

**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  
Meeting held: Tuesday 03 December 2019  
3.30 pm**



**Constitution, Membership and Attendance**

Director for Education Services	Charis Penfold (CP)
Director of Social Care	Alison Twynam (AT)
Virtual School Head Teacher	Suzanne Parrott (SEP)
Head of Governor Support	<b>Angela Langford (AL)</b>
Primary Headteacher (LBR)	Carmen Palmer (St Richard's CE Primary School) (CPa)
Secondary Headteacher (RBK)	Tom Gibson (The Holy Cross School) (TG)
Primary Headteacher (RBWM)	<b>Gemma Donnelly (GD)</b>
Foster Carer	Ruth Sinclair (RS)
Kingston and Richmond CCG	Vicky Fraser (VF)

**Apologies (in bold):**                      **Gemma Donnelly, Angela Langford**

**Also attended:** Paul Chapman (Deputy Virtual School Head) and Julia Hunt (Clerk)

<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies/Declarations of Interest</b>	
<b>1.1</b>	CP opened the meeting and apologies were recorded as above.	
<b>1.2</b>	On behalf of the Board, CP welcomed Sara Freitag (Virtual School EP), Collette Carter and Marzena Bryk (Finance) and Paul Chapman (Deputy Head). The agenda running order was adjusted to accommodate the external presenters.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>EP Overview (Sara Freitag)</b>	
<b>2.1</b>	SF gave an overview of the role of EPs in the Virtual School. Three part-time EPs support the Virtual School and their responsibilities are broadly divided over the three boroughs although there is some crossover. Their role comprises of five elements; training, child focused work, research, SEND, and consultation/supervision.	
<b>2.2</b>	EPs are available to CYP wherever they are in the country and often identify unmet learning needs. Their support reduces exclusions and support schools to reduce unnecessary placement moves.	
<b>2.3</b>	The EP's role is crucial in supporting the statutory role of the Virtual School to train and upskill others and achieves this through a variety of training opportunities.	
<b>2.4</b>	Consultation/supervision and reflective practice are evidenced based and effective means of giving psychology away, empowering and skilling up others who work directly with CYP.	

<p>2.5</p> <p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p>	<p>Numbers of CLA with SEND are significant and so EPs work closely with the SEN Team and meet half termly with them to discuss practice and streamline processes. EPs also have close links with EHS permanency team to ensure the right resources are being deployed.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Ruth Sinclair joined the meeting</i></p> <p>Research plays a key role and CLA are an under researched group. Among the many research projects, EPs worked with PALAC to identify the needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers which led to a co-produced guidance for schools. This research supported the Transition Hub bid.</p> <p><b>Q. Are the EPs full time?</b>  <b>A. No, 2 days are allocated to Windsor &amp; Maidenhead, and 2 days across Richmond and Kingston. There is an EP shortage nationally with insufficient numbers to currently support statutory responsibilities, so adding capacity is an ongoing challenge.</b></p> <p><b>Q. What access do CYP who are at risk of permanent exclusion have to neuro developmental assessments and how does this work in practice?</b>  <b>A. The Virtual School are linking in with Dr Pooley but access to this is very variable.</b></p> <p><b>Q. Will this change with the Transition Hub?</b>  <b>A. Not necessarily as it is an NHS service.</b></p> <p><b>Q. Is there speech and language therapy in the Transition Hub?</b>  <b>A. It is an option. If the Hub is located where it is expected, then yes.</b></p> <p>Governors discussed the need to share the preventative work undertaken by EPs to help the group of vulnerable children on the cusp of care who are experiencing fixed term exclusions. It is key to help schools be the stabilising factor in their lives when everything else is changing.</p> <p><b>Q. How successful are we in liaising with out of borough CYP?</b>  <b>A. it is a capacity issue and is particularly challenging for those CYP moving quickly around in multiple placements.</b></p> <p><b>Q. Are you liaising with Dr Pooley and the permanency services about these children? This needs to be joined up and triangulated.</b>  <b>A. Yes with the SDQ initiative we are looking at how we are going to monitor this across services.</b></p>	
<p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p><b>Finance Update (Collette Carter and Marzena Bryk)</b></p> <p>The Finance Team gave an overview of how the Virtual School is financed and how the funding is allocated.</p> <p>The Virtual School receives funding of £467,600 from the three boroughs via the Dedicated Schools Grant, council funding and the Previously Looked After grant (this grant is allocated by academic year rather than financial year). In addition the Virtual School receives a total of £561,200 PP+ funding equating to £2,300 per pupil.</p> <p><b>Q. Does the Virtual School get audited?</b>  <b>A. Yes, the accounts are audited by internal and external auditors and in addition a report is presented at Council level.</b></p> <p><b>Q. In terms of PPG how do we audit it is being appropriately spent?</b>  <b>A. Marzena Byrk meets with Sam Connor regularly to monitor this spend and SEP meets weekly with Sam Connor. Money is accounted for on the PEP child by child and a breakdown of PPG spend is circulated to governors.</b></p> <p>It was agreed AT would make a link governor visit to discuss PPG spend in more detail and give an update at the next FGB in March.</p>	<p>AT</p>

