



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

**Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich**

DBE (22)M4

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Tuesday 22 November 2022 at 1.30pm in the Boardroom.

Prayers: Jane Eccleston led the opening prayers.

Present:

Mrs Jane Addis
Mr Tom Brooke
Mrs Elaine Burdiss
The Revd Dr Karen Burton
Mrs Jane Eccleston

The Ven Jeanette Gosney (Chair)
Mrs Mary Lewis
Mr Pete Mumford
Mr Hugo Parker
The Revd Toby Tate

Apologies:

Mr Tim Fairbairn
The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison
Mr Daniel Jones
Mr Guy McGregor

The Revd Carl Melville
Mr Paul Ryle
Mr Drew Quayle

In Attendance:

Mr Phil Knowles
Mrs Jane Sheat
Miss Jacqui Studd
Mrs Sue Todd
Mrs Gemma Taylor

Diocesan School Effectiveness Officer (SEO)
Diocesan Director of Education (DDE)
Administrator (Education)
Deputy Diocesan Director of Education (DDDE)
Diocesan Schools' Adviser

WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting which she advised was the last meeting of the triennium. The Chair thanked members for their service.

22.42 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2022 were approved and signed.

22.43 MATTERS ARISING

None.

22.44 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

22.45 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 that:

- the Government will be providing £2.3bn additional funding for schools in both 2023/24 and 2024/25
- seven people have been elected by Diocesan Synod following DBE elections and co-options will take place at the February 2023 meeting. Anyone wishing to be co-opted are asked to contact the DDE
- under the DBE Measure 2021, the DBE will become a statutory committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) from 1 January 2023 and Bishop's Council will be considering the need for the Umbrella Trust, as the DBF could potentially replace this as the corporate member of church school MATs
- Pete Bloomfield has been appointed as the new Diocesan MAT CEO and will start in January 2023. The DDE will continue as a MAT Director
- the Schools Bill has been paused and the DDE continues to work with maintained schools to help to secure their futures. Appendix 1 provides a list of church schools which have academised and shows that most of our small schools are already in a MAT
- the DDE is working with Debenham High School, a standalone academy, as the school explores creating a MAT with feeder schools
- the academisation of Thorndon CEVCP has been delayed until January 2023
- the annual church school leaders' conference which took place on Wednesday 9 November at St Edmundsbury Cathedral
- the Education Team continues to support schools.

Mary Lewis highlighted the positive atmosphere at the conference, the Schools' Adviser's inspiring presentation on Christian vision, the contribution by pupils of Eyke CofE Primary School and the Headteacher's presentation on the school improvement journey at Ixworth CofE Primary School.

Tom Brooke, Chair of the Diocesan MAT, noted the gratitude of MAT Directors for the work of the MAT's CEO. The Chair asked if Pete Bloomfield would attend a future DBE meeting.

Action: The DDE to arrange for Pete Bloomfield to attend a future DBE meeting.

The Chair noted that a number of small church schools had not academised and asked about the viability of some schools. The DDE highlighted the DBE's Small Schools policy, the DfE's presumption against closure and the importance of small schools to their local community. The DDE added that the Education team works closely with the Local Authority to identify small schools which are vulnerable. There is no definitive number on when a small school is no longer viable but over the years difficult decisions have been made, such as with Badwell Ash CEVAP and Monks Eleigh CEVCP. Factors which make a school vulnerable to closure include: an inadequate Ofsted judgement, a falling roll, budget pressures, difficulties in securing effective leadership and recruiting and retaining teachers.

Jane Eccleston asked if the roll through school is considered. The DDE confirmed that the roll in each year group is looked at, and that falls in birth rate will have an impact. Pete Mumford advised that the Local Authority looks at forecasting and trends and that the falling birth rate is a nationwide issue.

The Chair asked whether there is a proactive approach with small schools. The DDE highlighted federations involving a number of small schools – Bentley CEVCP with Copdock Community Primary, Thurlow CEVCP with Hundon Community Primary, and Whatfield CEVCP with Bildeston Community Primary.

The Chair noted the value of small schools to local communities and the need to support small schools, provided the school is sustainable.

The Chair thanked the DDE for her report.

22.46 SIAMS UPDATE

The SEO introduced Paper B and noted the new SIAMS framework to be implemented in September 2023. The overriding message is of a Christian approach to inspection and Dr Margaret James, Director of SIAMS, is leading on this. The new framework sees a move away from set criteria and grades to judgements and subjectivity, and that church schools will need to uphold and celebrate their Christian vision.

