



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

DBE (22)M1

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Wednesday 9 February 2022 at 1.30pm via Zoom.

Prayers: The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison led the opening prayers.

Present:

Mrs Jane Addis	The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison (Chair)
Mr Tom Brooke	Mr Nicholas Jardine
Mrs Elaine Burdiss	Mrs Mary Lewis
The Revd Dr Karen Burton	Mr Guy McGregor
Mr John Dixon	The Revd Carl Melville
Mrs Jane Eccleston	Mr Drew Quayle
Mr Tim Fairbairn	The Revd Toby Tate
The Ven Jeanette Gosney	

Apologies:

The Revd Penny Brinkley	Mr Hugo Parker
Mrs Gillian Mitchell	Mr Paul Ryle
Mr Pete Mumford	Mr Daniel Jones, Buildings Officer

In Attendance:

Mr Phil Knowles	Diocesan School Effectiveness Officer (SEO)
Mrs Jane Sheat	Diocesan Director of Education (DDE)
Miss Jacqui Studd	Administrator (Education)
Mrs Sue Todd	Deputy Diocesan Director of Education (DDDE)
Mrs Gemma Taylor	Diocesan Schools' Adviser

In attendance for Item 22.05

Mr Ian Page	Interim Headteacher, Thorndon CEVCP School
Mr Stephen Page	Chair of Governors, Thorndon CEVCP School

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

22.01 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2021 were approved and signed.

22.02 MATTERS ARISING

None.

22.03 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The Ven Jeanette Gosney declared an interest as a member of the All Saints Schools Trust.

22.04 VACANCY FOR DBE REPRESENTATIVE ON BISHOP'S COUNCIL

The Chair outlined the role of Bishop's Council and asked for anyone interested in becoming the DBE representative on the Bishop's Council to contact either the DDE or himself.

22.05 CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT TO PROPOSED CHANGE TO ACADEMY STATUS WITHIN ALL SAINTS SCHOOLS TRUST

The Chair welcomed the Chair of Governors and Interim Headteacher from Thorndon CEVCP School to the meeting. Ian Page and Stephen Page provided background to the proposal for the school to become an academy within the All Saints Schools Trust. Stephen explained that the governing body has been considering federation and academisation for the last 18 months and had concluded that the school needed to strengthen its position by joining a MAT. The school is central to the community with growing links between the school and church and there is a commitment to keep the school going. Ian Page highlighted merits to joining the All Saints School Trust including the proximity of other schools within the Trust. Stephen had also been in discussion with the CEO of the Trust concerning the school budget deficit.

The Ven Jeanette Gosney noted the importance of the local school and asked about the plans for keeping the school viable. Stephen highlighted that the school is currently undertaking a staffing restructure and there are plans to work with two local schools in the All Saints Schools Trust.

Mary Lewis commented about her experience as a former Chair of one of the schools in the All Saints Schools Trust and the level of expertise on offer from the Trust.

The Chair was encouraged to see that the school's rainbow values were linked to the Church of England's values for life. He noted the school's vision and reference to Mark 9:23 and highlighted that this is about having faith in God rather than in ourselves. Ian Page advised that discussion on this Bible reference and the articulation of the school's Christian ethos is ongoing with the local incumbent.

The Chair thanked the Interim Headteacher and Chair of Governors for their presentation, and they then left.

Jane Addis joined the meeting

Tim Fairbairn asked whether the DBE had a responsibility to consider the financial viability of the school before consenting to the school joining the All Saints Schools Trust. The DDE referred to the staffing restructure which is taking place and added that due diligence would be undertaken by the All Saints Schools Trust. Tim Fairbairn referred to the financial position following the staff restructure and the DDE noted that further savings are likely to be made.

John Dixon asked if there might be conditions imposed on the school joining the All Saints Schools Trust and if so, should DBE members consider these. The DDE explained that the DBE's role is to consider consent to the school to join the Trust and that any conditions would be between the School and Trust. The DDE was only aware of one condition concerning the budget deficit, which had been mentioned. The DDE highlighted the benefits for the school of joining with two local schools in the same Trust.

The Chair asked if members consented to Thorndon CEVCP School joining the All Saints Schools Trust. This was given with one abstention from a member who had just joined the meeting. The DDE will advise the school.

