



# Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



**Minutes of the meeting of the Members of the Debenham High School Academy Trust held on MS Teams.**

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 at 9.30am**

Present:                    Rt Revd Martin Seeley                    Chairman  
                                  Mr D Carruthers                            Chairman of Governors  
                                  The Venerable John Cox  
                                  Mr R Grimsey  
                                  Mr N Serjeant

In attendance:           Miss J Upton                                    Headteacher  
                                  Mr S Wright                                    Clerk

## **1. Apologies for absence**

There were no apologies.

## **2. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019**

The minutes of the meeting of Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2019 were approved by the meeting - to be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

## **3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising.

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

### Governing Body membership

- There is one vacancy on the Governing Body following the resignation of Mrs Catherine Bosley, Support Staff Governor.
- Mr Andrew Dubberley had joined the Governing Body as Teaching Staff Governor to replace Ms Jo Newman who left DHS.
- Mrs Sheila Janson's term of service as a Governor expires on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 but she is happy to continue for a further term. Trustees agreed to this.
- Governors' range of skills continue to be reviewed through the annual skills audit. Currently the only area of expertise that is lacking is in relation to infrastructure/building.

### Staffing

This item was taken by Miss Upton who made the following points:

#### Departures

- Mrs Cheryl Thomas was resigning in August after 36 years of service to DHS.

- Mrs Janet Turner (Part time Teacher of Food) is retiring.
- Two teachers early in their career (English and Maths) left DHS at Easter.
- Mrs Nicky Harley (Head of Art) has moved to a part time role.
- Two Teaching Assistants (TAs), Mr Chris Ryland and Mrs Cathy Bosley have retired
- All three Graduate Interns in the current years have moved onto Teacher Training courses (two at DHS).

### Appointments

- Mr Simon Martin has been appointed as Headteacher of DHS. His replacement as Deputy will be in post in January. Face-to-face interviews will take place shortly and, whilst there will not be the usual student input into this process, current Year 11 students have been invited to meet the short-listed candidates.
- Mr Chris Stopher from the Felixstowe Academy has been appointed as Head of Design Technology.
- Ms Beauty Makudo (NQT) has been appointed as a Teacher of Food.
- Ms Ellie Love (English) and Mr Dan Finnegan (Maths) have been appointed.
- DHS has a full complement of ITT students for next year.

### Results

Mr Carruthers made the following points:

- 2019 Progress 8 measure of 0.69 places DHS in the top 13% nationally. The Progress 8 measure for disadvantaged students stands at +.01.
- The Attainment 8 outcome of 57.2 compares favourably with a LA average of 44.9 and a national average of 46.7.
- 70% of students achieved Grade 5 or above in English and Maths (LA 39%; National 43%). 80% of students achieved Grade 4 or above in English and Maths.

Mr Carruthers also commented on the positive outlook for current Year 11 students.

### Attendance

DHS attendance (to April 2020) was 95.7%.

### Admissions

The Published Admission Number (PAN) for DHS stands at 125 but an admission number of 135 continues to be the norm. This brings a good operating number for each class of 27. The school is full for September with 20 children currently on the waiting list.

Mr Cox asked about congestion in the school. Miss Upton said that, whilst DHS is full, recent building works have meant that DHS is coping well. Potential problems in corridors and social spaces have been helped by the new catering pod and the erection of a canopy.

It was noted that the application for house building in the fields opposite DHS had been withdrawn.

### Teaching School (TS) Activity

TS activity continues to provide excellent professional development and enables DHS to be outward facing. It has also helped the financial bottom-line. Projects have included:

- Mathematics Mastery
- Women in Leadership Conference
- Remote leadership of the new PSHE/Sex Education curriculum (one of 20 schools nationally)
- School to school support (including Miss Upton's work at Stowmarket HS)
- Curriculum review support

The roll-out of TS Hubs has been postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis and this has led to the continuation of Teaching Schools (and associated funding) for a further year.

## **5. Changes to the Governing Body**

Covered in Item 4 above

## **6. Finance**

Current figures suggest a surplus of £101k for 2019-21 – partly relating to savings occasioned by the Covid-19 crisis. The 2020-21 had been approved by Governors the previous evening and initially anticipates a surplus of £60k (though it might be a little higher).

Whilst reserves stand at £828k, the future remains uncertain as large budget deficits are forecast to be significant from 2020-21 onwards; changes in funding, however, might offset this (as has happened in the past).

In discussion, Mr Cox asked if the projected deficit(s) relate to static income or increased expenditure. Miss Upton said that it was a bit of both but noted that DHS is always cautious with its budgeting. She also said that the loss of TS income would be significant. Mr Cox also asked about the tension between building up reserves and maintaining appropriate expenditure. Miss Upton noted the recent expenditure on laptops and said that DHS was aware of the importance of achieving a suitable balance. She also pointed out that other schools are in a more perilous position.

