



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held at the school on Tuesday 9th December 2014 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:

Mr R Boulter		Mr D McMillan
Mr D Carruthers	Chairman	Dr H Marlow
Revd P Cotton		Mr R Stevenson
Mr P Debenham		Miss J Upton Headteacher
Ms S Goodrich		Mrs L Wilson
Mrs F Hotston Moore		Mr D Yaroslaw
Mrs S Janson		

In attendance:

Mrs J Brown	Member of the Academy Trust
Mr R Grimsey	Member of the Academy Trust
Mr N Serjeant	Member of the Academy Trust
Mr S Martin	Deputy Headteacher
Miss S McBurney	Assistant Headteacher
Mrs L Ramsay	Assistant Headteacher
Mrs T Darby	Business Manager
Mr S Wright	Clerk to the Governors

1. Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Dr D Egan, Mr C Gilgan, Mr C Grover and Mr D Ralph. Revd Cotton left the meeting at 6.30 p.m.
- 1.2 Governors consented to their absence.

2. Pecuniary and Other Interests

- 2.1 No pecuniary interests were registered.
- 2.2 There were no updates to the Register of Pecuniary Interests.

3. Chairman's Action

- Mr Carruthers, Mr Boulter and Mr Kevin Haddock (Professional Advisor) had carried out a successful performance review for Miss Upton.
- Mr Carruthers informed the meeting that Miss Upton had (with the Chairman's agreement) applied for election to ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders) and had been successful. ASCL was at the forefront of contact with Government and her attendance at Council Meetings would be advantageous for DHS, though it would require two days a term away from school.

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Headteacher Miss J Upton BSc

Senior Leadership Team: Mr S Martin, Miss S McBurney, Mrs L Ramsay, Mrs T Darby

Chairman of the Academy Trust Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Chairman of Governors Mr D Carruthers

- A Year 11 pupil had been permanently excluded by Miss Upton but had been reinstated by the Governors' Disciplinary Committee as a vulnerable pupil who was in need of the school's support.
- A presentation was made to Miss McBurney in recognition of her imminent confinement.

4. Governing Body Membership

- 4.1 There had been six nominations for two Parent Governor posts and an election was in train with voting closing on 17th December. Dr Marlow asked about the gender split which is four male and two female candidates. In the Staff Governor elections Emma Wnukoski and Jo Newman had been elected to replace Mr Yaroslaw and Mrs Wilson.
- 4.2 Though there would be other changes in the New Year the only change since the last meeting was that Mr Poole had resigned as a Governor due to work commitments.

Mr Boulter pointed out that the appointment of Dr Marlow as a Foundation Governor meant that there was now a vacancy for a Co-opted Governor. Though this would be a Trust decision the Full Governing Body could make recommendations. It also provided some flexibility; it could, for example, permit the appointment of an extra Governor from the current election candidates.

Mr Carruthers thanked those who had returned the skills audit and circulated the outcomes so far. He asked those who had not yet done so to return the audit as the data was extremely useful in determining the profile and needs of the Governing Body.

5. Minutes

- 5.1 After one amendment on the final page - the first sentence in the first bullet point under Item 17 to read 'Mr Boulter informed Governors that Miss Upton's Performance Management Review was to be undertaken by himself and Mr Carruthers' – the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting and signed by Mr Carruthers.
- 5.2 Matters arising from the minutes:
- 8.1 S106 money had now been received.
 - 9.2 The Pecuniary Interest Policy is published on the website.
 - 10.1 The LA had confirmed its existing position regarding the Creeping St. Mary primary school so Transport arrangements for those living in the parish but beyond the A14 would remain as they are (no free transport) unless there was a full consultative process. DHS was not keen for this but would continue to support Creeping St. Mary PS in their challenge to the LEA.
 - 13.3 SEND offer is now on the website
 - 13.7 Mr Carruthers is still in the process of examining the frequency of policy review – government advice on this is unclear

6. Academic Improvement

The meeting was addressed by the Deputy Head Boy and Head Girl (Sid Griffiths and Louise Davy). Sid described the work of the School Council who had been involved in discussion with the architects regarding the refurbishment of the PE changing rooms. He also recounted the useful experience of the Year 11 trial examinations. Louise talked about the Year 11 charity week and the successful shoe box appeal (104 completed and sent to Serbia). She also dealt with the School Jubilee celebrations, an assembly given by Dr Poulter, the display boards in the foyer and poetry written by the younger pupils.

