



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy

Minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Academy Trust

Wednesday 6th July 2016 at 9.30 a.m.

Debenham High School

Present: Rt Rev Martin Seeley Chairman
Mr D Carruthers Chairman of Governors
Mr N Serjeant

In attendance: Miss J Upton Headteacher
Mr S Wright Clerk to the Governors

1. Apologies for absence.

These were received from Mrs J Brown, Mr R Boulter and Mr R Grimsey.

2. Minutes of the meetings held on Wednesday 8th July 2015 and Tuesday 2nd February 2016.

The minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 8th July 2015 were received and approved as were those of Tuesday 2nd February 2016.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes.

There were no matters arising.

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

Results

The measure of 68% of grades at A*-C was slightly down on the previous year but with a cohort that had poorer prior attainment, this outcome could be seen as very pleasing. This was particularly the case in relation to the value added outcomes in the shadow Progress 8 measure.

Attendance

This was very good and at 96.3% was even better than the previous year. Individual cases are pursued if attendance dips below 90% (previously the measure had been 85%). As is often the case the figures had been affected by a small number of students with poor attendance – often because of existing medical conditions. In response to a question from the Bishop, Mrs Upton said that fines had not been used as attendance was good and improving.

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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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Governing Body

All positions in the Governing Body were filled. The only change since last year was that the Rev Cotton had resigned. He had been replaced as an interim measure by Rev Mary Lamb pending a new appointment to the parish.

Specialist School and Academies' Trust (SSAT)

Debenham High School (DHS) had received an award from the SSAT for being in the top 10% of academies nationally. The Chair of the SSAT (Sue Williams) had visited DHS and had been impressed. In the appropriate table in the Sunday Times, DHS had moved from position 23 nationally to position 10.

Teaching Staff

There had been a few but not many changes, which led Mr Carruthers to feel that most incumbents were happy in their posts. One ITT (Initial Teacher Training) teacher had gained a full time post and the four Graduate Interns (GIs) had all joined ITT courses. Mr Carruthers felt these appointments were important in providing a pool of potential DHS teachers and in spreading the good word about the school.

Infrastructure

The new boiler was up and running and was proving more efficient, providing for a warmer school; heating can now be zoned. The contractors had been quite difficult to manage and the effectiveness of the Project Managers (Concertus) had at times raised concerns although their Quantity Surveyor did an important job in defining costs as the project neared its conclusion. For DHS Mrs Darby had been excellent in ensuring that the school gained value for money.

The first phase of the re-roofing project was going well but there was still work to be done.

In the current round of funding applications DHS had put in bids for further roofing work and for additional classroom space and drama studio to cope with current high numbers (PAN remains at 125). With respect to the latter the Educational Funding Agency (EFA) had asked for a consultation to take place as if this were a bid related to a significant change in numbers (though this was not the case). To date one consultation return had been slightly negative so at this point it is not clear whether the bid will be successful. Mr Carruthers pointed out that, if the bid were to be successful, the funding/project time schedule would have to be adjusted.

Finance

Finances were in a satisfactory condition. Though DHS had set a deficit budget of £48,000, the current figures suggest that this will be reduced to £11,000 by the year end. For future years, projections suggest that the anticipated gap between income and expenditure will close – it is hoped that planned changes to the National Funding Formula will help. In essence the situation seems more comfortable than at this stage 12 months ago with a good level of reserves and reduced capital commitments. Increased student numbers have helped – though not to unmanageable levels – as has judicious staff recruitment.

Admissions

Interest in DHS remains strong with a full complement and a waiting list. All year groups stand at 135 except for Year 11 (134). DHS is aware that the current Year 5 is demographically smaller and this will need to be monitored. There had been very few in-year admissions as the school is full.

Teaching School

DHS had been approached by the Regional Commissioner (Tim Coulson) to become a Teaching School (TS) and a successful bid had followed. DHS is now looking to build a network of schools focussing on ITT, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and school-to-school support. DHS is already involved with the Suffolk and Norfolk ITT (SNITT) and will continue to support placements. CPD will involve course run by DHS and by other schools. Finally, support will be provided to other schools who may be struggling – this may well be brokered by the Local Authority (LA) and could enlist the help of other schools in the TS Alliance (TSA) such as Stradbroke, Stowupland and Thomas Mills. £60k of TS funding had been received with tapered payments in subsequent years. TS status also brings potential access to other sources of funding.

Safeguarding Audit

This had taken place with an external consultant and had been very positive. Thanks for this were due to Mrs Ramsay.

5. Changes in Governors/Directors.

This had been covered in the previous item.

6. Finance.

This had been covered in Item 4.

7. Admissions.

This had been covered in Item 4.

8. Head's Report to Governors.

This item was taken by reference to Miss Upton's report that had been circulated at the previous Full Governors' Meeting. She made additional reference to the impending changes to the NFF (now delayed) and to the international project undertaken with a Dutch school.

9. Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)

This item was taken by reference to a presentation. Introducing the presentation Miss Upton gave the background to the potential creation of a DHS-led MAT. Discussions had taken place with local primary schools (PS) following the DfE stipulation that all schools would need to be part of a MAT – one small PS in particular had seen this as an important survival issue. The goal was to create a two-tier MAT (primary/secondary). Though the current priority for DHS is its TS status there was a danger that, if DHS did not take the lead in creating a MAT, local PS might seek MAT leadership from other sources – which may harm work undertaken across the pyramid. In response to a question

from the Bishop Miss Upton said that 7 PS could potentially be part of any future MAT. She also said that the principles espoused by DHS would have to be at the heart of any MAT that it led.

Presentation

Attached to these minutes

The Governing Body had agreed (without commitment) to take forward the proposal for a DHS-led MAT and a Governors' Advisory Board was being set up. Most PS are happy to take things slowly at the moment. The Bishop asked how many of the potential MAT members were church schools. Miss Upton replied that there were 5 (3 Voluntary Aided and 2 Voluntary Controlled). The Bishop confirmed that the diocese was happy for non-church schools to be part of a MAT and felt that the model proposed by DHS was very much in line with diocesan thinking. Mr Carruthers stressed that the Governors see the benefit of stronger links with PS and the Bishop said that future collaboration between different pyramids of schools could be possible. Mr Serjeant felt that the geographical proximity of MAT schools was important.

The next step would be for the Governors' Advisory Group to put a proposal together over the next twelve months – there is a great deal that needs to be both understood and developed. This would include ascertaining the wishes of PS governing bodies. Miss Upton pointed out that the Regional Commissioner does not want a MAT to consist only of good schools – it should include those that are in need of support. Mr Carruthers noted that there were few C of E secondary-led MATS nationally and none locally.

The Bishop asked about his own involvement. Miss Upton suggested that he should join the Advisory Group in his capacity as Trust Chairman. It was intended that there should be three meetings spread across the academic year – dates to be convenient for the Bishop.

10. Any other business.

There was no other business.

11. Dates of next meetings.

These were provisionally set as Tuesday 31st January 2017 at 4.30 p.m. (AGM) and Wednesday 5th July 2017 at 9.30 a.m.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 10.56 a.m.