

**Meeting of the Thomas Hardy Governing Body
Training Room, Thomas Hardy School – 25th November 2020 – 4.30pm**

Present: Tony Moore (Chair), Mike Foley (Headteacher), Hugh Griffiths, David Grassby (left early due to technical issues), Tim Gallego, Alan Trowbridge, Simon Conibear, Rachel Turberville-Smith, Mike Faulkner, Garry Batt,

In attendance: Linda Morrison (Assistant Headteacher), Richard Nicholls (Assistant Headteacher), Jan McKie (Finance Director), Michelle Matthews (Business and Finance Manager), Jon Dean (Assistant Headteacher), Laura Cheney (Assistant Headteacher)

Apologies (Item 1): N/A **Late Arrivals:** Dr Ennion – 17.00

Item	Minutes	Action
20/16	Declarations of Interest (Item 2): None.	
20/17	Elect Chair and Vice Chair (Item 3):	
20/17.1	Chair - Mr Moore volunteered to serve as Chair. This was proposed by Mr Batt and seconded by Ms Turberville-Smith. Governors unanimously agreed Mr Moore be appointed Chair.	
20/17.2	Vice Chair - Mr Moore proposed that Mr Grassby be appointed acting Vice Chair if he agrees. Mr Conibear seconded this proposal and Governors unanimously agreed. Mr Grassby experienced technical difficulties which affected the Board's ability to hear him. Clerk's Edit – Mrs Smyth can confirm that Mr Grassby has agreed to take the role of Acting Vice-Chair for this year only.	
20/18	Minutes of the meeting 14th October 20 (Item 4.1): were approved and signed as an accurate record Matters arising (Item 4.2): 20/9 (Item 6): MAT Aims and Priorities – Amend minutes to read 'in Category 4' instead of 'in Category' 20/13.7 (Item 10): COVID – Q: Governors discussed the Catch-Up Funding plan and asked when this would be available for Governors to review. Mr Foley confirmed that senior management have met to discuss the use of catch-up funding. Ideas include setting up a catch-up school during the Easter holidays. Senior management are working up plans at present, considering interventions both in and after school. Mr Foley explained that there are difficulties with both; if interventions take place during school the children could be missing out on learning in class, however, if interventions take place after school the children will miss the school busses. Online interventions are also an option though many of these children are behind because online learning did not work for them during the first lockdown. Q: A Governor enquired as to whether any of the funding needs to be spent on new hardware. Mr Foley confirmed that new hardware has been purchased. Mr Cornell added that this was spent in advance of the catch-up funding being made available so will not form part of this. Mr Grassby left the meeting at 16.40	VS

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<p>20/19 20/19.1</p> <p>20/19.2</p> <p>20/19.3</p>	<p>School Improvement Plan and Self Evaluation Form (Item 5): – Governors Q&A Document (Item 5.1) – Mr Hardinge asked if there were any further comments or questions from Governors – None</p> <p>Review Link Governor Roles (Item 5.2) – Mr Moore and Mr Hardinge informed Governors that they have discussed the Link Governor roles and agree it will be more effective if the roles linked more specifically to the school improvement plan strands. This will provide greater focus to Governor Visits; it will enable Governors to take an aspect within their strand and look for the evidence of success detailed in the SIP. Governors unanimously agreed. Governors to identify which of the strands they wish to monitor. Mr Moore will give some prompts once all Governors have selected their strand. Governors to email their preference to Mrs Smyth ASAP Mrs Smyth will update the plan and share on the portal so Governors can see which strands have been filled. The plan will also show which staff member Governors need to make contact with for virtual meetings in the first instance, in relation to their chosen strand.</p> <p>Agree Governing Board Priorities (Item 5.3) – Mr Moore will draft a Governors Improvement Plan based on the SIP and Governors SWOT. Q: A Governor asked for a deadline for completion. Mr Moore suggested by Christmas so that Governors can review the plan and results of the SWOT after Christmas.</p>	<p>TM GOVS</p> <p>VS</p> <p>GOVS</p> <p>TM</p>
<p>20/20 20/20.1</p> <p>20/20.2</p> <p>20/20.3</p> <p>20/20.4</p>	<p>Finance and Operations Update (Item 6): Risk Register (Item 6.1): - Circulated in advance. Mrs McKie confirmed that she will review the risk register next term with Ms Matthews and other school senior management. Governors will review the risk register termly. Mrs McKie also advised Governors that COVID is a separate risk assessment and that the register is an overview of risks whilst the risk assessments will contain the detail.</p> <p>Internal Audit (Item 6.2): - Circulated in advance. Q: A Governor noted the governance actions including the recommended changes to the website. Q: Another Governor noted the issue with the Register of Business Interest not matching. Mrs Smyth explained that on a previous declaration a Governor had declared their safeguarding role at their place of employment but had not included it in a subsequent declaration. Mrs Smyth had left the first declaration on the register but the auditors had since advised that the register should match the current years' forms. Mrs Smyth has now made the recommended changes. Mr Foley explained the process and purpose of the internal audit and that it is a 'double check'. The internal auditors are different to the external auditors though they look at similar things. The process is useful and the reports will be shared with Governors for them to monitor the action outcomes.</p> <p>Annual performance management report including anonymised examples of targets and pay award information (Item 6.3): – Mrs Smyth confirmed that she had not received this and that it would be added to the portal as soon as it was available for Governors to review.</p> <p>Headteacher's Targets (Item 6.4): - Mrs Smyth will add these to the portal also.</p>	<p>VS</p> <p>VS</p>
<p>20/21</p>	<p>Headteacher's Report (Item 7):</p>	