3.4	Governors discussed the criteria for allocating PP+ funding and it was agreed a “deep dive” should take place at the March FGB meeting. SEP outlined that the strategic use of PP+ was reported in the circulated PP+ Narrative. Additionally, each pupil’s impact is collected via PEPs and collated into a report. Use of PP+ is closely monitored both within the Virtual School at weekly meetings and with Finance. Reports are shared with the Link Governor for PP+ and the VSH’s Line Manager. Impact reports of PP funded interventions and training are shared with partners there are likely to be links between positive outcomes and the use of PP+. CP to consider the format of the PP+ funding and protocol “deep dive”. for additional feedback next term	CP
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p>	<p><b>General Update (Charis Penfold)</b></p> <p>Following Social Care focus visits and their feedback, a Careers Officer has been appointed for CLA. This role will offer advice to pupils from Year 9 to support their long term career discussions and to help us address the number of NEET CLAs. It was agreed Governors would review the impact of this appointment in Autumn 2020. Rochelle Watson, Post 16 Outreach to present to FGB in March 2020</p> <p>Kingston’s ILAC inspection (Ofsted’s Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services) was very positive – the report will be published on 19 December.</p> <p>In 2018 The Virtual School’s responsibilities were expanded to include CYP up to the age of 25. By establishing a Virtual College this would provide an opportunity to look at leaving care and how services support these young people. Work needs to be done on encouraging an attachment aware community, not just in schools and Ian Thomas is already working with local businesses.</p> <p><b>Q. Do those young people who have been moved out of the borough return?</b>  <b>A. Yes, broadly at aged 16-17 which is why a Virtual College would be so important.</b></p> <p>There has been consultation within AfC regarding Senior Leadership responsibilities and SEP is now line managed through Social Care in RBWM.</p> <p><b>Q. Who made this decision?</b>  <b>A. The Joint Directors of Children’s Services after a consultation period.</b></p> <p>Governors expressed their concern that they had not been consulted and CP agreed to take this back to CLT.</p> <p>Governors discussed the need for the FGB to ensure education remains a key focus. CP confirmed she will be meeting with CLT to discuss the Virtual School governance arrangements and will feedback to the FGB in March. In light of this it was agreed the Terms of Reference be reviewed at the March meeting. SEP outlined that a Virtual School sits between Social Care and Education and has equal responsibilities to provide support and challenge in both areas. The guidance for Virtual Schools is that they should be line managed either by the Director of Education or Social Care (ref Handbook for Virtual School Headteachers, National Association of Virtual Schools). SEP reassured Governors that she would be attending the same meetings in both directorates as before and that the Virtual School function of championing education would not change. The change in the level of reporting line would raise the profile of looked after children’s education; provide better opportunities to influence and was therefore a positive development for the looked after children in our care.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">TG left the meeting</p>	<p>CP</p> <p>CP/Clerk</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p><b>Virtual School Headteacher’s Reports</b></p> <p>SEP summarised the key attendance headlines. For 2018/19, average absence figures nationally were 4.5%. Locally they were 4% in Richmond, 4.1% in Kingston, and 3.9% in RBWM.</p>	