Hugo Parker asked about the DBE's role within the new framework. The SEO advised that since the national integration of SIAMS, the Diocesan role is advisory. The SEO systematically visits schools midway between inspections to provide support and feedback on SIAMS.

Hugo Parker asked whether the DBE has a role to feedback any issues with the new SIAMS framework. The SEO advised that Dr Margaret James has welcomed feedback from Dioceses. A draft framework was sent to Dioceses six months ago and feedback was provided.

Jane Eccleston asked about schools' aspirations in the long term. The SEO responded that this would be dependent on the school.

The Chair noted that a school only has to fail on one of the criteria to get a J2 judgement. The SEO advised that Dr Margaret James has made clear that this system is nuanced and that it will take a whole academic year to see how this works in practice. The SEO will report back on this at future meetings. The SEO noted that SIAMS training is being delivered on Monday 28 November which will include a look at the new framework.

Mary Lewis asked if SIAMS support visits were proactive or in response to a request by schools. The SEO advised that schools midway through inspections are contacted about a visit although some schools do request a visit.

Hugo Parker asked if church schools would be inspected within a certain time. The SEO noted the backlog of inspections due to Covid and that schools should be inspected within a 5 year window but that this could be longer. Hugo asked about the benefit of school inspections and the accountability for schools which don't do so well at inspection. The SEO noted that inspections are statutory and as church schools were gifted to local communities, inspections ensure that schools are doing what was set out in the school's trust deed. The DDE added that the Memorandum of Understanding between the DfE and Church of England sets out powers for DBEs to advise about an underperforming church academy and/or those where the religious character is at risk. Hugo asked how this would be dealt with and the DDE advised that schools of concern would be brought to the DBE. The DDE added that the Education Team has a lot of experience, provides training to church school leaders and meets regularly to discuss church schools' engagement and support for schools.

Hugo asked if evidence could be kept about engagement with and support for schools. The DDE advised that there is triangulation on this but highlighted the impact of vacant ex officio foundation governor positions in schools, especially as SIAMS inspections consider the links with the Diocese and parish. The Chair felt that there was enough evidence gathering concerning school engagement and proactive support for schools.

The Chair thanked the SEO for his report.

22.47 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:

- positive Ofsted outcomes at Bardwell CofE Primary, Morland CofE Primary and more recently All Saints' CofE Primary, Newmarket
- the positive SIAMS outcome at Thorndon CEVCP
- plans to renew the subscription to Fischer Family Trust (FFT) to provide analysis of church school performance data
- a Governance review conducted at Debenham High School.

The Chair thanked the SEO for his report.

22.48 CHAPLAINCY

Revd Toby Tate explained that the focus of his recent sabbatical had been on chaplaincy. As part of this, he had visited chaplains in schools at Felixstowe School, Chantry Academy and Debenham High School. Chaplains varied by being either ordained or lay, and by working full or part time. Revd Tate highlighted that the Chaplain at Debenham High School visits the school for one or two days a week as part of her curacy; at Felixstowe School, the chaplain is full time and provided by a local charity, Boost, as part of its school chaplaincy project; and the Chaplain at Chantry Academy is four days per week and provided through CYM. All chaplains spoken to were not employed by the school.

Revd Tate highlighted that the role of Chaplains varies and at Chantry Academy, the Chaplain's work involves bringing faith into activities in a gentle way and supporting students. There is a staff café once a week with the chaplain and he is part of the pastoral team.

Revd Tate noted that the Church of England views chaplaincy as building a bridge between the school and church, and between the school and the wider community. He suggested that the DBE should consider investing in building bridges especially as young people are not coming to church and there is a need to go to young people. The role of chaplain is beneficial to all children in schools and could help with Growing in God, seeing more young people in church, experiencing the love of God.

Hugo Parker asked what action was needed. The Chair highlighted Growing in God and one of its themes, Growing Younger. Funding has recently been received which is to help with growing five Youth Hubs, of which Chaplaincy is a key part. Chaplaincy comes under the remit of Mission and Ministry, who are currently focusing on Debenham High School and looking proactively to see if the Chaplaincy role there can be expanded and rooted within the feeder schools. Bishop Martin is supportive of chaplaincy and about finding ways to help and support this. The Chair highlighted the work of Just 42, Boost and youth work in Beccles.

