

**Dove House School Board of Trustees**  
**Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Category:</b>
Juliet Annesley-Gamester (JAG)	Community Trustee
Kevin Barwick (KB)	Community Trustee
Sian Butler (SB)	Community Trustee
Murray Campbell (MC)	Co-opted Trustee
Andrea Francis (AF)	Community Trustee
Ollie Killinger (OK)	Community Trustee
Emma Layzell (EL)	Co-opted Trustee
Items 7-9	
<b>Apologies:</b>	
Lisa Goodall (LG) (Chair)	Parent Trustee
Olly Parker (OP)	Headteacher
Ben Service (BS)	Co-opted Trustee
<b>In Attendance:</b>	
Jenny Burns (JB) Items 1-7	Finance & Resources Director
Karen Ollive (KO) Item 5 only	Assistant Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Jayne Humphrey (JH)	Governance Lead

### **1. Welcome & Apologies.**

The Vice-Chair welcomed trustees to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Lisa Goodall and Olly Parker.

Emma Layzell and Ben Service were delayed due to circumstances outside of their control. This was noted.

**The meeting was quorate. It was noted that the agenda and papers had been provided in advance of the meeting.**

### **2. Pecuniary Interests**

Trustees had been provided with the updated Business Interest Register and the Governance Lead briefly explained why it was important that trustees are aware of trustee and staff interests to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Trustees confirmed that they did not have any interests in the agenda items nor were there any new declarations to add.

### **3. Approval of Minutes**

Trustees **agreed** that the minutes of the meeting of the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2021 were a true and accurate record and these will be signed by the Vice-Chair.

### **4. Matters Arising**

<b>No</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Update</b>
Action 4 Item 13 28/9/21	Data Protection Audit Action Plan: The Headteacher and Data Protection Lead will consider how the Data Protection Audit Action Plan can be implemented.  <b>JH/OP</b>	The Governance Lead advised that this hasn't yet been completed. As the Headteacher is absent through ill-health a timescale for completion could not be provided.  <b>Carried forward</b>
Action 1 Item 5 19/10/21	BCP: The Headteacher and F&RD were asked to review the points raised from the discussion and the questions asked and respond.  <b>JB/OP</b>	An updated was provided on the action tracker. The action had not been completed. The Vice-Chair asked for it be carried forward and completed so that the action can be reviewed and closed.  <b>Carried forward</b>
Action 2 Item 6 19/10/21	Risk Register: The F&RD will update the Risk Register with completion dates for the risk which have controls that are partial or developing.  <b>JB</b>	An updated was provided on the action tracker. The action had not been completed. The Vice-Chair asked for it be carried forward and completed so that the action can be reviewed and closed.  <b>Carried forward</b>
Action 3 Item 8 19/10/21	Headteacher's Report: The Headteacher will investigate how the staffing structure is approved at other academy trusts and will revert to the Board with a proposal.  <b>OP</b>	An updated was provided on the action tracker. The action had not been completed. The Vice-Chair asked for it be carried forward and completed so that the action can be reviewed and closed.  <b>Carried forward</b>

Noting the closed actions from the Board Action Tracker, the Vice-Chair asked the F&RD to provide a brief update about the marketing of the Privett Centre.

The F&RD advised the Board that:

- Savills have been appointed and are marketing the property.
- Savills have had some interest and have already shown 3 parties around the property with more to follow this week.
- The details are available to view on Savill's website (link will be shared)

To ensure monitoring the Vice-Chair recommended that the F&RD provides a termly update report on the progress of the marketing of the Privett Centre, but with anything urgent being brought forward more quickly. The Board **agreed** with this approach.

**Action 1: The F&RD will provide a termly update report on the progress of the marketing of the Privett Centre.**

A trustee asked if agreement would need to be sought from the DfE/ Secretary of State to sell the property if an offer was received. The F&RD advised that if the Board agreed to accept an offer then Secretary of State approval would be required.

The Vice-Chair advised the Board that the Chair wished to update them with the following:

- The highlights to staff email will be sent at the end of term.
- Trustee news will be included in the school newsletter.
- The parent trustee election will be completed this week.

