



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Full Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held on MS Teams on Tuesday 11th May 2021 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:

Mr R Barker		Mr A Dubberley	
Rev S Bates		Mrs S Edmond	
Mr D Carruthers	Chairman	Mr C Grover	
Mrs M Carter		Mr S Martin	Headteacher
Mr P Debenham		Dr W Thomas	
Mrs C Driver		Mrs E Wnukoski	

In attendance:

Miss S McBurney	Assistant Head
Mrs L Ramsay	Assistant Head
Mrs T Willmott	School Business Manager
Mr R Grimsey	Trustee
Mr S Wright	Clerk to the Governors

1. Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from Dr Egan, Mrs Janson and Mr McMillan. Mrs Carter joined the meeting during Item 3.

2. Pecuniary and Other Interests

2.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

2.2 Mrs Willmott confirmed that the register of pecuniary interests is up to date.

3. Chairman's Action

Mr Carruthers began by congratulating Miss McBurney on her appointment as Deputy Head at DHS.

3.1 Mr Carruthers updated the meeting on changes to the Governing Body:

- As terms of office do not apply to Trustees (dates have been removed from GO2), Mr Grimsey remains as a member of the DHS Academy Trust.
- Mr Grover has been reappointed as the Diocesan board nominee to the Governing Body.
- Mrs Driver has agreed to become a Co-opted Governor on the expiration of her term as a Parent Governor. There is now a vacancy for a Parent Governor. This will be advertised shortly.

Action Mr Martin/Mr Carruthers

- Dr Thomas' term as a Governor has expired but he is happy to be considered for re-appointment. Governors agreed unanimously to this.

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Headteacher: Mr S Martin BSc

Senior Leadership Team: Miss S McBurney, Mrs L Ramsay, Mrs T Willmott

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

- Other appointments were that of Miss McBurney (ex officio) to the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Mr Martin to the Health and Safety Committee.
- It was noted that the new Assistant Head should be Clerk to the Admissions Committee.

Mr Carruthers also referred to his role as Chair of an Independent Complaints Panel at another Suffolk secondary school. He felt that DHS had something to learn from this experience as it pointed to the importance of dealing with complaints in line with procedure and in a timely and precise manner. He had subsequently reviewed the DHS Complaints Procedure and felt that some adjustments should be made so as fully to reflect government guidance.

4. Minutes

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th February 2021 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4.2 Matters arising from the minutes:

- 4.2.6 The copies of articles written by students for the Parish Magazine had been forwarded to Governors.
- 5.1 Safeguarding Training has been arranged.
- 5.2 Miss McBurney has incorporated comparative data in the data dashboard.
- 9.2 There had been no feedback from Governors in relation to the Covid Addendum to policies.

5. Academic Improvement

5.1 Headteacher's Report

Staffing

Mr Martin, after adding his own congratulations to Mrs McBurney on her appointment thanked Debbie McWhinney and Clare Whale for their considerable service to DHS. Jo Woodhouse has been appointed as a part time member of the MFL department.

Year 11 Summer Assessments

Mr Martin tabled a record of planned departmental assessments (NEA, tests, past papers) to provide supporting holistic evidence for teachers' grading of students at GCSE, though he stressed that outcomes in these would not be the sole determinants of a student's level of achievement. These late requirements from JCQ had caused some disquiet amongst teaching staff but they had risen to the challenge. He felt confident that the process would produce fair grades for students, particularly as they had responded really well to the demands being made of them. He also thanked David Yaroslaw and the Year 11 tutor team for keeping students calm and purposeful.

Mrs Driver asked if there was the capacity for students to complete such assessments at home should the need arise. Mr Martin said that this could happen but, given the holistic approach and the range of opportunity for assessment and evidence gathering, this should not prove necessary.

Internal moderation has taken place and has been supplemented with an inter-school moderation exercise with Holbrook High School. Departments from each school had met twice, first to sample work jointly and then to cross-moderate a selection of students' work in line with JCQ guidelines. This had been a helpful exercise, especially for single person departments.

Year 11

May 28th would be the last day of formal schooling for Year 11 students; thereafter there would be an offer of preparation for post-16 courses and career guidance provided by Mr Voller in conjunction with post-16 providers. There would also be a celebratory event for Year 11 students at the end of term.

