



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

DBE (23)M1

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Thursday 9 February 2023 at 1.30pm in the Boardroom and via Zoom.

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

Present:

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| Mrs Jane Addis | The Revd Carl Melville (via Zoom) |
| The Revd Dr Karen Burton | Mr Pete Mumford |
| Mrs Jane Eccleston | Mr Phil Papps |
| Mr Tim Fairbairn | Mr Hugo Parker |
| The Ven Jeanette Gosney | Mr Paul Ryle |
| The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison (Chair) | The Revd Toby Tate |
| Miss Chloe Mayes | |

Apologies:

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| Mrs Mary Lewis | Mrs Gemma Taylor |
| The Revd Laura Mumford | |

In Attendance:

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| Mr Daniel Jones | Diocesan Buildings Officer |
| 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) |

In Attendance for item 23.04:

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| Mrs Mayleen Atima | Interim Headteacher, St Mary's CEVCP School, Benhall |
| Mr Roland Edwards | Chair of Governors, St Mary's CEVCP School, Benhall |

In Attendance for item 23.05:

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| Miss Gemma Cannon | Interim Headteacher, Orford CEVAP School |
| The Revd Giles Tulk | Chair of Governors, Orford CEVAP School |

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, particularly new members and introductions were made. The Chair advised that this would be the last meeting for the Ven Jeanette Gosney, as she retires at the end of April, and thanked her for her wisdom and service.

23.01 DBE MEMBERSHIP

The Chair noted that Miss Chloe Mayes and Mr Phil Papps had been newly elected by Diocesan Synod and that the Revd Dr Karen Burton had been nominated as a member of the Board by the Rt Revd Martin Seeley.

23.02 CONSIDERATION OF CO-OPTIONS

Members unanimously voted to appoint the following co-opted members: Mr Tim Fairbairn, the Revd Carl Melville, the Revd Laura Mumford, Mr Pete Mumford and Mr Paul Ryle.

23.03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Revd Carl Melville declared an interest as a trustee of the Tilian Partnership.

23.04 ST MARY'S CEVCP, BENHALL- 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 St Mary's CEVCP School, Benhall to the meeting. Roland Edwards and Mayleen Atima provided background to the proposal for the school to become an academy within the All Saints Schools Trust.

The Chair invited questions and began by asking about the consultation with parents. Roland Edwards advised that the consultation had gone well and that parents had been positive about the school academising and joining the All Saints Schools Trust. Tim Fairbairn referred to the independent review and audit of the school's finances which showed the school's strong financial position but felt this did not correlate with the school budget information supplied. Paul Ryle asked about projections for Year 3 which would help with any decision making. Roland advised that the figures were comparatively good, in his experience of schools, but added that a budget review was currently being undertaken which would provide more information.

Jane Eccleston asked why there was a projected fall of £45k in expenditure in 2023-24. Roland Edwards advised that no staff changes were expected but referred to the use of teaching assistants.

The Ven Jeanette Gosney asked why the school had chosen the All Saints Schools Trust. Roland Edwards advised that joining the MAT would strengthen the school and Mayleen Atima agreed and added that this would provide support from other schools within the Trust to strengthen the curriculum. Phil Papps asked how the school leadership would be enhanced. Roland Edwards advised that the All Saints Schools Trust would provide an interim Headteacher when Mayleen leaves at the end of March 2023 despite the school not yet being in the Trust. Experts from across the Trust would also be brought in to help with school improvement.

Paul Ryle asked if the Trust had agreed in principle to the school joining and whether there were any conditions. Roland Edwards advised that the school had received written confirmation to advise that the Trust was happy for the school to join the MAT and there were no conditions.

Tim Fairbairn asked whether the Trust had the means to provide support as they had just taken on Thorndon CofE Primary School. Mayleen and Roland both felt that they did.

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

Paul Ryle questioned the budget information supplied. Tim Fairbairn highlighted that academising and joining All Saints Schools Trust would be beneficial for the school. The Revd Carl Melville asked if a risk assessment had been done. The DDE advised

that she had not seen this as this was a matter for the Trust but noted that the Trust was keen to grow, was financially strong and prudent in its decision making.