*Karen Ollive joined the meeting at 5.12 pm*

## **5. Safeguarding Report**

The safeguarding report was noted. The Vice-Chair asked the DSL if there was anything she wished to specifically highlight. The DSL advised trustees that there has been a massive increase in cases since her last report, but this is in line with other schools.

**Q: What evidence do you have to support your conclusion that the increase in cases you've highlighted is in line with other schools?**

**A:** This comes from speaking to DSLs in other schools. There is a lot of collaborative work in this role as our students will often have siblings at other schools so I gain an awareness of caseloads elsewhere. Children's Services have reported being inundated and do not have the capacity to handle the number of cases they have, so some cases are being passed down to schools. This in turn impacts our workload and capacity.

**Q: Can you give any information about why there is an upward trend?**

A: Covid has had an impact, particularly with the lockdowns. There are more families that we are aware of that are struggling with mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. This impacts the ability to parent and affects family life. We're aware that this is a national trend.

Q: What concerns does that then raise for you as the DSL, as you go into the next period?

A: My concern is in the school's ability to keep up with the needs we are seeing. There is support available but it is often virtual so there isn't a human touch. Often face to face meetings suit our parents better, as they can find the support of other parents who are struggling with similar problems invaluable.

Q: What responsibilities do we have as trustees to work with you to ensure we are communicating back to the authorities about workload and risk?

A: I have to chase and follow up about 90% of our inter-agency referrals and it is key that I'm tenacious and prepared to challenge the services involved. I am confident that as a school, our procedures are followed and referrals are challenged as necessary.

The Safeguarding Link trustee reported that during her recent safeguarding visit a key concern raised was the time that it takes to get support. She noted that the lead times between making a referral and receiving a response/support were often significant and therefore concerning. The trustee noted that the Board and Senior Leadership Team could consider how to apply pressure.

Q: Bearing in mind the long delays to get external support, is there more that could be done to build greater resilience in school?

A: The school does have additional support in well-being, but more emotional support is still needed and the school needs to consider this. Some students need professional therapeutic support, as professional counselling, play therapy and art therapy would be beneficial in supporting our students. All of this would have a cost.

Q: In terms of the extra therapy you've identified that would be helpful in supporting the students, how will this be considered by the school?

A: It is something that the Senior Leadership Team need to discuss and move forward.

Q: Considering the volume of work you are dealing with and the nature of some of the cases, are you well-supported?

A: I haven't booked a supervision session this term as I haven't had time, but I will book one for after the Christmas break. The Deputy DSLs have had a joint supervision session with a counsellor.

Q: Have the recommendations from the external safeguarding report been included in the school's safeguarding action plan?

A: I believe some of them have, but I only had sight of the external safeguarding report today. I need time to consider the recommendations made in conjunction with the Headteacher and will then update the action plan.

The Trust Board requested that the safeguarding action plan is updated to include the appropriate recommendations from the external safeguarding review.

**Action 2: The Assistant Headteacher (DSL) will review the external safeguarding report with the Headteacher and update the safeguarding action plan for review at the March Trust Board meeting.**

Q: It seems as though safeguarding and pupil well-being often have links. How closely do you work with the Assistant Headteacher for well-being to utilise the results of the termly pupil well-being surveys?

A: We do work closely. The surveys include questions about how safe students feel at school, so the results of the surveys can be helpful.

Q: Is there value in the work involved in undertaking termly pupils well-being surveys?

A: It is nice to get pupil views and if there is information from the surveys regarding safeguarding then we would work on it.

The Vice-Chair thanked Karen Ollive for her report and for attending the meeting.

*Karen Ollive left the meeting at 5.35 pm.*

## **6. Approval of Annual Report and Accounts**

The Vice-Chair advised the Trust Board that the Annual Report and Accounts has been reviewed and discussed by the Finance, Resources & Audit Committee and they are recommending approval.

The Chair of Finance, Resources & Audit (FRA) Committee outlined the scope of the audit, noted that the process had been smoother than before and thanked the staff involved. He advised trustees that he was satisfied with the disclosures being made.

The Annual Report and Accounts were unanimously **approved**.