Summer Schools and Intervention

Governors asked about Government funding for catch-up and Mr Martin again stressed that, whilst the school had registered and interest with the DfE regarding Summer Schools, DHS would be looking at the longer term with funding being allocated on a needs-led basis. Currently this is being organised by Mr Phaup.

Staff CPD

Mr Martin tabled a schema for staff CPD organised by staff groups with each member of staff being required to attend five sessions over the course of the academic year. He said that staff had supported this incredibly well with many completing the five sessions in the first term and continuing to attend more. This bespoke offer had been very well received by teachers.

Enrichment

Mr Martin was really disappointed that enrichment activities had been so curbed by the pandemic as it was these that made DHS such a distinctive school. Things were starting up again, though, with the PE Department beginning clubs for Years 7, 8 and 9 in their Year Group bubbles. Year 10 to be added to this after half term. Sports day will take place after half term together with activity days (eg. bushcraft for Year 7) – it is hoped that these will serve to bring the community back together. Rev Bates and Curate Tracey James had been visiting the school and there had been a passion narrative to mark the Easter festival.

Parental Involvement

Online Parents' Evenings had worked well and there had been an Options Evening in January with a general presentation and then a Q and A session with departments. The RSHE consultation evening had also taken place online with a limited (but positive) group of attendees. Mr Martin and Mrs Ramsay had met with Hazel Harrison (parent and clinical psychologist) and will refine the RSHE Policy in the light of her suggestions. Mrs Ramsay asked that Governors now approved the draft policy that had been viewed at the last meeting. This was done.

Mr Martin concluded by saying that it had been a productive term but that DHS was looking forward to returning to a greater degree of normality.

Mr Carruthers asked whether, given the positive response, online parents evenings would be continued. Mr Martin said that it was likely that this would be the case as it proved to be very time-efficient for all involved. He regretted that lack of face-to-face contact (especially for the SLT) but still felt it was the way forward. He added that he intended to send a post-covid questionnaire to parents to ascertain views on all aspects of DHS provision during this period.

Clarification was sought and received about 'drug vaping' and an error was noted (and corrected) in the attendance figures. Exclusion figures were cumulative from September. Referrals were reviewed. Two students are being electively home educated.

5.2 Year 11 final predicted data

Miss McBurney talked to the Year 11 dashboard. Though there will be no Progress 8 data this year, this analysis is based on data provided by staff. She pointed out the improved data from December to January and then the slight fall in the March figures (possibly due to the fact that these figures are not shared with parents together with the impact of the second lockdown). It was felt that students are now performing really well so final grades should be good (for example 4+ in English). Subject outcomes generally reflect the whole school picture. Some subjects merit further attention eg. DT (Resistant Materials) – the decline here is largely due to the impact on NEAs during lockdown.

Mr Carruthers asked about the drop in P8 in Spanish. Miss McBurney felt that this was due to lockdown and lack of contact. She felt that grades will improve. Mr Carruthers noted that the figures looked very positive.

5.3 GCSE Assessment arrangements 2021

This had generally been covered in the Headteacher's report but Mr Martin asked Governors to note both the policy that had to be submitted to the DfE and the advice that had been sent to parents to explain how assessments were to work. He ran through the steps still to be done with grades to be submitted to the Government by June 18th. Government quality assurance will (possibly) be by a spot check and questions may be asked if grades are significantly different from previous years. The Government will also require DHS to send work for two different subjects for five students (which may or may not be looked at). Grades will be returned to the school by August 11th for distribution to students on August 12th. Students may then appeal through a three-stage process – though grades may go down as well as up.

5.4 Update on Catch-up Funding

This item had been partially covered in the Headteacher's report but Mr Martin said that some of the funding had been used for Year 11q students – specifically for examination preparation. Thereafter funds would be used to fill in gaps (usually on a one-to-one basis) for Year 10 students. He stressed that the school would not be looking to anticipate where these gaps might be but rather to respond to these when and if they emerged.

6. Safeguarding

6.1 Single Central Register

Mrs Ramsay confirmed that all was in order and that the use of recorded training had helped to keep staff up to date on Safeguarding issues and had facilitated the maintenance of the SCR. Mr Martin confirmed that the meeting with Mr Grover (Safeguarding Governor) scheduled for February had taken place.

6.2 Current Safeguarding Issues

Any current issues had been covered in the Headteachers' report.