<p><b>5.2</b></p> <p><b>5.3</b></p> <p><b>5.4</b></p> <p><b>5.5</b></p> <p><b>5.6</b></p>	<p>Persistent absence nationally was 10.6%, Richmond was 5.7%, Kingston 9.6% and RBWM 6.7% all below the National level. Although Kingston is still quite high, it was previously at 27% and demonstrates a consistent improvement trend.</p> <p>The Virtual School produce reports on a by pupil basis to assess attendance patterns and themes and in October, 19% went on holiday in term time which is a concern as this requires approval from the Virtual School and SEP has received no such requests. In addition, there was 44% sickness and SEP will consider both of these further. 9% were due to exclusions and 22% were school refusal.</p> <p><b>Q. Are there any differences between in borough and out of borough?</b></p> <p><b>A. SEP agreed to look into this further.</b></p> <p>Governors discussed whether these absences are medical appointments inaccurately categorized as sickness. CLA often have complex medical needs which require numerous medical appointments which often need to take place during school hours. SEP explained that VS training to professionals highlights the importance of avoiding booking appointments during school hours as these can build up and impact on progress. Governors thanked SEP for the clear new format of the reports.</p> <p>SEP updated Governors on the Transition Hub. The Hub was created following a successful collaborative bid by the Virtual School, Barnet Virtual School and St Mary's University. The Hub offers support to the child, carer and the receiving school during the early phases of transition. The short term intended outcomes of the Hub are to facilitate more effective transitions into mainstream and/or care placements and ensure greater school and foster carer placement stability.</p> <p>GD submitted some comments on the SIP Report which was not covered at the meeting – Clerk to ask SEP to feedback directly to GD.</p>	<p>SEP</p> <p>Clerk</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p> <p><b>6.1</b></p> <p><b>6.2</b></p> <p><b>6.3</b></p> <p><b>6.4</b></p> <p><b>6.5</b></p> <p><b>6.6</b></p> <p><b>6.7</b></p>	<p><b>Reflections from the New Deputy Head, Paul Chapman</b></p> <p>PC briefly summarized his experience prior to joining the Virtual School and shared his thoughts on his first few months in post.</p> <p>In terms of learning and progress, although the cohorts are small every child is important. 71% of eligible students (7 students) achieved the expected standard in Phonics which is well above the national average. At KS1 (3 students) all are making good progress from their starting point.</p> <p>At KS2 (8 students) exceeded the national average for CLA and non CLA students. Progress 8 scores were: Richmond +0.33, Kingston -0.44 and RBWM -0.62. National CLA is -0.96.</p> <p>The percentage of pupils achieving English and Maths 4+ was 44% in 2019, compared to the National CLA average in 2018 of 17.5%. All three boroughs exceeded the 2018 national average for attainment 8 and English and Maths 4+.</p> <p>PC reminded governors of the mountain categorization used to monitor student progress and ensure all levels of ability were supported with interventions.</p> <p>Two Celebration of Achievement events took place this term and were well received.</p> <p>At the PAN London Virtual School Conference, London boroughs met to build networks, to learn from each other and to share good practice.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p> <p><b>7.1</b></p> <p><b>7.2</b></p>	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>Minutes of the meeting dated 8 July 2019 were agreed as an accurate record. All actions were complete, subject to the following updates.</p> <p>Action 5.1.2 - SEP/AT to discuss the inclusion of risk assessment reports on a child's file following a school's RI judgement. It was agreed it is appropriate for this risk assessment to be held on the Ofsted Huddle.</p>	

<b>7.3</b>	Action 6.5 - SEP to provide a breakdown of CLA SEND in and out of borough for the November meeting. It was agreed a "deep dive" on CLA and SEND (including sub groups) be placed on the Summer meeting agenda.	<b>Clerk</b>
<b>7.4</b>	Emerging groups and those at the edge of care should also be a future agenda item.	
<b>7.5</b>	Governors agreed that the meeting time should be extended to 1hr 45 minutes.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
<b>8.1</b>	18 March 2020.	

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm

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

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary of Actions

<i>Item</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible governor</i>
3.3	AT to make a link governor visit to discuss PPG spend in more detail and give an update at the next FGB in March 2020	AT
3.4	CP to consider the format of the PP+ funding and protocols "deep dive"	CP
4.5	CP to feedback to CLT governors' concern at not being consulted about SEP's line management changes	CP
4.6	CP to feedback on Virtual School governance arrangements at March FGB Terms of Reference to be reviewed at March meeting	CP Clerk
5.3	SEP to consider differences regarding in and out of borough data on persistent absence	SEP
5.6	Clerk to ask SEP to feedback to GD on comments submitted in relation to SIP report which was not covered at the meeting	Clerk
7.3	CLA/SEND Deep Dive to be placed on July agenda	Clerk