmond | Charis Penfold (Chair) |
| 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 |
| Kingston Headteacher (RBK) | Esther White |
| Richmond Headteacher (LBR) | Vacancy |
| Secondary Headteacher (RBK) | Vacancy |
| Secondary Headteacher (RBWM) | Walter Boyle |
| Foster Carer | Ruth Sinclair |
| Kingston and Richmond ICB | Debbie Clark (currently on MAT leave) Nikki Richards covering - interim nurse for lac |
| Associate Director for Corporate Parenting (RBWM) | Marie Bell |

Apologies (in bold)

In attendance:: Francis Markall (Deputy Headteacher, Virtual School - Richmond)
Ruth Gusterson (Assistant Headteacher, Extended Duties)
Karen Bridgman (Clerk)
Joy Chapple (Observer)

| | Discussion/Actions | Action |
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| 1. | <u>Welcome</u> | |
| 1.1 | The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. | |
| 1.2 | It was noted that Nikki Richards is the interim nurse for LAC and needs to be invited to future meetings. | Clerk |
| 2. | <u>Minutes</u> | |
| 2.1 | The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2023 were approved. | |

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| <p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> | <p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p><u>Next Chapter of the Virtual School Governing Board</u> The Chair reported that following the last meeting on 15 March 2023, the role of the governing board has been reviewed. It has been agreed that in order to have equity across all three authorities, an independent chair will be appointed and this post is currently being advertised.</p> <p>The Executive Headteacher reported that activity across the year has been considered and there will be a link governor attached to each of the ten mission statements. The link governors will provide reports to the governing board and receive updates from the virtual school.</p> <p>The Chair reported that the terms of reference and membership have also been reviewed and updated. It has been agreed that a councillor from each local authority will become governors and this is being discussed with the lead members. There will also be online training sessions for governors in respect of the ten mission statements and their role once membership is confirmed.</p> <p>Q: Does the Executive Headteacher feel that the new structure will be more supportive and also enable governors to fulfil their role more effectively as unlike governing board's of a physical school, they cannot visit to see what is happening. A: Governors are individually very supportive but the Virtual School is not a physical school and does not teach the children so it has different KPIs.</p> <p>Q: Are there models of good governance practice available? A: There is no set model and some local authorities do not have Virtual School Governing Boards.</p> | |
| <p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> | <p><u>Headteacher Report</u></p> <p><u>Children's Commissioner Report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a very useful report and the recommendations will help our children. • The Executive Headteacher has already met with the DfE to discuss the recommendation on running a ESOL project for USAC that should run alongside a child's education to help them thrive in a mainstream school where appropriate, as the virtual school is already doing this. • The DfE are considering the Virtual School running this pilot project on their behalf which will result in some extra funding. • The EHCP should be embedded in the care plan. When a child moves to a different authority the EHC Plan does not move with them and there is a lot of bureaucracy. This would be positive as is often the reason why so many children are out of school. • The role of the Corporate Parenting Panel is being highlighted as important. <p><u>Children not receiving full time DfE registered education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 children are not accessing full time DfE education. • There are no children who are not receiving any education. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child on a reduced timetable has a plan focussing on their reintegration back into full time education. • Some children are accessing alternative provision, tuition or are attending a non DfE registered setting. • The children receiving tuition is due to EHC Plan issues and suitability of provision. • Placement stability is often a key factor and the more school moves a child has impacts on them. • Social workers are not attending the training provided by the Virtual School so they are now attending team meetings to deliver the core messages. | |
| 4.3 | <p>Q: What can the governing board do to support the recommendations and make changes happen?</p> <p>A: The embedding of the EHC Plan in the care plan would have an impact. An application for an EHC Plan takes time and it is not always possible to sustain children and young people, who are struggling, in a mainstream setting. They would benefit from their application for an EHC Plan being fast tracked due to the high risk of them being excluded or becoming school refusers. There needs to be a review of what is needed to stop young people being excluded who are often placed out of the borough, or need a specialist school which may not be available and will often be at a high cost to the local authority.</p> | |
| 4.4 | <p>The Chair reported that it is difficult to fast track a child having an EHC Plan due to the legislation. Kingston schools are considering a project to provide support without an EHC Plan.</p> | |
| 4.5 | <p>Q: What safeguards are in place in respect of children on a reduced timetable?</p> <p>A: There is documentation for every child and all the assessments are on the social care database which shows the reasons for a reduced timetable. All the children have plans that show a weekly increase and the support being provided to get them back into full time education.</p> | |
| 4.6 | <p><u>Annual Report</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no statutory requirement to share the annual report with Governors but this was circulated with the agenda papers. • The annual report will be reviewed by the Corporate Parenting Panel. • The Annual Report Executive Summary will help with clarifying the role of the link governors as it provides a detailed update on each of the mission statements. • The annual report now includes targets. • The Assistant Headteacher has completed an audit of Child Protection Plans • It would be helpful to review targets for extended duties especially in respect of the areas the Virtual School is struggling with. • KS1 pupils were on track to achieve the national expected level at KS2. | |
| 4.7 | <p>Q: How useful is it to compare each local authority as the numbers are so small.</p> <p>A: The Virtual School covers three local authorities. It is useful to review when something is working well in one authority and is not having the same impact in another. Whilst data is important, the Attachment Aware Award and the need for</p> | |

