

Learning Committee

19 May 2021

Present: Jodie, Claire, Mark, Katrina, Sarah, Ashley, Lynne, Mandy, Dan

Apologies:, Sajni, Bini

Purpose of the session was to hear about and consider Gillespie's longer-term approaches and plans in the wake of the school closures, including in relation to:

- Wellbeing and positive mental health
- Parental engagement
- Learning catch-up

Wellbeing and mental health key points:

- Lynne said that the school had had more success getting children in during second lockdown – reflecting the national picture. They were able to make a few additional CAMHS referrals, get engagement again from the educational psychologist (although they were dealing with backlog). Termly Inclusion meeting - has continued throughout lockdowns.
- Sarah reported that children had generally settled in well after the first lockdown, but this had been as a 'honeymoon period' for some children. Some children appeared to be coping well but parents later informed her that was not the case at home and she has noticed some children not being able to self-regulate as well as prior to lockdown. Lynne said that in some classes small friendship problems felt more likely to spiral up. SEN children seemed especially impacted.
- In terms of the schools approach since returning, Mark said that the priority has been on supporting children in their classes (due to restrictions). Teachers have put a lot of focus on talking to children about how they felt during lockdown and tried to play as much as possible. Lynne has been conducting focused work on social skills with some groups and individual work with KS1 and KS2, and reporting back to parents.
- An INSET day took place earlier in the year with staff/teachers/TAs thinking about the MAST survey conducted with children prior to the pandemic – although children responded positively on a number of areas a lower percentage reported feeling that an adult in school cares about their wellbeing than anticipated. Efforts to engage pupil voice continue and the school will be participating in the new Children's Commissioner's national 'Big Ask' about wellbeing as well as consulting with children in small groups to inform future policy and plans.
- Teachers and parent governors noted that restrictive covid protocols have made lunchtimes/breaks hard for some pupils over time – the school has recently made adjustments to lunchtime to partially address this so that children do not have to sit so long in the lunch-hall.

- The school has also conducted a staff audit of wellbeing – this covered culture, ethos, access to support, difficult situations with pupils, managing workload and work/life balance. The next step will be creating a staff wellbeing policy and developing means for monitoring and understanding impact.
- The school's CAMHS link clinician leaving but the school is still able to make CAMHS referrals and expecting a new linked clinician soon.
- A new Schools Wellbeing Service has been Piloted in Islington and is now being made widely available for schools – Gillespie now has a named link worker for early help (Emma Masterson).
- Katrina and Mark are not anticipating big announcement on relaxing of mixing in schools after 21 June but await government plans. The summer fair, sports day, and residential Y6 trip to Cardfields all remain in the school diary but are assumed tentative.

2. Parental engagement key points:

- Mark identified that some of the new ways teachers learnt to communicate with parents over the lockdown have been positive. Staff have also noticed benefits from parents engaging more with aspects of learning - for example their knowledge about how the maths curriculum and how it is taught. Sarah said that some of the learning discussions she is having with parents are now more fruitful as a result.
- Lynne said that work with some of the more vulnerable children and those with SEN during the first lockdown had facilitated excellent collaborative working with parents. The school developed strong email contact with some as well as face-to-face relationships. Some of the one-to-one sessions with Speech and Language have worked better virtually.
- Claire emphasised the need to think in the next year or so about how that experience can be replicated – including using a different approach to bring your parent to school day.
- Mark agreed and said that the school plans to re-evaluate its approach to parent engagement including the use of the bring-a-parent to school day. Although any new approach would need to take account of time pressures on parents once things are back to 'normal'
- Other ideas mooted included workshops for parents and inviting them in more to observe lessons once restrictions allow that. Mandy said that the school workshops on behaviour and phonics in the past had been really helpful in giving parents to tools and language to engage on topics and align with the school approaches.

3. Learning catch-up

- Mark said that the school's current approach to catch-up is targeted interventions for groups of children by qualified teachers who know them. The school has reviewed in recent weeks and would like the class teachers to have more time to do this. They plan to make this possible by having trusted teachers covering classes.
- Sarah gave an example from year 6 where this is happening successfully through utilising Meg and the year 6 TA in y6 to cover enabling her to do small group and one-to-one targeted work, especially in English and maths. Children are appreciating the additional support and in some cases asking to participate in it.

- Claire asked if Gillespie has access to the national tutors programme. Mark explained they had elected not to participate in it as the school would not have a say in choosing the tutors and would have had to spend a proportion of catch-up fund to access it. [DN: rules for this have since loosened]
- Katrina says that although there has been a delay in the schools' participation in the Nuffield Early Literacy project due to the second lockdown and then a closure of the reception bubble, this will now be going ahead. It will not be possible to complete the 20 weeks before the summer though so it will need to spread into the autumn term.
- Jodie asked if high attainers are also being targetted through the catch-up plans. Although this group is not a key focus, Sarah said most teachers are trying to provide some extra support and she is taking Y6 high ability groups in maths. Where Lynne takes groups of lower attainers out for targeted support, there can also be benefits to higher attainers who stay and are able to benefit from more focused teaching. Mark has re-prioritised his dedicated maths support for more able students on Year 5.

Follow-up actions:

- **Catch-up to be discussed further in context of review of end of term assessments at next Learning Committee being held on 14 July**
- **All discussion from today to feed into thinking about school priorities and improvement plan for next year**
- **Further Learning Committee meetings to be scheduled next year to follow up on progress with plans to update approach/strategy to parent engagement and on mental health and wellbeing**