## **7. Update on Covid-19**

Miss Upton outlined the nature of DHS' evolving provision for students. Initial steps had seen the creation of curriculum resources to be available on the website at the start of lockdown. This gave time to develop more sophisticated means of online delivery. Over the Easter Holiday teaching staff created online provision to be delivered through MS Teams (file depositary, lesson structure/plans, connectivity to teachers in message form in specific time slots – though not live). This involved a three-period day which gave flexibility within the structure and worked well. In the last three weeks teachers have been developing more connected learning (recording lessons and trialling live interaction with students), partly in preparation for September if some students are not yet back in school. Lesson times are now fixed (to facilitate the changed form of delivery) with up to 20% of lessons being either live or recorded. Potential safeguarding issues have been addressed. Parents had expressed satisfaction with this evolution of online learning.

The Bishop asked about access to technology and connectivity issues. Miss Upton said that DHS had distributed 120 laptops to students who did not have access to appropriate hardware (these are being replenished by new purchases). There are some issues with connectivity, particularly where parents and siblings are all working from home. Some students try to use mobile phones but this has been discouraged as it is not adequate to complete the work being set; others lack motivation. The new Year 7 will need a good deal of support in September if not in school.

The Bishop also asked about preparation for September. Miss Upton said that a normal timetable had been prepared to cater for a full return to school, but a shadow timetable had also been created with a

three-period day which could be used either at school or at home. Miss Upton said that, with social distancing and bubbles, DHS could operate at 50% capacity on a week on/week off basis. Currently the Government anticipates full time for all students with year group bubbles and a reduction of social distancing to 1 metre. Miss Upton felt that this would not work as it still meant that a full group would not fit into a classroom. There would be further problems with option subjects. The suggestion of staggered starts might prove difficult for a rural school like DHS. Social distancing on school transport may also prove to be an issue. Zoned outside space should be possible but social distancing is not compatible with a full school.

Mr Cox asked about monitoring student progress and ensuring support for those who fall behind. Miss Upton said that tasks are set on MS Teams and teachers report weekly on those who have not completed same. If a backlog builds up, the student will be contacted by a Teaching Assistant. Students falling into this category amount to about 10% of each year group. Those in Year 10 who are falling behind are attending school for an extra day a week to work in the computer room.

In terms of pastoral care tutor groups are connecting with each other online. Heads of Year and Mrs Ramsay are in regular touch with vulnerable students. Tutors are calling each tutee once a fortnight and chasing those who have been red-flagged due to work issues.

Mr Cox further asked about Year 7 transition. Miss Upton said that Mrs Jude is holding keeping in touch days with those Year 6 due to join in September. There have been virtual meetings with PS teachers to discuss individual students. Students have been given a virtual welcome and have been set three non-arduous 'getting to know you' tasks.

Mr Cox also asked about well-being and mental health and whether extra counselling will be provided in September. Miss Upton referred to the Year 10 experience where there had been 94% attendance (those not attending comprised 3% who are shielding and 3% elective non-attenders). She felt that careful reconnection and strong pastoral care should obviate the need for extra counselling. Every effort would be made to ensure that all students return to school in line with government guidelines. Mr Grimsey noted the need to take care of staff welfare too.

Mr Carruthers said that the (well-attended) EGM had approved the Covid-19 Risk Assessment and commended Mrs Willmott for her work on this.

### Teacher Assessment Grades

Teachers were understandably anxious about the process but received clear guidance as to what evidence to use. The following points were made:

- Each subject ranked students within grades (High, Middle, Low).
- SLT monitored tolerance of gradings
- DHS submission of centre-assessed grades will be judged on ability of students and the school's historical performance.
- Moderation will take place a subject level. Changes made to one subject's grades will not affect others.
- DHS believes it has awarded grades fairly and could be looking at a performance that is better than last year.

The Bishop thanked and commended staff at the school for the admirable way they had handle the crisis.

**8. Any other business**

- Mr Carruthers noted that Mr Grimsey's term as Trustee ends on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. Mr Grimsey had said that he was happy to continue in the role.
- Mr Grimsey suggested that the gender balance of the Trust needs attention. In response, the Bishop said he would review the diversity of the Trust and, together with Miss Upton, would look at the possibility of appointing additional members whilst ensuring the body remains reasonably small.
- The Bishop expressed the Trustees' thanks to Miss Upton who he said would leave the school in a phenomenally strong position having showed remarkable leadership during her tenure. DHS had a raised profile, extended awareness, with a strong staff with very successful students. She had also been a great friend and colleague. In response, Miss Upton thanked Trustees for their support.

Date of the next Trust Meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021 at 9.30 am.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Chairman**      **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 11.02 am