

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Tuesday 23 September 2025 at 4.15pm at Debenham High School.

Prayers: Archdeacon Rich led the opening prayer.

Present:

Mrs Jane Addis
Mrs Liz Campbell
The Ven Rich Henderson (Chair)
The Revd Laura Mumford

Mr Hugo Parker
The Revd Toby Tate
The Revd Canon Susan Taylor

Apologies:

Mrs Maggie Elder
Mr Tim Fairbairn
Mrs Julia Grainger
The Revd Jo Gunn

The Revd Rachel Revelly
Mr Paul Ryle
Mrs Debs Shipp

In Attendance:

Mr Leigh Foster	Regional Lead for Education (Central & South), SCC
Mrs Victoria Bush	Diocesan Schools' Adviser
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 25.36-25.39:

Mr Simon Martin	Headteacher, Debenham High School
The Revd Keith Rengert	Chaplain, Debenham High School
Max and Megan	Students, Debenham High School

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, particularly Leigh Foster who was attending on behalf of Julia Grainger, and Victoria who was attending her first meeting.

25.36 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2025 were approved and signed.

25.37 MATTERS ARISING

None.

25.38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

Liz Campbell and Hugo Parker arrived at 4.20pm

25.39 DEBENHAM HIGH SCHOOL

The Chair welcomed Max and Megan, students at Debenham High together with the chaplain, Revd Keith Rengert and Simon Martin, Headteacher. Revd Keith provided an overview of his role as chaplain, which had started in January 2025 providing spiritual guidance and pastoral care to students and staff at the school. Keith leads daily morning prayer, monthly communion and offers mentoring, listening and support to students of all faiths and none. Keith is also involved in a project to develop the garden into a reflective and quiet space. Simon Martin noted the strong links between the church and school and the importance of having a Christian presence in school.

Megan and Max shared their experiences of the school and the importance of having a chaplain particularly to listen and support students with sensitive matters and worship.

Revd Canon Susan Taylor advised that Keith is also an associate priest within the local benefice which strengthens relations between the school and community.

The SEO highlighted the Christian ethos of the school which had been apparent on a recent visit.

The Chair thanked Max, Megan, Revd Keith and Simon for sharing their experiences.

25.40 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:

- Victoria (Tor) Bush joined as part-time Diocesan Schools' Adviser on 1 September 2025 working two days a week
- the [Emmanuel Project website](#) went live in July with thanks to Rachel for all her hard work
- the DDE and Revd Laura Mumford will be running the [Bible Society's course](#) for Headteachers and governors from 15 January to 12 March 2026
- Creting St Mary CEVAP and Worlingworth CEVCP joined the Heart of Suffolk MAT on 1 September 2025
- Honington CEVCP is due to join All Saints Schools Trust and Hopton CEVCP is due to join the Elveden Schools Trust this autumn. No further academy conversions are expected
- Thedwastre Education Trust is exploring the possibility of a MAT merger and the DDE is working with the CEO, Chair of the Board and Headteachers and will report back as DBE approval will be required if the merger goes ahead
- Morland CofE Primary, part of the Diocesan MAT, opened a new SEN unit earlier this month with 13 KS1 children
- the Cathedral service with iSingPOP in June went well and the next Cathedral service will follow the same format on 15 June 2026
- the training programme 2025-26 has been sent to schools with a focus this term on Ofsted, a Headteachers' wellbeing afternoon and the annual church school leaders' conference. DBE members are warmly invited to the conference, which this year has the theme "Leading a church school with joy and hope"
- Ofsted inspections will resume under the [new framework](#) the week beginning 10 November
- statutory guidance on [relationships and sex education \(RSE\) and health education](#) has been published

- the [Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill](#) is at committee stage in the House of Lords
- the [SIAMS annual report](#) for 2024-25 has been published which highlights a continued focus on spiritual development in schools, an area that Tor is supporting schools with.

The DDE referred to Paper A Appendix, the Strategy Action Plan 2025-2028 which had been RAG rated. The DDE highlighted that two areas remain in amber - working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and recruitment of foundation governors. The DDE expressed her thanks to governors for their commitment and all they do.

The Chair thanked the DDE for her report.

25.41 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

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

- the recent Ofsted inspection at Hopton from Good to Requires improvement but added that the school has received support from the team and is moving in the right direction
- Worlingham CEVCP maintained an outstanding Ofsted
- St Peter & St Paul CofE Primary, Eye was highlighted in the SIAMS Annual Report 2024-25 for a 'deep, consistent understanding of spiritual growth' and that 'leaders have engaged in a thoughtful process to understand what is right for their context and have supported staff to have the appropriate language and planned opportunities to talk about spirituality. As a result, intentionally planned moments of awe and wonderment feed pupils.'
- recent work providing support on Headteacher performance management reviews, school improvement, preparation for SIAMS and whole governor body training.

Hugo Parker noted that recent SIAMS inspections had taken place for the first time in eight years. The SEO advised that schools should be inspected every five years but due to COVID and the national integration of SIAMS inspections, this has led to a backlog of inspections but it is expected that inspections will revert to a 5 year cycle in due course. Schools receiving a J2 judgement will be 3 years.

Hugo Parker asked about Ofsted inspections and Leigh Foster advised that Ofsted is currently piloting the new framework with schools until half-term but most schools will be inspected every four years.

The Chair thanked the SEO for his report.

