



DAMERS FIRST SCHOOL.

Minutes of the Governors' meeting held at school on Monday 30th January 2012 at 19.00 hours.

Persons Present	Community	Mr. T. Putnam Mrs. D. Taylor (Vice-Chair of Governors) Ms. R. Bettenson
	Elected Parent	Mrs. P. Campbell Mr. G. Rolfe
	Appointed Parent	Mrs. R. Davis (Chair of Governors). Mr. P. Adams
	Acting Headteacher	Mrs. M. Bearwish.
	Teacher	Mr. P. Rothman
	Support Staff	Mrs. S. Scott
	Clerk	Mr. D. Hall

Other Persons Present None were present.

1. **Welcome.** The Chair welcomed Governors to the meeting especially Mr. Paul Adams (Newly Appointed Parent Governor) and Mr. Gareth Rolfe (Newly Elected Parent Governor).
 - 1.1. Each Governor present gave a brief introduction of themselves, as new Governors were present.
 - 1.2. Mrs. Taylor was appointed as Mentor Governor to Mr. Gareth Rolfe. Mrs. Campbell was appointed as Mentor Governor to Mr. Paul Adams.
 - 1.3. **Governors unanimously agreed to appoint Mr. Adams to the Finance & Staffing Committee .**
 - 1.4. As a newly elected Parent Governor Mr. Rolfe would be given the opportunity to attend as many as possible of the Committee meetings in the next cycle before deciding which Committee to attend on a regular basis.
 - 1.5. **Governors unanimously agreed to appoint Mr. Adams as the Link Governor with a working brief to oversee Pupil Well Being .**
 - 1.6. **Governors unanimously agreed to appoint Mr. Rolfe as the Link Governor with a working brief to oversee the main school project (The Olympics) .**
2. **Apologies for Absence**
 - 2.1. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. L. Phillips, Mrs. A. Caldwell, Mrs. T. Gedye and Mrs. S. Hosford. No apologies had been received from Mrs. S. Limmer.
3. **Declaration of Any Other Urgent Business & Declaration of Interest.**

The Chair asked that 1 matter be considered;

 - 3.1. **Letter of Resignation from Mrs. Chris Brotherwood.** The Chair read out the contents of the letter. This briefly advised the Governing Body that Mrs. Brotherwood had been unwell in the last couple of weeks and felt it necessary to resign. The letter informed Governors how much Mrs. Brotherwood had enjoyed her time as a Governor and how she had appreciated the friendship and companionship. Governors expressed their sadness at the news and arrangements were made to send a get well card and flowers.
 - 3.1.1. The Chair agreed to write a letter of thanks on behalf of the Governing Body for the contribution that Mrs. Brotherwood had made to the life of the School over a period of 10 years.
 - 3.1.2. **Mrs. R. Davis proposed that Mrs. P. Campbell be appointed a Headteacher Performance Management Governor to replace Mrs. Brotherwood. Mr. P. Adams seconded. Governors unanimously agreed.**
4. **No declarations of interest were made.**

Minutes.

 - 4.1. **Mrs. Davis proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2011 were accepted as an accurate record. Ms. Bettenson seconded. Governors agreed unanimously.**

5. Matters Arising & Action Plan.

- 5.1.** Action Plan. Item 2. Consider possible candidates as a Parent Governor or Community Governor and pass on their names to the Chair or Clerk. Several Governors advised that they had approached suitable candidates but as yet had been unsuccessful in obtaining one. The Clerk advised that with the resignation of Mrs. Brotherhood, Governors would need to suggest to Dorset LA a suitable candidate as a replacement CSA Governor. The Chair asked Governors to continue with their efforts until suitable candidates were found.
- 5.2.** Action Plan. Item 4. Arrange date for the first meeting of the Governor Visit Working Party. Mrs. Davis reported that this meeting had not yet been arranged. Governors asked that this matter be retained on the Action Plan.
- 5.3.** Action Plan. Item 5. Write a Letter of thanks on behalf of the Governing Body to Mrs. Anita Harries. The Chair confirmed that the letter had been written and was awaiting posting until Mrs. Harries' new address had been obtained.
- 5.4.** Governors agreed that all the other action items had been completed or appeared on the agenda for this meeting for discussion.

