

# Esker Educate Together Board of Management Minutes 2021 via Zoom call

Venue	Zoom
Date of Meeting	Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
Minutes taken by	Tania Daly
Present	Ciara McMackin Gemma Curry Sandra Russe John Reilly Peter Murphy Tania Daly Damon Rogers
Apologies	Angela McMurray
Time meeting opened	7.15pm
Time meeting closed	9.10pm

Topic	Detail/ decisions	Future actions
1. Minutes and matters arising	<p>Staff CPD Contributions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See Item 7</li> </ul> <p>Ancillary staff pay review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ciara is attempting to contact a person in Educate Together who has experience in this area. Sub-committee to meet again</li> </ul> <p>Cleaning contract</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Midday clean was removed.</li> <li>- Chairs and desks continue to be cleaned in the evenings.</li> <li>- Some problems contracting cleaners now.</li> </ul> <p>Wifi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GDK was contracted.</li> <li>- New WIFI up and running.</li> <li>- Thanks to John for his expertise and for his extensive support and contribution in resolving this issue.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Ciara to liaise with E.T. contact and subcommittee to meet again.</i></p> <p><i>Gemma is to attempt to secure cleaning staff.</i></p>
2. School closure/ phased reopening	<p>Board approved "Logistics Plan for Re-opening of Esker ETNS".</p> <p>Key updates include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Windows and doors will be kept open at all times.</li> <li>- Staff to wear masks at all times except when eating.</li> <li>- Parents to wear masks when on the grounds. Exemptions may arise (e.g. parents with a medical condition can contact the school but the policy is to reflect the standard process).</li> <li>- Video of exit and entrance points is on the website.</li> <li>- Update to list of children who should not attend school.</li> <li>- Bank of educational resources available on website.</li> <li>- Parents will be notified in the event of a suspected case.</li> </ul>	

