



BENTHAL PARENT VOICE

Minutes of Meeting Friday 22nd May via Zoom at 2pm

Present:

Louise Drew (Head), Susannah Barker (Chair), Sauda Ramzan (Aspen Class representative), Pandora Syperek (Juniper class representative), Olainde Agbaje (Elder Class representative), Andres Gomez de la Torre (Hornbeam class representative), Stacey Samuels (Beech class representative), Nayomi Bodha-Hennadige (Ash class representative) Alom Mohabub (Birch class representative), Mo Islam (Pine class representative), Donna Kelly (Minutes)

Apologies:

Sandra King (Arbutus class representative), Senem Hayirli (Serrula class representative), Christie Forster (Hazel Class representative),

1. Welcome and introduction

- (i) Susannah welcomed and thanked all for coming and asked that parent class representatives continue to check their class emails regularly and to acknowledge any new emails with a brief response to show that parent queries are being received. She then passed over to Ms Drew to talk through the process of school reopening and encouraged comments/questions from the reps after Ms Drew had spoken.

2. School Re-opening. Ms Drew to provide information on school reopening.

- (i) Ms Drew welcomed all to our first Benthal Parent Voice zoom meeting and was pleased to share the school's response to the government announcement that schools are to reopen from 1st June. She expressed her surprise at the year groups which had been chosen. Background work has been going on prioritising health and safety for the children and staff, and the school has been looking at feasibility of how to safely reopen subject to risk assessments.
- (ii) Last week Year 6, Year 1, Reception and Nursery parents were emailed/texted to identify who might send their children back to school and Ms Drew had an emergency meeting with the governing body, looking at the safety of children and staff.
- (iii) The school has been open for children of key workers and other eligible children since the school closure and have had on average 15-24 children attending regularly each day. The Senior Leadership team have been sharing thoughts, looking at the numbers and working on the risk assessment provided by Hackney Learning Trust, adding in detail needed for Benthal. The shape of the classrooms has been taken into consideration with regards to

social distancing and the decision has been made that there will be a maximum of 8 children per classroom. 15 is the suggested size of bubble from the government but that won't be possible at Benthall given the shape of the classrooms. The governing body are in full agreement with this.

- (iv) 1st June will be an inset day and will be used to share documentation with the staff and go through everything. Getting the school ready with ten days' notice has been challenging. It has been decided that from Tuesday June the school will be open to Key Worker and eligible children as previously.
- (v) From Monday 8th June, the confirmed Year 6 children will return in their bubble groups of 6-8 children in each bubble. This will give the school a chance to see how the systems work with a smaller number of children. From the 15th June, the confirmed children from Early Years and Year 1 will return. For early years all 3 classrooms will be open (nursery and 2 x reception). Yr 1 will use the two Yr 1 classrooms.
- (vi) Drop off and pick up times will be staggered to ensure social distancing. There will be a maximum of 8 children in each classroom. The bubble groups will never mix with each other and staff will not swap bubble groups. Yr 6 will use Rendlesham Road entrance. Other years will use courtyard main entrance.
- (vii) Including Key Worker and eligible children, so far approximately 50 children are confirmed. Timetables have been made for playtimes/lunchtimes and where they will eat. The risk assessment is based on this number of children. If more parents in these years decide to send their children back after school opens, a further risk assessment will need to be undertaken (and approved by the governing body) as different systems will be needed. These parents will need to send an email to confirm their intention, their children cannot turn up at the school gates without notice and this has been made clear in the email sent to parents. There may be a delay of up to 2 weeks before their child can attend school.
- (viii) All details have been shared quickly with affected parents. After half-term, the risk assessment will be uploaded to the website and will be emailed to the affected parents. If the numbers of children who would like to return to school starts to increase the provision will need to change depending on the number of children. For example, the school may need to look at children attending school every other week. Currently children will attend every day.
- (ix) Each bubble groups will have one dedicated adult all week, there will be no swapping adults. The children will bring their home learning packs from home. There will be no formal teaching in school and the work will not be marked, it would be impossible to do so. Remote learning for all other children not at school will be exactly the same. Adults will be linked with bubble groups and staff will be rotated weekly. Year 6 will have transition activities to help them transition to Year 7 with Yr 6 teachers and members of staff familiar with Yr 6. Teachers being used with other year groups are linked to those year groups already.
- (x) Ms Drew attended an online meeting with Annie Gammon (Head of Education at Hackney Learning Trust) and over 100 other headteachers. HLT made it clear that while Hackney was endeavouring to follow a June 1st opening, they acknowledged that it was up to

individual headteachers and governing boards as to how they open up. HLT are happy with Benthall's approach and Risk Assessment which also has full support from the school staff.

3. Follow up questions and discussion. It was agreed that as it was an online meeting, Susannah would invite parents one by one to ask any questions.