- 6.1 Mrs Ramsay ran through the Literacy Action Plan (LAP) and made the following points:
- The situation is generally very positive; the action points which are shaded green had been successfully completed

- The LAP was a working document and will be reviewed in January
- INSET on 'reading for inference' is planned
- More consistency needed on application of the Literacy Mark Scheme
- The Literacy Action Group will be meeting shortly
- A Year 9 'Book Mastermind' is currently taking place
- Intervention has increased for high cognitive ability students with spelling difficulties as new online testing has made identification of these students much easier. Intervention takes place in the registration period and not through withdrawal from lessons.
- Mrs Wilkinson is working with primary schools to improve literacy levels for those transferring to DHS – particularly on SPAG (Spelling and Grammar); some who join DHS have very low levels of literacy and their needs have to be accommodated.

Mrs Janson expressed approval of the work on the LAP and Mrs Wilson pointed out that the English Department was holding reading sessions at lunchtime. On being asked by Mr Carruthers if the primary schools were receptive to support offered by DHS, Miss McBurney said that this was very much the case.

6.2 Year 11 performance data

Miss Upton ran through the data pointing out that this was compiled prior the trial GCSE examinations so a more accurate picture would emerge after the Christmas break. She reminded the meeting that data would be more volatile for those subjects with a small cohort of students. She focused on the 'whole cohort' figures pointing out that all categories were performing above expectations apart from upper band girls. DHS students' 3+ levels of progress in English and Maths (2014) is much better than national averages (2013): 82% (70%) in English; 80% (69%) in Maths. She added that RAG ratings applied by Suffolk LA used higher figures (71% in both cases) in their judgements on schools - this was particularly pertinent as the recently released 2014 Maths national average for 3+ levels of progress had fallen to 65%.

Mr Carruthers asked about the comparatively poorer outcomes in Drama. Miss Upton said that this was a relatively small group that had been partly affected by the presence of a temporary teacher for the Autumn Term. The new Drama teacher - Max Hardcastle (experienced in GCSE assessment criteria) – will be taking over in January and has been liaising closely with the current incumbent. The Summer examination results had been encouraging. Ms Goodrich asked about the red-rated performance of some groups in core science. Miss McBurney said that these were in the Additional Science element of the course and should improve. Mr Boulter asked which groups take the combined English Language and Literature Course; the meeting was informed that this course was ending this year. Mr Carruthers asked if it would be useful for Governors to have access to the FFT (Fisher Family Trust) dashboard but it was felt that might confuse issues as it used slightly different measures to those with which Governors are familiar. It was noted that OFSTED do not use, or even have access to, FFT data.

Miss Upton said that RAISE figures had arrived at the school after the distribution of papers and a summary would be available to Governors shortly. The headline was that the measure of progress (based on a benchmark of 1000 and with any outcome over 1012 being deemed significant) for DHS stood at 1019.7 (2013 – 1020.4) which is very pleasing given that the overall 5 A*-C measure of results for 2014 (including Maths and English) was down on those of the previous year.

6.3 Parental Surveys

These were reviewed. Miss Upton pointed out that Question 10 had been adjusted to include all aspects of a student's welfare and had elicited a more positive response. Miss Goodrich felt that in

many ways this question (and its response) summed up the approach of DHS; she also asked about the slightly less positive response on the question relating to homework. Miss Upton observed that some respondents felt that there was too much homework and some that there was too little, but that the SLT were looking at logbooks and getting a sense of some inconsistency in the setting of homework. Mrs Hotston Moore said that the wording 'appropriate homework' could refer to type and quality as well as amount. Ms Goodrich asked whether DHS conducted exit interviews for students (and their parents) who leave as this could provide a 'litmus test' for other questionnaires. The school does not currently do this. Mr Boulter asked how DHS might elicit a higher number of responses from parents. Despite the questionnaires being online and reminders being sent this had proved difficult; Mr Martin indicated that 25% was considered a good return compared to other schools. Dr Marlow felt that questions could be more open-ended but Miss Upton said that these were intended to mirror those used by OFSTED. It was noted that there were very few comments about DHS on the OFSTED Parent View website.