The trustees reviewed the summary of audit findings received from Wise & Co. The Chair of FRA Committee advised trustees that the committee had reviewed the report,

suggested improvements and the school management responses and were satisfied with the responses.

The F&RD briefly outlined the two low level management points and asked if there were any questions:

Q: Assuming that a finance policy is set up to avoid fraud and financial irregularities, is it good financial practice to make the changes in the finance policy rather than changing the process?

A: (KB) There are divisions of responsibility within a finance policy. Technically in this instance the policy hadn't been followed because the purchase had been authorised but the invoice hadn't. With the revision to the policy, the controls are still sufficient and appropriate.

KB briefly explained the purpose of the Letters of Representations.

*Emma Layzell joined the meeting at 5.47 pm*

## **7. Policy Reviews**

### **a) Finance Policy**

The F&RD outlined the changes to the policy. A trustee clarified the process for delegation of spending authorities in the event of long-term absence.

The policy was **approved** unanimously.

### **b) Accounting Policy**

The policy was **approved** unanimously.

### **c) Staff Pay Policy**

Q: Has the amendment regarding the responsibility of providing a job description to staff come about because of the challenges there have been in doing so?

A: (JB) It was already in the policy but has been clarified to show it is the Headteacher's responsibility.

The policy was **approved** unanimously.

### **d) First Aid Policy**

The policy was **approved** unanimously.

### **e) Early Careers Teacher (ECT) Policy**

The Governance Lead advised that this is a new statutory policy and has been based on a model policy from The Key, which is approved by Forbes Solicitors. The Governance Lead advised that the policy had been adapted by Andrea Merritt to reflect Dove House practice and that Andrea had provided a 'Q&A' document.

A discussion was held regarding whether the policy was sufficient to ensure that ECTs perform well and the F&RD and Governance Lead explained how performance concerns would be addressed for ECTs, using the policy in conjunction with the HR policies.

A trustee asked 'The school currently has 3 ECTs in key subjects. Has the school considered if there is a finite number of ECTs that can be supported without adversely affecting the workloads of staff or the experience that the student receives?'

Neither the Governance Lead or F&RD could answer the question and trustees agreed that a response could be emailed out to them.

**Action 3: The Governance Lead will obtain an answer to the question and revert to trustees by email.**

The policy was **approved** unanimously.

### **f) BASCITT Quality Assurance Policy**

The policy was **approved** unanimously.

*Jenny Burns left the meeting at 6.13 pm*

## **8. Receive Report from the Personnel & Pay Committee regarding the Performance Management Process**

The trustees reviewed the report from the P&P Committee and discussed the content.

A discussion was held about the disparity between gradings of different groups of staff and what that might indicate in terms of objective setting, bias or competency of the line managers conducting performance management.

The Chair of the Personnel & Pay Committee reported that performance management has improved somewhat, but there is significant work still to do. She noted that the P&P Committee have made recommendations, which the school need to consider and implement as appropriate.

A trustee suggested that some monitoring is undertaken to ensure fairness in the process e.g. by gender and full-time vs part-time staff; the Chair of the Personnel & Pay Committee advised that this information has been requested. It was briefly discussed whether the monitoring could capture reviewer bias.

The Vice-Chair advised trustees that performance management is a scheduled agenda item at each Personnel & Pay meeting, so that progress can be monitored together with a trustee visit in the monitoring schedule.

JAG/EL offered to provide questions for the upcoming trustee monitoring visit noting that they will send them to the Governance Lead.

## **9. Governance**

### **a) Chair's Notes**

The Chair's notes were acknowledged. The Vice-Chair advised trustees that the Chair is still in contact with the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher, whilst she is away.

### **b) FRA Committee**

The minutes were noted. No questions were asked.

### **c) Trustee Visit Reports**

The Vice-Chair thanked trustees for completing their visits, noting the importance of them in providing assurance to the Board. The Vice-Chair noted that some trustees had not been able to attend their visits because of Covid restrictions and expressed the hope that they could be rescheduled in the new term.

As the Headteacher was not at the meeting, the trustees asked that the Headteacher review the trustee visit report recommendations and report back any changes that will be made.