- (i) Nayomi asked if the timetables will be the same for those children in school and those at home, Ms Drew confirmed they would be and a newsletter would be sent out clarifying this. June 1st will be an inset day and more physical timetables will be made up then.
- (ii) Susannah welcomed Alom who joined the meeting at this point.
- (iii) Stacey had no questions and felt all had been covered.
- (iv) Sauda was trying to ask a question but couldn't get her mic to connect for the rest of the meeting.
- (v) Mo thanked Ms Drew for the update which he felt was very informative. He wanted to know what protective measures were being taken for teachers. Ms Drew answered, following government guidance there would be a minimised number of adults in school. All staff in school are on a rota to reduce the number of staff in school and are following guidance of handwashing, using hand sanitisers, using latex gloves when necessary. PPE will not be necessary for teachers. All information is in the Risk Assessment. If a child requires first aid, the staff member dealing with this will wear gloves and a mask. If a child needs help with personal hygiene/intimate care, staff will wear gloves, mask and apron. Risk Assessment includes hand washing guidance and use of hand sanitiser gel - which has been timetabled throughout the day for example each time a person moves to a different room, goes outside and back into the classroom. In the Risk Assessment, if a child is displaying Covid symptoms, the supervising adult will wear mask, apron, gloves and will isolate in a separate room with the child. A room will be allocated in the school which is not the medical room for the child to isolate until they are picked up. If a child needs to self-isolate then they will be encouraged to have a test. All children in their bubble will need to go home and self-isolate, until that child has been tested. If this test is positive then all others in the bubble will be encouraged to get tested. If the child displaying symptoms tests negative, then all children in that bubble can come back to school. Children of 5 years old upwards and their families can all be tested now for Covid.
- (vi) Pandora asked Ms Drew to confirm that if one child has symptoms all children in the bubble need to go home and Ms Drew confirmed this to be correct, to minimise the spread of infection. If it's positive the other children and staff in the bubble will need to be tested.
- (vii) Mo asked in relation to the children in Reception and Year 1 who are not coming back, how they will settle back into school in September. Ms Drew answered that this was a tricky question. Nobody knows at this stage what the new academic year will look like. The Government will issue further guidance and advice for schools after half term, which Ms Drew will share.
- (viii) Andres said that he wished we could have recorded Ms Drew's explanation of what's been going on at school and the plans she has made as it was brilliant to hear. He felt it would have been beneficial for all parents to hear her saying this. He said she had answered 90% of the questions he had from parents, and from the parents he had spoken to he had

received an abundance of positive feedback about how the school has responded to the situation. He encouraged Ms Drew to look at a document he had sent earlier in the day which recorded all of the enormous positive feedback he has received from parents in relation to the school's response.

- (ix) Andres asked if the number was 50 children in total or 50 children plus key worker children. Ms Drew said that so far in total, there were 19 children in Year 6 on the 8th June confirmed, and on the 15th June it was 11 in Year 1, 10 in Reception and 4 in Nursery, plus a further roughly 10 key worker and other eligible children per day across the other year groups.
- (x) Andres said there were three other points he would give and allow Ms Drew to respond to all three together. The points were: 1. The parents were welcoming the printed materials of the home learning packs as not everyone has internet computer access - will this continue? 2. Would there be any online classes with teachers? 3 Other than the teachers phone calls, are there any plans to have the work the children are currently doing at home marked and corrected? Ms Drew responded that when school closed on 20th March they were given 48 hours' notice, from Wednesday evening to Friday. The teachers pulled out all the stops making the home learning packs and have kept them up to date. On the second week after the Easter holidays, new physical home learning packs were made up. The school knows that some families may not have devices and internet access. The school has continued to run activities online and also give the physical home learning packs. The office team have been regularly texting to remind parents to collect the home learning packs. Regarding point 2. Teaching via a platform would be tricky as not all children have access but the school is considering this for the forthcoming academic year if not all children are at school. Ms Drew and our Business Manager Anna have been looking at ways of getting access to laptops for families, so everybody could have a laptop. The other thing to consider with teaching via a platform is if for example two siblings in different years have a maths lesson at the same time then two separate devices are needed. It's challenging and the school are aware and working hard looking at ways that they may be able to overcome this. Andres said he felt this was fair enough and if the situation remains in September then perhaps parents can work with the school to help to overcome this. Ms Drew agreed these were tricky times and there had been no way of knowing previously who had access to devices and who did not. She assured him that she is on the case but the process takes time to resolve.
- (xi) Susannah asked about point 3, if there were any plans for formal marking? Ms Drew responded unfortunately not. Marking is impossible to do via remote learning. The teachers and adults in school need to consider health and safety and shouldn't touch anything which has been touched. The teaching assistants have washed and disinfected enough pots of resources for the children returning to school and those resources cannot be shared in school, for example rulers and pens. The laptops in school will need to be disinfected after each use along with the headphones. The teachers have been instructed not to touch the booklets handled by children in line with health and safety guidance.
- (xii) Pandora asked how the Year 1's and other Years will be socially distanced and asked about the impact on their mental health, and also asked if the school had made any observations

