

**DEBDEN PRIMARY ACADEMY
LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD**

Minutes of the meeting held at 17:30 hrs on 30 March 2023

Membership	Type	Office	Term
Rev. John Saxon	Foundation:	Incumbent/Vice-Chair	Ex officio
Tom Caster	Foundation		02/02/2026
Sarah Belchambers	General Member		27/03/2026
Vacancy	General Member		
Sarah Mitchell	General Member	Executive Headteacher	Ex officio
Lin Stephenson	General Member	Chair	01/01/2025
Vacancy	General Member		
* Isobel Tunnecliff	Parent		14/07/2025
Marcus Hayakawa	Parent		04/11/2026
Matt Hawley	Headteacher	Head of School	Ex officio
Sarah Bailey	Staff		03/12/2023
In attendance			
Tom Bennett		Clerk	
* indicates absence			

OUR VISION is to be a highly purposeful, caring Christian community, in which our children:

- *Progress exceptionally well academically, across a broad and knowledge-rich curriculum;*
- *Develop into confident, compassionate, well-rounded individuals;*
- *Become equipped with the learning skills needed to deal with future challenges;*
- *Create happy, positive memories of their childhood.*
- *“That they may have life in all its fullness.” (John 10: 10)*

John Saxon opened the meeting with a prayer

1/23 Apologies for absence [LS]

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Isobel Tunnecliff.

2/23 Any Other Business [LS]

- Governance

3/23 Declaration of business interests [All]

No governor declared any potential conflicts of interest with any items to be discussed at the meeting or that they had given or received any gifts or hospitality that could compromise their impartiality when dealing with the matters for the Academy.

4/23 Minutes of the previous meeting [LS]

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 November 2022 were approved as an accurate and true record of the meeting.

5/23 Matters arising [LS]

No matters arising from the previous minutes not included on the agenda were reported.

6/23 Policies [MH]

a) The meeting received and **agreed** to approve the following policies:

- Epilepsy Policy [enclosed]
- Assessment Policy [enclosed]

Action

HT

b) The meeting received and noted the updated Attendance Policy that had been approved by the Board of Directors at their last meeting.

Sarah Mitchell reported the policy had been updated and followed Essex CC and the Department for Education's statutory guidelines.

The Board of Directors had felt that it was important for each Academy to have the ability to issue a penalty notice if this was deemed to be an appropriate action.

Low attendance had become a national issue and having the ability to issue penalty notices, would be expected. Attendance levels had not recovered to pre-Covid levels for some schools.

It was important to monitor attendance to identify any trends and patterns that might appear such as pupils not attending when siblings were also absent or non-attendance on Fridays when several parents worked at home. Ofsted would look at attendance levels and any trends for the school as a whole and for vulnerable groups.

The HT reported the Academy's attendance levels were above pre-Covid level but needed to be above 95%. Attendance had been raised via the parent newsletter and letters had been sent to families of children with attendance levels below 90%.

Marcus Hayakawa asked whether there was an adverse trend of attendance for service family children.

The HT reported it had not identified any adverse trends.

It was noted the attendance level for Reception pupils was lower than other years due to illness. Children in Reception were particularly prone to catching bugs and illnesses.

Tom Caster asked whether issuing penalties for unauthorised absences would make a difference.

Sarah Mitchell reported it did have a limited impact on parents taking the children out of school for holidays.

Some families were under difficult financial pressures with the cost-of-living rises and the high cost of holidays during school holidays. Some families were willing to pay the fine for a cheaper holiday.

John Saxon said it was important to be consistent on the criteria and circumstances when sanctioning parents and asked whether there was a role for governors.

It was noted the money received from fines went to the Local Authority [LA].

7/23 Headteacher's Report [MH]

The HT introduced his termly report and highlighted the following:

Attendance

Letters sent to parents of children with attendance levels below 90% had had a positive impact. A lot of children had been absent due to the higher levels of colds and illness during the winter months.

Pupils on Roll

The total number of pupils on roll was stable at 131 pupils. Three pupils had joined the school and the total would increase to 140 pupils in September when the 13 year 6 pupils leave the school, and an expected 20 Reception children join the school.

The school would attempt to accommodate the higher number of children within the existing class structure of five classes.

Attainment

The attainment results showed that the results for “homegrown” children, those who had been at the school at least since September 2021, were higher than those who were newer to the school.

The attainment gap between children of service families and homegrown children had closed.

National data averages for Years 2 and 6 were recorded on the data sheets within the School Development Plan for comparison.

The progress made by pupils over the year to the Spring term was good. This was measured by tracking children’s standardised scores across terms.

Sarah Belchambers asked whether the progress made for Maths was good. The HT reported that the progress in maths has improved since the last academic year.

