



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Full Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held at the school on Tuesday 9th May 2017 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:

Mr R Barker		Rev M Lamb
Mr D Carruthers	Chairman	Mr D McMillan
Mr P Debenham		Dr H Marlow
Mrs C Driver		Mrs J Newman
Dr D Egan		Mr R Stevenson
Mr T Green		Dr W Thomas
Mrs S Janson		Miss J Upton

In attendance:

Mr R Grimsey	Member of the Academy Trust
Miss S McBurney	Assistant Headteacher
Mr S Martin	Deputy Headteacher
Mrs L Ramsay	Assistant Headteacher
Mrs T Willmott	School Business Manager
Mr S Wright	Clerk to the Governors

1. Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Mr R Boulter, Mrs J Brown, Mr C Grover and Rt. Revd. M Seeley.

Dr Egan arrived during Item 5.2. Mr Barker left during Item 5.5.

1.2 Governors consented to their absence.

2. Pecuniary and Other Interests

2.1 There were no pecuniary interests raised with respect to items on the agenda.

2.2 There was nothing to update in the Register of Pecuniary Interests.

3. Chairman's Action

New Governor

Mr Carruthers introduced Dr Will Thomas as a prospective new Governor; the appointment was subsequently approved by the Governing Body. Dr Thomas has worked at the University of Suffolk for 10 years and is Deputy Head of the Business School. He is Suffolk born and based.

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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 Chair of Governors: Mr D Carruthers

School Business Manager (SBM)

The Chairman also introduced Mrs Tracy Willmott, the new SBM. Mrs Willmott had previously worked as a roving BM for Schools' Choice and prior to that in commercial research and development. She also serves as a school governor.

Complaint

This related to a challenge by the parents over the change of setting for a student in Mathematics. This had been resolved by reference to the DHS complaints procedure which had been followed to the letter.

Exclusions

There had been two exclusions relating to an incident at the school. Both would require consideration by the Governors' Disciplinary Committee as one was permanent and the other, fixed term, exclusion was in excess of 15 days.

4. Minutes

4.1 With the correction of one typographical error the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 31st January were accepted as a true record of that meeting.

4.2 Matters arising from the minutes.

Action Points

3 The SEN Presentation is an agenda item for this meeting.

5 Acronyms will be explained in future documents

7.2 The Admissions Policy on the website had been checked and updated

9 Rev Susan Bates (currently Curate at Yoxford) has been appointed to the Debenham Parish. She will take up her post in July.

5. Academic Improvement

5.1 Head's Report

Miss Upton welcomed Mrs Willmott (SBM) to the meeting and then reviewed her report:

Staffing update

The need for a Maths teacher had been partially resolved by the appointment of a part time (0.5) teacher and through the flexibility given to staffing by the appointment of Mr Steve Phaup as a Physics teacher. This, along with the blocking Science and Maths together in Year 9, allowed some scientists to teach more Maths. Mr McMillan asked how this worked and Miss Upton said it was made possible by splitting one year group in half (Year 9) and having six sets in both Science and Maths as opposed to five to allow half a year group on at one time.

An advertisement for an Art post is currently in the media.

Eleven potential Graduate Interns are being interviewed for posts across the Teaching School Alliance (TSA).

The caretaker has been referred to Occupational Health in the light of his long-term absence.

Jo Newman has resigned from her post of Head of Design Technology. This post is being advertised.

National Leader of Education (NLE)

Miss Upton gave more detail relating to her work as an NLE. She also stressed how impressed Mr Campbell had been with the teaching of English at DHS. He had visited as part of the peer Headteacher review process.

Dutch Partner School

Two DHS teachers and one from a TSA school will visit Slingerbos and Levant.

Diversity week

The talk given on the dangers of extremism had elicited an interested and varied response from both students and their parents.

Dr Hazel Harrison

The parental workshop held by Dr Harrison had been well-attended and response had been very positive. (Mrs Janson concurred that it had been excellent.) Most parents agreed (strongly) that they understood their children better after the talk.

Extra-curricular highlights

Emma Burley had gone on to win the County Book Mastermind Final. The Under 16 boys lost narrowly in the County Final.

Appendix 2; Attendance

Mr Carruthers noted that Year 11 absence rates were higher than elsewhere in the school. Mrs Ramsay pointed out that, whilst attendance amongst older students is generally lower, in this case the discrepancy was almost entirely due to demographics relating to long term absence in this particular year group.

5.2 Academic Progress

This item was taken by reference to the Departmental Monitoring Records for Year 11. Miss McBurney gave the usual health warnings with respect to the unknown standards relating to the new grading system and new qualifications, combined with teacher caution. She also made the point that the figures in red related to a comparison with national figures from 2016 which were not easily comparable.