7. Budget and related items

- 7.1 The Annual Report and Financial Statements document was reviewed. Mr McMillan asked if the bullet point on Page 8 relating to the number of staff applying to posts was verifiable. It was felt that the issues of qualification and quality of staff were equally as important as the number applying – equally a small number of applicants can still be higher than average. Mr Carruthers noted that retention was strong.

The Annual Report and Financial Statements were approved.

- 7.2 Audit and Audit Summary Memorandum. The auditors had been very positive about accounting procedures and those comments that they were related to:
- The unpaid VAT payment expected from HMRC. This had now been received but the issue had raised a question of whether DHS should be registered for VAT. Though this might lead to swifter payments it would also lead to an increased administrative burden and had other business implications – charging VAT on adult sized uniform and staff meals being examples. Larking Gowen were advising and Mrs Darby will discuss with Mrs Hotston Moore before any decision is taken.
 - Unpaid S106 monies – now received.
 - Local Government Scheme pension liability - which has doubled in the last year. It is anticipated that employer contributions will increase again at the next actuarial review in 2½ years time.
 - New legislation and regulations.

Mr Carruthers thanked Mrs Darby and Miss Knock for their hard work that had elicited such a positive response from the auditors.

- 7.3 The Audit Summary Memorandum for the period ending 31st August 2014 was received.
- 7.4 Representation Letters for the Accounting Officer and Chair of Governors were received and signed.
- 7.5 Mrs Darby outlined the minor changes that had been made to the Value for Money (VFM) statement. These related to the clarification of acronyms and to the creation of a more generic statement relating to purchasing. Mr Carruthers said that this latter issue had been discussed at the recent F and GP Committee meeting. The VFM Statement has to be published on the school's website and sent to the Educational Funding Agency (EFA).

- 7.6 The Budget position is very much as it should be with spending around the 16.6% mark as expected after two months of the financial year. The figures had been looked at in detail by the F and GP Committee. It was noted that the national pay negotiations for support staff had resulted in a settlement that, through a complex series of arrangements, would add £13,804 to the salary bill for DHS. The average pay rise would make up an overall 2.2% up to 9% (for lower paid employees) increase – this includes the 1% rise for all that the school implemented in April 2014. This change had not been budgeted for.
- 7.7 The Final Capital Fund 04 Report was not available at the meeting.
- 7.8 Mr Serjeant outlined his role. When the DHS Academy Trust was established it was required to have a Responsible Officer (RO) to advise Trust Members on the correct use of public money - particularly important as the Chairman of Governors has to sign a letter saying that the Governing Body is happy with the financial controls that are in place. To support the work of the RO, DHS had purchased an internal audit service from Suffolk LA (CSD) which had always graded the school as outstanding. Following a review by the F and GP Committee it was decided that CSD took an approach that was more suited to LA schools rather than academies. As a consequence the internal audit had been transferred to Miller Wash Associates, better to meet DHS' needs. Miller Wash will carry out two audit checks a year with the focus determined by Risk Assessment and F and GP priorities. They will provide a report for the F and GP. Mr Serjeant also pointed out that the latest Financial Handbook for academies (2014) made no mention of an RO. In the light of this Mr Boulter asked if there was still a need for an RO – this will be discussed at the next F and GP meeting.

Action Mrs Darby

8. Buildings

- 8.1 The design process for the new boiler was in progress and the contract with Cofely will be finalised on 11th December. Because of delays it was becoming less likely that work will start over the Christmas break but it would certainly begin in February half term. The associated planning application for the new boiler house has yet to be submitted.
- 8.2 The Capital Improvement Fund (CIF) had replaced the Academies Capital and Maintenance Fund (ACMF). Bids for the new roof and the classroom extension are being prepared by the school's consultant and will be submitted by the deadline of 19th December.