22.06 DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S REPORT

The DDE referred to Paper A, which provided an update to DBE members on issues arising since the last meeting. The DDE noted the Covid issues still affecting schools and expressed gratitude to Headteachers and schools for all they are doing. Elaine Burdiss highlighted the issues which have affected Elmsett CofE Primary School and expressed her thanks to the Diocesan education team for their support.

Action: The DDE to extend the thanks of the DBE to schools through the next education newsletter.

The DDE noted recent Ofsted inspections at five schools in the Diocesan MAT which resulted in three Good judgments and two Inadequate. The MAT is in discussion with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). The RSC has the power, although not the duty, to rebroker schools judged Inadequate to another Trust. The DDE and MAT CEO are invited to make representations to the RSC. The DDE advised that parents at both schools remain supportive and that improvements have already been made at the schools.

Ven Jeanette Gosney asked if the judgements had been expected. The DDE advised that the MAT had been disappointed with the results as training and support is a strength of the MAT. The DDE noted that safeguarding issues impact on the overall judgement and added that Ofsted will keep monitoring the schools which will hopefully show improvements.

Tim Fairbairn asked about the schools' previous judgments. The DDE advised that Hartest CofE Primary was previously Good but that the school had experienced significant change over the last few years. Stoke by Nayland CofE Primary was previously judged Requires Improvement. Tim Fairbairn asked whether this was an indication of MAT capacity. The DDE replied that the MAT continues to review this.

John Dixon asked if any concerns had been identified prior to inspection and if any interventions had taken place by the MAT. The DDE highlighted that extensive support had been provided but that Covid had also had an impact on some schools. John Dixon highlighted the impact of safeguarding issues on Ofsted judgements and suggested regular safeguarding checks on schools. The DDE highlighted that regular safeguarding audits are undertaken by the MAT and safeguarding training is also provided to Designated Safeguarding Leads, in addition there is a DSL network.

Jane Addis commented as the Vice Chair of Governors at Stoke by Nayland CofE Primary and added that the issues highlighted in the Ofsted report had already been identified prior to the inspection by the Interim Head. The school is grateful for the support which has been received from the Diocesan MAT.

The Chair felt that a number of issues from the Ofsted reports could be remedied quickly although he highlighted the issue of poor behaviour. Jane Addis advised that a new behaviour code had been implemented at the school.

Tim Fairbairn asked if there were similar schools which might be vulnerable. The DDE advised that Ofsted inspections are expected at another three MAT schools this year, which should be in line with expectations.

The DDE further noted that:

- the publication of the white paper on academisation was expected shortly. The DDE suggested that after publication it might be helpful to arrange an information session for church schools on becoming an academy, and to consider at the next DBE meeting whether good and outstanding maintained

schools could be encouraged to create a new MAT in order to increase capacity.

- Following the report on Special Educational Needs in Suffolk in September 2021, the DDE is meeting with Ros Somerville, Assistant Director (Inclusion) on 3 February to discuss some of the issues affecting schools.
- The executive trustees, chaired by Bishop Mike, have authorised Savills to proceed with the marketing of the former St James school site.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Academies Trust (SENDAT) are now using part of the former Thurston site for educational provision.
- The recent consultation by Suffolk County Council on the proposed 2023-2024 admissions arrangements to remove faith based oversubscription criteria for admission to voluntary controlled schools. SCC's Cabinet has determined the arrangements which will be published on 15 March and an update will be brought to the next meeting.

The DDE noted recent advice from the National Governance Association (NGA) concerning governors remaining in a governance position at any one school for no longer than two consecutive terms of office. In addition, the NGA advised that no governor should remain Chair of Governors of a school for more than six consecutive years. The NGA highlighted that this is to ensure that a governing board does not become complacent in its practice or over-reliant on the experience of any one person, as well as allowing for fresh ideas, discussion, and challenge. The local authority has advised that they will normally operate within the NGA advice in relation to LA governors.

John Dixon agreed with the advice and felt it was important that people did not serve too long and highlighted the importance of succession planning by governing bodies. Tim Fairbairn commented that while it was beneficial to refresh the governing body, the difficulty was finding the right volunteers with the appropriate skills to be governors. Tim noted that the onus is on the governing body to find a replacement for the LA governor who can only stand for two terms.

