



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held at the school on Tuesday 8th July 2014 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:	Mr R Boulter	Chairman	Mrs S Janson	
	Mr D Carruthers		Mr D McMillan	
	Mr P Debenham		Mr R Stevenson	
	Mr C Gilgan		Miss J Upton	Headteacher
	Mr C Grover		Mr D Yaroslaw	

In attendance:	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 Mrs J. Brown, Dr D Egan, Ms S Goodrich, Mr R. Grimsey, Dr H Marlow, Mrs F Hotston Moore, Mr B Poole, Mr D Ralph, Mr N Serjeant and Mrs L Wilson.
- 1.2 Governors consented to their absence.

2. Pecuniary and Other Interests

- 2.1 Mr D McMillan and Mr D Yaroslaw declared a pecuniary interest in item 8.1 of the agenda.
- 2.2 There were no updates to the Register of Pecuniary Interests.

3. Chairman's Action

Mr Boulter referred to a complaint that had been made to the school with which he was dealing.

4. Governing Body Membership

- 4.1 Mr Boulter reminded the meeting that he would cease to be a Governor at the end of the calendar year and that those who were interested in taking on the role of Chairman or Vice-Chairman from September should let him or Miss Upton know before the next meeting.

5. Minutes

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13th May were accepted as a true record and signed by Mr Boulter.

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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 R Boulter

5.2 Matters arising from the minutes not covered by agenda items:

- Page 1 (Item 3 – Chairman’s Action). Mr Debenham asked if the DfE had compelled the school to accept the student who had been refused a place. Miss Upton said that it had despite the school’s belief that this was not in the student’s best educational interests.
- Page 3 (Item 6.1 – Headteacher’s Report). There was yet to be a response from Dr Poulter regarding the Section 106 monies.

6. Academic Improvement

6.1 Introduction of new Head Boy and Girl together with their Deputies.

Alex Warnes (Head Boy) and Louise Davy (Head Girl) were joined the meeting together with their deputies Sid Griffiths and Kate Gilbert. They had been chosen from a strong field, following interviews with Miss Upton, the Head of Year and younger pupils. Each gave a brief presentation on recent events in the school: Sports Day, the success of the Young Enterprise team, the visit of the Cambridge Science centre, the charity work of Year 7 Leaders and the primary arts workshops. Of the last of these, Mrs Janson said that primary school children who had attended this event had thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

6.2 School Development Plan (SDP) - to receive and approve the School Development Plan for the year 2014-15.

Before looking at the SDP, Miss Upton drew Governors’ attention to an open letter from OFQUAL, tabled at the meeting, which suggested that all schools should expect variation in examination results in August 2014. This created further uncertainty for teachers though, unlike many schools, the DHS pattern of entry had changed little in the light of recent legislation – there are relatively few early entries.

Miss Upton then referred to the last year of the three year SDP that had been initiated in 2012. She made the point the final year of the plan provided an opportunity thoroughly to embed the initiatives that had been taken in Years 1 and 2. The following points were highlighted:

Attainment Targets

The predictions for the current examination cohort were lower than those achieved previously. Part of The reason for this was staff caution over standards (confirmed by the OFQUAL letter) though it is hoped that reality will be better than predictions.

Improving Student Achievement

- Using the new Ofsted criteria there had been a slight improvement in the quality of lessons observed, from an average score of 1.9 to 1.8.
- There had been an improvement in the percentage of outstanding lessons and in the quality of assessment.
- Milestone assessments are working well though there was still some inconsistency – this is being addressed with the individual departments and teachers concerned.
- Dialogue about marking is making a difference as students are much clearer as to how they might improve.
- Vulnerable students are making less progress than others (Level 4c compared with Level 4a) – teacher awareness is the key to improving this, together with a focus on students below Level 4. SEND students are making good progress. Mr Grover suggested that primary schools inflate grades making it harder to measure student progress. Miss Upton noted that the high level of support in primary schools can also disguise ability levels. Mrs Janson pointed out that the new Ofsted framework focuses on teacher awareness of vulnerable students.
- IEPs are proving more effective.

