

Directors' Note for Portfolio Groups

Portfolio title: Pilton Bluecoat LGB

Date of meeting: 22nd February, 2023

Attended by: Caroline Preston, Julien Morton, Sam Crocker, Dan Polak, Verity Goss (clerk)



Brief overview of discussion

Welcome and apologies

CP welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies received and accepted from Zoe Charlton.

Ethos

School Values - art presentation

DP showed governors the recent artwork commissioned to show the schools values, and explained how these were referred to during the school day.

Main Business Meeting

Register of Business Interests

No interests declared. CP was in the process of being appointed as a trustee for TEAM.

Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes

Log in for Devon Education Services – VG to arrange.

Correspondence

None received.

Reports

Head of School Report

- Covid Catch-up, Pupil Premium, and School improvement
- Opal project
- Walkthrus

Governors had received the report – agreed it was clearly laid out and useful. DP explained that it had been separated into the different Ofsted criteria. Attendance – governors noted that this was higher than the national average, and were pleased to see that there had not been any exclusions this year. *Were letters going to parents of children with low attendance?* DP explained the current process around attendance. DP had called the families concerned to explain the thresholds set by Devon County Council. DP explained where absences would be authorised. Considering fining was a big change in Devon – education services had found that after Covid there were a lot of families that were viewing school as optional. Sporadic attendance could increase anxiety around school.

Were the number of children under Early Help or Child Protection normal for a school this size? Did it change year on year/how did it impact on resources? DP explained the school had good resources in place, with pastoral workers available. These staff member absorbed a lot of issues that normally the head of school would have to deal with. DP reminded governors of the current state of Devon’s children’s services. DP explained that a parent had to agree to Early Help. There were a lot of things that could be done informally – for example the pastoral team checking in weekly with parents and providing support. The pastoral team were also able to lead meetings with other professionals. If there were serious concerns about the wellbeing of a child and they were at child protection level, there would be a lot of meetings including teachers and local services. Child in need was a step below this – there was less risk for the child, with fewer meetings and less immediate targets. There was a high level of turnover with social workers – DP explained the difficulties that this could cause. DP explained there had been an increase in safeguarding concerns in the school – this was similar across all schools. *Did this draw resources away from elsewhere in the school?* DP confirmed that it did take time away from other roles. There were also problems caused when there were changes to the time of meetings.

Staffing – Pilton had been fortunate not to have a high amount of staff turnover. *How much time was taken up with staff being needed outside of the classroom?* DP explained that Pilton was fortunate to have the pastoral team in place to keep this to a minimum. Staff payrises – schools had not received additional funding for the payrise. Pilton Bluecoat was fortunate that in that the budget set had a carry forward, which had now been reduced. Many schools had been badly affected.

School improvement – DP explained that pupil premium funding was received in recognition that disadvantaged children needed additional support. It was used to provide what a child needed to help them achieve at the same rate as their peers – this may be social/emotional support, or learning support.

DP shared the walkthrough books, and explained how teaching strategies were used to improve practise. Staff shared good practise with their peers – DP explained the guidelines that had been written on how to work together and look at improving.

DP shared what a recording of a lesson looked like. *Did children know they were being recorded?* DP explained that they did – the cameras were unobtrusive, but it was explained to children how recording a lesson would help teachers get better at teaching, and that it wasn’t shared outside of the

school. DP explained how teachers became comfortable with having their lessons recorded – initially the lesson was recorded and only the teacher concerned watched it before it was deleted, then they would choose a section to share, before the whole lesson was shared. DP explained how teachers found it difficult to monitor their own performance in real time.

Staffing – one teacher currently off. DP explained how a rotation of teachers was being used to reduce the impact on all classes – this was more consistent than supply.

Was the Opal Project going to go ahead? DP explained that it would still happen, but not immediately – Opal would come in to look at the current provision in March.

Behaviour and attitudes – DP explained that there were a lot of issues where children were falling out after school while under parental supervision, and the parents were then contacting the school. Parents and children were now asked to leave the site once school had finished – it was hoped this would reduce these issues.

Monitoring and Accountability

Pupil Premium Data

Data was included in the report section.

Comparative judgement – DP explained that scoring writing was highly subjective, and staff could be swayed by a child's normal level of work. DP showed how the comparative judgement tool worked – two pieces of writing were compared with staff deciding which was better, rather than giving a set mark to each piece. This took place with all members of staff across the trust. This was more accurate than marking individually. DP explained it was likely that data would be changed after the comparative judgement process. It also showed how accurate staff were in their own judgements – those who were less accurate were the less experienced staff.

In some areas, the number of children reading age related expectation was comparatively low – for example non Pupil Premium Y6 maths. DP explained how in Y6 not all of the content would have been taught at the point the test was taken. The data was higher than last year, and it was looking like this cohort would be higher than the national average. DP explained the national average for age related expectation – tests were very hard. *Did staff make an effort to ensure children did not worry about SATs?* DP explained that pastoral support that was around SATs – SATs breakfasts took place, children did fun activities during the rest of the week, and children quite enjoyed the week. Staff worked on children not being worried by the tests.

Strategic

Governor Skills Audit, Training, and CPD online

CP explained the different ways that governors could access training. CP and JM were attending the March TEAM training.

Self audit on BlueSky happened annually – CP explained that it had been felt previously that not everyone had given themselves enough credit in terms of the skills that they had. CP explained the purpose of doing the skills audit to see what skills the board had across its members.

Governors discussed which focuses for visits they would be best suited to. CP to take lead on organising a date for governor visit.

Policies for approval

Attendance – updated

Uniform Policy – question on how second hand items could be obtained. DP stated that there were sales at school events, but parents could also approach the office. *Were vulnerable families aware of this?* DP confirmed that they were, and there were also items that could be given away if needed. *Was there any stigma attached to children having second hand items?* DP explained that there were quite a lot of children who had second hand items – most were in very good condition, and there were environmental as well as cost considerations for choosing second hand items. Governors noted some items on the policy that were not what happened in practice – some children wore leggings rather than joggers for PE, no shorts were listed for summer. Governors discussed what would be a suitable alternative to closed toe sandals for summer wear that might be preferred by boys.

AOB

Matters brought forward by the Chair

Dates of next meeting TBC

Date of next meeting – Wednesday 14th June, 6.00pm.