



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Full Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held on MS Teams on Tuesday 5th October 2021 at 5.00 p.m.

Present: Mr R Barker Mr A Dubberley
Rev S Bates Mrs S Janson
Mr D Carruthers Chairman Mr S Martin Headteacher
Mr P Debenham Dr W Thomas
Mrs C Driver

In attendance: Miss S McBurney Deputy Head
Mrs C Schmidt Assistant Head
Mrs L Ramsay Assistant Head
Mrs T Willmott School Business Manager
Mr S Wright Clerk to the Governors

1. Absence

1.1 Apologies were received from Mrs M Carter, Mrs S Edmond, , Mr C Grover, Mr D McMillan, Bishop Martin Seeley, Mr M Touman and Mrs E Wnukoski.

Mr Barker asked, given the level of absence, whether the meeting was quorate. Mr Carruthers confirmed that it was.

2. Pecuniary and Other Interests

2.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

2.1.1 Mr Martin said that forms required annually to register Governors' pecuniary interests would be distributed shortly by Mrs Willmott.

Action Mrs Willmott

3. Election of Chairman for 2021-22

There being no other nominations, Mr Carruthers was elected nem con.

4. Election of Vice-Chairman

There being no other nominations, Mr Grover was elected nem con.

[On behalf of the Governing Body, Mr Debenham thanked Mr Carruthers and Mr Grover for their service to DHS over what had been a difficult year.]

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Headteacher: Mr S Martin BSc

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

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

5. Chairman's Action

The Chairman reported that he and Mr Grover would be organising Mr Martin's Performance Management review with the support of Sue Hargadon. He noted that, although she would continue to support students at DHS, she was intending to relinquish her post as External Adviser. An approach was to be made to Phil Knowles from the Diocese to fulfil this role.

6. Governing Body Membership

- 6.1 There had been no changes to membership since the last meeting.
- 6.2 Recruitment of a replacement Parent Governor is underway.

7. Minutes

- 7.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6th July 2021 were accepted as a true record of the meeting.
- 7.2 Matters arising from the minutes:
 - 4.2 Mr Wright had sent the revised meeting schedule to Governors.
 - 4.4 The NGA twenty questions comprised part of this agenda.
 - 5.4.2 (3.1) Recruitment for a Parent Governor is underway.
 - 9.2 Mr Martin had made the required adjustments to the E-Safety Policy.
 - 9.2 Mr Martin said that the reference to mobile phones had been adjusted but had been left with room for interpretation. Mr Barker agreed that this was the best solution.
 - 10.1 Keeping Children Safe in Education is included in the agenda.
 - 11 Mr Voller would be speaking with Mrs Edmond.

8. NGA – Twenty Questions for Governors

- 8.1 Discussion in relation to DHS

Mr Carruthers led discussion of each of the questions posed:

Governing Body Effectiveness

- 1. The DHS Governing Body does carry out a skills audit annually.
- 2. It was agreed that Governors, including those with specific responsibilities, understand both their roles and the strategic function of the Governing Body.
- 3. The DHS Governing Body does employ a professional Clerk though he does not have any specific legal expertise.
- 4. It was agreed that, through its committee structure and conduct of meetings, the DHS Governing Body discharges its duties effectively. Whilst the Governing Body is larger than some it was felt that this did not hamper its effectiveness.
- 5. Whilst Governors noted a good level of collaboration with other schools locally it did not have a specific national outlook. It was, however, unclear to Governors how important this absence is.
- 6. A 360-degree review of the Chair's performance had been carried out in the past but another is due. The Chairman is elected annually.

7. It was felt that succession planning was not generally pursued and, whilst there is a Vice Chair of Governors it might be useful for other roles actively to be shadowed. Some Governors have served longer than six years. Mrs Driver said that, when she approached the end of her term of office, it might be useful for another Governor to take over as Chair of the Finance Committee whilst she was still on the Governing Body. It was noted, however, that her term had recently been extended for a further four years as a co-opted governor. She also said that she would be preparing a booklet to aid her successor. Mr Carruthers asked, if there were any Governors who were prepared to understudy Mrs Driver, Mrs Janson (SEND) or Mr Grover (Safeguarding), that they let him know.

Action All Governors

8. Whilst attendance is recorded and reported, there was not felt to be a need to review the performance of Governors other than informally as at present.

Vision, Ethos and Strategy

9. The School Development Plan (SDP) looks forward for three years; similarly with financial planning. There is some feedback from former students.
10. Financial Planning and the SDP are underpinned by KPIs.
11. With respect to strategy informing activities and agenda, it was noted that there was an annual cycle in place but that this was not over-prescriptive.
12. Relations with students, parents and staff were felt to be good. The links of individual Governors with faculties was noted as were the regular visits of the Chairman to Parents' Evenings. It was felt, however, that Governors could have more contact with parents and Mr Carruthers canvassed for ideas on this. Mr Martin pointed out that Governors do review the Parents' Survey.
13. Other than through minutes posted on the DHS website, it was felt that Governors do not make regular reports on their activities to parents or the local community.
14. DHS was felt to have good links through the Teaching School, local primary schools and with Holbrook High School together with the Diocesan Board of Education and the Church in its wider role.

