

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Tuesday 12 September 2023 at 4.00pm in the Boardroom and via Zoom.

Prayers: The Ven Rich Henderson led the opening prayers.

Present:

Mrs Jane Addis
Mrs Joanne Austin
Mr Tim Fairbairn
The Ven Rich Henderson (Chair)
Mrs Mary Lewis (via Zoom)

Mrs Gillian Mitchell
The Revd Laura Mumford
Mr Pete Mumford
Mr Paul Ryle

Apologies:

Mrs Jane Eccleston
The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison

Mr Hugo Parker
The Revd Toby Tate

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 Gemma Taylor	Diocesan Schools' Adviser and Acting Headteacher, Nacton CofE Primary School
Mrs Sue Todd	Deputy Diocesan Director of Education (DDDE)

In Attendance for item 23.37 – 23.42:

Mrs Penny Bates SCC Schools Planning Manager

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and Penny Bates who was attending from Suffolk County Council.

23.37 DBE MEMBERSHIP

The Chair noted the resignations of Revd Dr Karen Burton, Chloe Mayes, Revd Carl Melville and Philip Papps and thanked them for their service.

Members unanimously voted to appoint the following co-opted members: Joanne Austin and Gillian Mitchell.

23.38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, BUSINESS INTEREST FORMS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no declarations of interest.

Members were reminded to complete business interest forms and new co-opted members would be asked to sign their agreement to the Code of Conduct.

23.39 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2023 were approved and signed.

23.40 MATTERS ARISING

None.

23.41 PUPIL FORECASTS

Pete Mumford referred to Paper A, an update on primary age pupil forecasting. The Local Authority carries out yearly pupil forecasting, based on NHS registration data and trends, which is shared with schools to inform planning and budgeting processes. Pete advised that the primary age population has fallen since 2017 which is reflected in a reduction in pupils on roll in some schools. However, new housing growth in some areas has meant some school rolls have risen. The number of reception age children in Suffolk is predicted to fall by 20%, from 8,199 in 2020 to 6,669 in 2027. For church schools, there is a smaller reduction of 14%, from 1,424 in 2020 to 1,231 in 2027. Pete referred to the Appendix providing Church of England primary forecast summaries as at June 2023. Pete highlighted the five church schools which would see the largest decreases in pupil rolls.

Pete advised that 10 new schools were expected in the next 5-10 years as a result of housing developments of 800 homes or more. Areas include Ipswich Garden Suburb, Adastral Park at Martlesham Heath, Bury St Edmunds and north Felixstowe. Academy events would be taking place in the next few months to find sponsors and Pete would circulate dates for these events.

Jane Addis referred to the forecast summaries for church schools and asked about where potential pupils from new housing would go to school, especially if there was no school in the village. Pete advised that this would depend upon the catchment areas of local schools. Revd Laura Mumford asked about the figures in red and was advised that this showed where schools were over capacity. Tim Fairbairn asked if a fall in pupil forecasts would impact on the work of the Local Authority. Pete advised that the Schools Infrastructure Team would not be affected.

23.42 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

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

- St Mary's CEVCP, Benhall joined All Saints Schools Trust on 1 September 2023
- Three academy orders are in place for Cockfield CEVCP to join All Saints Schools Trust, Orford CEVAP and Wilby CEVCP to join Tilian Partnership this autumn
- the consultation for 2025/2026 school term dates will be carried out between October and December 2023
- a review of initial survey work of maintained schools on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) is underway to identify where further investigation is needed and to support schools. Collaboration with the Diocesan Buildings Officer and a plan of action is in place.

The Chair thanked Pete Mumford and Penny Bates for their work.

Penny Bates left at 16.20pm

23.43 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:

- the DDE has resumed her part-time role of CEO for the Diocesan MAT following the departure of Pete Bloomfield
- the Schools' Adviser has been appointed the Acting Head of Nacton CofE Primary School for the autumn term 2023
- support for two Stand Alone Trusts (SATs) - Debenham High and Elveden CofE Primary Academy – which are planning to create MATs
- St Edmundsbury CEVAP was judged Inadequate by Ofsted in May and the DDE has been asked by the DfE to attend its regional Advisory Board on 19 October to outline the diocesan academy strategy, the Advisory Board will consider a sponsor at its November meeting
- the annual church school leaders' conference takes place on 1 November to which DBE members are offered a free place
- the guidance on responding to racism guidance has been reviewed which includes additional links to resources, and which will be circulated to schools
- a breakdown of Ofsted inspections in church schools by MAT (Appendix 1)
- Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System from the Church of England Education Office (Appendix 3)
- the updated DBE Strategy Action Plan (Appendix 4).

The DDE referred to the Small Schools Strategy (Appendix 2) which had been approved by the DBE in September 2018 and reviewed in September 2019. The DDE recommended that the strategy be kept under review. The DDE asked Pete Mumford about the support being offered to small schools by the Local Authority. Pete advised that short-term support is being offered in line with eligibility criteria as laid out by the DfE.