- Gifted and Talented students are well catered for. When asked by Mr Carruthers, Miss Upton said that the needs of these students were met within lessons through extension work. Further work is being done on recognising exceptional performance.
- ESSENTIALS (9 points evident in good lessons) are not always reflected upon by students. This will be checked on through an SLT and Head of Year review of student logbooks.
- Controlled Assessment is getting better though improvement is proving more difficult in Science.
- From August 2017 GCSEs will be recorded by letters rather than numbers – this will necessitate a review of how student progress is measured across Key Stage 3 and 4.
- Explicit teaching of specific skills required for independent learning will continue.
- Information from the SEND review is working well in the promotion of inclusion.
- The data for the current Year 11 is less positive than in previous years (affected, in part, by student attendance issues). That for Year 10, on the other hand, is more encouraging – though there will be two students with a significantly modified curriculum in September 2014 (one Year 10 and one Year 11).
- The SEND review had positive things to say about the work of Teaching Assistants – their use in lessons is improving.
- In terms of isolation/exclusion the proportion of LAC and SEN students is probably higher than it should be. Mrs Ramsay said this would be addressed by the Equalities Action Plan. Mrs Janson asked if this situation was different from previous years and it was noted that the number of exclusions was slightly increased.
- Student rewards are now well documented.
- A great deal is being done to promote literacy in lessons – e.g. decoding questions in Maths. This will be further embedded next year.
- Two of DHS middle leaders are working towards the NPQML course.
- The Quality Mark for RE provision is being pursued.
- In response to a question from Mr Boulter, Miss Upton said that there were no teachers undertaking MA modules this year.
- Not many peer observations had taken place so this will be formalised next year – possibly being linked to twilight training sessions. Mr McMillan pointed out that making time for such observations was sometimes difficult for teachers.
- All those undertaking teacher training had qualified and had gained employment (one at DHS). There will be three trainees next year in Music, Maths and RE.
- Teaching and Learning Community meetings are being shared more widely.
- Performance Management is due for review in the Autumn Term.

Facilities and Environment

- ICT developments have been delayed slightly because of the change in Network Manager. Sufficient hardware is in place,
- The partnership with primary schools is now flourishing as positive relationships have developed.
- Primary Schools are still discussing the possibility of federation.

Mr Grover asked if there was a conflict between goals found in pages 7 and 25 of the SDP as an increase in class sizes could make achieving increased student contact time with teachers more difficult. Miss Upton felt that this would not necessarily be the case as students would be given more time to reflect as a group. There is no desire to increase class sizes. Mr Boulter, however, pointed out that financial imperatives might make this position less tenable.

Mr Boulter noted that only four governors had attended departmental reviews though it was recognised that the time commitment could be difficult. He encouraged Miss McBurney to seek alternate governors where possible. Mr Carruthers indicated that he was happy to fill in where necessary.

The School Development Plan was approved for a further year.

7. Budget and related items

7.1 Budget Outturn 2013-14

By reference to the Monitoring Commitment Report Mrs Darby made the following observations:

- There had been some virements in line with policy.
- The Pupil Premium had been higher than expected so income will be higher than budget.
- High Tariff Needs income had been higher than expected as DHS had received four terms allocation this year. This will fall next year. It was noted that SEN funding will not increase in spite of the fact that there will be more SEN pupils.
- The estimates from non-guaranteed sources of funding had been cautious and budget income had been exceeded in a number of areas.
- Overall staff costs are down because of provision made for pension auto-enrolment (not taken up) and staffing changes. Advertising costs are higher.
- Maintenance costs had been higher than expected due to unexpected outlay – water boiler replacement, drainage etc.
- Electricity costs had been lower than expected. Less oil had been used during the mild winter.

Otherwise the outcomes were much as expected and it is estimated that a figure in the region of £125k would be carried forward to next year. Mr Debenham asked about returns from the solar panels but the only gain was through free electricity. Any revenue from feed-in tariffs was taken by SCC.

