

**Minutes of a virtual Governing Body Meeting of Lord Lawson of Beamish
Academy on Wednesday, 10 March 2021 at 5.30pm**

Governors Present: Chris Smith (Chair), Andrew Fowler (Principal), Andrew Chanse, Guy Currey, Cllr Sheila Gallagher, Claire Godfrey, Joel Greenwell, Dr Jane Halpin, Jayne Hooker, David Horn, Alison Logan, Heather McClean, Elena Ovington, Mark Surtees, Kevin Thompson

Observers: Joe Dicocco (Observer, Deputy Principal)

Clerk: Kim Ashford

The meeting started at 5.34pm and was quorate.

1. Apologies for absence

- Apologies were received from Linda Alder. Consent was given for her absence.

2. Declarations of Interest in any items on the agenda

- There were no declarations of interest in any items on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the last Governing Body meeting on Wednesday 23 September 2020

3.1 Approval of the minutes

- Governors received the minutes of the last Governing Body meeting on Wednesday 23 September 2020, as circulated via e-mail prior to the meeting. The minutes were **approved** as a correct record.

3.2 Matters arising (not appearing elsewhere on the agenda)

- Item 3.2 – Open letter to the ESFA: The Chair confirmed that he has drafted the letter to the ESFA and will discuss this with the Principal before sending it.
- Item 4.2.3 – Sixth Form update: The Principal confirmed that the 2 Physics students interviewed by Oxbridge have been offered places.

- Item 6.1 – Information to publish on a school website: The Principal confirmed that the website is not yet fully compliant but that this is in hand. Andrew Chanse has kindly offered to help with this project.
- Item 8 – Any other business – 3rd bullet under the heading **Friday 18 December 2020**:
The Principal asked that a small amendment is made to the sentence below, adding “part of” where indicated:
*“The Principal proposed bringing forward, in part, the INSET day that was planned for 22 February, and to have **part of** this take place on Friday 18 December.”*
The Clerk agreed to make this amendment. **Action: Clerk.**
- Item 10 – Update on Kate Kendall: Kate is now on a phased return working 3 days a week, and is aiming to be back full time by Easter.

4. Governing Body membership and vacancies report

- Governors received the Governing Body membership and vacancies report, for information.

5. Principal’s Report

- Governors received the Principal’s Report, as circulated by email prior to the meeting, along with the following documents relating to the Principal’s report, also circulated by email prior to the meeting:
 - Academy Safeguarding Plan 2020-2021
 - Support to reduce the impact of lockdown on disadvantaged pupils, March 2021
 - Student numbers, September 2021
- The Principal commented on the report as follows:

5.1 Academy restart/ risk management/ Safeguarding/ Testing/ Arrangements for pupils require to self-isolate

- The restart is going well, with only Year Groups 8 and 9 still to return.
- Attendance has been good. Year 11 attendance figures were at 93.5% on Monday 8 March, 93.4% on Tuesday, 92.5% on Wednesday. Year 10 figures were 97.3% on Tuesday and 95% on Wednesday. Year 7 figures were 93.7% Wednesday. The cumulative percentage of attendance over the first 3 days back are 93.5%, 95.4% and 95.8%. These figures are in line with attendance figures for more normal days, which is very encouraging.

- Year 11 attendance has been impacted by a number of factors. These include:
 - This year group has a higher than usual number of students who are long-term school refusers or who are attending alternative provision (and for whom we do not yet have the attendance data)
 - Lateral flow testing on Monday produced a positive result, which then led to a small number of students having to isolate
- The first 3 days' attendance figures are included below, for information:

	% attendance	% attendance	% attendance
	Monday 8th	Tuesday 9th	Wednesday 10th
Year 11	93.5	93.4	92.5
Year 10		97.3	95
Year 7			97.3
Cumulative	93.5	95.4	95.8
FSM year 11	91	88	83
FSM year 10		90.3	86.4
FSM year 7			95.6
Male year 11	94.6	96.1	94.6
Female year 11	92.8	91.4	91.1
Male year 10		98.1	95.9
Female year 10		96.6	94.1
Male year 7			96.8
Female year 7			97.8
EHCP year 11	100	50	100
ECHP year 10		100	50
ECHP year 7			83.3

- There have been 2 positive test results from the lateral flow tests, both in Year 11. Advice from the DfE was that 'track, trace, isolate' needed to be done for the students, despite the fact that face masks were worn. This is because the masks were not 'medical grade' face masks.