Effective Accountability

15. Data is seen regularly by Governors to enable them to monitor both progress and outcomes.
16. Governors visit the school regularly; there are clear links with faculty and pastoral teams.
17. Policies are reviewed regularly at Governors' Meetings in line with DfE guidance.
18. Governors are notified of Performance Management outcomes and given redacted exemplars of individual documentation.
19. Government awareness of financial systems is good – for example compliance with the Academies Handbook – and there is full confidence that controls are robust.
20. DHS has achieved high standards over the last three years and Governors have good oversight of this.

Mr Carruthers said that, following this discussion, he would review those areas where it was felt that improvement was needed and report back to Governors.

Action Mr Carruthers

8.2 Governor Effectiveness Audit

Mr Carruthers reported that he and Mr Martin were to approach Mr Phil Knowles (Diocesan School Effectiveness Officer) with a view to him carrying out an external review of DHS Governing Body – he had been recommended for this purpose by Trustee, the Venerable John Cox. Mrs Willmott noted that monitoring of Governor effectiveness was a clear steer in the Academies Handbook. Mr Carruthers said he would report back to Governors on this matter.

Action Mr Carruthers/Mr Martin.

9. Academic Improvement

9.1 Head and Deputy Head Boy and Girl

Nominees for these positions had all been interviewed and, from a strong field, the following had been appointed:

Head Girl	Sophie Coton
Deputy Head Girl	Megan Green
Head Boy	James Foreman
Deputy Head Boy	Ben Risby

It was hoped that Governors will be able to meet the four postholders at the December Meeting.

9.2 Head's Report

This item was taken by reference to Mr Martin's written report, circulated with the papers for the meeting. He made the following additional comments:

Staffing

Mr Martin felt that there had been some 'exciting' appointments:

Ashleigh Floyd had made a good impression. All the new TAs had links to the school and Paddy Hughes, the Graduate Intern, was another who has returned to DHS. One apprentice has been appointed – an ex-student.

Summer Break

Support staff had worked hard on deep cleaning over the break. A Summer School (using Government funding) had been held for Year 6 students joining the school – 90 had attended. It is hoped that – funding permitting – it will be held again next year.

Attainment

The details of this had been covered in the Curriculum Working Group meeting that preceded this meeting. The process had been reviewed and there was real confidence that these were a fair and reliable set of results. Individuals had performed well at Level 6+ but equally some students had improved by over three grades on prediction. Those who had required greater pastoral support had done well as had SEND and disadvantaged students.

Summer Term

Normal activities had been resumed in the Summer Term with clubs being well attended and trips taking place. An Enterprise Day, Activities Days (by year group) the Year 11 Prom and Sports Day had all taken place. Staff support had been tremendous, and the offer was felt to have been as good as it could have been. Parents had given positive feedback.

Admissions

Year 7 intake stands at 135 and all Year Groups except Year 11 are full.

September Training Days

It had been intended to hold a full meeting outside but the inclement weather had prevented this. Inter alia an MS Teams session had included:

- A celebration students' achievement.
- A discussion of priorities for the coming year (see below).
- A session on parental involvement in student learning.
- Safeguarding – a focus on vulnerable students led by Mrs Ramsay.
- A response to Covid with respect to students.

The priorities for 2021-22 are:

- Student responsibility for, and ownership of, their own learning.
- Parental engagement.
- The Christian characteristics of DHS.
- The DHS school community – specifically the House System.
- Repairing disrupted learning.

A number of Middle Leaders are taking responsibility for some of these initiatives.

External Links and Networks

Teaching School status had now ended. DHS will strive to maintain the external links established through the Teaching School and will work with the Unity Teaching Hub when the opportunity arises. DHS had gained an innovation grant from the Specialist School and Academies Trust. Fruitful links remain with various Teacher Training bodies. Julia Farrow had been appointed as a Visiting Fellow at the Unity Teaching Hub. Links remain with the Diocese and the local church.

Start of Term

Year 7 came into school before other students and all students were required to have taken a Lateral Flow Test (LFT). DHS had deviated slightly from government guidance in that students were encouraged to isolate following a positive LFT whilst awaiting the outcome of a PCR test with remote learning bring made available to them on MS Teams. It was felt that this had helped control the number of students with Covid, and had restricted spread within school..

Rev. Bates asked about student vaccinations. Mr Martin said that the vaccination team had arrived late and that the process had been slower than anticipated. As a result, some students had not been vaccinated.

Appendices

- Exclusions – mostly single incidents.
- Attendance – impacted by single students (especially in Year 8).
- Online safety training for all staff will be held in the Spring Term.
- Planned trips and visits were approved by Governors.

9.3 Staff Handbook

This had been made available to Governors.