Revd Dr Karen Burton asked if chaplaincy in community schools was also being considered. Jane Addis and the DDE felt that community schools should be targeted as it was important for children and young people to have some form of Christian presence where there might be none.

Hugo Parker asked about implications of resources and budget in supporting chaplaincy. The DDE highlighted that the Education Team would work with Mission and Ministry as this is under their remit. The DDE expressed gratitude to Revd Tate and other clergy who visit schools. The Chair advised that Revd Canon Susan Loxton is involved with voluntary chaplaincy and wondered if clergy and congregations could be supported to do "low level" chaplaincy as well as formal chaplaincy. Revd Tate asked about training lay people and highlighted again the importance of being bridges between church and school to support children and young people.

Jane Addis asked if the Diocese appoint chaplains in community schools. The DDE advised of different models and that local charities such as Boost and CYM provide

chaplains, as already mentioned, in Felixstowe School and Chantry Academy. The Chair highlighted that not all chaplains are ordained. Revd Tate felt that chaplains didn't necessarily need to be ordained. Mary Lewis felt it was important to support the Youth Hubs which would encourage lay people to help and provide a structure to do this. Jane Eccleston highlighted the resources and funding needed by a school to have a chaplain.

The Chair thanked Revd Tate.

Tom Brooke left 2.40pm

22.49 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

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

- the Local Authority is still waiting for a Government update on the Schools Bill and academisation
- Thorndon CEVCP is due to convert and join the All Saints Schools Trust on 1 January 2023
- the Local Authority supports the removal of the religious oversubscription criteria for the former VC schools of the Diocesan Multi Academy Trust
- all Admission Authorities must determine their Admissions Arrangements for 2024/2025, even if they have not consulted on making any changes to their policy, by 28 February 2023
- part of Suffolk's Household Support Fund will provide food vouchers for children who receive free school meals during school holiday periods
- Phase 3 of the SEND programme has been approved by Cabinet to secure funding for new SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) units alongside mainstream schools. This follows Phase 1, which provided an additional 825 places in new schools and unit provision and Phase 2, which is in progress to provide up to a further 72 places
- a number of new primary schools are proposed in Suffolk from 2025 due to new housing developments in Ipswich, Felixstowe, Haverhill, Bury St Edmunds and Sudbury
- the Local Authority saw a reduction in the School Condition Allocation (SCA) provided by the DfE from £5.6m in 2022 to £4.2m in 2023, due to a change in the formula that the funding was previously based on, which has led to significant challenges
- alongside the aspirations to make all school buildings net zero by 2030, SCC is undertaking work with Vertas and Concertus to plan the condition programmes for the next few years to ensure the funding is used as effectively as possible.

The Chair highlighted the proposed housing developments and new schools but that there was also a fall in school numbers and the impact on small schools. The Chair also noted the amount of emotional, social and behavioural needs in schools and the need for SEMH. Pete Mumford highlighted the high number of SEND pupils with specific needs and that the Local Authority is working with schools on these challenges.

Mary Lewis asked about aspirations on net zero and whether this included academies. Pete Mumford highlighted the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme although there

is not much funding available. The Local Authority is trying to make the School Conditions Allocation go further to help with work on net zero in schools.

The Chair thanked Pete Mumford for his report.

22.50 RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP REPORT

The Schools' Adviser referred to Paper D and noted:

- a collective worship leadership programme for schools to use or adapt in school
- courageous advocacy is a focus this year with a new training course and also support from Christian Aid which is supporting our church schools with courageous advocacy through the Global Neighbours accreditation scheme. This involves termly meetings with our schools, the first of which is on 23 November with 21 church schools wishing to attend
- further work on padlets, including for Advent, Christmas and RE Subject Leaders, and on collective worship
- a new advent resource from Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) was shared with schools which offered resourcing for the first 30 schools to sign up. All 30 places were taken by our schools
- a dozen staff meetings on RE were delivered during the first half of the Autumn term, which included some community schools. This led to the development of an annual staff training update which is being used in schools to update teaching staff on the latest developments in RE
- a training offer on the Suffolk RE syllabus is being prepared and materials to help school implement changes will be written next term. The training offer for the new Suffolk RE Syllabus 2023 is being finalised with the Local Authority
- the importance of hearing from real people of faith in RE as an entitlement rather than an enrichment activity. Feedback from subject leaders has helped to create a map of 25 places schools could visit:

<https://goo.gl/maps/xxD6Gts5xDxHMNi1A>

Appendix 2 provides the results of a wider piece of work about visits and visitors.