The Principal gave the following responses to questions from Governors:

- *In terms of attendance, is there a free school meals gap?* Yes, there is a small gap, where slightly fewer free school meals

children are attending than other children, but a smaller gap than in the autumn term.

- *How have the children embraced being back?* The children are largely glad to be back. They are pleasant, understanding of the changes that are in place, and working hard. The children are a little quieter than normal. There is a lot of staff presence around the building, and staff are impressed with the children's attitude and behaviour.
- *What will remote learning look like for students who are required to self-isolate, in comparison to remote learning up to now?* It will vary. For most classes live streaming is not preferred over classroom learning, partly due to IT issues that can occur. Lesson material is shared for remote learning.
- *Is there a degree of flexibility for individual teachers in regard to remote learning, for example in terms of whether they live stream?* Yes, they can live stream if they wish.
- *What is the rationale for Years 8 and 9 being tested once they return to school?* We needed to get one Year Group per day coming back, and we were not sure how this would work, hence testing while the children were in school.

5.2 Wellbeing across the school community, including staff sickness absence

- Staff sickness absence has been low this year.
- The Principal sent out letters to 60 members of staff congratulating them on 100% attendance since last year.
- For the 4 members of staff who are shielding, agency cover is in place.

The Principal gave the following response to a question from the Chair:

- *In terms of student wellbeing, what support is there for students who have struggled during the pandemic and have anxieties about returning to school?* A strong message regarding the wellbeing of students went out to staff the week before the return, and this is something we are very much looking out for. We have done a lot of work with students during lockdown and on their return. There has been a lot of contact from staff and also from student support for individual students. Additional mental health training is available for staff, and there is also material for students and parents.

5.3 Support to reduce the impact of lockdown on disadvantaged pupils

- Governors received a document from Janey Stubbs entitled Support to reduce the impact of lockdown on disadvantaged pupils, March 2021.
- The report shows that a range of activities have been in place. The focus is on getting students who have fallen behind the support that they need, with an emphasis on making the best use of time available and for everyone to have high expectations.

The Principal gave the following responses to questions from Governors:

- *Have you been able to assess whether disadvantaged children have been more adversely affected by lockdown than non-disadvantaged children?* We do not have this analysis in terms of hard data, but we can run this fairly easily. We expanded our definition of disadvantaged to include educationally disadvantaged rather than only socially disadvantaged. Where students were deemed to be vulnerable and not engaging, they were brought into school full time. In some cases, underperforming students were also brought into school for a day's 'boot camp' to work with staff to examine what the problems were and how the school could help the students.
- *How personalised is the recovery curriculum?* Wherever possible we have continued with the curriculum as planned during lockdown. In lockdown, we gave students work that they could achieve via the mode of remote teaching. We know who did not engage and where they need to catch up, and we can help them by recapping on all necessary areas. For Years 11 and 13, the timescales for catching up are small, and a 9-week scheme of work has been put together where children are recapping and then assessed via a series of mini-assessments. For Years 10 and 12, we will be working on filling in gaps and following the normal curriculum with a view to taking some mock exams in the summer term.
- *The tutoring programme is a great initiative – is it working in school?* We all had great hopes for this but our experience trying to engage with it has been frustrating, as it has been for a number of schools. The supply of both quality tutors and any information we have requested has been limited. We have been using some of our own teachers for extra tuition. Added to this, we could see that as the cohort of students we wished to support were not engaging with our own remote offer, they would be unlikely to engage with that of an outside organisation. We would like to work with you [Joel Greenwell] on this, and we

have not written it off; we are just letting you know the approach we are having to take at the moment. I will put you in touch with Louise Ford so that you can have a direct conversation about what we can do together. **Action: Principal.**

- *Have disadvantaged students been more or less engaged with mental health services offered by the school?* I have no ready answer at the moment, but I will be able to get you some data on this.
- *What is the crossover between the definitions of 'disadvantaged' and 'vulnerable' students?* 'Vulnerable' includes all disadvantaged students. All students in these categories were encouraged to come into school. We went above and beyond, to also bring disadvantaged students into school who were not classed as vulnerable according to the government definition. All of our students receive the same offer in relation to support, encouragement, delivery of learning and additional tutoring where necessary; the difference is that disadvantaged students get this first.