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<p>20/21.1</p>	<p>Numbers – Stable, though the sixth form number is of concern as the school was not able to hold its open evening in the normal way.</p>	
<p>20/21.2</p>	<p>School operation – Mr Cornell explained he had tried to provide a flavour of how the school was operating including the decisions being made in the report. He confirmed it has been very hard for staff. The school has had 10 cases to date and every case has an impact on the numbers of students isolating. Q: A Governor enquired as to how many students need to isolate for each case. Ms Cheney explained it is in the region of 20-25. She added that each class has a seating plan which the staff use to identify close contacts as well as the bus seating plans and social contact information provided by the students themselves. Q: Another Governor enquired as to attendance. Mr Cornell confirmed average pupil attendance is in excess of 90% in comparison to 78% nationally. Dr Ennion arrived at 17.00 Q: Mr Cornewll was asked by a Governor if pupils self-isolating affect the attendance figures. Mr Cornell confirmed the current lower school attendance figure is 94.5% but this does not take into account those that are self-isolating or absent due to COVID. Sixth form attendance is more difficult than usual as the school has asked sixth formers to come in only for their first lesson start time. Last figures were 95% for year 12 and 92% for year 13. Q: A Governor enquired as to the effect of COVID on persistent absentees. Mr Dean explained that there are some families where attendance was problematic prior to COVID, not attending due to COVID. The school is working closely with the inclusion team at the council, however, the current message is that no one will be pursued for non-attendance which is difficult. Governors Mr Cornell to pass thanks, on behalf of Governors, to all staff. They acknowledged how demanding and tiring the situation is for all staff and the sterling work they are doing in the circumstances. Mr Cornell informed Governors that staff attendance is also very high. Mr Moore stated he would write to staff on behalf of all Governors.</p>	<p>TM</p>
<p>20/21.3</p>	<p>Safeguarding – Mr Cornell informed Governors that the school has enhanced non-teaching pastoral support in school at the right time. Senior management are also exploring the century tech learning platform to see if that will improve things for those that don't come in to school usually. Q: A Governor enquired as to a mental health survey for pupils. Mr Cornell confirmed that one is undertaken with the lower school. Ms Matthews left the meeting at 17.06 Governors were also informed of the increasing number of pupils with mental health concerns that the guidance team are catching. Mr Nicholls outlined the provision now available in the sixth form and that some students have been expressing suicidal tendencies in larger numbers than previously. Mr Cornell explained that there is little data to compare this to as there was no guidance leader in the sixth form previously. He noted that there are a few students in every class struggling and they are not necessarily the ones staff would have expected. Mr Cornell stated that the situation has been relentless for staff and that the teachers and the students are tired. Q: A Governor asked if the guidance team have the professional capacity and experience to support students with mental health issues. Mr Cornell opined that they do due their professional backgrounds and prior experience. He explained that there are 4 staff in the guidance team for the lower school and</p>	

