



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Full Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held at the school on Tuesday 10th December 2019 at 5.00 p.m.

Present:	Mr R Barker	Mr T Green	
	Rev S Bates	Mr C Grover	
	Mrs C Bosley	Mrs S Janson	
	Mr D Carruthers	Chairman	Mr D McMillan
	Mrs M Carter	Mr M Touman	
	Mr P Debenham	Miss J Upton	
	Mr A Dubberley		

In attendance:	Mr J Cox	Trustee
	Mr R Grimsey	Trustee
	Mr S Martin	Deputy Head
	Mrs L Ramsay	Assistant Head
	Mrs T Willmott	School Business Manager
	Mr S Wright	Clerk to the Governors

The meeting was preceded by a prayer.

1. Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs C Driver, Mrs S Edmond, Dr D Egan, Ms S Goodrich, Miss S McBurney, Mrs L Ramsay, Dr W Thomas and R Revd M Seeley.
- 1.2 Governors consented to their absence.

2. Pecuniary and Other Interests

- 2.1 No pecuniary (or other) interests were declared.
- 2.2 Mrs Willmott said the Register of Pecuniary Interests was up to date.

3. Chairman's Action

Mr Carruthers congratulated Miss Upton on her appointment as Head of Kesgrave High School. Miss Upton said that this had been a difficult decision and that she had not actively been seeking a new position. She said that she would miss DHS which had been a fantastic place in which to work but was sure that it had a bright future. Mr Debenham reminded the meeting of when Miss Upton was appointed and Mr Touman asked if anything could have been done to retain Miss Upton's services. Miss Upton said that she had been well-supported throughout her time at DHS; it was simply a new opportunity that had presented itself.

Mr Carruthers said that the process of recruitment for a new Headteacher would begin after Christmas.

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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

Mr Carruthers said that he had received a letter from a parent complaining about the level of sanction issued by DHS against a student who had been involved in an aggressive incident involving their own child. Mr Carruthers said that he had written and explained the school's position. Miss Upton said that the Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE) issued was one of the longest she had given. It was noted that the DHS Behaviour Policy does not discriminate as to the level of aggression used and this will be considered when the policy is next reviewed. Mr Green felt that the Behaviour Policy was sufficiently detailed and there needs to be a degree of latitude to allow individual judgements to be made.

- 3.1 Mr Carruthers confirmed that he and Mr Grover, with the support of Ms Hargadon (SIP) had completed a successful Performance Review for Miss Upton.

4. Governing Body Membership

- 4.1 Mr Carruthers welcomed Mr Dubberley to his first meeting as Teaching Staff Governor. He also thanked Mr Green (this was his last meeting) for his commitment to DHS and his valuable contributions to Governor deliberation.

- 4.2 Mr Carruthers noted that the changes GO1 were slight and, after one or two minor corrections, it was approved by Governors.

Mr Carruthers noted that GO2 had not changed significantly in the main body of the document but that the Code of Conduct for Governors had been revised significantly in line with National Governance Association guidelines. It was noted that there a number of gaps in the committees of the Governing Body (especially the Health and Safety Committee) and Mr Carruthers asked Governors to let him know if they were interested in filling one of these vacancies.

GO2 and the associated Code of Conduct were approved by Governors.

5. Minutes

- 5.1 The minutes of the meeting of Tuesday 1st October 2019 were approved by Governors and signed by the Chairman.

- 5.2 Matters arising from the minutes.

- 8.2 Miss Upton said that Ofsted Training for Governors had been arranged to take place on Monday 2nd March. It would be run by Sally Garrett – Head of an 'outstanding' special school and an Ofsted Inspector.

Action All Governors

- 8.2 Approval for school visits will not now be sought retrospectively.

- 14.3 The DHS Safeguarding Policy had been amended by Mrs Ramsay.

6. Student Presentation

Presentations were made by Alfred (Head Boy) and Millie (Head Girl).

Millie said that the School Council had organised the collection of food parcels. Year 11 had just completed trial examinations and had enjoyed a cinema trip at their conclusion. They were now receiving the results. Being asked about the importance of these examinations, Millie said that they had provided useful practice (and had been a wake-up call for some).