7.2 Budget medium-term plan

7.3 Budget Plan 2014-15

Mrs Darby made reference to the above in a presentation:

- The government is still saying that they are moving towards a flat cash system – though nationally there is money in the system, it is inequitably distributed.
- There was a possibility of a pupil-based injection of funds to poorer funded local authorities in the year 2015-16 (£350 per pupil). The Suffolk Schools' Forum wants to use these funds to offset debts elsewhere before distributing remainder through the Schools' Funding Formula – c £100 per pupil. This figure had not been included in DHS budget planning because of the uncertainty associated with its delivery.
- The only way to increase grant income would be to increase pupil numbers.
- Expenditure will be hit by increased contributions to Teachers' Pensions and the Local Government Pensions Scheme and by the fact that the National Insurance Rebate will be scrapped
- Budgeting has been based on an assumption both of 2% inflation and 130 students in each year.
- It is estimated that reserves stand at circa £511k (the equivalent of approximately 2 months payroll). These reserves will be needed (and could be gone in four years) if the current financial situation pertains – the ability to break even with GAG funding will be lost next year given increases in staff costs.
- KPIs – the DfE expects that staff costs should be around 85% of income. At DHS they are above this and are increasing. A comparison of Norfolk and Suffolk Academies shows that staff costs as a percentage of GAG are increasing generally. By the year 2018-19, if there were to be no increase in funding, staff costs will be higher than GAG income.
- The impact of increased costs for NI and pensions will total £328k over the next five years.
- In the coming year's budget the same funding has been allocated to subject departments. The premises budget is less than had been hoped for and, whilst catering should break even, the plans to employ a catering apprentice have been shelved. The cost of utilities is proving difficult to predict.
- Given the level of reserves, DHS has a year's grace to allow funding uncertainties to be further resolved.

Potential future strategies to relieve financial pressures

- Status quo to be maintained for the coming academic year.
- Reserves to be maintained until the end of 2015.
- To maintain admissions at PAN.
- To consider adjustments to the curriculum offer.
- To look at reducing expenditure on ESS and on non-essential maintenance.

Discussion followed. Mr McMillan pointed out that an increase in PAN would involve catch-up in resourcing increased numbers – including buildings. Mr Grover asked on what pupil figures modelling had been based. Mrs Darby responded that 5 extra pupils had been assumed but even then this would not quite make up any deficit. Mr Boulter observed that increasing the PAN might not prove easy as recruitment had been buoyed by the school reorganisation in West Suffolk. Mr Yaroslaw said that teaching staff felt that teaching and learning would suffer if set sizes were to be increased. Miss Upton wanted to reassure staff that no changes were imminent and that funding for 2015-16 looks to be satisfactory. She pointed out that all other schools were in a similar situation.

The proposed budget for 2014-2015 was approved by the Governors and signed by Mr Boulter.

7.4 Audit Summary and Action Plan

The summary report and action plan were received by the Governors. This was reviewed. Mr Boulter pointed out that many issues had been addressed and thanked Mrs Darby and Miss Knock for their work on this. DHS did not agree with some of the points made. Actions taken will be reviewed at the next Governors' Finance and General Purposes meeting.

It was noted that a group of Governors were looking at a new internal audit provider, the intention being to move away from Schools' Choice to get a more flexible and appropriate service.

8. Teaching and Learning Responsibility Allowances

8.1 To confirm and approve the proposed structure for implementation in September 2014 (related paper enclosed).

Miss Upton prefaced her review of the paper that the Governors had received by assuring the meeting that this was not a cost saving exercise and noting that some staff had been unsettled by the process (particularly being made aware of the allowances for different roles). She also felt that there probably should have been more one-to-one contact with those individuals who had 'lost out'. The paper she had prepared covered both verbal and written communication with members of staff.

After she reviewed the feedback provided in the paper Miss Upton outlined the proposed changes:

1. Create a new point on the TLR Scale (2ii).
2. Heads of History and Geography to be placed on this new point.
3. An additional TLR3 for School Liaison to be given to Head of Year 7.
4. Extra-curricular responsibilities in Drama and Young Enterprise to be given the same allowance as that for D of E.
5. Head of Food to be given a TLR 3 payment on a fixed term basis if numbers opting for the subject entailed the management of another member of staff.

Discussion followed. Mr Boulter pointed out that the outlined changes had already been fully discussed and proposed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee (who had seen all communications from staff in full).

