

NOTES OF THE CONSULTATION MEETING BETWEEN ELECTED MEMBERS, OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OXFORDSHIRE GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION (OGA) HELD ON TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 4.00pm VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

OGA Representatives: Carole Thomson [Chair] (CT), Judith Bennett (JB), Ian Courtney (IC), Lorraine Foreman-Peck (LFP), Doreen Rose (DR)

OCC Elected Members and Officers: Tim Brock (TB) [Lead Officer – Governor Services], Hayley Good (HG) [Deputy Director for Education], Kevin Gordon (KG) [Director of Children's Services] (part of the meeting), Kim James (KJ) [Head of School Improvement and Learning], Cllr Liz Brighthouse (LB) [Deputy Leader of the Council], Cllr Ian Corkin (ICo) [Chair - Scrutiny Committee]

In attendance: Katie Paxton [Clerk].

Apologies for absence: Stan Terry (ST)

1. Matters arising from notes of meeting held on 7 June 2021

The notes had been previously approved by email.

1.1 F40. MPs briefing now planned for 1 March 2022.

The briefing had been deferred. CT hoped to attend.

1.2 Two OGA open meetings had been held virtually since we last met.

Two very successful open meetings had been held. OGA was pleased to be working with OTSA to enable these virtual meetings to take place.

It was noted that numbers of electively home educated children had been creeping up. There had been 891 as of the previous day, an increase on a figure around 865 since September 2021.

1.3 Projected pupil numbers: Pupil place plan currently out for consultation.

OCC Officers were giving pupil placement updates on a localised basis and in regular contact, providing information, to headteachers. They were also holding locality meetings with Councillors. It was agreed that it would be useful for governors to be given relevant information direct. TB and HG would discuss with Allyson Millward, Head of Access to Learning.

Action: TB/HG

1.4 HR Advice. New OCC schools HR business partner appointed. (Michelle Higgs - MH)

Governors were pleased to see the appointment had been made and MH had met with the Workforce Steering Group the previous week.

The issue about HR advice given to headteachers occasionally being wrong had been raised at the WFSG meeting; this had led to a number of headteachers taking actions that were dubious or had caused problems. MH had advised that she had embarked on a complete audit of HR advice and guidance to make sure it was correct.

1.5 Increasing academisation and DfE intentions. Any update.

There had been no further update from DfE as yet. CT, JB, IC, KP and TB had attended the NGA Conference where the Secretary of State had provided a message which mentioned a

White Paper to be published in spring 2022 to include details about the Government's vision for schools going forward. A SEND Green Paper was also due to be published in the first quarter of next year.

2. The significant shortfall of places at special schools is creating an increasing need in maintained schools for staff able to support pupils with complex needs. Schools are requesting dedicated and funded training for TAs on SEND and how to support pupils. Is this being considered?

As part of SEND transformation work, Kate Bradley was leading on the SEND continuum. There were a couple of pilot projects in conjunction with schools. The need for consistency of support and practice was acknowledged.

An early intervention offer which would include universal support such as TA training was being pulled together. HG would discuss what the universal offer could include with Kate Bradley. Although it would be a much more co-ordinated offer, there may not be new staff on the ground. It was hoped that a telephone support line would be introduced for SENCOs and teachers when in need of urgent advice.

A lead officer was being recruited. It was hoped that they would be in place before April 2022 so that the offer would be available for September 2022. Until that point the offer would not be finalised.

All training links were now included in *Schools News* which should make it easier to identify. Communication to schools in the past had not been good.

KJ pointed out that there had been a report about the use of TAs many years ago which had concluded that impact depended on the way that TAs were deployed. Quality First teaching and well planned lessons was key for children making progress. It was important that teachers had performance management targets to improve outcomes for SEND pupils. There was something about leadership for the class teacher planning for each SEND child. This would help headteachers to hold SENCOs to account for pupil performance. The work of governors was also necessary to hold people to account and skill up teachers and TAs. TB would consider a document setting out good questions to ask and governor training on how to ask those questions.

Action: TB

It was noted that SEND pupils were central to planning in some schools already. All pupils had profited from the practice.

It was suggested that an area in GovernorHub be allocated for governors and trustees to share best practice. Consideration would be given to identifying a suitable platform to do so.

Action: TB

3. What is the OCC strategy for emergency capital expenditure for maintained schools? Particularly in relation to emergency Health and Safety issues.

OCC Officers were aware that there was a piece of work outstanding around condition surveys which were still to be undertaken by colleagues in Property.

Governors advised of a school with a 50-year old fire alarm system; parts could no longer be sourced, there was no central control and it was one failure away from having to close the school. Each OCC visit over the last few years had said that the system was fine. Governors queried the level of confidence that the local authority had in the surveys. Concerns were expressed that surveys were undertaken and things not being highlighted that could not be

afforded. The experience on the ground was that estates were deteriorating faster than schools could keep up with and there were increasing concerns about keeping sites safe. Schools were considering paying for their own commercial condition surveys to identify issues.

