



DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Thursday 25 January 2024 at 2.00pm in the Boardroom and via Zoom.

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

Present:

Mrs Jane Addis	The Revd Laura Mumford
Mrs Jane Eccleston	Mr Paul Ryle
Mr Tim Fairbairn (via Zoom)	Mr Pete Mumford
The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison (Chair)	Mr Hugo Parker
Mrs Mary Lewis	The Revd Toby Tate
Mrs Gillian Mitchell	Mrs Gemma Taylor

Apologies:

Mrs Joanne Austin	The Ven Rich Henderson
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In Attendance:

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)

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

24.01 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 were approved and signed.

24.02 MATTERS ARISING

None.

24.03 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:

- interviews for the Schools' Adviser post take place on 14 February and DBE members are warmly invited to hear presentations as part of the process
- the Diocesan MAT is currently recruiting for a full-time CEO to start in September 2024
- the DfE's Regional Advisory Board has deferred making a decision on a sponsor for St Edmundsbury CEVAP until its February meeting
- analysis of pupil numbers in church schools over the past five years (Paper A Appendix 1)
- the coroner's report on the death of Ruth Perry, Headteacher has been published and Ofsted inspections have been paused to enable mental health

awareness training for inspectors. Ofsted has also introduced changes on how complaints are handled. Inspections are due to resume on 22 January

- the next cohort of training for SIAMS inspectors will begin in September 2024 and the DDE has informed those who previously expressed an interest
- the DfE's workload reduction taskforce has published recommendations as part of the Government's target to reduce teachers' workload by five hours per week over the next three years
- the former St James school site in Bury St Edmunds has been sold
- five free CPD sessions have been delivered to our schools by Christian Aid over the past 18 months on Global Neighbours, a scheme which supports schools to develop courageous advocacy and teach children about global justice
- we are a pilot diocese to hold a Big Sing event, with Christian Aid, for our schools on Tuesday 26 March at the Cathedral to which DBE members are warmly invited
- the DfE has published non-statutory guidance for schools about gender questioning children for consultation.

The DDE asked members for their views on a response to this consultation. Paul Ryle advised that Mellis CofE Primary has recently reviewed its transgender policy in line with draft guidance and advice. Paul felt it would be helpful for the DBE to respond and have a written position on this to ensure consistency across church schools. The Chair asked about the views of other Dioceses. The DDE advised that DDEs have been invited to respond. The DDE highlighted the Church of England guidance for church schools - [Valuing all God's Children](#) - on challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and that church schools are inclusive, treating every child with respect and dignity including around gender questioning. The DDE advised that some concerns had been expressed about whether the guidance is strong enough legally which could leave schools open to legal challenge.

Mary Lewis felt that it was important to protect children from the pressure of any expectation that they had to consider this. The DDE advised that there is a key role for schools and parents on helping children with this and supporting them with any questions.

The Chair asked if secondary Headteachers had views on this. The DDE advised that she is awaiting their response. The Revd Laura Mumford highlighted that the Royal Hospital School has a policy covering gender reassignment, especially important as pupils are away from home and parents.

The DDE agreed to consider some basic principles for schools.

Tim Fairbairn asked about the scope of the response and whether the Local Authority would be involved. The DDE advised that the response would be from the DBE and Pete Mumford advised that the Local Authority would be happy to liaise with the Diocese.

Actions:

- Paul Ryle to send Mellis CofE Primary School's policy to the DDE.
- The DDE to follow up with secondary school Heads and offer to respond on their behalf.
- The DDE to consider a set of basic principles for schools.

The DDE noted the Church of England's Flourish Network, the development of networks of worshipping communities in schools. The Church of England has now agreed to fund £2.5m to support 15-20 dioceses to develop projects over a two-year pilot period starting in September 2024. Further information had been provided in

the Flourish development day presentation slides (Paper A Appendix 3) which set out five core principles which inform the Flourish approach. Funding could help with chaplaincy, developing music, Choir Church or other projects such as developing a young leadership course. The closing date for applications is 5 April 2024 and it is proposed that the Chair and DDE make a decision on which settings to choose for the 2-5 bids from the Diocese, acting on behalf of the DBE and Bishop's Staff.

The Chair advised that the Flourish Network is grounded in the wider Vision and Strategy of the Church of England, one of the aims of which is to be a church that is younger and more diverse. The Revd Toby Tate asked about the success criteria for young people in worshipping communities and hoped that this would not just be measured by church attendance. Paul Ryle agreed, highlighting the importance of worshipping communities growing in a context which would benefit schools. The Chair had spoken to the Church of England's national team about measuring success criteria, particularly discipleship and about the development of discipleship pathways for young people. The Chair hoped that measures would include community service and how well schools and churches work together.

Gemma Taylor highlighted that it was important how information would be shared with schools. The Chair advised that projects would be voluntary and that the pilot would only involve 2-5 projects. The Revd Laura Mumford felt that faith and discipleship were a key part of church schools. The DDE added that projects would be after school activities and Jane Eccleston felt that this would help to make it clear that it was optional for children who wanted to engage. Hugo Parker highlighted the importance of choosing the right settings for the 2-5 bids and evaluating these projects.