Mrs Janson was concerned that the removal of parity of the SENCO with Heads of English, Maths and Science would adversely affect SEND provision – she had already discussed her concerns with Miss Upton. She asked about the number of SEN students at DHS; currently there are 48 with 8 statemented

and 16 at School Action. A further six students with statements would be arriving in September with 2 leaving. Mrs Janson had recently attended a meeting about SEN reforms that had been prompted by the Children and Families Act 2011. Those presenting at this meeting had felt that, in any school, the SENCO stands very much on his/her own – especially when dealing with external agencies and parents. Reforms were aimed at extending parents'/students' control of choice with respect to learning needs. Given this (and the fact that new guidance suggests that the SENCO should be a member of the SLT) she felt that the parity with major Heads of Department should be maintained. Mr Boulter had received a communication from Dr Marlow supporting this view and noting the proportion of students with SEN who appear before the Disciplinary Committee.

[At this point the Clerk advised Governors that they were possibly straying into the area of the executive function of the Head and they should be wary of making decisions on an individual's pay. In response to this, Mr Carruthers noted Mrs Janson's expertise on matters relating to SEN and the hard work that she puts into her role as SEN Governor.]

It was pointed out that the school's SEN offer had to be published and that it was a legal document.

In response to Mrs Janson, Miss Upton made the following observations:

- With respect to SEN reforms Miss Upton agreed that these were intended to give students and parents greater choice and information but she also noted that schools were able to determine their own categories of need; DHS intended to retain School Action and School Action Plus.
- She agreed that the SENCO role is a vital one but still felt that it did not warrant parity of allowance with the Heads of English, Maths and Science.
- In other schools, when the SENCO is a member of the SLT, this is a post usually held together with other SLT responsibilities. She also noted the close link that the DHS SENCO has with Mrs Ramsay.
- The DHS SENCO enjoys a considerably reduced timetable beyond that of any other TLR holder – each free lesson costs c£1000 a year – and administrative support (an acknowledgement of the complexity of the role).

Mr Carruthers asked the meeting to note that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had discussed the issues at some length and that the second proposal had been approved unanimously. The Committee had seen all the written responses from teaching staff and felt comfortable recommending that the Full Governing Body approved the proposals.

Mr Yaroslaw agreed that the process had been unsettling for staff (more than might have been expected) and that concerns were a lot to do with status. The fact that Miss Upton had revised the proposals after consultation would do much to retain the goodwill of staff.

Mr McMillan referred to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and said that the Teacher of Drama would not have left but for changes to the TLR allowances. He also said that the negative effect on morale had not been related to the time of year.

It was noted that individuals had a right to appeal to the Governors' Appeal Panel.

Mr Boulter summarised the discussion and asked Governors to approve the revised proposals. Further discussion ensued. Mr Debenham said that, as the matter had been discussed a great length, it should be agreed. Mr Yaroslaw noted the time spent on the matter by the Finance and General Purposes Committee – which served its purpose as a sounding board. Mrs Darby said that the proposals made sense in personnel terms. Mrs Janson said that she felt that the status of each post should be separate from financial considerations.

Those members of the Governing Body (who were not conflicted) approved the revised TLR structure.

9. Committees and Working Parties

9.1 Committee reports

Draft minutes of the Health and Safety Committee Meeting of 20th May 2014

After a correction of a typographical error these were discussed by the meeting. It was noted that the security lighting in the rear car park had been improved, and it was confirmed that the student involved in the assault had now left DHS. Mrs Darby reported that a door in the covered way had fallen out of its frame. The door had been repaired and all other doors had been checked. Cofely had been charged to check all doors in their preventative maintenance programme.

Draft minutes of the Financial and General Purposes Meeting of 13th June 2014

There was a brief discussion of these. Mr McMillan commented on the generous allocation of non-contact time and hoped that this would continue as any decrease might affect results, particularly if financial pressures caused set sizes to increase. Mr Carruthers said that every effort would be made to maintain the current situation.

9.2 To receive any school visit reports from Governors

Mrs Janson had provided a report of her visit associated with the SEND review (appended to these minutes). There was to be a greater emphasis on PPI, pupil tracking, work scrutiny and marking and assessment.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Mr Yaroslaw asked if there should be a link governor for the pastoral team. There was general agreement that this could be a good idea and the anticipated arrival of new governors at the end of the year should provide the opportunity for suitable re-assignment.

10.2 Dr Marlow had suggested that there should be termly meetings of the Disciplinary Committee and this idea had been adopted.

Mrs Janson had attended a Governor briefing on upcoming SEND reforms.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

The meeting schedule was agreed.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.14 p.m.

Signed

Date 7th October 2014