6. Correspondence.

- 6.1.** Letter from Staff member concerning 1 day leave of absence. Governors were informed that this request had been made in order that the member of staff could attend a close family member's wedding. Governors considered that the request was reasonable.
- 6.1.1.** *Mrs. P. Campbell proposed that the Governing Body grant 1 day, paid leave of absence. Ms. R. Bettenson seconded. Governors unanimously agreed.*
- 6.2.** Letter from Member of staff concerning 2 days leave of absence. Governors were informed that this request had been made in order that the member of staff could attend her brother's passing out parade. Governors discussed this request and decided that in order to be consistent only 1 day paid leave of absence would be granted to cover the time that the Member of Staff was attending the ceremony.
- 6.3.** *Mr. P. Adams proposed that the Governing Body grant 2 days leave of absence, 1 day paid leave of absence and 1 day unpaid leave of absence. Mrs. D. Taylor seconded. Governors unanimously agreed.*

7. Chair's Report. (Appendix 1).

The Chair spoke briefly to her report. She highlighted several items from the Report.

- 7.1.** Dorchester Area Schools Partnership (DASP). Update.
- 7.1.1.** The Chair gave a brief resume of the aims of the organisation for the benefit of the 2 new Governors present.
- 7.1.2.** The Chair emphasised that the Thomas Hardy School had already become an Academy as from September 2011. The 3 middle schools in the Partnership were proposing to become Academies by September 2012, although full consultations with their stakeholders had not yet taken place. First Schools in the Partnership were being encouraged by the Senior and Middle Schools to become Academies also by September 2012. The Chair explained that several First Schools had already advised that they were not going to seek Academy status. The reasons given were varied. 1 school would become a Member of a voluntary aided Academy that was Diocesan wide, another would not consider Academy status in case a new build did not take place and a small first school had considered it not to be economically viable. In the case of Damers First School the key problem, if Governors wished to consider changing status to an Academy was that Dorset LA could not transfer the deeds of the land as it was not the owner. Additionally the responsibility of maintaining an old building could in the future be an excessive drain on funds. The Governing Body would be totally responsible for the buildings and site.
- 7.1.3.** Governors were advised that a series of seminars would be held covering different aspects of becoming an Academy. At these seminars Governors would be given an opportunity to ask relevant questions. The Chair asked that as many Governors as possible attend the seminars in order that as much information as possible could be obtained. This would allow the Governing Body to have an informed debate about the future status of Damers First School.

Governors then discussed at length the pros and cons of becoming an academy. The following questions were asked following the discussion and were answered by the Chair of Governors.

- 7.1.3.1.** What benefit is there to the Thomas Hardy School of all the first schools becoming academies? The explanation given by their representative was that after gaining academy

status pressure on future funding would mean that the Thomas Hardy School would be looking for savings in other areas and that this was likely to be at the expense of DASP. Additionally if the Dorchester Schools worked together as academies their joint buying power would enable them to obtain sizeable discounts from suppliers.

7.1.3.2. What are we at risk of losing if we become an Academy later rather than sooner? The pot of money for schools becoming Academies is shrinking and therefore the funding for conversion is becoming smaller.

(Sandra Scott arrived at 19.45 hours)

7.1.3.3. What benefit is there to the Pupils of us becoming an Academy? Governors after discussion were unsure of any clear benefits to the teaching and learning of Pupils. Governors decided that this should be a key question for Governors to ask at the seminars. The Chair advised Governors that they might consider that by becoming an Academy the school would be distancing itself from Dorset LA which had recently been awarded an outstanding by OfSTED.