7. Budget and related items

7.1 Current budgetary position

Mrs Willmott took this item by reference to the budget commentary that had been included in the Governor Papers. She noted the generally positive picture and made the following additional points:

Income

- A good deal of projected income had been lost through the absence of trips (though this is an in-out transaction) and a sharp fall in catering income related to the pandemic.
- This had been countered however by income for the Teachers' Pay Grant, Covid Catch-up funding and a projected £31k to pay for in-school Covid Testing – which would more than cover costs.
- The anticipated shortfall in income at the end of the year is expected to be £84k.

Expenditure

- Partly as a result of the pandemic, expenditure had been lower across the board and it was now anticipated that there would be a surplus of £178k at year end
- More specifically larger savings had been due to the absence of a Deputy Head (though this created pressures elsewhere); savings on Educational Supplies and Services (absence of trips - £120k - and underspend on catering supplies - £20k)

Summary

- Income is down by £128k but this is offset by savings of £177k.
- With a capital outlay of £59k (canopies) this will lead to a net surplus of £94k – up from a £61k estimate previously, largely because of Covid testing money. This is despite extra Covid-related expenditure on PPE etc.

7.2 Current capital projects

Canopies are now in place and are working well.

Mr Carruthers asked, in light of the extra surplus detailed above, whether funds would be available for other projects. Mrs Willmott said that she was receiving quotes for potential cooling solutions for over-warm classrooms, was looking at the potential for improving science facilities in conjunction with a grant from the Wolfson Foundation. There were also on-going discussions with the Sports Centre regarding the improvement of sporting facilities (matched funding). She urged caution, however, and warned against any increase in the current cost base as the next financial year was likely to be much tighter.

With respect to cooling solutions, Mrs Willmott said that air-conditioning units for individual rooms seemed to be the only effective solution. Mr Carruthers asked if there would need to be a carbon offset for this. Mrs Willmott said she would check on this.

Action Mrs Willmott

It was anticipated that, with the return to normality, applications for grant funding for capital projects would be further explored.

[Though it did not relate to capital projects, and in response to Mr Carruthers, Mr Martin said that some of the extra surplus would be used to fund specific teaching and learning projects in school at a time-limited cost of £10k spread over two years.]

8. Committees and Working Parties

8.1 Finance and General Purposes Committee

Governors received the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 12th March 2021.

8.2 Visit Reports from Governors

Mr Carruthers and Rev Bates had both visited the school for the Deputy Head interviews and expressed pleasure in seeing the school running at something closer to normality.

9. Policies

9.1 DHS Attendance Policy

Mrs Ramsay said that there had only been one change in nomenclature (truancy replaced by school refusal) and that otherwise the policy remained as it was. Governors approved the policy.

9.2 Drugs Education Policy and Incidents

Mr Martin said that the only change had been to the Drugs Education part of the PSHE programme. Governors asked about the difference between RSHE and PSHE. Mrs Ramsay said that RSHE was the mandatory part of the wider DHS PSHE course. Mrs Wnukoski asked if there should be more mention of 'county lines' issues in the policy. Mrs Ramsay said that it is covered in the Year 8 and 9 PSHE curriculum but DfE guidance was clear that

Drugs Education (health issues etc.) should not be confused with matters relating to criminal or anti-social activity. Governors approved the policy.

10. Any Other Business

- Mr Debenham asked how the lockdown had affected DHS young carers. Mrs Ramsay thanked Mr Debenham for asking about this important issue. She felt that the situation had suited some students who had managed well but that for others it had been more difficult. Some young carers were seen as vulnerable and had attended school during the enforced closure. She saw the greatest issue being that of social interaction with peers and, in response to this, it was hoped to have a drop-in session before the end of term. Mr Debenham further asked about financial support for these students. Mrs Ramsay said that, where necessary (for example in the purchase of revision guides), this was provided by the school.
- Mr Carruthers raised the possibility of the July Full Governors meeting taking place face-to-face in the school Hall. Governors agreed to this.
- Mr Carruthers also said that he had been approached by the Curate Tracey James who wished to be an observer at the next Governors' meeting. This was agreed by Governors.

11. Date of next meetings

These was confirmed as Tuesday 6th July 2021

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.27 pm.

Signed: **Chairman** **Date:** 6th July 2021