Mr Carruthers asked what benchmarks might lead to closer DfE scrutiny – it was believed that this would be minus 0.5 or less. Dr Thomas sought clarification in interpreting the figures.

5.3 SSAT Leading Edge School – Visit Report

A Leading Edge School is one with a good or outstanding Ofsted grading. Schools join to share good practice and there is a database resource for the purpose of consultation. A journal is published and there is a yearly visit.

The DHS visit was carried out by Sue Hargadon, former Head of Farlingaye High School. Prior to the visit the DHS had self-assessed on a four point scale (Transforming, Embedding, Developing and Beginning). The visit had been very positive.

Mr Carruthers asked if there was any capacity for gubernatorial review within the LE body – it was thought not.

5.4 SEN Presentation

This was given by Mrs Ramsay - see attached. Mrs Angie Scott (SENCo) joined the meeting.

After the presentation there were a number of questions which raised the following points:

Dr Egan asked who paid for the services of an educational psychologist. The school can make a referral for LA services in this regard after which there is a panel judgement (governed by the In-Year Fair Access Protocol) which, if favourable, means that there is no cost to the school. It is usually easier and quicker for DHS to pay directly for an educational psychologist.

Mr Carruthers asked if many parents raised concerns regarding potential SEN issues of their child. Mrs Scott said that they did and, if these are felt to be unfounded, the reasons why are explained to the parents. If the parents still insist there is a problem then an assessment will be made. He also asked if any parents are reluctant to accept a judgement that their child has SEN. Mrs Scott agreed that this was sometimes the case but that she will always talk this through with the parents.

5.5 Curriculum Review

Miss Upton gave a presentation on proposals for a remodelled curriculum (see attached). She said that such a review had not taken place for some time. She posed three questions relating to: the establishment of the necessary foundations in the early years at the school; whether students should have the same curriculum diet at KS3 and the same choices at KS4; and how the DHS curriculum offer compared to that at other successful schools.

After consultation and comparison with the curriculum offer at other schools it had been decided that there were several issues that needed to be addressed:

- The offer of a second language at GCSE – commonly found in many high achieving schools.
- The increased importance of literary competence at GCSE (and generally).
- The current Year 10 will struggle to finish the GCSE Science course because of time pressure.
- A significant shortfall in Science provision compared with other schools (with the carousel model currently deployed not easily meeting the needs of students).

Proposals - 2017

PSHE to be removed as a timetabled lesson to allow for more efficient deployment of staff resources; PSHE instead to be taught by the tutor team across the whole school in a period that would rotate throughout the week.

The PSHE lesson thus made available would be used for:

Year 9 English Sets 1-3 – to be taught Spanish
 English Set 4 to receive an extra English lesson
 English Sets 5-6 to be taught bespoke literacy skills.

Year 10 An extra Science lesson.

Year 11 A roving lesson taught by Science staff (in 2017-18).

In Year 9, Graphics to be replaced by Drama in the DT rotation.

Art to remain in the Year 9 DT carousel.

Proposals 2018

Three subject options rather than four at GCSE. Most students to undertake a full course RE GCSE. Freed Year 10 PSHE Lesson to remain with Science.

Periods released by the removal of an option block to be allocated as follows:

- Year 10 - 2 lessons to RE (giving three in total like as with other full course GCSEs)
- Year 11 - 1 lesson to RE (giving three in total as with other full course GCSEs)
- Year 10 - 1 lesson to English
- Year 11 - 1 lesson to Science
- Year 11 - 1 lesson to Maths

Miss Upton made the following observations relating to form tutors teaching PSHE:

- Though not PSHE specialists, Form Tutors are capable of teaching this subject as all are trained in holistic student development.
- Though staff will no longer have the expertise of teaching a module regularly this would be offset by stability in staffing (this currently varies year on year) and by the fact that there could be the opportunity of rotational modelling within the tutor team.
- There are benefits to teaching PSHE in the context of the personal relationship that exists between tutor and tutee.
- The loss of curriculum time in subjects under pressure (English and Maths in particular) caused by the rotating PSHE lesson.
- Loss of PPA time when the rotating PSHE lessons falls in a staff free period - though this small reduction should be seen in the context of the extra PPA time offered at DHS. It could also be offset through rotation within the tutorial team.

The loss of one of the GCSE options might lead to fewer vocational courses being offered. To retain four blocks and offer RE in each had been considered but this would make it difficult to balance numbers doing RE across each block.