The DDE highlighted the benefit of three-year forecasting as used by academies. Paul Ryle agreed and highlighted the importance of careful planning. Tim Fairbairn added that three-year plans were important for governors, although assumptions still needed to be made, for example currently with the pending support staff pay rise and Government funding. Tim highlighted that not all schools have the knowledge to deal with redundancies and suggested support for schools on this. Paul Ryle added that his concern is having to deal with redundancies with people who have worked together for a number of years. Discussion followed on the benefits of mixed class structures.

Actions:

- The DDE to contact the five schools most affected by falling rolls to offer support.
- The DDE to consider sending to clergy the Church of England publication, Our Hope for a Flourishing School System.
- The DDE to add racial justice to the DBE Strategy Action Plan.

The Chair thanked the DDE and education team for their work.

23.44 ACADEMY STRATEGY

The DDE referred to Paper D, the Academy Strategy which had been updated to include further context for the DfE. Members discussed the strategy in small groups. Mary Lewis commented that read in conjunction with the SIAMS annual report, the strategy works well by offering Diocesan support and partnership to schools. Tim Fairbairn highlighted the importance of providing choice to schools as laid out within the aims of the policy. Tim referred to section 10 (page 5) and suggested that the DBE should satisfy itself that the Headteacher and Governing Body support the proposal to academise, rather than fully support this, which was agreed.

The DBE approved the academy strategy, including the growth of two existing SATs to MATs, Debenham High and Elveden Church of England Primary.

Action:

- The DDE to circulate the Academy Strategy, after amendment, to schools.

23.45 SIAMS ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The SEO introduced Paper E, the annual report of the National Director of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools 2022-2023. The SEO noted the key points:

- the gap has closed between Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools which have achieved an Excellent grade
- pastoral support, mental health and wellbeing are taken seriously in schools and support for children and adults is prioritised
- schools where values are a coherent outworking of the Christian vision are particularly effective
- some confusion and/or a lack of understanding remains about whether schools should have or need to have a Bible verse 'attached' to their vision
- the impact of RE on improving the understanding of diversity
- teaching of RE at KS5 is inconsistent
- schools are overly concerned about being inspected although the new framework should help with this
- the key finding is the need for strong leaders who understand what it means to lead a church school.

23.46 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

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

- two excellent SIAMS grades for Moulton CEVCP and Elveden CofE Primary
- the level of support being provided to St Edmundsbury CEVAP following its Inadequate Ofsted grade
- termly SIAMS training is being provided to schools as well as SIAMS Support Visits
- the DDDE and SEO are involved in a number of Heads' performance management reviews this term.

The Chair thanked the SEO for his report and work.

23.47 KESWICK HALL TRUST REPORT

The Schools' Adviser introduced Paper G, the annual report to the Keswick Hall Trust on the use of the grant for the Schools' Adviser's role. The Schools' Adviser noted:

- support provided to schools on implementing the new Suffolk RE Syllabus, on improving the quality of monitoring by RE Subject Leaders, and developing the recording of RE to reflect higher expectations in the subject
- the key impacts of this support
- feedback received from RE Subject Leaders (Appendix).

The Schools' Adviser added that due to being on secondment this term, she has provided schools with padlets and recorded training.

Paul Ryle highlighted that the Schools' Adviser's resources and recorded materials had helped with a PD Day at Mellis CofE Primary.

The Chair thanked the Schools' Adviser for her report and work.

23.48 BUILDING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Buildings Officer introduced Paper H, an update on school buildings. The Buildings Officer advised of work to support schools with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). The Buildings Officer thanked Pete Mumford, the Local Authority and Concertus for their support with this work. Records had been compiled by the Buildings Officer and Administrator over the summer in relation to VA schools to share with their Governing Bodies so that visual inspections might be commissioned. The Buildings Officer is currently carrying out a similar exercise for Diocesan MAT schools. This work will be a priority until completed.

The Buildings Officer noted discussion amongst Diocesan Buildings Officers about whether conversion of schools to academy status is impacting effective estate management. The Buildings Officer has ongoing estates dialogue with non-Diocesan MAT CEOs, although there is less interaction with standalone trusts. Sharing or promoting information, resources and news on a more systematic basis amongst MATs and SATS might help.

The Buildings Officer advised that estate services to Diocesan MAT schools have increased, whilst his role within the Diocese has reduced, with only 9 VA schools. As a result, changes to his role are needed, especially around the proportion of time spent on each role. He highlighted a proposal for the SCA capital planning and administration to be delivered by an external consultant. The DDE confirmed the need to adjust the proportion of time spent on DBE work.

Paul Ryle asked about communicating with parents about RAAC. The Buildings Officer advised that DfE guidance and model letters should be used.

The Chair thanked the Buildings Officer for his work.

23.49 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

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

Tim Fairbairn was approved as the DBE appointed trustee for the Girling and Upcher Educational Charity.

23.50 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

23.51 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

23.52 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board noted that future meetings would take place on:

Thursday 23 November 2023 @ 1.30pm
Tuesday 30 January 2024 @ 1.30pm
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 5.15pm.

Signed: _____
[Chairman]

Date: _____