



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Academy Trust

Tuesday 8th July 2014 at 9.30 a.m.

Debenham High School

Present:	Rt Rev David Thomson	Chairman
	Mr R Boulter	
	Mrs J Brown	
	Mr R Grimsey	
	Mr N Serjeant	
In attendance:	Miss J Upton	Headteacher
	Mr S Wright	Clerk to the Governors

Introductory Remarks

Bishop David welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded members of his own interim status as Bishop. Due process of appointment for a permanent incumbent was in train and should be completed by Easter 2015.

1. Apologies for absence.

There were no apologies

2. Minutes of the meetings held on Tuesday 12th July 2013 and Tuesday 24th February 2014.

The minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 12th July 2013 were approved as were, with one typographical correction, those of Tuesday 24th February 2014.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes.

Tuesday 12th July 2013

Item 4 - Ownership of the land on which DHS stands had yet to be transferred from the Local Authority to the Diocese.

Tuesday 24th February 2014

There were no matters arising.

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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

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4. Report from Chairman of Governors to Members of the Trust.

Results

This had been another successful year with 88% of students achieving 5 A*-C grades (including English and Maths) and 90% of students achieving 5 A*-C grades overall. 31% of all grades were at the A*/A standard. DHS achieved the highest points score per student of any Suffolk maintained school and was in the top 20% of 11-16 schools nationally for both attainment and progress. Mr Boulter congratulated and thanked Miss Upton on this performance and asked her to convey the thanks of the Trustees to the staff.

Although expectations are still high it was felt that results for 2014 might not be quite as good.

Attendance

At 95% this is high and reflects the fact that students want to come to school. Those absences that there are often relate to a medical condition.

Behaviour

Standards of behaviour are high. 18 students had been given Fixed Term Exclusions (overall a total of 39 days); there had been one Permanent Exclusion. Earlier in the year a fire had been started in the boys' toilet though the culprit had not been discovered.

Numbers

There were 130 students in each year group (5 over the PAN of 125). DHS is oversubscribed for Year 7 in September.

Staff

Mr Boulter noted that the full complement of staff was in place for September with the exception of a Teacher of Drama and that there were to be ten leavers at the end of the year. Most of those leaving were doing so for genuine reasons (retirement, promotion etc.). A new Network Manager and Clerk to the Governors had been appointed. Mr Boulter also highlighted the importance of trainee teachers at DHS.

Miss Upton provided further detail:

- The post of Head of Humanities had been discontinued on Darren Steele's departure last year and Bob Molton had now been appointed as Teacher of Geography on a fixed-term contract. The post of Head of Geography will be re-advertised next year.
- Michael Brookes' retirement from the post of Head of English had enabled the internal appointment of Julia Farrow as his replacement which in turn allowed for the appointment of Rachel Fitch (currently at St Benedict's School, Colchester) as second in department.
- Similarly in MFL, the retirement of Peter Taylor had led to the internal appointment of Sophie Halford-Thompson as Head of Department. Her position had been taken by talented NQT, Tamsyn Cook, who was currently a trainee teacher at DHS. Miss Upton echoed Mr Boulter's views on the importance of trainee teachers when it came to recruitment.

- Julia Rose had retired as Head of ICT and was to be replaced by Erik Geronimo as Head of ICT in Computing. Mr Geronimo currently holds a similar post at St Benedict's School and part of his brief was to introduce GCSE Computing into the curriculum.
- Oliver Hughes is leaving to be Head of PE in Gran Canaria. He will be replaced by Kevin Cook, an experienced teacher (and current Head of PE and Head of Year) from a Middle School background.
- Increased numbers have led to the appointment of Vanessa Highland as a part time (.25) teacher of Health and Social Care. This will allow Miss Mc Burney to focus more on Science teaching as well as her other responsibilities.
- Rachel Keeble has resigned as Teacher of Drama (partly, but not entirely, because of the proposed changes to the TLR structure). Interviews will take place before the end of term.
- Two teaching assistants are leaving to undertake teacher training; one (Maths) at DHS.

Changes to structure of TLR Allowances

These are in the course of being revised to reflect the changes in the organisation and nature of the school as this had not been done since they were first introduced in 2006. It was noted that there was no financial imperative behind the proposed changes.

Land and Buildings

Three capital bids had been made over the course of the year:

- Drama facility with two classrooms
- Boiler and pipe work replacement
- Flat roof repairs

None of these had been successful: an appeal had been lodged but the outcome of this was not yet known.

The repositioning of solar panels (fitted incorrectly some time ago) was part of the roof bid. These will now be re-sited but DHS may need to find some additional funding to ensure refurbishment of the whole roof at the same time. The feed-in tariff revenue from these goes to the LA. Other work had been undertaken on the electrical infrastructure, on the refurbishment of the boys' toilets (post fire), on decorating the covered way and on general maintenance.

Bishop David asked how far we were away from being unable to sustain the quality of the facilities and the upkeep of the fabric of the school. Miss Upton felt that, having been successful with bids in the past, the situation was satisfactory but that we were not far from a tipping point – especially as numbers of students has increased. It was noted that wear and tear on the fabric was generally less than might be expected in other schools.