Sarah Bailey reported that the progress made for the sixteen SEND children was very good and reflected the school’s investment in its intervention strategy, teacher training and the high standard of teaching provided.

The HT reported he was pleased with the Year 6 and Year 2 attainments levels and progress being made in achieving the Expected Standard targets set for the end of the summer term. However, more work needed to be done to raise the Working at Greater Depth attainment levels for Maths to meet the Summer Term targets.

It was **agreed** to include the National Averages on future HT reports.

Marcus Hayakawa asked how parents were informed if their children were not meeting their targets.

The HT reported pupils progress and attainment levels were discussed at Parent Consultation evenings and parents were informed when the interventions were used to help get them back on track.

The school was targeting fifteen out of the twenty children in Reception (75%) to make the expected Good Level of Development [GLD]. The other five children were not targeted due to being too far away from the expected target. Three of the five had not attended a nursery prior to joining the school.

Of the fifteen pupils being targeted there are three children (15%) were at risk of not making GLD due to one specific area of need. Interventions had been put in place for the summer term to boost progress and enable them to reach the target.

Staffing

The HT reported that one of the Years 1-2 Teacher (Mrs Jenny Hatch) was on maternity leave and her position was being filled by a maternity cover teacher (Mrs Caroline Elliott)

Sarah Belchambers asked how the new teacher was settling in.

The HT reported that she was very experienced and had settled in quickly.

Sports

The sports profile of the school was continuing to grow with more teams competing successfully in sports events with several teams reaching area finals. This was due to a significant increase in the number of children wanting to participate in sports at the school.

HT

Music

The school was working hard to try and increase the school's music profile, which had included a Christmas music festival in school in December, a singing group representing the school in the Christmas singing event in Saffron Walden.

Saffron Sound had delivered musical instrument workshops to the KS2 children that would result in the school being invited to an event at the Saffron Concert Hall.

With financial help of the Friends of Debden [FODs], the school was investing in the 'Learn It' offer from the Essex Music hub in which children learn an instrument for 10 weeks.

Mental Health

Sarah Bailey reported the school had been approached by the charity MIND who had agreed to fund a placement at the school.

There was a gap between the support provided by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and the support schools could provide to children and staff with mental health issues. MIND had received government funding to fund training in twenty schools on a trial basis and DPA had been selected with its connection to Carver Barracks.

Funding would be provided to fund training, one-to-one help, and mentoring. Sarah Bailey had undertaken a course on and would take on the role of the Senior Mental Health Lead to support staff, children, and parents.

Marcus Hayakawa reported a lot of mental health welfare support and resources was available to service families at Carver Barracks including access to a Welfare Officer and free residential camps.

Safeguarding

The HT reported there had been no permanent or fixed term exclusions since the last meeting.

In total, there had been twenty-four behaviour incidents recorded in the behaviour log so far, this academic year that was a rate of just under one per week. Behaviour had improved and there was no persistent bad behaviour at the school. There were only a small number of children with more than 1 incident warranting a behaviour form this year, and they were being carefully monitored.

Pupil Premium

The meeting received and noted the Pupil and Service Premium Statement: 2021/22 – 2023/24 detailing the school's use of pupil premium and service premium funding to help improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and children from our service families.

The statement outlined the school's pupil and service premium strategy, how the school intended to spend the funding during the current academic year.

Part B of the Statement set out the outcomes for the previous academic year and the impact that the spending had had within school.

The data showed that a number of Pupil Premium pupils achieved above than expected progress and that Key Stage 2 children of service families outperformed non-service children in reading.

8/23 School Development Plan 2022-23 [SDP] [MH]

The meeting received the updated SDP for 2022-2023 and noted the actions undertaken during the spring term and the progress made to achieve the five key priorities.

Sarah Belchambers asked how Priority 3 on Maths was progressing.

Sarah Bailey reported that having researched a number of approaches to teaching maths, the school had chosen an approach that helped children focus on achieving expected standard rather than working at greater depth. This had improved the overall attainment and progress data results.

The school had also changed the approach to teaching maths in class to more class-wide teaching and less helping small groups of pupils within class.

The school had received help from Essex CC on teaching maths.

Further activities were planned for after the Easter holidays.

9/23 Self-Evaluation Form [SEF] [MH]

The HT reported he would be amending the SEF to align it with the new Ofsted Inspection framework.

Under the new framework, schools have to achieve outstanding in all statements to secure Outstanding for the category, whereas 'good' or 'Requires Improvement' is determined by best fit.

Sarah Belchambers felt the school had made significant progress when compared to when it was last inspected.

Sarah Mitchell suggested drafting and presenting a one-page summary sheet for the next meeting.

