

Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy

Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held at the school on Tuesday 8th October at 5.00pm.

Present:	Mr R Boulter	Chairman	Mrs S Janson
	Mr P Debenham		Mr D McMillan
	Ms S Goodrich		Dr H Marlow
	Mr D Ralph		Mr B Poole
	Mr R Stevenson		Mrs L Wilson
	Miss J Upton		Mr D Yaroslaw
In attendance:	Mrs J Brown		Mr S Martin
	Mrs T Darby		Mrs L Ramsay
	Ewan Ralph (Head boy)		Miss S McBurney
	Left after point 5		
	Alice Eddy (Head girl)		
	Left after point 5		

1 ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Mr D Carruthers, Rev P Cotton, Dr D Egan, Mr C Gilgan, Mr C Grover and Mrs F Hotson Moore.
- 1.2 Governors consented to their absence.

2 PECUNIARY AND OTHER INTERESTS

- 2.1 Governors present were asked to complete the annual pecuniary interest declaration. Mrs Darby circulated a form for Governors to complete
- 2.2 No pecuniary interest was declared with regard to any item agenda

3 GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1 Mr Boulter advised the governors that they should elect their Chair and Vice Chair at the first meeting of the new year. He handed the chair over to Mrs Darby who enquired if any one wished to stand for election. Only Mr Boulter offered to stand for re-election as Chairman and he was proposed by Ms Goodrich and seconded by Mr Debenham. Mr Carruthers had indicated he would be willing to carry on as Vice Chairman and was proposed by Mr Boulter and seconded by Dr Marlow. Mr Boulter was duly elected chair of governors for the year and Mr Carruthers was elected as vice chair.
- 3.2 Mr Debenham thanked Mr Boulter, on behalf of the Governors, for all his work over the past year.

4 CHAIRMAN'S ACTION

Mr Boulter reported there had been no action taken by the chairman since the last meeting.

5 HEAD'S REPORT (Received)

Miss Upton referred to her report highlighting and embellishing key points.

Clerk

The governing body are still seeking a permanent clerk to governors. Miss Upton stated that no one internally had indicated their wish to take on this work in addition to their current role. She felt the

governors have little option but to agree to advertise and recruit a suitably qualified individual to fill this key post.

Exam results

Exam results had exceeded expectations and a full discussion and examination of the results would take place at the Curriculum Working Party Meeting on 15 October. Thanks were made for the whole school improvements, but particularly to Miss Ramsay for the work she has spearheaded on writing throughout the year.

The Governors formally congratulated Miss Upton on the 2013 exam results.

Mr Ralph asked for more detail about destinations of year 11 students and their progression from level 3 courses. Miss Upton reported that information is gathered from post 16 institutions but further detail to this will be sought this year in the light of DfE progression expectations on 11-16 schools. This will be brought to the next meeting.

Summer works

Miss Upton highlighted the work carried out in the summer and how the covered way and the science toilets had been enhanced and improved.

Admissions

Referring to pupil numbers, Miss Upton commented that there was one space in year 8 and numbers were up to 130 in year 9. Miss Upton mentioned the LA's involvement in placing SEN as mid term admissions pupils and how the school had little recourse if the placement was felt to be inappropriate or even when the year group is full.

With regard to our feeder schools Miss Upton highlighted the work of Miss Coe (Head of Maths) who works with our feeder primaries. Ofsted had made specific positive reference to the work Miss Coe carries out at Helmingham during their recent inspection.

IT Provision

Speaking again of enhancements to the provision within school Miss Upton stated that the IT provision is now at a ratio of 1 computer between 3 students.

Pathways

Miss Upton commented how the school helps young people make the right choices beyond 16 with the work of Mr Voller who is the school Information and Guidance coordinator. His work coordinating careers advice, helping with options events and coordinating work experience, has ensured that all our young people have found an appropriate solution for further advancement beyond 16 bar one.