The Chair asked if members consented to St Mary's CEVCP School, Benhall joining the All Saints Schools Trust. Members consented and the DDE will advise the school.

23.05 ORFORD CEVAP- CONSIDERATION OF CONSENT TO PROPOSED CHANGE TO ACADEMY STATUS WITHIN THE TILIAN PARTNERSHIP

The Chair welcomed the Chair of Governors and Interim Headteacher from Orford CEVAP School to the meeting. Gemma Cannon and the Revd Giles Tulk provided background to the proposal for the school to become an academy within the Tilian Partnership. The school had considered a number of models including collaboration with a local school. However, governors felt the best option was to be part of a MAT and that Tilian offered the best fit, preserving the school's identity and its importance to parents and the community. Governors had also spoken with the Local Governing Bodies of schools within Tilian which had affirmed the support and challenge provided by the Trust. The Governing Body had unanimously agreed to join Tilian.

Gemma Cannon provided an overview of the unique nature of the school, which offered a bespoke curriculum across three classes. Gemma highlighted that joining Tilian would offer networking opportunities, training and CPD, help with costs and a falling roll, and that Tilian's expertise would support and help the school.

Tim Fairbairn highlighted the surplus budget and asked why this was not being used. Gemma Cannon advised that due to the age of the school building and falling roll, this surplus was being kept in reserve.

Paul Ryle referred to future pupil numbers and asked about the position in three years' time. Gemma felt that the number of pupils could fall into the 40s, but highlighted new housing developments in neighbouring areas which although outside the catchment area might be targeted, as schools in these areas were believed to be full. Revd Giles added that the school would need 50-60 pupils to be sustainable.

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

Paul Ryle questioned whether targeting neighbouring areas would help with numbers especially if neighbouring schools were not full. Discussion followed on whether reducing to two classes might be necessary in future if numbers fell.

Tim Fairbairn highlighted that although the financial position was good, only 22% of KS2 children were at or above the expected standard in writing in 2022. Pete Mumford felt that aspirations to increase pupil numbers would be challenging. Paul Ryle added that pupil numbers falling to below 40 would be difficult. Tim Fairbairn asked about the viability of very small schools. The DDE highlighted that schools with fewer than 30 pupils were vulnerable on their own, (two having previously closed with just 29 on roll) however Tilian had taken on Kersey CofE Primary (25 on roll in 2021) and the Trust has a strong moral imperative to help small schools.

The Chair asked if members consented to Orford CEVAP School joining the Tilian Partnership. Members consented and the DDE will advise the school.

23.06 BUILDINGS OFFICER'S REPORT

The Buildings Officer referred to paper H and noted that:

- additional capital allocation for schools to spend on energy efficiency is mostly likely to be spent on lighting upgrades to LED technology and the Buildings Officer is supporting Voluntary Aided (VA) and Diocesan MAT schools with this

- a Salix Low Carbon Skills Fund grant was secured last year to pay for heat decarbonisation plans for VA schools. Concertus has been appointed to produce reports which are expected in the next week. The reports will be shared with schools once finalised.

Daniel Jones left 14.25pm

23.07 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2022 were approved and signed.

23.08 MATTERS ARISING

UNDER ITEM 22.45, THE DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S REPORT

The DDE advised that Pete Bloomfield, CEO of the Diocesan MAT would be attending the DBE meeting in May.

23.09 DBE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Chair asked new members to sign their agreement to the Code of Conduct which was duly done.

23.10 BUSINESS INTERESTS

The Chair invited members to complete a business interests form which should be returned to the Administrator. Jane Eccleston declared an interest as a trustee of the Keswick Hall Trust. Phil Knowles declared an interest as a trustee of Bury Christian Youth and Elveden Church of England Primary Academy.