5.4 Free school meals

- Governors had asked questions at the last Governing Body meeting regarding free school meals. The Principal confirmed that Janey Stubbs has since sent out information on free school meals to all Governors.

5.5 Examination and assessment

- The Principal stated that Joe Dicocco is currently supporting subject leaders in putting together the examination and assessment provision.
- Joe stated that he began by reading all available guidance on this subject. The approach the school is taking is to focus on further developing the students, continuing with teaching as much as possible rather than having an emphasis on testing. Subject leaders are putting together a 9-week scheme of work up to the May/June half-term, so that all students are assessed on the same areas of learning. Subject leaders have a good deal of knowledge about where students are and where they would have been expected to be by the end of the year under more normal circumstances. There is therefore a measure as to how students are progressing against this, in the current period.

Joe gave the following responses to questions from Governors:

- *Are these grades moderated in any way, or is the assessment up to the school?* The grades submitted will be the grades awarded. However, there is a quality assurance measure on the part of the exam boards, when they receive the awards. Where awards seem to be out by a large margin when compared with the school's previous assessments and/or nationally, there will be some form of individualised intervention, including looking at the school's evidence and working with the school to arrive at a more moderated opinion, if necessary.
- *You said you are not teaching any more of the syllabus, but will students miss the base curriculum?* Our plan is to use Year 11 gain time to invite the students back in to study on a bridging course, to study in small groups. We know what content students have not seen and therefore what they need to cover, and we will prepare them for the course.
- *How much of the curriculum have you been able to get through?* It varies depending on the subject. The more content-heavy subjects such as English, History and Geography have some gaps. In terms of Geography for example, over two thirds of content has been covered and no new material is now going to be delivered; students will be tested on what they have covered to date. A lot of work was done on predictions before the second lockdown. Departments have a good idea as to where the students are.
- *Having the bridging tools there for the Sixth Form is great, but are we coaching them into understanding what this means? Are they aware they will have to work a lot harder to bridge the gap?* One of the advantages of lockdown is that many students have become more independent in their learning; some parents have said that this experience will help prepare them for University. We will continue to coach students, but they will also continue with the self-coaching they have become accustomed to during lockdown.

5.6 Student numbers

- Governors received a document entitled Student Numbers September 2021.
- Sixth Form applications are up slightly, and Year 7 places are down. The PAN is 254, and 231 places have been offered.
- The figures in the above report show that other schools across the borough are taking in significantly over their PAN. Because of where Lord Lawson is located geographically however, the school

is not able to pick up students from surrounding schools because most of the surrounding schools are not in Gateshead.

- There was a problem with the Durham County Council form such that some Ouston parents were not aware that they could apply to a Gateshead school. This problem has now been addressed. The Headteacher of Ouston Primary School has also put out information to parents of all Year 6 students, informing them that Lord Lawson does have places and explaining how they can apply.

The Principal gave the following responses to questions from Governors:

- *Where does the 120 Sixth Form applications sit in terms of the capacity for applications? We would not turn anyone away provided they meet the entry requirements or are likely to do well based on alternative qualifications. We would normally cater for around 120 to 150 students for each Year Group.*
- *What is an enhanced PAN? Where schools want to offer more places than their PAN states they can offer, the PAN can be temporarily enhanced to the desired number, without permanently expanding their official PAN.*
- *Is there any theory as to why our Year 7 numbers are going to be low in 2021? There are a number of bullet points under point 8 on the Principal's report that address this.*
- *We are the only school who hasn't reached the standard number rather than the increased PAN, which is a concern. Yes, and we are surprised at the extent to which the PANs have increased in other schools.*
- *If this continues, should we be approaching Gateshead Local Authority to ask them where they see us in the community, going forward? We could suggest to the LA that for one year the school could reduce its PAN, meaning that technically we will be full. We could also speak to the LA on moral grounds, asking them to contain the expansion of the PANs of other surrounding schools.*
- *How much does the recent Ofsted judgement help us? When this is published, will it help tip things for us for next year? The additional monitoring inspection that we had was not a Section 5, so it cannot alter the current judgement – only a full inspection can do that. We can certainly use any favourable comments that were forthcoming from the recent Ofsted inspection, although this will not change the existing judgement. Our priority is to improve the school as fast as we can, and we are focussed on doing this.*