OCC officers explained that there had been churn at a strategic level in the Property team. However, there had been a commitment to fund the surveys a few months ago and a commitment that they be done over the next year. There was a question over whether they would be conducted on all schools and it may be put on hold until the White Paper had been published: if there was going to be any push to academisation then OCC may need to rethink the programme. Governors expressed their concerns that funding had been allocated for surveys that may be over a year away from being done. It was noted that some discussion had taken place in Schools Forum which had been informed that condition surveys would be done quite a long time ago.

OCC officers explained that the last lot of condition surveys had been undertaken by Carillion which explained the quality and lack of consistency.

HG would follow up with the Property Directorate and would endeavour to get a written update. The lead officer would be asked to nominate someone from the Property team to attend the next OGA/OCC consultation meeting.

Action: HG

4. What is the latest position with regard to support for Afghan (and other) refugees?

Operation Warm Welcome had seen over 200 children land in Oxfordshire, though not all had stayed in the county. By 3 October all children had been placed in eight schools across the local authority area. Schools had been absolutely brilliant with PTAs raising funds to provide essentials such as warm winter coats and socks, laptops, etc. A small amount of money from DfE had also gone to those schools. There were further pockets of money for housing and health.

It had been a tricky piece of work to find places for the children ensuring that there was enough space to keep family groups together. It was also necessary to provide transport from hotels.

Oxfordshire was now part of a national transfer scheme for refugees.

Cllr Brighouse left the meeting

5. Any other business

Governors were thanked for all the help and support they were giving schools: it had been a very challenging 18 months and continued to be so.

The numbers of Covid cases in the county were high: there had been 1,142 cases in the week before half term, the previous week there had been over 1,000 and there had already been 500 this week. There had been 165 staff off sick with Covid in the previous week and already 70 in the current week.

KJ continued to meet virtually with headteachers every Tuesday with the latest focused on the new government guidance. The Government agenda was that all schools should be open; however, headteachers had to decide at what point it was unsafe to be open because there were insufficient staff. Headteachers had been advised to talk to their governing board.

KJ stressed the need for balance between support and challenge at the present time. She and TB would also be talking to colleagues over the next few weeks about the balance between

boards being effective and boards engaging. TB was very pleased with the engagement with training but more important was boards being effective and having the right priorities.

It was noted that the Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, had presented *The Big Answer* responses to a nationwide children's survey:

<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-answer/>

IC had obtained the data for Oxfordshire which would be appended to the meeting minutes. In the responses, children in Oxfordshire had reported as slightly happier than national average.

HG would provide copy of the chat from the meeting to CT.

Officers were thanked for their support and time.

6. Date of future meetings TBA.

Action: HG (EK?)

The meeting ended at 5.00pm

Additional points from the Meeting Chat:

Agenda Item 2.

KJ offered to provide a list of key questions for Governors to ask. Also noted that some of this information is included in the Governor Training course 'Holding schools to account'.

KJ provided the link to the EEF Guidance to help primary and secondary schools make the best use of TAs '[Making Best Use of Teaching Assistants' | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](#)

Noted 25 courses this term for OCC Governors and over 850 governors trained this term.

KJ also provided the link to the [Oxfordshire School Inclusion Team \(OXSiT\) | Schools](#)

OXSiT run the following course: 'Effective TA deployment and practice' package

A one-and-a-half-day package to develop understanding around how teachers should deploy and use TAs for maximum impact in the classroom and to improve TA interactions to develop learning and independence in pupils (£918). (N.B. OGA question related to 'Funded' training for TAs).

HG 'We are developing a strengths-led model - developing a directory of good practice for schools in relation to SEND'.

Agenda Item 3:

KG: Re alarm system headteacher should talk to Allyson Millward

Allyson.Milward@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Appendix: Information From The Big Ask

Thank you for getting in touch regarding The Big Ask. Unfortunately, we did not capture any data which would allow us to identify children of armed forces personnel.

The data is available at local authority levels here:

<https://childrenscommissioner.github.io/working/index.html> This allows for comparison between local areas.

I've had a quick look at the figures for Oxfordshire as a whole using the 'download data' function under the local area maps:

% of children unhappy with...	% in Oxfordshire	% nationally
My friendships	5.236976	5
My experiences online	4.30165	5
My personal safety	3.566213	4
My access to somewhere outside to have fun	9.298411	10
The choice of things to do in my local area	18.29628	19
Life at school or college	13.97798	16
My progress in education	9.628162	10
My mental health	21.30229	20
My physical health	10.5333	11
My family's health	5.675499	6
My family life	6.546348	6
My family's ability to buy things we need	2.20432	3
My life overall	7.711074	9

Overall children in Oxfordshire seem to be slightly happier than the national average, though they were slightly more likely to be unhappy with their mental health (21% unhappy compared to 20% nationally).

You can also split the data by types of vulnerability and local area characteristics. Hopefully this is useful for understanding the population of children in your area overall. We have also published our [questionnaires](#), if you wanted to repeat a similar survey in your school but include an indicator for service children.

Kind regards,

Evidence Team

Children's Commissioner for England

Email: research.network@childrenscommissioner.gov.uk



Get the data: [Childhood Local Data on Risks and Needs](#)