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| | school moves to be authorised to ensure more stability are making a bigger difference. | |
| 5. | <u>Attendance Update (Ruth Gusterston)</u> | |
| 5.1 | <u>Child in Need Plans</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance across all three authorities has risen slightly since February 2023 and is above the national average. • Persistent absence in Kingston and RBWM has improved and is below the national average which shows that some of the interventions are starting to have an impact. • Persistent absence in Richmond has increased and is above the national average. | |
| 5.2 | <u>Child Protection Plans</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average attendance for children with Child Protection Plans in Richmond has reduced from February 2023, stayed in line for Kingston and risen slightly in RBWM. | |
| 5.3 | <u>CIN and CP Absence</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain schools are being targeted to try and improve attendance. • Raising awareness is part of the extended duties and a presentation was done to the DSL's in all three authorities. • 33 social workers have enrolled for the training on 6 July 2023. • It is difficult to do comparisons as this is a mobile population and the number of children on plans constantly varies. • One member of the staff in the Transition Hub is going into secondary schools and this has been successful. • A lot of schools have signed up for cohort four of the Attachment Aware School Award. • An Education Welfare Officer is being appointed. • Work is being done with St Mary's University to show the impact of the work being done to improve attendance. • Social worker clinics continue to be offered. | |
| 5.4 | <u>CLA</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence is below the national average in Richmond but is higher in Kingston and RBWM. • A lot of work is being done with schools to increase awareness. • The number of suspensions has reduced for Richmond. • The suspension rates are lower than the national average in Kingston and RBWM. | |
| 5.5 | <p>It was noted that it was agreed with the Child Protection Chairs that attendance would be raised at conferences and this is now starting to have an impact. There continues to be worries about the Child in Need cases and there needs to be a process in place to track this. There also needs to be work with the schools to ensure routines are in place if a child is not getting up for school.</p> | |

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| 5.6 | <p>There was a discussion on the processes in place in respect of Child in Need Plans. It was noted that an alert was sent to the social worker when any child was absent, suspended or excluded.</p> <p><u>ACTION:</u> <u>The Assistant Headteacher (Extended Duties) agreed to alert the Heads of Services and Team Leaders when any child was absent, suspended or excluded from school.</u></p> | RG |
| 5.7 | <p>Q: Are the young people who were suspended at Richmond schools?</p> <p>A: As the young people have CP or CIN Plans, they will be attending Richmond schools.</p> | |
| 5.8 | <p>Q: How does the recruitment for the Virtual School EWO correlate with the work done by the EWO's in Ops 1 and Ops2</p> <p>A: This role was suggested by Ops 2. The EWO will focus only on children with a social worker and will be an expert in this area.</p> | |
| 6. | <u>PPG Funding</u> | AT |
| 6.1 | <u>ACTION:</u> An update on PPG funding and how this is being used will be discussed at the next meeting. | |
| 7. | <p><u>School Moves/Placement Stability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Richmond has had the most school moves (64%) compared to Kingston and RBWM. KS3 pupils saw the most school moves 45.6%. 38.4% (10 out of 26) of the school moves were due to placement breakdown. 23% (6 out of 26) were due to a young person being placed out of the borough when they come into care. 7.6% (2 out of 26) were due to a young person's needs changing. The other reasons for a school move are safeguarding, adoption breakdown, a managed move and court directive. | |
| 7.1 | <p><u>Next Steps</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to use the school move authorisation form. Continue to raise awareness about the need for stability and attend team meetings in social care due to high staff turnover. Support with training for foster carers especially in respect of placement breakdowns. Continue to track stability circles in PEP meetings. A second stability symposium is being arranged. | |
| 8. | <p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>There was no other business.</p> | |
| 9. | <p><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>To be arranged.</p> | |

The meeting ended at 11 am.

Signed by the Chair _____

Date _____

Summary of Actions

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| 1.2 | Nikki Richards, Interim Nurse for LAC, to be invited to future meetings. | Clerk |
| 5.5 | The Assistant Headteacher (Extended Duties) agreed to alert the Heads of Services and Team Leaders when any child was absent, suspended or excluded from school. | RG |
| 6.1 | An update on PPG funding and how this is being used to be discussed at the next meeting. | AT |