Ewan and Alice, head boy and head girl, both Year 11, gave a short talk about their experiences of the presentations that were offered by outside agencies on the recent teachers' strike day. Both commented how useful the day had been giving them advice on study techniques and future pathways and career choices from apprenticeships to university course choices.

Ewan Ralph also mentioned how as a prefect he had suggested that whole school assemblies would be beneficial to the cohesiveness of all the year groups as one student group. He described how there had been a whole school assembly early in September and how beneficial it had been. Miss Upton stated that the school plans to hold one whole school assembly every term.

Attendance

Attendance in school had a direct effect on exam results. Miss Upton shared an analysis she had that showed clearly the relationship between % attendance and exam success. What was startling was how little attendance had to drop before it had a dramatic detrimental impact on attainment in year 11.

Attendance %	5 A* - C including English & Maths
>95%	94%
90-95%	85%
80-90%	65%
<80%	29%

Behaviour

Behaviour has always been very good at Debenham but even so has been improving as illustrated in the report.

Mr Ralph enquired how Governors might help with 'Raising the Bar'? Miss Upton explained what she understood to be happening at County level and what is planned with Debenham High School sharing their success and best practice with others.

6:35 Ewan Ralph and Alice Eddy left the meeting.

6

MINUTES

- 6.1 The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and approved and signed by the Chairman with no amendments.
- 6.2 No matters arising

7

SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (Received)

- 7.1 The Governors considered the School Development Plan and the SEF Executive Summary. Miss Upton introduced both documents explaining they are living, working, documents. The current editions have been updated with the latest exam results. The SDP and executive summary illustrate that the school is constantly striving to improve and will not become complacent on the back of the excellent results.

Ms Goodrich mentioned she noticed that there had been terrific progress in humanities but Science would appear not to have made the same level of progress. Was there a particular reason for that? Miss Upton responded by reassuring governors that Science was being monitored but that it should be noted that the previous year's results for Science had been exceptional. This year there had been the well documented national issues with Science similar to those experienced by English last year. It should also be noted that there was a new syllabus this year and overall Science progress levels are still very good.

Mr Stevenson stated that although the school says it is regularly featured in the press he felt it did not appear to be that regular. Was there opportunity to do more? Miss Upton responded, positive pieces are frequently sent to the local press but it is always at their discretion whether to print or not. One must also remember the recent press about Suffolk schools and lots of positive reports may not have been deemed to be following the angle of the national and local press focus.

Dr Marlow asked for reassurance the school had a standard press release format to avoid misquoting by the press. Miss Upton confirmed this is the case.

Miss Upton closed this agenda item by strongly advising governors to read the SDP and executive summary thoroughly as this would be key background to help with an Ofsted visit.

8

PUPIL PREMIUM

- 8.1 Miss Upton introduced the impact of Pupil Premium summary (**Received**). A statement on Pupil Premium, the amount we receive and how we spend it is on the school website as required by the DfE.

Mrs Ramsay explained to governors how she monitors closely Pupil Premium (PP) and Looked after Children (LAC) students. Mrs Ramsay can show progress by individual student. In the financial/academic year 2012-13 the school received £61,599 Pupil Premium grant.

Mrs Goodrich asked how the school deals with individual students who do not progress as much as planned or expected?

Miss Upton explained we do everything we can but we do still have some students who do not progress as much as statistics would suggest they should.

Mrs Ramsay described in detail the strategies that are in place to encourage and nurture these pupils.

Miss Upton stated that Debenham High School has a responsibility to ensure Year 11 students are in education through age 17 and she is keen to know what they are doing at 18 and beyond. Some of the education providers do pass back to DHS information on the success and pathways of former pupils, some are less keen to do so. Miss Upton will chase our pathways institutions for this information where it is lacking. Miss Upton also mentioned that our PP students who have now left us have got on to appropriate courses that are suited to their skills, expectations and aspirations. Mrs Goodrich mentioned with attendance being key what study has been made on free school meal (FSM) students and attendance.