The Chair asked if governors could return after they had stepped down. John Dixon advised that the advice refers to consecutive terms. The DDE highlighted how governors usually want to be involved with their local school. Tim Fairbairn asked whether this advice would impact on the challenge of recruiting foundation governors. The DDE advised that this would indeed impact if implemented.

The DDDE advised that she is a member of the Diocesan Governance Group, a working party exploring strategies to improve foundation governor recruitment and reduce unfilled vacancies nationally, which is working with the NGA. The DDDE highlighted that one of the most successful ways of recruiting is through personal invitation and asked if DBE members could raise the profile of foundation governors.

John Dixon felt that care was needed to ensure that governing bodies did not perpetuate themselves and to consider how we recruit and where we advertise. Jane Addis highlighted the issue of consecutive terms of office running at the same time on a governing body and suggested staggering governor appointments. The DDDE noted the importance of getting the right people in the role and advised that she is also working with the Diocesan Communications Manager on raising the profile of foundation governors to encourage new people to volunteer. The DDE highlighted LinkedIn as a creative form of recruitment.

The DDE commended to members the draft Strategy Action Plan 2022-2025, which members approved, and advised that this will be reviewed at every second meeting.

The DDE finally noted the draft DBE Committee Terms of Reference which is based on the national model and provides further details on governance and membership of the committee. Bishop's Council had seen the draft and made a few amendments. The DBE Measure legal scheme will need to be approved by Diocesan Synod at the next meeting on 19 March 2022 and it will take effect from 1 January 2023.

The DDE thanked members for comments and questions.

22.07 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

The SEO introduced Paper C, providing Ofsted and SIAMS outcomes for church schools published since the previous meeting. The SEO noted that while Ofsted inspections have resumed, SIAMS inspections had been deferred until the end of February.

The Chair asked whether there were lessons being learned about developing a strong Christian ethos. The SEO advised of the importance of beginning with the school Christian vision and developing a strong theological basis with involvement of the local incumbent, education team and community.

The Chair thanked the SEO for his report.

22.08 RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP UPDATE

The Schools' Adviser referred to Paper D, providing an update on RE and Collective Worship work since the last meeting. The Schools' Adviser noted that the Suffolk Agreed RE Syllabus is being reviewed and that she is involved in writing material and working with Suffolk SACRE on this project. Rewriting the syllabus is both a huge undertaking and a great opportunity to reshape RE teaching in Suffolk over the next five years.

The Schools' Adviser further noted that she has delivered SCITT training to 100 trainee teachers in Suffolk and Norfolk across nine sessions over the last two months.

The Chair asked what changes were expected from the rewriting of the Agreed Syllabus. The Schools' Adviser highlighted that the rewriting will look more at how RE is taught, and that she would provide a more detailed update on this at the next meeting.

Mary Lewis asked about coverage of other faiths in the Syllabus. The Schools' Adviser replied that whilst Christianity would be predominant, the focus on worldviews and being a person of faith, will be reflected in the new Syllabus but this is currently being worked on.

Drew Quayle referred to the SCITT training involving 100 delegates and the low numbers for the Basics of RE and Collective Worship courses. The Schools' Adviser advised that the Basics courses are run termly and there are usually lower numbers for this regular course. However other courses, such as Spiritual Development in primary schools attract more delegates.

Tim Fairbairn asked how changes in the Agreed Syllabus are communicated to both church and community schools. The DDE highlighted that SCC's Cabinet would determine the new RE syllabus and that Suffolk Headlines are used by SCC to communicate with schools while the education team would communicate through training, the newsletter and website.

The Chair thanked the Schools' Adviser for her work.

22.09 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

The DDE noted the Local Authority report in Pete Mumford's absence.

The DDE advised that Deri O'Regan had been appointed as the new Head at King Edward VI School, Bury St Edmunds.

22.10 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

The DBE ratified the appointment of Foundation Governors listed in Paper F.

22.11 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

MAT summary evaluation of the Diocesan MAT

Admissions - religious oversubscription criteria for VC schools

Levelling up

MAT schools and Ofsted inspections

22.12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair will be on sabbatical from April – July 2022. Revd Carl Melville will be Chair for the next meeting in May.

22.13 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board noted that future meetings would take place on:

Tuesday 3 May 2022 @ 4.00pm

Tuesday 13 September 2022 @ 4.00pm

Tuesday 22 November 2022 @ 1.30pm

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.05pm.

Signed: _____
[Chairman]

Date: _____