Extra-curricular

Mr Boulter drew attention to the successful Young Enterprise team – Year 10s competing against Year 12s who won the County Final and finished second, winning two prizes, in the Regional Final. There had been county and national success in Sport- Jack Miller finishing fourth in the national

cross-country competition and the Year 8 football team being successful in the national schools plate competition. The current Year 11 is very strong musically with two DHS students being members of the Snape Young Musicians group. Approximately a third of students learn musical instruments.

5. Changes in Governors/Directors.

There had been no changes in Governors or Directors over the year but there would be a number in the coming academic year as Governors reached the end of their tenure. There was some discussion of the staggered tenure of Trust Members (see below). Mr Boulter reminded the meeting that he would be departing shortly so a new Foundation Governor would be needed - Mrs Janson was the likely candidate. Bishop David asked that 'enormous thanks' to Mr Boulter be recorded in the minutes.

6. Finance.

Aside from the failure of the capital bids, this had been a solid year in financial terms. Careful use of £3.4m of revenue had led to a small surplus of £100k (in part due to cautious income predictions) but it was noted that falls in general revenue had been offset by increased student numbers. Accumulated surplus amounts to c£500k with a further £11k anticipated in next year's budget. This will be important given future financial uncertainties – particularly in relation to the cessation of the Minimum Funding Guarantee, increases in NI and employer pension contributions. The potential was there to raise pupil numbers still further (possibly to 135 in each year group). Mr Boulter pointed out, however, that over-subscription in Year 7 for September 2014 was partly due to school re-organisation elsewhere in Suffolk and that there was no guarantee of such demand in coming years. Miss Upton agreed saying that only 80-90 of the intake were in-catchment and it would be important to maintain the numbers of out-of-area applications. Mrs Brown pointed out that the potential downside to this was that some parents were attracted to DHS by its small class sizes and that, if these increased, the number of applications might be adversely affected.

Bishop David summarised the situation by saying that we were in a reasonable position for the next two years with enough accumulated reserves to cope for a further year. Thereafter the viability of finances would depend on an increase in funding levels.

A recent internal audit had revealed outstanding financial practice and Mrs Darby and Miss Knock were thanked and congratulated for their astute financial management.

7. Admissions.

Most issues had been covered in items above.

Miss Upton drew Members' attention to two students that DHS had refused but had been forced to admit by the LA and DfE. It was felt that one, the son of a traveller family joining next September in Year 11, would not be able to access the full curriculum and that DHS was, therefore, not the correct school for him. The other (LAC) student who had previously only attended specialist provision had been admitted on a part time basis but had moved to Number 46 in Bury and then to Parkside PRU which was the most appropriate provision for him. Bishop David felt that inclusivity was important and said that Church of England was looking to promote this.

8. Head's Report to Governors.

Miss Upton highlighted three points:

- The SSAT recognition of the school's achievement both in terms of attainment and progress.
- That the Governors had discussed the possibility of vertical federation with primary schools but had decided that this could spread school resources too thinly and should not be pursued. She further said that feeder primaries had cooperated with each other in matters relating to Teaching and Learning but nothing more formal had been undertaken – the five smaller schools being rather keener on federation than the two larger, more financially viable, ones. Bishop David informed the meeting that the Diocese was looking to develop a Multi-Academy Trust as a neutral sponsor and that he would welcome a 'watchful interest' from DHS. It was intended that the Trust would be open to non-Church schools.
- That the three year School Development Plan would be discussed by Governors at their next meeting; it was intended that the third year of the plan would be used for the embedding of initiatives taken in Years 1 and 2.

9. Any other business.

Radicalism

Mr Grimsey asked if recent events relating to religious radicalism in Birmingham held any lessons for a Church of England School such as DHS. Miss Upton felt not as DHS was not a proselytising institution and welcomed students from other faiths. Bishop David made two further points:

- None of the schools involved in Birmingham were faith schools.
- In many ways such radicalisation was less likely at a Church of England schools as such institutions were skilled at managing the interface between faiths, and encouraging others to 'encounter' Christianity. DHS, he felt, should be confident in its Christianity, but quietly so.

Bishop David also drew attention to the Christianity Project which, recognising the fact that schools were often more confident in teaching about other faiths whilst being diffident about Christianity, was developing new, age-appropriate teaching resources.

All students complete a short course GCSE in RE at DHS and this would continue to be the Christianity and Ethics option. From September, numbers opting were such, that a full course GCSE in RE would be undertaken within the timetable. The school was also looking to gain the RE Quality Mark – Bishop David approved and felt that this would enable DHS further positively to influence other local schools.

Trust Membership

Mr Serjeant asked that the tenure of Trust Members be clarified. Me Boulter confirmed that tenure ended as follows

Mr Serjeant - 31st December 2016

Mr Grimsey - 31st December 2017

Mrs Brown - 31st December 2018

Replacements were through co-option and the process of selection needed to be initiated a least a year before the period of service ceased.

10. Dates of next meetings.

These were confirmed as Tuesday 3rd February 2015 at 4.30 p.m. (AGM) and Tuesday 7th July at 9.30 a.m.

Signed: Chairman Date: 8th July 2015