



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

DBE (24)M3

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 4.00pm in the Boardroom and via Zoom.

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

Present:

Mrs Jane Addis	Mrs Mary Lewis
Mrs Joanne Austin (via Zoom)	Mrs Gillian Mitchell
Mr Tim Fairbairn (via Zoom)	Mr Hugo Parker
The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison (Chair)	Mr Paul Ryle
The Ven Rich Henderson	The Revd Toby Tate

Apologies:

Mrs Jane Eccleston	Mr Pete Mumford
The Revd Laura Mumford	

In Attendance:

Mrs Julia Grainger	Interim Assistant Director Education Skills and Learning, SCC
Miss Rachel Cutts	Diocesan Schools' Adviser
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 items 24.27 – 24.31

Mr Philip Codling	Diocesan Finance and Operations Director
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The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, Julia Grainger who was attending in place of Pete Mumford and Phil Codling from the Diocese.

24.27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

24.28 DBE MEMBERSHIP

The DDE acknowledged with gratitude Bishop Mike's service as Chair for the past four years and his support of church schools. The DDE noted that Archdeacon Rich will become Chair from 1 October 2024. The DDE also noted that DBE elections by Diocesan Synod will take place over the coming weeks and that co-options will be on the agenda for the next meeting. The DDE encouraged members to apply to stand again.

24.29 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 May 2024 were approved and signed.

24.30 MATTERS ARISING

None.

24.31 2023 FINANCIAL POSITION AND 2024 BUDGET

Philip Codling referred to Paper A and noted:

- better results than budgeted in 2023 due to the DDE providing cover for the Diocesan MAT CEO role and the disposal of the St James school site in Bury St Edmunds which provided net proceeds of £2.431m
- deficit for 2023 is £3k
- investment income is not as high as predicted as the proceeds from the St James school site arrived in January 2024
- forecast for 2024 is £21k surplus although looking forward to 2025 and beyond, the forecast is of a deficit due to budgeting for increased staff costs.

The Chair thanked Philip Codling for his report. Hugo Parker asked about the implications of having a deficit balance and whether the DBE needed to cover its costs and who had oversight of the DBE budget. Philip advised that the DBE does have reserves to support its activities, that the deficit figure is relatively small, although balances should not be run at a deficit consistently and that the Diocesan Board of Finance has custodial oversight. The Chair noted the extent of the support provided by the DBE to schools.

The Chair thanked Philip Codling for the report.

24.32 DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S REPORT

The DDE referred to Paper B, which provided an update to DBE members on issues arising since the last meeting. The DDE welcomed Rachel Cutts to the education team as the new Diocesan Schools' Adviser.

The DDE noted that:

- Victoria Bush will continue to provide RE support and will be piloting a project on spiritual development with a small group of schools
- St Edmundsbury Church of England Primary converted to academy status as part of the Elveden Schools Trust on 1 September 2024
- an Academy Order has been issued for Cavendish CEVCP following an Inadequate Ofsted inspection and the school is to join the Tilian Partnership, following due diligence
- Mark Trenavin-Body joined the Diocesan MAT as Chief Finance Officer on 7 August, Tracey Caffull joined as CEO on 1 September and Claire Bourne also joined as 0.6fte Head of Inclusion and SEND- a new post initially for this academic year
- there are five new substantive Headteachers and five acting Headteachers this term
- DBE members are warmly invited to attend the annual church school leaders' conference on Wednesday 6 November, there is no charge for DBE members
- Ofsted has published its [response](#) to its Big Listen consultation exercise and is taking a number of key actions, one of which is to remove the one word overall effectiveness Ofsted judgement

- the national Church of England Education Office has administered SIAMS inspections since September 2021 with Dioceses entering into a Service Level Agreement and paying £5,500pa towards the cost of recruiting and training SIAMS inspectors, scheduling inspections and notifying schools. From September 2025, Dioceses will enter into a Partnership Agreement and costs will increase to £8,250pa
- 21 church schools in the Diocese are likely to be inspected by SIAMS this year
- the Church of England has issued [New anti-bullying guidance for Church of England schools](#)
- our bid for funding for five Flourish projects was unfortunately unsuccessful but the DDE will be monitoring any future funding opportunities
- the DDE and DDDE are working with the Diocesan Communications team to create a short film highlighting the benefits of serving as a governor and will report back at the next DBE meeting.