Alfred noted that the DHS talent competition was due the following week and that the DHS winter production was *Scrooge*.

7. Academic Improvement

7.1 Local Authority School Improvement Summary

Miss Upton pointed out that this (and the two subsequent documents) are generated by the LA. They include demographic and comparative results relating to academic progress, absence and exclusion. In discussion the following points were made:

With respect to the LA School Improvement Summary, Mr Green noted that the low percentage of students on SEN Support (2.4%). Miss Upton said that this was due to the school's profile and, though there was no exact guidance on how to establish this figure, there had been no under-identification or non-reporting.

Mr Green also commented on the high level of LA Fixed Term Exclusions (8.4%) as compared to DHS (2.7%). It was noted that this referred to incidents rather than individuals.

Mr Carruthers said that there was no clear indication of which schools were included in the cluster with DHS though it was believed to include Thomas Mills, Hartismere and Stradbroke.

7.2 Suffolk Secondary School information (on a page)

Miss Upton said that this document informed the process of peer review. The second page represented the challenge for DHS (which is actually less than that which had already been achieved).

7.3 Suffolk Secondary School Performance Comparison

Miss Upton noted that DHS was the top school in Suffolk in the Progress 8 measure and was in the top bracket for both Grade 4 and Grade 5 (English and Maths).

7.4 Year 11 performance data

Miss Upton reminded Governors of the nature of the Progress 8 measure and said that the figures should be treated with caution as estimates were based on the performance of the previous cohort. That being said, the Progress 8 measure (0.53) is better than at this stage last year as is the percentage of students achieving Grades 4 and 5 in English and Maths.

Mr Green noted the gender gap evident in English; Miss Upton said that this was similar to last year. Mr Barker commented similarly on the gap in Computing, but this figure was skewed by the fact that there were on 2 girls in a set of 21. Mr Green checked that this was the first year that all students are undertaking the full RE course; Miss Upton confirmed that it was.

7.5 School Development Plan

Miss Upton noted that this was the last year of a three-year plan which continues to embed and improve the key priorities. The first page thereafter contained targets - both historical and those set for 2020. Page three contains an overview for the start of the academic year and outlines areas of focus after a period of review. It was noted that, as a church school, the Christian Ethos of the school is increasing in importance with the expectation (made more rigorous in new SIAMS inspection framework) that specific Christian teaching values should underpin everything that DHS does. The subsequent pages review performance in each of the four themes (identified on page 1).

Building the whole child

Most of the aims here had been met though it was noted that relating to **Careers** had not. Miss Upton said that this will be completed in the current academic year.

Curriculum and Assessment

Miss Upton felt that the changes that had taken place had been really beneficial over the previous year. Those areas that had been amber-rated related to:

Assessment – here the issue was the need to use assessment as a learning tool (rather than simply assessment for assessment's sake) in a way that is both 'meaningful and manageable'. (This is particularly important to ensure teacher workload is not too great.)

MFL – this related to immersion opportunities and the move away from exchange visits (safeguarding) towards placement in foreign language schools. This was proving to be more expensive.

Curriculum change – This related to the final stage of the changes to curriculum delivery in Year 11. Mr Grover asked about the impact of these changes on the delivery of Science. Mr McMillan said that teachers were very happy with the change as it allowed more time for reflection and the revisiting of topics with subject specialists.

Strategic Planning

Amber areas here related to **Local Partnerships** – specifically the relationship with the Leisure Centre, and to **Budget** and related issues.

Environment and personnel

Significant milestones had been achieved here – including the completion of two building projects. The only area needing more work was in the area of **ICT** where training of staff in the use of interactive white boards is still to be put in place.