6. Link Governor reports

- Governors received the Quality of Education Governors' Impact Evaluation Visit Report from Alison Logan, as circulated by email prior to the meeting.
- The Principal thanked Alison for the level of detail contained in her report.
- The Principal stated that Alex Rayner would like to work with a Governor on the plan for outreach to primary schools, and asked if any of the Governors would like to become involved, in that capacity. Claire Godfrey and Heather McClean volunteered, and the Principal confirmed that he would put their names forward and would ask Alex Rayner to contact both Governors. **Action: Principal.**

7. Dates and times of future meetings

The dates and times of upcoming meetings were presented as follows:

Trust Board meeting

Wednesday, 24 March 2021 at 5.30pm

Academy Management Committee meeting

Wednesday, 21 April 2021 at 4.00pm

Student Progress Committee meeting

Wednesday, 19 May 2021 at 5.30pm

Academy Management Committee meeting

Wednesday, 16 June 2021 at 5.30pm

Governing Body meeting

Wednesday, 14 July 2021 at 5.30pm

- A Governor queried the 4.00pm start for the Academy Management Committee meeting in April. The Chair stated that he would query this with Linda Alder and confirm to the Governors and the Clerk whether the start time would remain as 4.00pm or revert to the usual time of 5.30pm. **Action: Chair.**
- The Chair **agreed** to circulate the dates for meetings taking place in the academic year 2021/2022. **Action: Chair.**

8. Any other business

Policies

- Guy Currey stated that there are 14 policies scheduled to be approved, and it would be appropriate to share the load in terms of review of the policies. Guy proposed that he obtains the list of draft policies from Linda Alder and Sam

Wakefield, and share this with Governors with a view to obtaining volunteers for reviewing the policies.

- Kevin Thompson suggested that if any of the policies are key to Governors' responsibilities, then these policies should be allocated to those Governors. Guy agreed that he would look at this.
- Governors **agreed** that they were happy for Guy to move forward with this project. **Action: Guy Currey.**

Ofsted inspection

- It was noted that an online Ofsted inspection took place last week, which went very well. The Chair requested to note formally the Governors' thanks to the Principal and senior leaders who were directly involved with the inspection, and to all staff who supported colleagues who were directly involved.
- This was a positive inspection wherein the inspectors recognised the efforts the school was making across the board. The school has a good idea of what strategic action needs to be taken to improve and move forward.

Meetings at the Academy

- The Chair stated that a Governor had asked informally whether there were plans to return to the Academy for meetings. The Chair stated that not everyone has received their Covid-19 vaccinations as yet, and that despite the date given by the Government of a 'return to normal' on 23 June, the school will continue with remote meetings for the rest of this academic year.
- Kevin Thompson asked whether Governor link visits can resume after 23 June. The Principal stated that only essential visits can take place, and pointed out that Kevin's linked SLT members are currently shielding. Kevin stated that he was happy to wait until 23 June and then review the situation regarding link visits at that point.

Succession planning

- The Chair stated that there are plans to work towards succession arrangements for the Chair and Vice Chair positions, and a meeting will be called in the near future to put these plans to Governors and invite them to submit their views. The Chair stated that he would be happy to attend future meetings as an ordinary Governor, if this will help support the incoming Chair/Vice Chair in their new roles.

IT issues

- It was noted that several Governors have experienced difficulties with their Academy email accounts. It was also noted that there appear to be 2 domains: *@lordlawson.org.uk* and *@lordlawson.academy*. Joe Dicocco confirmed that significant IT issues have been encountered in moving the staff

email accounts across from *@lordlawson.org.uk* to *@lordlawson.academy*.
Once the staff issues are rectified, it will then be possible to move Governor
email addresses across to the new domain. Joe confirmed that all emails that
are sent to staff are being forwarded on to the current email address for those
members of staff.

The meeting closed at 7.26pm. Staff Governors left the meeting at this point.

Date.....

Signed.....