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	<p>1 in the sixth form. The new structure in the sixth form has proved better suited to picking up issues and a second guidance leader has been appointed who will be coming from CAMHS. This person has also had training in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy which will be used.</p> <p>Q: A Governor enquired as to how this has been funded. Mr Foley stated it has been partly funded through the restructuring of the sixth form team.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked for the survey to be shared with Governors.</p> <p>Another Governor commented from the perspective of a parent that the uncertainty around exams is putting a lot of pressure on pupils. Mr Foley agreed and added that it is also putting pressure on staff. He explained that they are teaching courses not knowing what is at the end and that mock exams have taken on a new importance in light of the decisions the government made in the summer. The Governor reassured those present that the vaccine is coming and will be a game changer in the fight against the virus.</p> <p>Colleges – Governors were informed that they are working as normally as they can in the circumstances. The online parents evening has been very successful and this may stay long term.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked staff present whether the comment he had come across that 'the fun has been taken out of schools' is true. Mr Cornell agreed that it is a fair comment in respect of enrichment. Curriculum clubs are still taking place but there are no sports, drama, choir activities etc. The school is nowhere near normal.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked if this has manifested in behaviour issues with pupils. Mr Cornell opined that the pupils seem more immature, especially in Year 9 and that this was perhaps as a result of not finishing Year 8. They have also not been able to be brought into the ethos of THS as normal so there has been more silliness than usual. He suggested that 'cabin fever' could also play a part. He concluded that there has been more 'naughtiness' than usual but no serious problems and exclusions are lower than at this point in comparison to last year.</p> <p>Q: A Governor opined that there had been difficulty creating the culture. Mr Cornell agreed.</p>	
20/21.4		
20/21.5	<p>Catch-up Funding – Mr Cornell referred to the report and stated he had provided insights into the strategies being considered.</p>	
20/21.6	<p>Sixth Form – Mr Cornell referred to the recruitment film.</p> <p>Q: A Governor congratulated Mr Nicholls on the film and stated that it was brilliant, professional and slick. Governors agreed.</p> <p>Q: Another Governor enquired as to links with feeder schools. Mr Nicholls confirmed that he has attended assemblies at All Saints School almost as normal and has communicated with Wey Valley. Other schools in Weymouth and Portland have been harder to make links with.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked if the number of applications are at the same level. Mr Nicholls stated it was difficult to say; 240 people have registered and 120 have completed their application form. This is substantially down from expected. The school will remind Year 11's during the last week of term after the mocks, in order to help them understand that the move to sixth form is not automatic and they need to apply.</p> <p>Q: A Governor commented that the bus advert had been very noticeable. Mr Nicholls agreed that it had worked well and that they are considering another ad, possibly on hoarding.</p>	

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<p>20/21.7</p>	<p>Standards – Mr Cornell informed Governors that exams, grade boundaries etc are all unknowns. Staff have been positive about the way the Year 11s have returned. Progress is a little bit less than usual as is to be expected after 4 months out of school and there will be a clearer picture after the mocks. In the sixth form there is more polarisation than usual. The professional pathways are not as strong as they could be. The courses will still be covered and the school has far less students and staff isolating in comparison to other schools around the country. Mr Cornell confirmed Ms Morrison would provide some ALPS data next time.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked if data on disadvantaged and SEND pupils from Formatrix could be included. Ms Morrison agreed.</p> <p>Q: A Governor enquired as to the effect on UCAS applications. Mr Nicholls explained that the internal deadline for UCAS applications is this week and that numbers are good still. Pupils are still applying despite not being able to go to university open days. The guidance leader is working 1:1 with all students that have indicated they will not be applying for university alongside Penny Campbell who is supporting pupils with apprenticeships. He agreed to produce figures for the next meeting.</p> <p>Q: A Governor asked if more pupils deferred entry to university this year. Mr Nicholls confirmed that some had but not huge numbers. All have own, individual reasons for still going or deferring.</p> <p>Q: Another Governor asked if the Autumn Series of exams had gone well. Mr Cornell confirmed that the exams process was smooth but the school is unaware of the grade boundaries.</p>	<p>LM</p> <p>RN</p>
<p>20/21.8</p>	<p>School and Capital Projects – Ms Cheney gave an update on the Theatre refurbishment project and confirmed that the school has been awarded £500k of section 106 money by the council, in partnership with Dorchester Arts. The school will guarantee Dorchester Arts 30 nights hire per year which will be chargeable. Governors discussed the possible sources of funding for the shortfall.</p> <p>Q: A Governor noted that the school has the funds. Mr Foley explained that though this is the case, the school would need to be reassured that it is going to be recouped by other funding streams.</p> <p>Q: A Governor commented that the potential income would recoup this expenditure and that there is a business case for taking it out of the reserves. Mr Foley opined that the speed at which the funds can be recouped is important. The school is due to be in a healthier position and if the government publishes a three-year spending plan with current levels of funding he would be more confident taking the money from the reserves. Governors discussed issues such as the current state of repair of the theatre, the need to utilise the summer holidays for disruptive building phases, the possible economic recovery once the vaccine is widely available and possible difficulties sourcing contractors and materials. Mr Foley advised Governors that the window replacement project will begin in January.</p>	
<p>20/21.9</p>	<p>MAT Update – Governors were informed that there is a possibility of Purbeck School joining. This is exciting for THS as it will provides opportunities to work with another successful secondary with a similar ethos. Their GB have voted to join the MAT and have approached the Regional Schools’ Commissioner to express an interest formally.</p>	
<p>20/22</p>	<p>Training Feedback (Item 8): Mrs Smyth reminded Governors that they</p>	