23.11 DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S REPORT

The DDE referred to Paper C, which provided an update to DBE members on issues arising since the last meeting. The DDE noted that:

- the Government will be providing £2.3bn additional funding for schools in both 2023/24 and 2024/25 which approximates to an additional 4% for schools and will help with the pay rises for teachers and support staff for 2022/23
- families are also experiencing the cost of living crisis and this impacts on the cost of school meals, school trips, uniform and school photographs. The Tilian Partnership recently engaged with parents through a survey about the cost of living. Good practice by schools offering uniform sales, swap shops and book sales was commended in the last education newsletter
- members of the largest teaching union, the National Education Union (NEU) voted for strike action in England over pay which will take place over four days this term in our region: 1 February, 1 March and 15 and 16 March. The impact on schools so far has varied, from minimal impact to partial closure to full closure
- the Schools Bill will now not proceed
- a map showing church schools in the diocese in our four church school MATs [Church School led MATs and schools - Google My Maps](#)
- the sale of the former St James CEVA Middle School site in Bury St Edmunds continues to progress. The DDE thanked Hugo Parker, Tim Fairbairn and the Buildings Officer for their work
- the Education team continues to support schools with headship appointments, training and advice on a range of issues, and are also working in partnership with Christian Aid which is offering free CPD to schools on its Global Neighbours Scheme- <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/schools/global-neighbours-accreditation-scheme> -over an 18 month period.

The DDE referred to the DBE Strategy Action Plan for 2022-2025 (Appendix 3) which has been updated to reflect recent work by the Education Team and which is reviewed by the DBE twice a year. The DDE noted:

- there are currently five headship appointments in progress
- 22 schools have been supported with Headteacher performance development reviews this academic year by the DDDE and SEO
- 28 schools have received SIAMS support visits since 2021 by the SEO
- church schools are equipped and resourced to deliver high quality RE and Collective Worship through the work of the Schools' Adviser
- Governor vacancies are down to 11%
- work with MAT CEOs and the Regional Director to build capacity of church school MATs
- the importance of chaplaincy and that the role of a secondary school chaplain is being developed at Debenham High School.

The Chair noted the number of headship appointments and asked why good calibre candidates were coming forward. The DDE felt that this was partly a reaction to Covid and lifestyle changes as well as house prices in Suffolk. Tim Fairbairn highlighted his recent experience of appointing a Headteacher at Bures CEVCP School. The DDE emphasised the privilege of working with governors on Headship appointments and that governors are encouraged to think about their school and how best to promote as well as the skills and attributes required in the candidate.

Hugo Parker asked about Headteacher retention and whether this could be monitored, possibly through exit interviews. The DDE advised that the team's role is to broker relationships with Headteachers, within the family of church schools, and also support wellbeing due to the challenging nature of the role. Paul Ryle added that during his nine years as Head at Mellis CofE Primary School, there had been difficult times but being part of the Diocesan MAT had provided support and network opportunities. Paul Ryle added that analysis of reasons why Heads leave after 2 or 3 years could be beneficial.

Hugo Parker asked about the role of the DBE with Headship retention. The DDE advised that the team has advisory rights on the appointment of Heads but the final decision is with the governing body.

Action: The DDE to provide details of Headteacher length of service in church schools.

Hugo Parker asked if there were any concerns about current Heads and senior leadership. The DDE advised that this is kept under review as the role of the Headteacher is integral to the school. Tim Fairbairn asked if it was more challenging recruiting into small schools. The DDE replied that the success rate with small schools is good. The DDE suggested further discussion on this at a future meeting. The Chair suggested the DDE liaise with other DDEs about good practice across Dioceses.

The Chair thanked the DDE for her report.

23.12 ANALYSIS OF 2022 ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS IN CHURCH SCHOOLS

The SEO introduced Paper D, providing an analysis of attainment and progress data for KS2 and KS4 for 2022. The SEO advised that as this was the first report since 2019, there could be no direct comparisons with previous years but data will provide a benchmark for future years. The analysis of attainment data had been provided by Fischer Family Trust (FFT) and KS1 data is hoped to be available for future reports. The SEO noted that pupil outcomes in church schools in KS2 in 2022 were in line with

national data. While KS4 data was based upon the relatively small number of students of two church secondary schools, there is a positive picture overall in terms of attainment and progress and this compares well with national averages.

A significant number of disadvantaged pupils did not perform as well as expected according to available data. This is consistent with data at the end of KS2 for our Diocese that was available prior to lockdown.