Mrs Ramsay assured governors that this is part of the individual case studies and the monitoring and tracking that she carries out.

9 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

9.1 There had been no committee meetings since the last full governing body meeting.

10 BUDGET AND RELATED ITEMS

10.1 Mrs Darby reported on budget related items. She stated that she was quoting unaudited figures. The likely in year out turn for 2012-13 will be an overall surplus of £82,899 comprising of £2,312 GAG Fund 01, -£228 Restricted Fund 02 and £80,814 unrestricted. Combined with the carry forward from the previous year will give an overall surplus of £346,505.

This is broadly in line with the predicted surplus.

Mrs Darby reiterated that future funding is still uncertain and whilst this is the case this level of reserves is prudent and may protect against the immediate impact of the anticipated drop in funding.

10.2 Mrs Darby briefly mentioned the current budget position for 2013-14 year. Already there have been some changes in staffing and other areas of what already is a very tight in year budget. Mrs Darby will be reviewing the situation and presenting proposals for virements to the finance and general purposes committee on Friday 18th October.

10.3 Mrs Darby reminded Governors that the internal auditors would be in school all week from the 14 October. Their remit has been widened by Government to include regularity and Governance.

11 POLICIES

11.1 Performance Management Policy (Received)

Miss Upton explained the overall principle and cycle of events

Mr Boulter felt that with the Head's performance management section on page 4 to have 3 governors was too many.

Miss Upton explained to have three was to ensure a balanced view.

A debate took place with final agreement to change wording so that it reads 2 governors one of whom is the chair of governors.

Mr Stevenson questioned if the chair is the right person to appraise the head given the close working relationship that develops between them.

Mr Boulter convincingly explained how it was normal practice for a direct line manager to manage the performance of their team.

Mr Ralph queried why the history of the document contained ?? for previous versions. It was agreed to remove references to the past documents as this one was a complete re-write. Wording to be in altered on the front page to reflect this.

Page 7 bullets under a. for teachers need amending ensuring clarity of meaning.
 A thorough discussion took place about the need for Governors to consider, on an annual basis, whether or not to increase the salary of teachers ...
 Governors agreed that this responsibility to be delegated to the Finance and General Purposes Committee (FGPC) with immediate effect.
 Mrs Darby commented that the policy was very teacher focussed and whilst this was, to certain extent, understandable given the current political sensitivity it did not fulfil the title of a whole school performance management policy as little of it referred to support staff.
 Miss Upton conceded this was the case and undertook to weave support staff into the one policy rather than create a separate one. This will be presented at the next governors meeting.
 Mr Boulter voiced his concern that the appendices seemed to be repeating things.
 Mr Martin explained that annex B could be removed as a separate document designed to stand alone should a teacher specifically wish to progress through threshold and on to the upper pay scale.
 Mr Boulter also stated that the teacher standards were repeated.
 Mrs Goodrich stated she felt this was helpful as it was part of the separate section and could stand alone as a hand out as and when necessary.
 Mr Boulter was content to accept these explanations.
 The contents of page 8 were discussed at some length with regard to the statement about no statutory limit on the number of hours a teacher may be observed in the classroom.
 Mr McMillan felt strongly that this gave the impression that the school intended to observe teachers for more than 3 hours. He stated teaching unions were strongly opposed to this.
 Mr Yaroslaw stated this was more of a National issue rather than a Debenham High School issue.
 After discussion governors agreed to simply remove the sentence completely.
 Mr Debenham questioned given the teacher standards that state, 'teachers must have proper regard for the ethos, policies and practices of the school in which they teach and main high standards etc...', why did Debenham High School teachers go on strike and force the school to close to all but one year group when other local schools remained open.
 Mr Martin explained it would have depended upon the ratio of teachers who were in the striking unions that may have differed from other local schools, also what schools were prepared to do on that day in place of lessons is a factor. Debenham High School endeavours to ensure meaningful teaching and learning takes place.
 Mr McMillan stated teachers felt the need to support the national union agenda and follow union guidance particularly whilst it was felt the profession was under attack from central government.
 Mrs Goodrich stated ultimately whether anyone agrees with the strike or not it is the democratic right of an individual to strike.