7.1.3.4. What are the governance arrangements for an Academy? The Clerk briefly outlined some of the possible models in existence. Governors concluded that there was less local accountability and also that most of the models included a high proportion of Governors appointed by the trustees of an Academy. Governors decided that this should be a key question for Governors to ask at the seminars.

7.1.3.5. What benefit are the middle schools obtaining that does not seem to be clear to us as Governors of this School? The Chair stated that it was not possible to answer this question as all the meetings concerning the middle schools and changes to Academy Status had been at closed meetings and that the consultation process with other stakeholders including the Parents had not started.

7.1.3.6. In conclusion the Chair asked that as many Governors as possible to attend the seminars on the different aspects of Academies and also encouraged them to ask some of the searching questions that had been discussed.

7.2. No further questions were asked of the Chair.

8. School Development Plan Progress Review

Governors had been previously circulated with a detailed School Development Progress Review (Appendix 2). Governors together with the Acting Headteacher reviewed the Current Development Plan and the progress made. Governors considered together with the Acting Headteacher the overall aims and the priorities. She outlined the key priorities of the SDP that had changed during the life of the School Development Plan. The key points included;

8.1. Overall target; Communication.

8.1.1. The views of parents are sought to identify and improve communication.

8.1.1.1. A key area for development is the School Website. Senior Management Team (SMT) have looked at a large number of examples. Parents are being canvassed for their opinions on school websites and together with this information the SMT will draft a list of what the School wants the website to achieve.

8.1.2. Specific guidance is available to Parents showing the level of support they can expect and what to do if things go wrong.

8.2. Overall target; Peer and Self-Assessment.

8.2.1. Pupils have critical skills when reflecting on their own work and that of their peers.

8.2.1.1. An excellent training day was led by Mr. John Blanchard on the links between differentiation and peer and self-assessment. Mrs. Bearwish asked Governors to note that peer and self-assessment was for Pupils and Members of Staff. Staff had been involved in joint focussed planning based on peer planning, observation, evaluation, coaching and mentoring.

8.2.2. Pupils are aware of their own targets for improvement.

8.3. Overall target; Differentiation

8.3.1. Learning activities match Pupil Ability and offer appropriate challenge.

8.3.1.1. Governors were impressed with the breadth of the checks on differentiation with specific and vulnerable groups. Governors were informed that the groups included the Gifted and Able as Governors noted that the development of challenges for Gifted and Able had been a previous recommendation.

8.3.2. All Pupils make good progress.

8.3.2.1. Governors reviewed the information that was available to the school to monitor the progress of all the Pupils.

8.4. Overall target; Subject Leadership.

8.4.1. A common approach to subject leadership exists in the School.

8.4.2. Subject Leaders are able to identify their strengths and areas for development in their subject and show the impact of their leadership.

8.5. Summary.

8.5.1. The Chair thanked Mrs. Bearwish for giving Governors an update on the current progress in the Strategic Development Plan. Governors indicated how impressed they were with the amount of work being completed towards implementing the priorities in the SDP.

9. Benchmarking Exercise.

Mrs. Bearwish explained that together with the Finance Officer she had analysed the data for Staffing expenses as this was 85% of the overall Budget, although an analysis could be made of nearly every aspect of School Finance. Governors together with the Acting Headteacher used the DES Benchmarking site to compare Damers First School Data with Schools of a similar size and in a similar catchment area. This information would be used by Governors and Staff when planning the new Budget and also when considering the Staffing Structure and the deployment of resources to support the priorities in the School Development Plan. Governors noted the costs compared to statistical neighbours in the following categories;

9.1. Staffing Costs	Cost Average	Possible Reasons
9.1.1. Teaching Staff .	Cost above average.	Employment of experienced teachers, enhanced salaries of some Staff to cover the Headteacher's secondment. Full time reading recovery teacher. 1 year contract to cover maternity.
9.1.2. Supply Staff.	Cost above average.	1 to 1 tuition is covered under this heading.
9.1.3. Admin & Clerical Staff	Cost below average.	
9.1.4. Premises Staff	Cost above average.	Employment of a Site Manager rather than a caretaker.