Mary Lewis asked whether worshipping communities would help with career paths for young people. The Chair highlighted it could provide answers but key was the idea of conforming to Jesus and His values in one shape or another.

Jane Addis asked if schools were aware of the Flourish Network and the DDE advised that no communication had yet been shared. Jane Addis suggested that smaller, rural schools should be included, possibly through collaboration with other small schools. The Chair agreed.

Action: The DDE to report back on progress at the May meeting.

The DDE noted the DBE Strategy Action Plan (Paper A Appendix 2) which had been updated. The DDE extended thanks to Mary Lewis for being the DBE member responsible for monitoring the RE and collective worship objectives and advised that Mary would like to allow a new member to help the new Schools' Adviser. If any DBE member would be interested in this monitoring role or any other, to contact the DDE.

The Chair thanked the DDE for her report.

24.04 ANALYSIS OF 2023 KS1 ATTAINMENT IN CHURCH SCHOOLS

The SEO introduced Paper B, providing an analysis of KS1 attainment data for 2023. The SEO noted that:

- KS1 progress data had not been included
- KS4 data had been reported previously and the SEO highlighted that Debenham High School was the top achieving school in Suffolk and third highest achieving school in the East of England.

24.05 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

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

- the Ofsted inspection at Great Whelnetham CofE Primary which had resulted in a Good judgement following the previous Inadequate judgement
- the Ofsted inspection at Great Barton CofE Primary which had resulted in a Good judgement
- recent SIAMS inspection reports.

The Chair asked why the inspection at Great Barton had taken so long and the SEO advised that this had been due to the inspection exemption for outstanding schools which was removed in 2021. Paul Ryle noted an article with the Chair of the inquiry commissioned by the National Education Union, titled 'Beyond Ofsted': [What might 'Beyond Ofsted' mean for governance? \(thehoot.news\)](#)

The Chair thanked the SEO for his report and work.

24.06 BUILDINGS OFFICER REPORT

The Buildings Officer introduced Paper D, an update on school buildings. The Buildings Officer noted that:

- voluntary aided SCA funding continues to be squeezed so funding has been allocated in keeping with our Diocesan Asset Management Plan prioritisation criteria. The scarcity of funding is not unique to Voluntary Aided (VA) schools as the amount per pupil is the same across VA, Voluntary Controlled, community and academy schools
- currently no RAAC has been found in Diocesan MAT schools with 99% checks completed and 152 roofs identified. The work has helped to collate excellent records and compile a record of the chronological development of school buildings. Investigation of VA schools is well advanced with a few areas remaining and the Buildings Officer is supporting schools
- the benefits of a good pre-school or nursery on a school site is well proven but the financial outlook for providers is becoming more challenging. It is important that the process of identifying a new provider can happen quickly.

The Buildings Officer referred to the two recommendations in the report: that DBE consent is given to Barningham CEVCP School and Charsfield CofE Primary School extending their age ranges to offer nursery provision; and that the DBE delegates authority to the DDE to grant DBE approval to such proposals at maintained schools and academies where, in the DDE's view, there is no significant detriment to such a proposal to either the applicant school, or any nearby Church of England school.

Tim Fairbairn asked about the financial scrutiny by schools seeking to provide pre-schools or nurseries. The DDE advised that schools will be required to undertake due diligence and to seek the DfE's approval. It is not for the DBE to scrutinise the finances.

DBE members approved the two recommendations.

The Chair thanked the Buildings Officer for his report.

24.07 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

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

- three conversions took place on 1 December 2023 for Cockfield CEVCP to join All Saints Schools Trust, Orford CEVAP and Wilby CEVCP to join the Tilian Partnership
- Sexton's Manor Primary School, Bury St Edmunds is due to convert and join the All Saints Schools Trust on 1 April 2024
- all admission authorities must determine their admission arrangements, including PAN, for the 2025/2026 school year by 28 February 2024
- the consultation for 2025/2026 school term dates has taken place and is due to be approved by SCC's Cabinet
- the challenge of funding for school buildings and BBC's Panorama programme which recently investigated the conditions of school buildings [BBC One - Panorama, Britain's Crumbling Schools](#)

Tim Fairbairn highlighted that the Unity Schools Partnership piloted a two week autumn half-term following a consultation. Jane Addis added that this had impacted on attendance in some primary schools.

The Chair thanked Pete Mumford for his report.

24.08 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

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

The DBE approved Pinkie Palmer being appointed as the nominative trustee to the Eye Grammar School Trust.

Tim Fairbairn asked about the length of time of current vacancies for foundation governors.

Action: The Administrator to provide information on how long foundation governor positions have been vacant at future meetings.

Pete Mumford left at 3.15pm

24.09 NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL IN IPSWICH GARDEN SUBURB

See confidential minute.

24.10 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Two church schools likely to seek approval to academise

24.11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

24.12 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board noted that future meetings would take place on:

Wednesday 8 May 2024 @ 4.00pm

Tuesday 24 September 2024 @ 4.00pm

Wednesday 20 November 2024 @ 4.00pm

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 15.35pm.

Signed: _____
[Chairman]

Date: _____