10/23 Risk Register [MH]

The meeting received and noted the updated risk register and noted the following changes:

- Financial – Funding Gap – the risk had been amended to reflect the impact of rising costs on the small surplus in the current year's budget and the extent that the Teachers' current disputed pay award would be funded separately from the school's current grant funding.
- Financial – Financial information accuracy – The risk had been reviewed in light of the difficulty of recruiting a permanent Finance Manager. Temporary cover was being provided to ensure there was no break in the provision of financial information to allow the leadership team to manage the school.
- Operational - Inappropriate internet content – The school was seeking to change the ICT network administrator due to the retirement of the current administrator to ensure internet content downloaded was secure and safe and prevented children being exposed to distressing material.

Marcus Hayakawa asked whether any staff had taken industrial action in supporting the teachers' strike.

The HT reported a couple of teachers had taken industrial action, but no classes had to be closed.

Sarah Mitchell reported that the industrial action taken had not affected working relationship or the ethos between staff at the school and the local community.

Marcus Hayakawa reported that parents at the Barracks were very grateful for the minimal disruption caused by the industrial action.

It was **agreed** to review and amend the risk owners to reflect changes in personnel at the school.

HT

11/23 Minutes/reports of committees

a) **Finance and Premises Committee [JS]**

John Saxon, the committee Chair provided an overview of the minutes of the last committee meeting and finances for the five months to 31 January 2023.

The upgrade of the lighting throughout the school to LED lighting had become an urgent matter as the existing lighting units were failing and replacement parts were no longer available.

Following the tendering of the work to replace the whole school lighting with energy efficient LED lights, the committee had recommended accepting the tender price of £12,890 ex VAT from DSA Robus to conduct the works.

The work would be funded by an additional Devolved Capital Formula Grant received of £12,066 and the balance from reserves.

It was **agreed** to approve the work to replace the lighting at the tendered price of £12,890.

The meeting noted and the governors appreciated all the volunteer help and support the school received from parents, particularly those at Carver Barracks.

HT

b) **Teaching and Learning Committee [LS]**

The meeting received and noted the minutes of the committee's last meeting and the policies that have been reviewed and updated.

12/23 Chair's action [LS]

The Chair reported the HT's Performance Review for last year had been undertaken in December and that all of the HT's the targets set had been met. An interim performance meeting had also been conducted to review the progress being made to meet the current year's targets.

13/23 Correspondence [LS]

None.

14/23 Safeguarding children [LS/MH]

The HT reported one safeguarding referral had been made in the spring term. The school had received correspondence back from the Essex CC stating that no further action would be taken. The school had facilitated a Team Around the Family (TAF) meeting with the child's parent, who was offered local area support by children and families support services.

Marcus Hayakawa asked how the school supported teachers during an Ofsted Inspection and at other times.

The meeting noted staff had access to a staff help-line.

The HT reported the school had an informal wellbeing charter and staff had access to external wellbeing councillors funded by the school staff sickness insurance policy.

It was **agreed** to add monitoring of staff wellbeing to the governor monitoring visit schedule.

Chair

15/23 Church Matters [JS]

John Saxon provided a report on joint school and church activities since the last meeting.

Three classes had visited the church with Ducking class working with children in the Church Mice pre-school.

The Stort Valley Trust had offered an Easter workshop that was well received.

16/23 Governor visits [LS]

The meeting noted the following governor monitoring visits:

- Sarah Belchambers – Design and Technology, H&S inspection with the external H&S consultant.
- John Saxon – School worship, SEND.

Following the departure of Catherine Gibson, it was **agreed** to transfer her monitoring responsibilities for Early Years to another governor, yet to be confirmed.

Chair

17/23 Governor training [SM]

The meeting noted that Sarah Belchambers and Tom Caster had attended a training course on school finances.

It was **agreed** to send details of the on-line governor training modules to Marcus Hayakawa.

SM

Governors were reminded that all governors were required to complete the on-line Safeguarding module.

All

18/23 Any other business [LS]

Governance

The Chair reported that two parents were interested in becoming governors. It was **agreed** to discuss the role of being a governor with them and invite them to put their names forward for the two vacancies on the LGB.

Chair

The Chair reported that she would be standing down as the Chair of the LGB at the end of the current academic year but would like to continue as a governor and Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee.

All governors were asked to consider taking on the position and to discuss the role and responsibilities with Lin or Matt.

All

John Saxon reported he had been asked and had agreed to become a Director of the Trust to help manage the Trust and represent the school on the Board of Directors. He would be standing down as the Chair of the F&P Committee at the end of the academic year but would like to continue as a governor at the school and support the new Chair as Vice Chair.

19/23 Date/time of future meetings [LS]

- 6 July 2023

Approved by the Board on 6 July 2023