



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Full Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held on MS Teams on Tuesday 30th June 2020 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:	Rev S Bates		Mrs S Edmond
	Mr D Carruthers	Chairman	Mrs S Janson
	Mrs M Carter		Mr D McMillan
	Mr P Debenham		Dr W Thomas
	Mrs C Driver		Mr M Touman
	Mr A Dubberley		Miss J Upton

In attendance:	Mr S Martin	Deputy Head
	Mrs T Willmott	School Business Manager
	Miss S McBurney	Assistant Head
	Mr S Wright	Clerk to the Governors

1. Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Dr D Egan, Mr C Grover, Ms S Goodrich, Mr R Grimsey, Mrs L Ramsay and R Revd M Seeley. Mr Touman joined the meeting at 6.10 p.m. and Mr Dubberley left the meeting at 6.42 p.m.
- 1.2 Governors consented to their absence.

2. Pecuniary and Other Interests

- 2.1 Mrs Edmond said she was a Governor at Bedfield PS. No other interests were declared.
- 2.2 Mrs Willmott said the Register of Pecuniary Interests was up to date.

3. Chairman's Action

It was noted that the Full Governors meeting scheduled to be held on Tuesday 12th May had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis.

It was also noted that there had been an EGM of the Governing Body on Tuesday 8th June to review the Covid-19 Risk Assessment and to approve the return of Year 10 students on Monday 15th June 2020.

Mr Carruthers updated Governors on the recruitment of a new Deputy Head to replace Mr Martin following his appointment as Headteacher. The deadline for applications had been set at 10.00 am on Monday 6th July with interviews scheduled for the following week. Six or seven applications had already been received together with 24 individual calls to discuss the post. Most applications had been local. There had been no internal applications as yet.

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Headteacher: Miss J Upton BSc

Senior Leadership Team: Mr S Martin, Miss S McBurney, Mrs L Ramsay, Mrs T Willmott

Chairman of the Academy Trust: Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Chairman of Governors: Mr David Carruthers

4. Governing Body Membership

- 4.1 Mr Carruthers informed the meeting that Mrs Bosley was retiring from DHS at the end of the academic year and there would, therefore, be a vacancy for a Support Staff Governor.
- 4.2 The meeting schedule for the academic year 2020-21 was received by Governors.

5. Minutes

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 4th February 2020 were approved as a true record of the meeting – to be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

The minutes of the EGM of Tuesday 8th June were approved as a true record of the meeting – to be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

- 4.2 There were two matters arising from the meeting of Tuesday 4th February:

- 5.2 The inspection dashboard had been sent out to Governors.
- 10.2 The Staff Harassment and Bullying Policy had been adjusted as per the minutes.

There was one matter arising from the EGM of Tuesday 8th June:

7. Classroom doors. At a recent Fire Risk Assessment, the Fire Officer had confirmed that it was permissible for doors to be wedged open when the classroom is in use as the imperative of the Covid-19 pandemic clearly meant that this was necessary. Mrs Carter added that her advice was that such action would not provide grounds to decline an insurance claim.

Mr McMillan asked if, as the Covid-19 RA is a live document, there had been any recent changes since the EGM. Miss Upton said that there had been no changes as yet but that it would need to be updated, in line with government guidance, for the Autumn Term.

6. Academic Improvement

- 6.1 Head's Report

Miss Upton made the following additional points:

Staffing

Miss Upton commended to Governors the long service of Cheryl Thomas (36 years at DHS). Mr Carruthers agreed that a letter should be sent to Mrs Thomas from the Chair of Governors to mark her retirement.

Action Mr Carruthers

After the round of departures and appointments, Miss Upton said that school now had a full complement of teaching staff for September (with the exception of the Deputy Head post). Interviews for Graduate Intern and Teaching Assistant positions had taken place and Miss Upton said she was confident that the vacancies would be filled from a strong field. Mr McMillan ask if the numbers of SEND support staff remained the same as last year. Miss Upton said there was likely to be one extra appointment of either a Graduate Intern or Teaching Assistant.

Learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Miss Upton said that her report provided the necessary detail of lockdown learning provision, but that Governors needed to be aware that this was an evolving situation. Currently teachers are introducing virtual material (both live and recorded), partly in preparation for any situation that might pertain in September. She

also stressed that student welfare had been to the forefront with contact being made with all students, especially vulnerable students and those falling behind with work.