9. Committees and Working Parties

- 9.1 The minutes of the F and GP Committee Meeting held on 17th October 2014 were received without comment.
- 9.2 The minutes of the F and GP Committee Meeting held on 28th November 2014 were received by the meeting. Mr Debenham asked about the PV panels referred to in Item 9.1 and how the mistakes made at the time of installation might be rectified. Mrs Darby reported that the panels had been placed on the wrong (unsuitable) roof and negotiations regarding recompense were being held with the LA and Cofely. Cofely had agreed to remove and reposition the panels free of charge. Proof had been found to verify that the LA did know the panels were going to be fitted to the hall roof (which is something they have denied up until now). This has been forwarded to the LA, without response as yet. Mr Carruthers pointed out that the replacement roof will be suitable for PV panels with an appropriate

frame supplied by the roofing manufacturer; this would ensure that the 25 year warranty on any replacement roof is unaffected.

- 9.3 Mr Stevenson reported on the Maths Faculty Review during which he had attended Pupil Performance Interviews (PPIs) for KS4 pupils together with the Review Meeting. He said that it was clear that this was a very good department and any action points were 'above the icing on the cake'.

Ms Goodrich had also attended PPIs and the Review Meeting as well as undertaking a Lesson Observation in the English Department. The lesson (on the topic of sentence construction) was fascinating; pace and engagement were its notable features. The Review Meeting had been professional and thorough in a determination to drive up standards.

Dr Marlow said that he was currently involved in the review of the DT department and had taken part in the observation of an impressive lesson together with participation in PPIs.

- 9.4 A revised timetable for faculty review was received; it will be further adjusted once changes in the Governing Body are finalised. Mr Carruthers undertook to ask Mr Grover to fill the vacant governor slot for PE on 19th January. The SLT member in charge of each review will send out a reminder to the link governor.

Action Mr Carruthers

10. Policies

- 10.1 The Teacher and Support Staff Salaries Policies have to be reviewed by the Full Governing Body. It was noted that there had been little change to the Support Staff Salaries Policy other than the updating of section 7.1 to reflect the national pay settlement. Mr McMillan suggested that Graduate Interns and Teaching Assistants should be included in the structure diagram (Annex A). It was agreed that they should.

Action Mrs Darby

There had been no changes to the Teachers' Salaries Policy. Miss Upton said that Governors had to be confident that the policy was being applied correctly and referred to the Performance Related Pay Overview (already received). This was noted. Mr Carruthers referred to Annex D which states that, 'Applications may be made at least once a year.' This was felt to be confusing and it was suggested that it should read, 'Applications to be made once a year in the Summer Term'.

Action Mrs Darby

Both policies were approved by the meeting.

11. Governor Training

- 11.1 Details of Spring Term training opportunities were received by the meeting. Governors were reminded to inform the Clerk once a booking was confirmed.
- 11.2 The date and time for Governor Safeguarding Training was yet to be confirmed.

12. Any Other Business

- Miss Upton informed the meeting that, under Mr Yaroslaw’s leadership, the RE Department had been awarded a Gold RE Quality Mark. Mr Carruthers congratulated Mr Yaroslaw and his department for this achievement.
- Mr Debenham queried the workings of the PA system at the Presentation Evening as audibility was poor. Miss Upton said that she was aware of the issue and it was in the process of being resolved.
- Mr Yaroslaw spoke on behalf of himself and Mrs Wilson on the occasion of their leaving the Governing Body and thanked Governors for all they did for the School. In return Mr Carruthers thanked Mr Yaroslaw and Mrs Wilson (and, in his absence, Mr Gilgan) for their contributions during the time on the Governing Body.
- Finally Mr Carruthers thanked Mr Boulter all his work in over 20 years on the Governing Body, as Chairman and as a Trustee. A presentation was made to mark his retirement.

13. Date of next meeting

This was confirmed as Tuesday 3rd February 2015 at 4.30 p.m. (Annual General Meeting) followed by a Full Governing Body Meeting at 5.00pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.53 p.m.

Signed

Date