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	<p>have been signed up to the Learning Link Governors training platform provided by the National Governance Association. Governors should have received a link from the virtual college to create their account and she asked Governors to check and create their username and password using the link. If Governors have not received the link please inform Mrs Smyth.</p> <p>Q: A Governor commended the training courses to Governors stating they are easy to access and well prepared.</p>	GOVS
20/23	Policies (Item 9): None	
20/24	Any other business (Item 10):	
20.24.1	Governor appointment – Ms Over introduced herself to the Governors and shared her background and interest in the role. Mrs Smyth asked Governors to vote on whether Ms Over be appointed to the Board. Governors unanimously voted to appoint Ms Over to the Board.	
20/24.2	Governor Elections – Mrs Smyth confirmed that Mr Faulkner had been appointed to the Board as Support Staff Governor. The Teaching Staff Election had yielded 3 applicants and the vote would take place on the 26/11/20. The Parent Governor election process would not reach a conclusion until 18/12/20 as there are several applicants for one vacancy.	
20/24.3	Ski Trip – Mr Foley updated Governors as to the present position regarding the ongoing dispute over cancellation fees with the ski trip provider. The school’s solicitors are providing advice.	
20/24.4	Thanks – Governors expressed their thanks to Mr Batt for his many years of sterling service to the school as both Governor and Chair of Governors. He was invited to attend the next meeting for more formal thanks. Mr Batt thanked Governors and opined that he was leaving the Board in good hands. Mr Moore also thanked Governors and wished all present a happy and safe Christmas and New Year. Meeting closed at 17.50	

Action Log

Person	Action	Timing	Outcome/Update
Vicky Smyth	20/9 (Item 6): MAT Aims and Priorities – Amend minutes to read ‘in Category 4’ instead of ‘in Category’	ASAP	Complete
Governors	20/19.2 (Item 5.2): Link Governor Roles - Identify which of the strands they wish to monitor and email their preference to Mrs Smyth.	December 20	Partially complete - still awaiting all Governor responses
Vicky Smyth	20/19.2 (Item 5.2): Link Governor Roles – Update the plan and share on the portal so Governors can see which strands have been filled.	Ongoing	As above
Tony Moore	20/19.2 (Item 5.2): Link Governor Roles – Give some prompts once all Governors have selected their strand.	February 21	
Governors	20/19.2 (Item 5.2): Link Governor Roles – Make contact with link staff member for virtual meetings in relation to their chosen strand.	February 21	
Tony Moore	20/19.3 (Item 5.3): Agree Governing	February	

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	Board Priorities – Draft a Governors Improvement Plan based on the SIP and Governors SWOT.	21	
Vicky Smyth	20/20.3 (Item 6.3): Annual performance management report including anonymised examples of targets and pay award information – Add to the portal	ASAP	Complete
Vicky Smyth	20/20.4 (Item 6.4): Headteacher’s Targets – Add these to the portal also.	ASAP	
Tony Moore	20/21.2 (Item 7): Headteacher’s Report - Write to staff on behalf of all Governors to thank them for their sterling work.	ASAP	
Linda Morrison	20/21.7 (Item 7): Headteacher’s Report - Provide data on disadvantaged and SEND pupils from Formatrix for the next meeting	February 21	Data moved to March meeting due to lockdown. February focus to be remote education provision and related issues.
Richard Nicholls	20/21.7 (Item 7): Headteacher’s Report - Produce figures on UCAS application numbers for the next meeting.	February 21	
Governors	20/22 (Item 8): Training Feedback - Create username and password using the virtual college link. If Governors have not received the link please inform Mrs Smyth.	ASAP	

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