Staff had suggested alternative ideas such as the teaching of PSHE in tutor time but experience suggests that this time is often taken up by administrative and pastoral issues. Similar concerns pertained in relation to different use of the afternoon registration time. Miss Upton said that the changes will be kept under review:

Discussion

Governors raised a number of points:

- Mr Green asked if French was taught in sets – it is taught in tutor groups.
- Dr Marlow asked why Spanish was the second language of choice rather than German – it is felt that this is a more widely spoken language and was more commonly taught in other similar schools.
- Dr Thomas asked if the carousel model might lead to confusion – Miss Upton felt that this was possible but students would be given regular reminders
- He also asked about linking the teaching of Spanish at KS3 with setting in English – it was felt that lower literacy levels were usually the greatest inhibitor in the learning of a foreign language.
- Mr McMillan if the literacy support that is currently offered in tutor time would continue – it was felt that would not be required to the same extent.
- Reverend Lamb asked if this was going to lead to further change in the curriculum and if teachers were being put under greater pressure. She also asked if the range and breadth of the curriculum had been compromised – Miss Upton felt rather that it had been extended given the further opportunities that were being offered.

- Mr Green asked if the Progress 8 pots would be filled – Miss McBurney confirmed that they would.
- He also asked if offering full course RE might reduce enjoyment for some students. Miss McBurney made the observation that the material that most enjoyed by students was now only available in the full course.
- In this light, Mr Barker asked if DHS could not create its own RE course using the ‘best’ parts of the existing syllabi. Miss McBurney said that the RE Department preferred an examined course.
- In a response from a question from Mr Stevenson it was confirmed that currently all students do the short course RE and that one set takes the full course.
- Dr Egan wondered, if the teachers are somewhat reluctant to teach PSHE, would this lead to a reduction in quality of delivery. Miss McBurney felt that the opposite would be the case given that all staff would be available to teach PSHE. Mrs Ramsay also noted that, though the teaching of PSHE was not yet a statutory requirement for academies, it is expected that it soon will be.
- Mr Green asked if personal finance is part of the PSHE scheme of work – it was confirmed that it is.
- Mrs Newman said that there was genuine concern amongst staff about increased workload – particularly given the introduction of new specifications at GCSE. Mrs Upton felt that the quality of PSHE resources would be the key to countering this.
- Mr Green asked if the introduction of Spanish as a GCSE option would affect uptake in other subjects. Miss Upton felt that, for the most part, it would be taken as an alternative to French.

Though this was not a strategic decision, Mr Carruthers asked Governors to be supportive of the proposed changes. Reverend Lamb said that the matter had clearly been considered very carefully and Mr Stevenson said that Governors should trust the SLT in this matter. Governors concurred.

6. Budget and related items

6.1 Current budgetary position

Miss Upton said that this had been discussed at the last FGP Meeting when it was found that the budgetary position was broadly as it should be at this stage of the year. She highlighted the variations in supply costs. Mrs Willmott said she was working towards the formal March closure of accounts. Mr Carruthers noted that it was difficult working towards the 2017-18 budget given the uncertainties over staffing. Dr Thomas sought, and was given, clarification regarding the accounting of Teaching School monies. There were no further questions.

6.2 Capital Improvement Fund (CIF)

Unsurprisingly both bids had been unsuccessful – though that for improvements in Food Technology was by only a small margin; Mrs Willmott had reviewed this decision and felt that there were no grounds for an appeal. Work in Food Technology was, nevertheless, to be undertaken using existing capital funds and work on this will begin two weeks before the end of term.

6.3 Extension Project

After post-tender interviews, Beardwells had been appointed contractors for the project. Archers (Project Managers) had briefed Mrs Willmott. Work will commence on 22nd May.

7. Committees and Working Parties

7.1 The minutes of the Financial and General Purposes Meeting of Friday 17th March 2017 were received and noted.

7.2 Governor visits

Mrs Janson, Dr Marlow and Mr Carruthers had been to the Extended Project presentation evening and had been impressed with the quality of the submissions.

Mrs Driver had attended Pupil Perception Interviews undertaken by Mr Martin and had been impressed how reflective and clear students were on how they were taught.

Ms Goodrich (English) and Mr Debenham (Drama) had attended departmental reviews and had been very encouraged by what they saw.

8. Policies

8.1 DHS Attendance Policy

Given recent court judgements a clearer definition of what constitutes 'regular attendance' had been inserted on page 3. Clarification was sought (and given by Mrs Ramsay) as to the speed with which the school will communicate with the parents if a student is not in attendance.

The policy was approved by Governors.

9. Any Other Business

Given input from the National Governors' Association Mr Carruthers will redistribute the Governor Skills Matrix and adjust the GO1 and GO2 documents.

Action Mr Carruthers

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 4th July 2017 at 5.00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.52 pm.

Signed: Chairman Date: 4th July 2017