Policy was approved with agreed changes

11.2

Lone Working Policy (Received)

This policy was presented by Mr Martin
 Dr Marlow pointed out it was not a Lone Working Policy and should be renamed. It was agreed to rename this policy as One to One Working Policy.

11.3

Policy was approved with agreed changes

Safeguarding Policy (Received)

Mrs Ramsay presented this policy for review. No changes had been made to the content as new government guidance was still awaited before a full update can be carried out.
 Mr Boulter pointed out that he is no longer the named safeguarding Governor. This is now Mr Carruthers.
 Mrs Goodrich mentioned she understood there is new higher level safeguarding training for governors covering their statutory duties.
 Mrs Ramsay agreed to look into this and report back. That level of training would not be something she would be qualified to deliver.

Recruitment Policy and Guidance Document + Recruitment of Ex-Offenders(Received)

Mrs Darby presented these three documents to Governors.

Governors first focussed on the accompanying guidance querying why two documents.

Mrs Darby explained one was the actual policy and would be published on the website whilst the other was the procedures to be used to ensure the policy was adhered to and ensure school recruitment complies with employment legislation and best practice.

Mr Boulter clarified the procedure for the recruitment of the Headteacher correcting the number of governors and how governors are involved in the recruitment of the headteacher. It was agreed to alter so that a shortlisting panel of 3 governors is appointed by governors and then a panel of at least 5 governors are appointed by governors as the selection panel.

Mr Boulter stated that the selection of SLT was not the same as the Headteacher and asked for the policy to be amended to reflect this.

Mrs Darby pointed out that the funding agreement and the EFA finance handbook stated that the position of Principle Finance Officer (Business Manager) is stated as having to be a governor appointment along with the Clerk to Governors.

It was agreed to ensure at least one Governor is present at the recruitment of any member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

With regard to Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs), point 4.5, there was an incomplete sentence that required alteration to make the meaning clear.

Under point 6 there was an erroneous reference to be removed.

Policy document to be amended to match the procedure document.

Policy document for recruitment of ex-offenders was approved without amendment

**Recruitment Policy was approved with agreed changes
Recruitment of ex-offenders approved without amendment**

11.5 Equalities Policy and Action Plan (Received)

Mrs Ramsay presented these to governors. There were only minor revisions to the policy with the addition of services children and a change of governor.

Mrs Ramsay talked through the action plan highlighting key points and explaining the focus for the year ahead. It is key that work is targeted at the right students.

Policy was approved without change

12 LOCAL AUTHORITY ITEMS

Governors had received from LA

Information Sheet for Autumn Term 2013

Governors Newsletter Autumn 2013

Green Paper for action referring to LA Schools Financial value Standard (SFVS) not relevant to academies as internally and externally audited.

Blue Paper for action referring to Safeguarding. Mrs Ramsay confirmed she has sent the safeguarding return back on governors behalf.

Yellow Paper for action referring to Raising the Bar. Previously discussed in this meeting.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Stevenson asked if there was any scope for an engineering extra curricular club? He had a number of ideas he would like to discuss with Miss Upton

Miss Upton confirmed there is a Raspberry PI club running but she welcomed any ideas and suggested he contact her after the meeting.

14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

A calendar listing all meetings had been previously circulated (Received).
Mr Boulter asked Governors to note the change of date for the AGM to 25 February 2014.
Health and safety meeting was cancelled in September and needs to be re-arranged.
The Curriculum Working Party had also been re-scheduled to Tuesday 15th October at 4pm.

The meeting closed at 7.17pm

Signed..... Date.....