



Leading a School through Covid - 19: A Governors View

The primary purpose of the government's legislation is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by people staying at home and staying away from others. In this blog I will look at the ways in which this effects the work of school governing bodies.

In the first instance this means that governing bodies should no longer meet in person. The regulations are written in such a way which permits "virtual" meetings. This is made possible with the advent of technology platforms such as Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams etc. If this technology is not available common-sense judgement is important, taking decisions via email or phone calls for example. The key issue is that Clerks to governing bodies are able to maintain clear communication and an audit trail for any decisions taken.

The overriding priority is everyone's well-being, so the focus has to be on urgent matters. Non urgent matters where possible should be delayed. Clearly, there will be some differences depending on whether the school is closed or is acting as a hub school.

Urgent matters include, but are not limited to:

- Business critical issues like budgets, leadership appointments etc.
- Monitoring the well-being of pupils, staff and in particular vulnerable children and those of key workers still attending school.
- Support for any home education
- Monitoring any issues associated with school premises.
- Keeping the local authorities informed of any issues which require their advice or intervention.

Matters which are not urgent but which are still a priority are safeguarding, health and safety and Headteacher and staff well-being.

The Chair of Governors has a key leadership role during this unprecedented situation and should maintain close contact with the Headteacher throughout to provide advice, support and ask after their well-being. The Headteacher will report on the well-being of the staff and pupils. The Chair also has an important role in keeping all governing body members informed in order to retain focus in preparation for when we emerge from this crisis.

Although very challenging these activities should be eminently doable with modern remote working methods, some imagination and determination.

Mike James is a Governor at Radyr Comprehensive School in Cardiff

Whilst we have all had to deal with significant changes in this unprecedented time, it has been very pleasing to witness the number of actions and initiatives that Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd has implemented to try and keep our learners as engaged as possible whilst also looking after their welfare and that of our staff.

All work for each year group has been uploaded to Google Classrooms and is updated by staff members on a regular basis. In addition, all Examination year pupils are having tuition via Google's multi people platform by their subject teachers. Moving forward, given the difficulty we have in employing specialists in certain subjects, this will be something we will need to consider to be able to offer our Learners the best subject.

- All vulnerable pupils are kept in touch with at least once a week by the pastoral team, to ensure well-being
- We have introduced online assemblies for KS3 learners as we found they were missing face to face contact. This is something we will formalise as a whole school initiative after the Easter Break as from feedback this is something all pupils seem to be missing.
- All staff are in contact with Learners on a regular basis to ensure personal well-being and the Head is continuing with weekly meetings with all staff to ensure their personal well-being
- It has been particularly pleasing and quite humbling with the volume of staff who have been prepared to work in the Hub on a shift rotation basis even during their Easter break. Fortunately, not many have been needed, but the mere fact they were prepared to give up their time, especially when the majority live out of County (Cardiff & Swansea), shows first-hand the dedication and commitment they give.
- Moving forward, Governing Body Meetings and Sub Committee Meetings will be held via Microsoft Teams as this is a more secure platform for the confidential nature of these. However, I have been in regular contact with the Head throughout as he is giving me continuous updates with any changes / developments.

Overall, I feel the school has adapted very well to the enforced changes and we are looking at continuous learnings as a result of the findings to further improve our offering to our Learners once this pandemic is over.

Geraint Issac is the Chair of Governors at Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd, Maesteg



As a school, we welcomed the Welsh Government's proposals for a new Curriculum for Wales that outlined a clear and ambitious vision. At the heart of this vision are the four purposes, which express the kind of learners we are all hoping to create. Not so long ago, we as a school explored these purposes and tried to identify what they meant to us as a community, as well as what they looked like for children of different stages of development. Our next step was to consider the kinds of learning experiences that we currently offer and those that we might include in the future in order to promote the four purposes further. Whilst we found the exercise very reassuring, we also identified areas for improvement. I suppose the biggest revelation for us, as governors, was that the four purposes apply to everyone in the school community not just to the children. As adults we are all striving to 'be and become' healthy, confident individuals, ambitious, capable learners, enterprising, creative contributors and ethical, informed citizens.

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You might be wondering what this has to do with our school's response to Covid 19, but for us these four purposes have been at the heart of our decision-making and responses.

Asking parents to keep their children at home, and the school to remain open only for children who are vulnerable and for those children of key workers was undoubtedly the right thing to do to keep our community healthy and safe. Become a community hub was based on ethical, informed decisions and the school's attempts to support the wider community by providing food parcels was both enterprising and creative. Supporting the concept of home learning has required children, parents and staff be resilient and demonstrate their abilities as ambitious, capable learners.

The staff from Cadoxton, Oakfield, Jenner Park, Gwaun y Nant and Palmerston who have volunteered to work in the Cadoxton Hub, often putting their own health and that of their families at risk, should rightly take their place next to our NHS staff, and other critical workers, as central to battling this virus. When this time is over and we return to a new kind of normal, the efforts and professionalism that these people and many others have shown should be celebrated and never be forgotten. They have all exemplified our favourite phrase from the four purposes, 'Give of their energy and skills so that other people will benefit'. *Diolch bawb*

Wendy Thomas is a Governor at Cadoxton Primary School in Barry