Revd Dr Karen Burton expressed her thanks to the Schools' Adviser for her work. The Chair asked about the collective worship leadership programme and whether this was aimed at specific age groups. The Schools' Adviser responded that the programme is to help schools to encourage pupils to plan and lead collective worship and to inspire people about what children can do. The programme is generic and will be provided as a word document to schools so that they can adapt.

The Chair thanked the Schools' Adviser for her report.

22.51 BUILDINGS OFFICER REPORT

The DDE referred to Paper E and noted that the DBF has agreed to the temporary use of the former Thurston CEP School site as a SEND facility by SENDAT (a specialist SEND provider). The market rent for this will be held by the DBF, separately, in a "project" fund, and the income used to meet the DBF's site trustee costs of disposal. The DDE asked for the DBE's approval for the proposal to account for income and expenditure relating to the site using a "project" account within the DBF's accounts, which was given.

The DDE advised that the former St James school site is close to completing.

The DDE noted that energy saving advice had been provided to Voluntary Aided (VA) Schools. The DDE asked for approval for the recommendation to ringfence 20% of the 2023-24 School Conditions Allocation funding for energy demand reduction measures.

The Revd Toby Tate asked what might be cut if this was done. The DDE advised that project bids are received from the nine VA schools (although schools do not always bid) and the bids are prioritised by the DDE and Buildings Officer so not all projects may be passed.

Hugo Parker asked if bids need to be for net zero work and if so, how do we ensure this. The DDE advised that the DfE requires schools to provide detailed information when bidding and the Buildings Officer also has the knowledge and experience of schools.

The Chair asked about the statutory temperature required in schools. The DDE advised that this formed part of the energy advice sent to schools by the Buildings Officer. Matt Fulford, Inspired Efficiency also provided practical advice for schools at the conference.

The Chair asked for the DBE's approval to the recommendation that up to 20% of 2023-24 SCA funding be ringfenced for energy demand reduction measures which was agreed.

Pete Mumford left at 15.10

22.52 ADMISSIONS UPDATE

The DDDE referred to Paper F, an update on admissions, and noted that admission policies have to be legally compliant. To ensure this the School Admissions Code provides mandatory requirements making the process open and fair, and the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) may investigate the admission arrangements of any school that the Adjudicator considers do not or may not comply with the Code or the law.

The DDDE advised that schools are currently working on Admissions policies for the 2024-2025 academic year. Schools need to run a full consultation if changes are proposed or at least every seven years, whether changes are proposed or not. The policy is proposed in the autumn term and determined and published in the spring term.

The DDDE is currently supporting former Voluntary Controlled schools in the Diocesan MAT with the removal of religious criteria from oversubscription criteria as well as four other MAT schools with proposed changes to admission policies. The DDDE is also supporting five VA schools as part of the seven year cycle.

The DDDE advised that admission appeals are increasing and that support is provided to schools. Admission training is being offered for new administrative staff and new Headteachers.

The DDDE highlighted current admission related issues including: children out of year group; Ukrainian refugees; appeals code; faith criteria; and Fair Access Protocol Admissions.

Jane Eccleston asked about the consultation involving a school defining its religious criteria. The DDDE advised that this was because of a recent OSA report which had found that a school was not inclusive due to how it was using faith-based criteria.

Hugo Parker referred to the increase in appeals and asked about lessons learned and the rate of success. The DDDE advised that some schools do have a lot of applicants

and parents have the right to appeal if their child is not admitted. The DDDE is encouraging some schools to have a PAN of 15 and in the last academic year and this year, there has just been one appeal not won by the school.

The DDE suggested contacting the Local Authority about appeals data.

Action: The DDDE to ask the Local Authority for appeals data for the last three years and report back.

The Chair referred to faith criteria and highlighted that the definition of church is expanding. The Chair thanked the DDDE for her report.

22.53 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

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

22.54 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Input from a church school

Dave Gardner, Director of Mission and Ministry on the development of Youth Hubs
St Mary's CEVCP, Benhall consent to academise

22.55 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

22.56 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board noted that future meetings would take place on:

Thursday 9 February 2023 @ 1.30pm
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 15.30 pm with the Growing in God prayer.

Signed: _____
[Chairman]

Date: _____