7.6 DHS E-Safety survey

This item was taken by reference to the spreadsheet showing student responses to the survey, together with Miss Upton's subsequent letter to parents. During discussion the following points were made:

- Mr Carruthers expressed some alarm at the findings – particularly the amount of time spent on social media.
- Mr Martin was worried by the lack of parental control both of devices and their use.
- Mr Grover felt that it would be helpful to share the findings with feeder schools as the issue is primary-based too and it could be easier to set controls at a younger age.
- Mr Touman asked if it were possible to alter these patterns of behaviour. Miss Upton said that this was difficult but hoped that her letter might encourage some parents to take action to establish boundaries, whilst being open and non-judgemental. She also noted the regular briefings (every two years) for Year 7 and 8 parents. Rev Bates wondered if children should accompany parents to this event.
- Mr Green noted that parents often set a poor example for their offspring.
- Mr Martin said that DHS taught e-safety as a discrete topic, but that student decision-making is the key issue. DHS endeavours to encourage 'good' decision-making in a variety of platforms.
- Mr Touman that the design of apps is intended to be addictive. Mr Dubberley concurred.
- Mr Carruthers asked if there had been any response to Miss Upton's letter – there had not.
- Mrs Bosley wondered if there should be workshops for parents offering practical advice. It was noted that this is the purpose of the workshops that had been delivered biannually to Year 7/8 parents and carers.
- Mr McMillan felt that DHS and the Governors had done a great deal in an effort to address this problem but that in some ways, matters remain beyond the school's control.

8. **Budget and related items.**

8.1 & Mr Carruthers said that the Annual Report and Financial Statements had been comprehensively
8.4 reviewed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and now needed approval from the Full Governing Body.

8.2 & Mrs Willmott described the audit process and noted that there were two minor action points as a
8.3 consequence of the audit. Both she (and those Governors present at the Audit Finalisation Meeting) felt that the auditors had been searching hard to find such action points. Larking Gowen had, however, conducted the audit rather more efficiently than last year. It was noted that DfE audit requirements are rather more stringent as schools have to account for the use of public monies.

Governors unanimously approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

8. Sporting facilities

Miss Upton said that it was felt that the most pressing need for development of the site is in the area of sporting provision. The tennis courts are a case in point as they are wearing out and are unsafe to use in wet weather. There is also a need for more inside space. Conversations had been held with the Leisure Centre as to future developments because as, if project is to be grant funded, there will need to be evidence of community use. Financial support within the locality will need to be sought – Mr Touman suggested that an approach be made to local councillors in this regard.

10. Safeguarding

10.1 Though compliant, the Single Central Register had been reviewed against best practice by Mrs Willmott. There were some subsequent actions to be completed and Mrs Willmott and Mr Carruthers will meet to finalise before the end of term.

11. Committees and Working Parties

11.1 Governors received a copy of the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 10th October 2019.

11.2 Governors received a copy of the draft minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on Friday 6th December 2019.

11.3 Various Governor visit reports were received. With respect to the Open Evening, Mr Carruthers wondered if it was too short. Miss Upton said that this had been considered but, because of timings (with refreshments for example) it was felt best to leave as is.

12. Policies

12.1 Scheme of Delegation. This remained unchanged and Miss Upton and Mrs Willmott said that they were happy with it. Governors approved the DHS scheme of delegation.

13. Governor Training

13.1 Mr Carruthers sought feedback on training. Mrs Bosley was undertaking NGA modules which involved quite a bit of work. The Safeguarding module had been useful, but it would be helpful to have guidance on prioritising other modules. Mr Barker commended the NSPCC Safeguarding Training. Mr Carruthers said that he had undertaken Safer Recruitment training.

13.2 This item was taken by reference to Mr Carruthers' Skills Audit spreadsheet which showed a different profile from those created previously. Those areas rated red were not thought to be significant and the whole was useful in deploying Governors' skills to best effect and identifying skill gaps.

14. Any other business

- Miss Upton reminded Governors of the Admissions Committee Meeting on Wednesday 9th January.
- Mr Carruthers checked that all Governors were now receiving hard copy NGA correspondence.
- Dissemination of paperwork to be resolved.

Action Mr Carruthers/Mr Wright

- The carol service will take place on Wednesday 11th December at St Mary's church – 7.00 pm.

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 4th February 2020 at 5.00 pm (preceded by the Trust AGM at 4.30 pm).

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6.59 pm.

Signed: Chairman Date: 4th February 2020