so far in relation to the children's mental health given that many of the new steps seem quite alarming (although necessary) for younger pupils. Ms Drew said so far the key worker and eligible children who have been in school have been in groups of a maximum of 8 pupils. Each child has their own table and chair totally separated with their own resources, which the staff are cleaning and disinfecting often. Activities are still going on with younger children. It is challenging for the staff with Early Years as this is very different to how Benthal normally works - collaborative work. Regarding mental health, the staff have been doing circle time activities. Once a week the speech and language therapist from Speech Bubbles has been coming in and working in socially distanced teams with the children for dancing and drama sessions. Ms Louise is coming in for music lessons. Harold is coming in for PE activities. The school is running creative curriculums as much as they can and are very aware and mindful of the mental health and wellbeing of children and staff. Ms Joseph is in touch with the CAMHS team (Child and Adolescent Mental Health) and they have given recommendations of activities that can be run after half-term by Learning Support Assistants who have been trained in those areas e.g. resilience training for the Year 6 transition activities (this will be adapted for those at home). The school is adapting as best they can and in the new academic year will be doing a lot of PHSE work.

- (xiii) Pandora said that there had been some queries in relation to the Free School Meals vouchers. Ms Drew confirmed that FSM provision continues whether a child is at home or school. This will be clarified in the forthcoming newsletter and Ms Drew asked Pandora to encourage parents to speak to the office if they have any queries.
- (xiv) Olainde said she felt Ms Drew and the school were doing a fantastic job and wanted to thank them. She asked if Ms Drew could explain the self-isolation process again, if a student is showing symptoms how long do they need to self-isolate for? Ms Drew said if a child is symptomatic then they should be tested and self-isolate for 7 days. If the original child tests negative, then the bubble can come back to school immediately. Susannah pointed out that we don't know the turnaround time for test results at the moment. Ms Drew said all of the children in the bubble would be encouraged to get tested ASAP.
- (xv) Olainde asked the difference between ongoing provision of Universal Free School Meals and Free School Meals as some Yr 2 parents aren't getting vouchers. Ms Drew advised her to direct any queries of this nature to the office who could explain and help any parent with these questions.
- (xvi) Alom said he missed the first half of the meeting but he really wanted to reiterate that he felt that Benthal were doing a fantastic job. He asked if the children were going back on June 1st, Ms Drew explained that was an inset day and the rest of that day would be making up home learning packs, getting the classrooms ready, removing furniture getting a deep clean of the school. Then on June 8th some Year 6's would return and on June 15th some Nursery, Reception and Year 1 children would return.
- (xvii) Alom asked when Year 5's would return and Ms Drew advised there were no current plans from the government about the return of Years 2-5. The Prime Minister has suggested that they may be back before the end of term, but she asked that all bear in mind that if the numbers of children attending school increase a new risk assessment will be needed and

ultimately it will be up to Ms Drew and the board of governors to decide what is safe. In the meantime, those year groups will continue with remote learning and home learning.

- (xviii) Alom asked if the term dates will remain the same and Ms Drew confirmed that July 17th will be the last day of this academic year.
- (xix) Alom asked if parents can volunteer to come and help in any way, he knows that a lot of parents would like to do this, he has free time. Ms Drew said that volunteers will be called on if needed.
- (xx) Susannah said that other parents had also been asking if there was anything they could do to support the school in a broader sense. Ms Drew said she will call if needed.
- (xxi) Pandora said she felt this information was all very reassuring and that the teachers are heroes. Ms Drew said this information be shared in the newsletter for those who haven't already received emails. Ms Drew has been messaging the children once a week through Marvellous Me and Tapestry.
- (xxii) Susannah said she thought it might be a good idea in the newsletter to mention this meeting and the fact that we have met and discussed all of this. Ms Drew agreed and added that she would signpost parents to class emails.
- (xxiii) Andres said some parents felt overwhelmed by the different channels in use, the website, Marvellous Me and emails. Ms Drew said that this will continue as it important to reach everyone with the information. The children will receive weekly messages from Ms Drew and newsletters so the level of communication remains transparent throughout with information sharing using every piece of media possible.
- (xxiv) Susannah said that it is obviously important to use different channels of communication to ensure that everyone receives the information but it might feel less overwhelming for parents if it was ensured that there was consistency across Marvellous Me messages and the home learning packs.

4. AOB (Any Other Business)

- (i) Susannah asked the reps to please keep checking their class emails and to consider setting up auto replies explaining that e.g. they only check once a week.
- (ii) Susannah said she would like to arrange another meeting for the next half term before the end of the academic year and will be in touch.
- (iii) All were thanked for keeping things going.

End of Meeting.