9.4 Pupil Premium – impact and planning

This item was taken by Mrs Ramsay. RAG rating shows that most targets had been completed despite the pandemic though some (for example Case Studies) had been delayed. New targets are highlighted in red and all costings in the plan are new. The work of the Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) had been particularly pleasing. Attendance of Pupil Premium students needed to improve. Appointments are to be made of Intervention and Catch-up Tutors to support PP students and CPD is to be held in the Spring Term so teachers fully understand the challenges facing PP students.

The Impact Statement remained similar to last year.

The Statement and the Plan were approved by Governors.

9.5 Equality Action Plan – review and planning

It was noted that there was overlap with Item 9.4.

There had been a number of successes in the light of last year's plan:

- English and Maths outcomes.
- Reading as a tutor group activity.
- Boys' progress with a positive residual at GCSE.

But equally there are still some issues with the SEND coordinator finding it difficult to engage with parents.

Changes in the 2021-22 plan include:

- A new outcome relating to emotional and social development had been added (specifically including LGBT+ students).
- Pupil Premium students are to be targeted.
- A focus on ethnic minority and (specifically) Traveller students.
- Building cultural capital for the most vulnerable by means of a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Development of self-compassion and self-esteem.
- Reference to the Church of England publication, *All God's Children*.
- Implementation of a gender-neutral uniform.

9.6 Faculty Review Dates

These were received by the meeting. It was noted that the programme now included governor links to Year Groups.

10. Safeguarding

Governors had received a link to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and were asked to confirm to the Clerk that they are familiar with its contents. Mrs Ramsay said that the changes in KCSIE had been incorporated in the revised DHS Safeguarding Policy.

Action All Governors

11. Budget and related items

11.1 July budget position

The current end of year forecast is for a surplus of £127k which is greater than expected or desired, with additional costs arising from the covid pandemic offset by other factors. The surplus results from the Deputy Head vacancy and from various sources of Covid income (not all of which has yet been used). These include money for testing, some of which was used for extra cleaning, and catch-up funding of £40k remaining out of the £53k provided.

Capital expenditure over the Summer Break had been on the IT rollout (though not, as yet, the interactive TVs. Air-conditioning for those classrooms prone to over-heating was still being scoped.

Governors received the balance sheet.

11.2 Support Staff Pay Settlement

This should have taken effect from 1st April but negotiations are still ongoing – a government offer of 1.5%/1.75% had been rejected but was unlikely to increase. DHS had made an interim payment last year but this had proved difficult for the payroll providers to administer so it was not intended to attempt this again.

11.3 STRB proposals

There government had imposed a pay freeze. The Teachers' Pay Policy will be shared with Governors at the December meeting.

12. DHS Admissions Arrangement 2023-24

These remained the same as previously. Governors approved these.

13. Committees and Working Party

13.1 The Curriculum Working Party had been held just prior to the Full Governor Meeting and minutes will be shared with Governors at the December meeting.

14. Policies

14.1 DHS Performance Management and Appraisal Policy

The only significant change to this was that the application form to pass through the threshold to the Upper Pay Spine had been scrapped.

Governors approved the policy.

14.2 DHS Whole School Policy for Child Protection and Safeguarding Children

This item was taken by Mrs Ramsay and changes were marked in red; most of these reflect changes in KCSIE. These include:

- Changes to Ethos Statement.
- A specific reference to sexual violence and harassment.
- Appendix B is now a shortened version.
- Clearer reference to Statutory Guidance.
- An additional paragraph relating to Governor responsibilities.
- Louise Ramsay is now listed as the Online Safety Lead.
- Reference to Annex C of KCSIE in defining DSL role.
- Staff roles and responsibilities regarding policies and child protection defined more clearly.
- New phrases inserted in relation to criminal activities and county lines.
- Reference to peer-on-peer abuse included.
- Emphasis on online safety (commerce/gambling/phishing). Whole school audit of online safety.
- Various changes in terminology.
- Recognition of the importance of information sharing.
- Supply teachers now specifically under school jurisdiction.
- Safer recruitment – significant changes.
- Reference to domestic abuse and its impact.
- Increased role of DSL.

Governors approved the policy.

14.3 DHS Complaints Procedure

The policy has been tied in more closely with DfE recommendations. It was noted that students cannot complain – it has to be parents.

Governors approved the policy.

14.4 Updated Covid 19 Risk Assessment

Changes implemented for the current academic year are highlighted in red. The Covid RA now includes a Contingency Plan (as required by the DfE).

Governors approved the plan.

14.5 DHS Early Career Teacher Policy

This was based on a template provided by the Unity Hub and provides more structured support for those teachers early in their career, with roles and rights of all concerned outlined.

15. Governor Training.

Governors received the training record. The Clerk requested that any further training undertaken be reported to him.

16. Any other business

Dr Thomas asked if there were any further developments with regards to the Ipswich Garden Suburb as, after a delay, building had now been started. Mr Martin said that he believed that plans to create a new secondary school had been scrapped. Mr Carruthers said he would make enquiries of Bishop Martin.

Action Mr Carruthers

17. Date of next meeting

This was confirmed as Tuesday 14th December 2021.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.14 pm.

Signed: **Chairman** **Date:** 14th December 2021