	<p>Gemma updated BOM on the steps taken to date regarding school closure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Including: staff meetings; distribution of books and resources; lunch updates (good quality food and excellent service provided by Carambola); remote learning procedure; SET teaching; SNA contact with children.</li><li>- We have Linda (HSCL); our SET teachers; Michael (psychologist); Kate (S&amp;L therapist) and Sharon (social worker/ school completion) supporting our most vulnerable children remotely.</li><li>- Gemma acknowledged the tireless work of the entire staff in the past two weeks and she acknowledged the anxiety felt amongst the staff.</li></ul> <p>Gemma explained the original proposals for SET reopening early (11<sup>th</sup> January date). Parents of Blue class were contacted and Gemma explained we are committed to opening but needed more time to do so safely (given space and PPE constraints). Then government announced specialised classes would not reopen.</p> <p>Government then announced again that specialised classes were to reopen on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup>, along with reopening for “children with significant additional needs in mainstream primary classes”. As it stands tonight this is the most up to date guidance. Gemma outlined that this could be viewed in two or three phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Phase 1:</b> Specialised class due to reopen on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January. A suite of three rooms is now available to the Blue class and staff. Medical grade masks have been ordered. Gemma anticipates that reopening this class will go ahead on Thursday, unless the outcome of upcoming meetings (INTO, Forsa etc) directs otherwise. Proposal from 9:30 – 13:00 (due to cleaning and other considerations) was presented.</li><li>- <b>Phase 2:</b> Additional Needs in Mainstream, with potential to extend this to additional vulnerable/ SET children (Phase 3). The Department of Education have stated this should also happen on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January with a full return of SET teachers and SNAs. Gemma has contacted 13 parents of children with autism. Just five would send their children back. Gemma is yet to contact the next group of children’s parents.</li></ul> <p>There are a number of concerns and challenges related to reopening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Educate Together are acknowledging that what is coming from Department of Education is different to what is coming from the Department of Health. Educate Together feel schools should have a level of flexibility based on their needs.</li><li>- Gemma highlighted her concerns and the concerns of the staff, which are further outlined in the correspondence section below.</li></ul>	<p><i>Board want to acknowledge the tireless work of the staff and thank them.</i></p> <p><i>The board has agreed that the management can follow the advice of the patron in relation to the reopening the school.</i></p>
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	<p>Ciara explained the role of the board in primary schools. We are the employer for the school staff in many aspects. However, Emer Nolan (Educate Together) has asked that boards do not to make a unilateral decision until they receive advice from Educate Together. The benefit of this is strength in numbers. Therefore, while the BOM can acknowledge the concerns, we cannot issue guidance against the Department of Education's directives.</p>	
<p>3. Correspondence</p>	<p>Letter from SNAs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concerns over safety of reopening the school.</li> <li>- Concerns over exposure to other adults.</li> <li>- Personal health issues and those of their families.</li> <li>- Lack of social distancing between SNAs and children.</li> <li>- Concern over safety during current surge.</li> <li>- Concern over inclusion for the students.</li> <li>- Concern about temporary bubbles and what happens when school reopens.</li> <li>- Request for decision to delay opening.</li> </ul> <p>Letter from a teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concerns about plans to reopen.</li> <li>- Concerns about groupings and demoralising students.</li> <li>- Avoidable and unacceptable level of risk.</li> <li>- Recounted personal experiences.</li> </ul> <p>Letter from a teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Issues raised by staff members.</li> <li>- Concerns over safety of the school community.</li> <li>- Concerns over inclusion.</li> <li>- Concerns over the routine that can be offered to children.</li> <li>- Ability to cater for all families who feel they may be eligible.</li> </ul> <p><i>- Ciara and the board acknowledge the concerns addressed in these letters and the challenges being faced and appreciate that the staff have taken the time to communicate these to the board. The board will ensure these letters are forwarded to Educate Together who can take further action.</i></p> <p>Letter from a teacher</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Request for permission to ask for parental permission for children to partake in an action research project.</li> <li>- Approved by the board.</li> </ul> <p>Letter from two SNAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Request for funding for TEACCH course.</li> <li>- Approved by the board.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Gemma is to forward these three items of correspondence regarding concerns to Educate Together.</i></p>
<p>4. Treasurer's report</p>	<p>See report attached.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sandra detailed grants received and major spends for 2020.</li> <li>- Sandra confirmed that the report is almost ready to go and will be ready on time for the February submission.</li> <li>- Ciara and the board thanked Sandra for her hard work on this.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Sandra to email Ciara with a list of items she needs.</i></p>

5. Principals report including staffing / enrolment and recruitment 2021/22	Report was read aloud by Principal.	
6. Covid-19 – review of policy	<p>Changes to policy were approved. See policy for further details.</p> <p>Examples of updates include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If symptoms (as per latest HSE advice) or advice from HSE to restrict movements, not to attend school.</li> <li>- High-risk category advised not to volunteer for summer provision.</li> <li>- Training to be provided.</li> <li>- Staff to be kept fully informed of procedures.</li> <li>- Personal PPE – Full PPE not required within school vicinity. Except in personal care/ suspected Covid.</li> <li>- Protocol updated.</li> </ul>	
7. Inset – new policy to ratify	<p>New policy was approved by the board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distinction between school-requested CPD versus staff-initiated CPD.</li> <li>- Annual budget, where possible, will be €3,000.</li> <li>- Allocated on a case by case basis.</li> <li>- Criteria outlined in policy.</li> </ul>	
8. Anti-bullying report	Report was read aloud by Principal.	
9. Children protection oversight report	Report was read aloud by Principal.	
10. SSE	Reminder that we have switched focus to Digital Action Plan in light of the challenges for this year.	
11. Date of next meeting	<p>5<sup>th</sup> February 2021 proposed.</p> <p>Expectation that an earlier, emergency meeting may be called sooner depending on updates from Department of Education, FORSA and INTO.</p>	