Governors noted that overall the Staffing costs were higher. This information would need to be considered when discussing the strategic direction of the school, especially when setting the next Budget. Governors concluded that the Benchmarking Exercise had been useful.

10. Single Equality Policy

Governors agreed to defer consideration of this item until the next meeting of the Full Governing Body as Mrs. Bearwish advised that before the Policy could be approved the School needed to complete a set of development priorities that needed to reflect the aspirations of the Single Equality Policy.

11. Current Issues of Committees and Groups.

11.1. Report of Environment & Premises Committee. (Minutes of Meeting 10/01/2012 Appendix 3)

Mrs. Scott spoke briefly to the minutes.

11.1.1. Ms. Bettenson alerted the Clerk to the fact that she had attended the meeting but had been shown as not being present. The Clerk confirmed that the minutes would be corrected at the next meeting of the Environment Committee.

11.2. Report of Curriculum Committee. (Minutes of Meeting 12/01/2012 Appendix 4)

Mrs. Taylor spoke briefly to the minutes.

11.2.1. Mr. Putnam commented that the Committee had listened to a very good Teacher Led Briefing on the Arts led by Naomi Hudson.

11.3. Report of Finance & Staffing Committee. (Minutes of Meeting 09/01/2012 Appendix 5)

Mrs. Davis spoke briefly to the minutes.

11.3.1. **Virements;** Governors discussed the following virements. The reason for several of these virements was that funding came into income codes (600) and needed to be moved to payment codes.

11.3.1.1. **Mrs. Taylor proposed that the virements as outlined in sections 11.3.1.1.1 to 11.3.1.1.11 be approved by the Governing Body. Mrs. Campbell seconded. Governors unanimously agreed.**

- 11.3.1.1.1. £3,694 from A/C 610 (Other Contributions) to Supply.
- 11.3.1.1.2. £145 from A/C 610 (Other Contributions) to Training.
- 11.3.1.1.3. £941 from A/C 610 (Other Contributions) to Indirect Employee Expenses.
- 11.3.1.1.4. £150 from A/C 610 (Other Contributions) to Capitation.
- 11.3.1.1.5. £6,671 from A/C 610 (Other Contributions) to Teaching.
- 11.3.1.1.6. £652 from A/C 640 (Fees and Charges) to Supply.
- 11.3.1.1.7. £1,693 from A/C 642 (Swimming Income) to Supply.
- 11.3.1.1.8. £500.22 from CCE (Capitation) to Supply.
- 11.3.1.1.9. £405.75 from A/C 113 (Admin) to Supply.
- 11.3.1.1.10. £373 from A/C 630 (Sales) to C/P.
- 11.3.1.1.11. £549 from A/C 630 (Sales) to TRI.

11.3.2. Inventory Limit. The Chair explained that the Finance Committee had an opportunity annually to review those items that had been written off the Inventory in the last year. Members had discussed the possibility of raising the items included in the Inventory from £50 per item to £100. This would ensure that the Inventory list did not become unwieldy.

11.3.2.1. Mrs. Campbell proposed that the Inventory list only include items to the value of £100 and above. Mr. Rothman seconded. Governors unanimously agreed.

12. Governor Visits & Training.

12.1. Feedback from Governor Training.

12.1.1. No reports were received concerning Governor Training. Governors confirmed that they had received a copy of the Dorset Governor. The Clerk agreed to send a copy to the 2 new Governors, Mr. Paul Adams and Mr. Gareth Rolfe.

12.2. Feedback from Governor Visits.

12.2.1. No reports were received concerning Governor Visits.

13. Any Other Urgent Business.

13.1. No matters of Urgent Business were discussed.

The meeting concluded at 20.45 hours.

Date of next meeting. **Monday 19th March 2012** at 19.00 hours in school.

Certified as a true record.

Chair Date

D.A.Hall.

Clerk / Manager to Governors.

31st January 2012.