Dr Thomas asked about student access to technology and if this was a potential barrier to virtual learning. Miss Upton said that there were some issues with shared computers, but all school laptops had been distributed to students who needed them. She felt that broadband connectivity was perhaps a bigger issue, particularly in homes where there were a number of children, together with parents working from home

Mrs Edmond thanked DHS for its efforts in support of students and made the point that some students are very nervous when being taught in live lessons online. She also felt that safeguarding issues were a high priority in live learning.

Year 11 Assessed Grades

Miss Upton reviewed the process that had been used to determine the Teacher Assessed Grades and commended DHS Staff for their professionalism. Students will receive results by e-mail rather than visiting the school. Staff will be available for those students that subsequently need to visit the school

Appendices

Exclusions

Mrs Janson asked if the Year 10 exclusions related to one, or to a number, of students. Miss Upton confirmed that, whilst there were two repeat offenders, most were individual incidents.

Attendance

Miss Upton made the point that attendance figures covered the period up to the start of lockdown.

6.2 Year 11 Assessed Grades

The spreadsheet submitted provided Governors with an overview of grades awarded through Teacher Assessment, and the Progress 8 and Attainment 8 estimates are based on these. Any moderation that takes place will be at the subject level – meaning that changes made in one subject during moderation will not affect grades in others. Examination Boards will use historical school performance in the moderation process. Mr Carruthers said that, if unmoderated, the grades will be very good indeed; Miss Upton concurred but stressed that they are a fair reflection of students' ability and performance.

Mr Carruthers stressed that Governors should treat these results with complete confidence.

6.3 Year 10 return to school

Year 10 students are attending DHS in bubbles; each bubble coming in for one day a week to be taught English, Maths and Science. There had been 94% attendance and, despite some initial anxiety amongst students, all had gone well. Students are clearly pleased to be back in school.

Those students (in other years) who had fallen behind in their home-learning were also being asked to attend in the last few weeks of term.

7. Budget and related items

7.1 Budget estimated outturn 2020-21

Mrs Willmott highlighted the following points:

Income

- Budgeted income was £3,936k; projected income now stands at £3,947k

Variations due to:

- Lost income from trips/catering.
- Increased Pupil Premium Grant.
- Teachers' Pay Grant received for April-August.
- Extension to Teaching School status and associated funding.

Expenditure

- Budget was set at £3,876k; projected expenditure now stands at £3,717k.

Variations due to:

- Saving on teaching staff costs of £40k due to opt-outs from TPS and those staff leaving at Easter not being replaced immediately
- No employment of casual support staff – e.g. invigilators.
- Increased teaching costs (advertising).
- Overspend on premises relating to storm damage to boilers and contractor damage to paving. Both these costs will be covered by insurance. Refurbishment of tennis courts (£5k).
- Savings on educational costs of c £109k. It was noted that DHS has refunded money for trips to parents in full. This will be covered by providers or, failing this, insurers.
- Catering – loss of income (though also savings on catering supplies).
- Teaching School costs.

Reserves

These stand at £757k (£88k of which is Teaching School reserves).

7.2 Budget Mid-term Plan

This item was taken by way of a presentation from Mrs Willmott:

Projected Pupil Numbers

Currently these stand at 673 following the October 2019 census. It was noted that there will be a dip in numbers at the end of the year when the current Year 11 leaves (138). The assumption has been made of a Year 7 entry of 135 each year.

Five Year Summary

Income is based on funding of £5,039 per pupil (through the Minimum Funding Guarantee). An assumption of an increase in funding of 1% a year has been made. The Teachers' Pay Grant is expected to end in March 2020; thence to be subsumed into GAG. The assumption has been made that the Teachers' Pension Grant will continue (£130k). Other grant income (Higher Needs Funding, Pupil Premium, Teaching School) has been assumed to continue into 2020/21 - based on known numbers where relevant. It was noted that Teaching School income had been extended for a year following the delay in the creation of Teaching School Hubs. Income from Miss Upton's support to other schools will also be lost. There may well be other project income but this has not been budgeted for. Catering income has been based on 50% attendance. Expenditure has been based on staffing as established, plus a new Deputy Head from January.

It was noted that there was a projected in-year deficit from 2022.

KPIs

It was noted that the Pupil-Teacher ratio is being maintained at around 16. The increase in staff costs percentages in 2020-21 relates to loss of income.

Benchmarking

DHS still compares well with other schools.