The Chair thought it was useful to have 2019 data comparisons. The Ven Jeanette Gosney referred to KS2 attainment data in Writing and asked why this was down compared to Reading and Maths. Paul Ryle highlighted that during lockdown, it had been easier to teach Reading and Maths virtually but had been more challenging to teach writing. The Ven Jeanette Gosney highlighted the long-term implications for pupils going to senior school.

Phil Papps noted the impact of Covid on pupils learning but asked whether the cost of living crisis was having an impact. The SEO advised that this is an ongoing issue but is the responsibility of those who look after standards and learning in schools.

Tim Fairbairn asked about Diocesan input in Ofsted inspections. The SEO advised that inspectors do now sometimes contact the DDDE and SEO to discuss support with school improvement and school engagement with the Diocese. The DDDE felt that there was a misconception amongst some Ofsted inspectors about church schools and the role of the Diocese. The SEO advised that a record of school engagement is kept.

23.13 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

The SEO referred to Paper E, providing Ofsted and SIAMS outcomes for church schools published since the previous meeting. The SEO noted:

- 17 Ofsted inspections and three SIAMS inspections have taken place this academic year
- more schools are now judged good by both Ofsted and SIAMS compared with a year ago
- there had been a positive SIAMS outcome at St Botolph's CEVCP School rather than St Gregory CEVCP as noted in the SEO report
- the positive Ofsted outcome at St Christopher CofE Primary School.

The Ven Jeanette Gosney asked about the Ofsted inspection at Stutton CofE Primary School. The SEO highlighted that the school has experienced some turbulence but with a new Headteacher, expectations for the school are good.

The Chair thanked the SEO for his reports.

23.14 RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP REPORT

The DDE introduced Paper F and noted that:

- new RE Syllabus training is taking place for church schools in February and community schools in May
- two network meetings have taken place with Christian Aid's Global Neighbours team which have been well attended by schools
- a reflection for schools has been produced which supports the Bishops' Lent appeal and the Lent padlet has been updated [Lent padlet](#)

23.15 ADMISSIONS

The DDDE referred to Paper G which provided an update on admissions since the last meeting. The DDDE noted that:

- five VA schools have completed full consultations, as part of the 7-year cycle

- a Diocesan MAT consultation on the removal of church attendance from the over subscription criteria of former Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools in the Diocesan MAT has been completed. Details of the responses received to the consultation are set out in the Appendix
- four further consultations by Diocesan MAT schools have taken place in order to extend the catchment area, remove religious criteria, reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN) and as part of a 7-year cycle
- admission authorities must determine admission arrangements for 2024-25 by 28 February and publish by 15 March 2023
- the Statutory Appeals Office has provided appeals information for the last three academic years, as requested at the last DBE meeting.

The DDDE highlighted the amount of work undertaken by schools for consultations but that this needs to be completed to ensure schools are compliant with the School Admissions Code.

The Chair thanked the DDDE for her report.

23.16 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Pete Mumford referred to Paper I, the Local Authority report and noted that:

- the Local Authority is working with several schools on reducing Published Admission Numbers due to pupil forecasts
- the Suffolk Education Partnership (SEP) has been established to encourage and provide opportunities for Academy Trust CEOs and maintained leaders to work collaboratively together. Further details are provided in Appendices 1-2
- the Schools Infrastructure Team has a new Schools Planning Manager, Penny Bates
- latest Secondary forecasts have been completed and should now be with schools.

The Chair thanked Pete Mumford for his report.

23.17 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

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

23.18 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Pete Bloomfield, CEO of the Diocesan MAT

Gary Peverley, Finance Director

Consent for a school to academise

Headteacher recruitment and retention

Falling school roll and arising issues

23.19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Jane Addis advised that she had resumed monitoring of the school effectiveness role on the action plan and would send a report.

The DDE invited members to monitor aspects of the DBE Strategy Action Plan and asked members to contact her if interested.

23.20 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board noted that future meetings would take place on:

Tuesday 2 May 2023 @ 4pm
Tuesday 12 September 2023 @ 4pm
Thursday 23 November 2023 @ 1.30pm

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 3.30pm.

Signed: _____
[Chairman]

Date: _____