25.42 DIOCESAN SCHOOLS' ADVISER REPORT

The Schools' Advisers referred to Paper C and noted:

- a focus on supporting schools with spiritual development
- training for trainee teachers on teaching RE effectively in primary schools
- schools are subscribing to the new Emmanuel Project website, both locally and nationally. One Diocese has asked for the resource to be presented to Wiltshire teachers alongside its new agreed syllabus
- Key Stage 1 plans for the Emmanuel Project will be re-written this academic year and there are plans to explore developing the resource for special schools, nurseries and secondary schools
- seven core subject knowledge webinars will be delivered focusing on a different religion/worldview and how to teach these accurately

- work with the Dioceses of Ely and Norwich to launch the 'REady Leadership' course, comprising of five sessions over a year for 24 RE leaders in schools across the three Dioceses
- links with the Dioceses of Chelmsford, Ely, Norwich and St Albans to create a Secondary Church Schools RE Network to share practice
- the Big Spring Sing will take place again at the Cathedral in March 2026, bringing schools together to share their journeys as courageous advocates and fighters for justice
- a RE Roadshow will take place at Debenham High School this term with a team from St Philip's Centre in Leicester who will share their worldviews with pupils and staff.

The Chair thanked the Schools' Advisers for their report.

25.43 BUILDING OFFICER REPORT - NET ZERO ACTION PLAN

The Buildings Officer referred to Paper D which presents the draft Net Zero Action Plan for schools (Appendix 1) as part of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich's broader response to the Church of England's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The Buildings Officer thanked James Rolls, the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Officer for his contribution to this work.

The school section of the Action Plan covers 55 schools made up of: 21 schools in the Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (DMAT); 6 Voluntary Aided (VA) schools; and 28 other in-scope schools in Church-majority Academy Trusts.

The Action Plan outlines a three phase approach: Phase 1 (2025–2026) focuses on education, planning, and low/no-cost actions; Phase 2 (2027–2029) has an emphasis on delivery of cost-effective projects, quick wins, and community energy pilots, subject to funding; and Phase 3 (2030+) covers the final implementation and monitoring of outstanding actions, and embedding carbon reduction in procurement and capital projects.

The indicative capital cost of decarbonising the school estate is £38 million (£21m for DMAT and VA schools and £17m for others). Funding remains a critical barrier following the withdrawal of national decarbonisation schemes. However, the plan identifies behavioural change, strategic procurement, and collaboration with community energy groups as viable interim steps. Heating decarbonisation plans are available for all DMAT and VA schools so there is a good understanding of what needs to be done.

The Buildings Officer recommended that the DBE approve the schools section of the Net Zero Action Plan (Appendix 1) for inclusion in the full diocesan action plan, and support the phased implementation of actions outlined. The DBE approved.

The Chair thanked the Buildings Officer for his report.

Revd Canon Susan Taylor left at 5.15pm

25.44 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Leigh Foster referred to Paper E, the Local Authority report and noted:

- overall attendance has improved over the last 2 years to 93.3% in July 2025
- early outcomes based on data currently available indicate that the percentage of Suffolk children achieving a Good Level of Development in the EYFS is in line with national for the second year running
- work with the DDE on the sustainability of small schools
- all primary schools are expected to have a wraparound offer in place by September 2026 and the Early Years and Childcare team has been working

with schools to either create an offer or expand existing offers that did not meet the Government's expectations. Of 255 schools expected to have a wraparound offer, 217 have a full offer, 34 have a partial offer and 4 currently have no offer

- Suffolk Education Partnership (SEP) is a cross-phase and cross-sector organisation working to support all publicly funded schools in raising standards and supporting school improvement. Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Suffolk MATs and maintained school Headteachers are encouraged to get involved. Work has begun on three new workstreams: Transition across Suffolk; building a Community of Support for school leaders; and improving parental collaboration
- the SEND task group has actioned supporting schools to take up the Inclusion Quality Mark 'Centre of Excellence' and is organising 'open school' sessions to spotlight highly effective practice in inclusion This group is chaired by Daniel Jones, CEO of Children's Endeavour MAT
- the Safeguarding Group has led to the creation of an educational subgroup as part of the Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership chaired by Phil Mackay, CEO of Thedwastre MAT
- following the successful trial of a partnership approach to School improvement and School Effectiveness in the Woodbridge, Martlesham/Kesgrave and Felixstowe areas in the summer term 2025, this way of working is now being established across Suffolk for all LA maintained schools
- the 'Growing Leaders' programme for LA maintained schools will continue this year, supporting and upskilling a second cohort of leaders who aspire to headship.

The Chair thanked Leigh for his report.

25.45 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

The DBE ratified the appointment of Foundation Governors listed in Paper F subject to one appointment to be discussed with the DDE.

The Administrator noted that information on how long foundation governor positions have been vacant had been included in the Appendix. This represented vacancies across all 87 church schools. In answer to a question from Tim Fairbairn at the last meeting, the Administrator advised that of the 50 current vacancies in church schools, 12% of these were ex officio clergy foundation governor positions.

Revd Laura Mumford asked about good practice in those schools with no vacancies and whether lessons can be learned for those schools with vacancies. The DDDE advised that when contacting newly appointed foundation governors, they have usually been approached personally.

The DDE suggested discussion on this at a future meeting. The Chair advised that information on foundation governor vacancies would be taken to the rural deans. Revd Toby Tate highlighted the issue for incumbents of needing to be good with all age groups.

The Chair advised that during clergy interviews, questions are asked about the applicants' experience of working with children and that the DDE has contributed to these questions.

The Chair thanked the Administrator for her report.

25.46 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Foundation governor vacancies.

The Chair advised members to email either the DDE or Administrator if they have suggestions for items to include for discussion at future meetings.

25.47 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

25.48 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Board noted that the next meeting would be Tuesday 2 December at 1.30pm in the Boardroom.

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the meeting. The meeting closed at 5.35pm.

Signed: _____
[Chair]

Date: _____