Revd Toby Tate suggested that the short film be sent to clergy to play in churches. The Chair highlighted the applications from church schools for the Flourish funding and suggested working with the Growing in God Panel and Mission & Ministry team on future funding opportunities.

The Chair asked about the situation with Headteacher recruitment. The DDE highlighted the importance of having the best qualified people running church schools, particularly those sympathetic to the church school ethos, however the job is possibly not as attractive due to the workload. The use of the Executive Headteacher model appears to be working as well as supporting Headteachers and promoting networks. Mary Lewis asked if there was a similar issue with recruitment in non-church schools. Julia Grainger responded that the situation is mixed as some positions attract people into Suffolk while others need to be re-advertised several times. The Local Authority is using the Executive Headteacher model and improving opportunities for career development and shadowing to help recruitment. Paul Ryle suggested that there is also scope for schools to look actively at senior leadership teams and put things in place to help with development of aspiring heads.

The DBE received the DBE Strategy Action Plan (Paper B Appendix) which had been updated and highlights the support offered to church schools by the Education team.

The Chair thanked the DDE for her report.

24.33 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

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

- the Ofsted inspections at -
 - St Edmundsbury CEVAP which moved from an Inadequate to Requires Improvement judgement
 - Kersey CofE Primary and Rougham CofE Primary which moved from Requires Improvement to Good judgements
 - Cavendish CEVCP which resulted in an Inadequate judgement
- all church schools inspected under the new SIAMS framework have received J1 judgements
- the Heads Wellbeing session on Friday 11 October at which Revd Laura Mumford is one of the keynote speakers

Gillian Mitchell noted that East Bergholt CEVCP had been inspected at the end of the summer term and received a Good judgement. The report had been published in the last few days. Mary Lewis highlighted the positive content of the inspection reports

which backs up the support offered in the DBE Strategy Action Plan. Mary asked about the preparation by schools for SIAMS inspections and the SEO advised that evidence suggests that some schools appear to reserve their engagement with expert training on SIAMS either for the year before or the year of inspection, as highlighted in the SIAMS Annual Report 2023/24. The SEO highlighted that schools need time to embed a Christian vision approach and to help with this, SIAMS support visits are arranged with church schools mid-way through the SIAMS five-yearly calendar. In addition, termly SIAMS training is provided, which includes input from the Schools' Adviser on RE and Collective Worship. The DDDE added that training is also provided for governors on monitoring in relation to SIAMS.

The Chair asked whether there is a breakdown of Ofsted/SIAMS inspection data nationally for comparison purposes. The SEO advised that analysis of school data is provided annually for church schools, and he would continue to look at patterns and trends of inspections and report back. The DDE advised that the [Ofsted annual report 2023/24](#) was available.

Julia Grainger advised that she would cover in her report (see 24.37 below).

The Chair thanked the SEO for his report.

24.34 SIAMS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The SEO referred to Paper D, the SIAMS Annual Report 2023/24, and noted:

- 904 inspections took place in the last academic year of which 887 received J1 judgements and 17 received J2 judgements
- 16 inspections took place in our Diocese, all received J1 judgements
- areas which require further work nationally include
 - monitoring and evaluation, and the impact of Christian vision
 - an understanding of spirituality and spiritual development
 - the RE curriculum
 - teaching of faiths other than Christianity, and
 - teaching of Christianity as a global faith
- evidence from 2023-24 indicates that the understanding, prevalence and positive impact of schools' Christian visions are better than at any other time over the last three years
- evidence suggests that additional factors are having a net negative impact on RE in schools, such as insufficient teacher subject knowledge, inconsistent high quality professional development and support for teachers of RE, low teacher confidence and the absence of RE from the EBacc in KS4
- some possible areas of confusion in relation to inspection question (IQ5) with a frequent focus on 'courageous advocacy' and 'agents of change'
- 27.5% of all inspections cited the need for a school to understand spirituality and/or for spiritual development to be a routine aspect of the curriculum
- growing evidence that a MAT that has a coherent vision that aligns with a Church school's Christian vision is well-placed to play an important role in the school's development and improvement as a Church school
- monitoring needs to be followed up by evaluation and asking questions
- recommendations to DBEs concerning Christian vision and spirituality, leadership training, SIAMS training and RE, are already included in the support being offered to our church schools.