Financial Risks and Challenges

These include, inter alia:

- The reversion of various grants into GAG income
- Post-Covid cutbacks.
- Loss of current circumstantial savings in staff costs (maternity leave etc.).

Dr Thomas noted that, in five years' time, the deficit will have wiped out reserves. Mrs Willmott said that variables make the outlook uncertain but that the school would act in good time to cut costs if the situation were to become more pressing. Healthy reserves will aid forward planning. Mr Carruthers noted that the projections had been similar in previous years (but had subsequently improved). Miss Upton pointed out that other schools are in a more precarious position than DHS and the Government would need to respond to support them were the financial situation to worsen appreciably.

7.3 Budget Approval

Based on the draft budget for 2020-21 provided in the Five-Year Summary (which shows a projected surplus of £60k) Governors approved the budget for the coming year. It was noted that, in the light of the pandemic, the DfE had not required a forecast for the following two years.

Mr Carruthers thanked DHS Staff for their work on the budget.

8. Committees and Working Parties

8.1 Minutes from Committees of the Governing Body

Governors reviewed the unapproved minutes from the Health and Safety Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 12th May 2020 and from the Financial and General Purposes Meeting held on Friday 19th June 2020.

8.2 Health & Safety Committee

The minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 10th December were received by Governors.

8.3 Mid-term Admissions

Despite being discouraged, Elective Education at Home (EHE) is showing an upward trend - it was felt that the current pandemic crisis might have impacted on this.

Dr Thomas asked if parents of EHE students ever changed their mind and sought re-admissions. Miss Upton said that this did not often occur but that it was likely that the place would have been filled. Any re-admission that took the school over PAN would need to be considered by the Governors' Admissions Panel.

9. Policies

9.1 Send Information Report

This was reviewed by Governors. The policy had been updated in the light of the Covid-19 crisis. Mrs Janson Noted that Issues 4 and 5 appeared not to have been approved by Governors. Mr Carruthers said that he would check this.

Action Mr Carruthers

The report was approved by Governors.

9.2 E-Safety Policy

There had been no changes to the main body of the Policy. Adjustments had been made to Appendix 4 to cover the DHS response the Covid-19 crisis – largely in relation to the demands of online learning).

The policy was approved by Governors.

9.3 Policy Supporting pupils with Medical Needs

Though this was not due for review, it was felt that, as it had been updated in light of the pandemic, Governors should give their approval to the revised policy. It was noted that there had been changes in the list of qualified first aiders.

The policy was approved by Governors.

9.4 DHS Accessibility Policy

There had only been minor updates to the policy

The policy was approved by Governors.

9.5 Support Staff Pay Policy

This policy had been due for review earlier in the year but had been delayed pending the LG pay award. This still had not been decided. It was thought that an interim measure needs to be in place and backdated to April 2020. It was agreed that a 2.5% award (together with an extra day's holiday) should be made; to be adjusted when the pay award is finalised.

The policy was approved by Governors.

9.6 Equalities Policy

There had been minor changes to this policy and other minor errors were noted. It was noted that the Line Management chart will need to be adjusted. Mrs Edmond observed that the Black Lives Matter movement had brought a change to the language that should be used in such documents. Mr Carruthers invited Mrs Edmond to review the document and suggest areas that might be improved.

Action Mrs Edmond

The policy was approved by Governors.

10. Safeguarding Audit

It was noted that Mr Grover (Safeguarding Governor) had been unable to attend the audit meeting. Mr Martin noted that there were four areas where DHS had assessed its performance as less than the top grade (5). These were:

- 3.8 Letters of assurance had not been received from all alternative providers (though all providers are verified by Suffolk LA).
- 4.2 To ensure the encryption of memory sticks.
- 7.2 Procedures to be cross-referenced with those on the SSP website.
- 7.7 To inform Governors of part time/dual registered students and clarify monitoring of attendance of same.

11. Any other business

Mrs Edmond suggested that it would be helpful to inform parents of the changed calendar of Professional Development days. Miss Upton said that she would do so.

Action Miss Upton

Mrs Janson thanked staff for their hard work in what is a trying period for schools.

To conclude, Mr Carruthers expressed Governors' heartfelt thanks to Miss Upton for her service to the school and noted the success of DHS under her wise and clear-sighted leadership. He looked forward to a future date when the gratitude of the community could be shown more fully. Miss Upton responded by thanking the Governors for their full support during her tenure.

13. Date of next meeting

This was confirmed as Tuesday 6th October 2020.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.02 pm.