Paul Ryle highlighted that religious education is the most commonly occurring theme to be cited as both a development point and as a strength in the same inspection. The SEO advised that the key development points for church schools in our Diocese

are around spirituality, courageous advocacy and governor monitoring. The Chair asked what can be learnt from schools which haven't prepared for SIAMS. The SEO advised that most schools had developed a Christian vision but were now seeking support with revising the vision. The DDDE added that some schools are revising because the school or its context has changed. Paul Ryle observed that the impetus for schools to prepare is likely when an inspection is approaching. The SEO highlighted the need for schools to look at embedding the Christian vision on an ongoing basis.

The Chair thanked the SEO for his work.

Gillian Mitchell left at 5.05pm

24.35 DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' ADVISER REPORT

The Schools' Adviser referred to Paper E providing an update on her first few weeks in the role. The Schools' Adviser noted:

- there will be a relaunch of the Emmanuel Project in 2025
- revised model policies for religious education (Paper E Appendix 1) and Collective Worship (Paper E Appendix 2) for DBE approval.

Mary Lewis suggested adding to the RE model policy that the Governor appointed for RE should assist in monitoring *and evaluating* the subject. Mary also suggested for the Collective Worship model policy the addition of space for reflection for children with no faith.

The DBE approved the model policies for RE and Collective Worship, subject to the amendments mentioned.

The Chair thanked the Schools' Adviser for her report.

Actions:

- The Schools' Adviser to make amendments to the RE and Collective Worship model policies as agreed.
- The Administrator to update the website

24.36 BUILDINGS OFFICER REPORT

The Buildings Officer referred to Paper F, an update on issues relating to school buildings and noted that:

- the 2024-25 VA School Condition Allocation (SCA) was £260k and determination of funding to VA schools has been allocated
- the DfE is currently preparing details of capital funding for 2025-26
- Dioceses with fewer than 3,000 VA pupils (which applies to our Diocese) have a choice to opt out of the SCA system and join the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)
- the DfE published guidance for schools on managing older buildings in April 2024 which particularly covers the national programme of schools construction between 1945-1970 and helps those planning estate maintenance to be aware of common problems arising with buildings of different periods
- the Church of England has set up a framework agreement to provide regional consultancy to Dioceses on decarbonisation, the current focus is developing a short list of schools suitable for an application to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). The Church of England's dataset has been reviewed and we have provided additional records and await an update. One issue is that the PSDS requires substantial contributions from applicants which may be a barrier to bidding.

The Chair asked what could be done to support schools with PSDS funding. The Buildings Officer advised that funding needs to be spent efficiently, lobbying Government about changes to policy needs to happen, further funding stream opportunities need to be explored and we needed to be creative. The Buildings Officer added that knowledge of school buildings, for example the age and lifespan of boilers, means we are well prepared.

The Chair thanked the Buildings Officer for his report.

24.37 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Julia Grainger referred to Paper G, the Local Authority report and noted:

- Sarah-Jane Smedmor is the new Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services
- 89% of primary school in Suffolk received Outstanding or Good inspection outcomes compared with 90% nationally
- early date from statutory assessments of pupils 2024
 - EYFS - Good level of development in line nationally
 - Y1 phonics – Good level of development in line nationally
 - KS2 - provisional data still 3% below 3% national although this was 5% in 2023
- the Local Authority is now ranked 103rd out of 151 in 2024 from 134th in 2022
- focus on four key areas in education
 - support for school leaders
 - strengthening Suffolk as an evidence based education authority
 - building an inclusive education community
 - supporting leadership development

Tim Fairbairn asked about the implications of funding for maintained VA and VC church schools, particularly the depth of provision available, as more schools academise. Julia Grainger advised that funding for de-delegated services for maintained schools has been agreed at the School Forum and that the Local Authority still has a statutory responsibility for education excellence for children in all schools.

The Chair thanked Julia Grainger for her report.

24.38 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

The DBE ratified the appointment of Foundation Governors listed in Paper H noting that Revd Helen Grover is the new ex officio governor at St Botolph's CEVCP School.

Revd Toby Tate asked about the support to clergy, particularly new clergy becoming governors and trustees. The DDE advised that the situation would be kept under review and the team was available to support clergy. Archdeacon Rich advised that the level of work for clergy is currently being discussed and that the Bishops are aware.

24.39 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None.

24.40 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