**Action 4: The Headteacher was asked to review the visit reports and report back to the Board, any changes that the school will implement.**

Safeguarding: Sian Butler

Q: Has the Single Central Register been checked now?

A: (JH) The HR Officer advised me that Karen Ollive had undertaken the SCR check last week and that she planned to undertake the check termly from now on.

AF noted that the SCR had been significantly updated with further information since the appointment of the HR Officer and was now compliant. The trustees asked for their thanks to be passed on to Debbie Andrews.

**Action 5: The Governance Lead will send a note of thanks to the HR Officer as requested.**

Health & Safety: Murray Campbell

No questions asked.

Staff Mental Health & Well-being: Juliet Annesley-Gamester

No questions asked.

Training: Lisa Goodall

The Vice-Chair reported that she had also attended inset day training sessions that were held for 'Governance in an Academy' and 'Non-Negotiables in the Classroom'.

**Q: Was the training about governance well-received and will it assist in setting expectations of the Trust Board?**

**A: (JH)** The training was useful in setting out expectations. Staff had the opportunity beforehand to ask questions and Ruth Murton included these in the presentation, and also offered an opportunity for questions at the session. Anecdotally, several staff have said they felt it was helpful in knowing what trustees do.

Post-16: Andrea Francis

AF highlighted that:

- The students were very welcoming during her visit.
- Post-16 appears isolated from Dove House.
- That the Trust Board don't have much information about Post-16 and therefore don't discuss Post-16 regularly.
- That the Assistant Headteacher (Post-16) has advised that careers information guidance needs to be developed, so that students are provided with a robust offering.
- That the current premises do not have sufficient space for students and staff, nor does it have an outdoor area.

A trustee suggested that a discussion about Post-16 is included in the upcoming strategy session.

No questions asked.

#### **d) Skills Audit Update**

The skills audit was noted. No recommendations were made.

#### **e) Approval of BASCITT Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference were **approved** unanimously.

The Vice-Chair noted that it was Ollie Killinger’s last meeting as a trustee with Dove House School Academy Trust. She thanked him for his service to the Trust and wished him well for the future.

The Vice-Chair thanked the trustees for their work during the last 12 months.

The Governance Lead advised trustees that a message had been received from Ben Service to apologise that he was still unavoidably detained. The Trustees agreed that his absence would be recorded as ‘apologies received and accepted’.

The meeting closed at 6.54 pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2022 at 5 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

## Summary of Actions from:

### Meeting of Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2021

No	Action	Owner
Action 4 Item 13 28/9/21	<p>Data Protection Audit Action Plan: The Headteacher and Data Protection Lead will consider how the Data Protection Audit Action Plan can be implemented.</p> <p><b>Update 14/12/21:</b> The Governance Lead advised that this hasn't yet been completed. As the Headteacher is absent through ill-health a timescale for completion could not be provided.</p> <p><b>Carried forward</b></p>	OP/JH
Action 1 Item 5 19/10/21	<p>BCP: The Headteacher and F&amp;RD were asked to review the points raised from the discussion and the questions asked and respond.</p> <p><b>Update 14/12/21:</b> An update was provided on the action tracker. The action had not been completed. The Vice-Chair asked for it be carried forward and completed so that the action can be reviewed and closed.</p> <p><b>Carried forward</b></p>	OP/JB
Action 2 Item 6 19/10/21	<p>Risk Register: The F&amp;RD will update the Risk Register with completion dates for the risk which have controls that are partial or developing.</p> <p><b>Update 14/12/21:</b> An update was provided on the action tracker. The action had not been completed. The Vice-Chair asked for it be carried forward and completed so that the action can be reviewed and closed.</p> <p><b>Carried forward</b></p>	JB
Action 3 Item 8 19/10/21	<p>Headteacher's Report: The Headteacher will investigate how the staffing structure is approved at other academy trusts and will revert to the Board with a proposal.</p> <p><b>Update 14/12/21:</b> An update was provided on the action tracker. The action had not been completed. The Vice-Chair asked for it be carried forward and completed so that the action can be reviewed and closed.</p> <p><b>Carried forward</b></p>	OP

Action 1 Item 4 14/12/21	Matters Arising: The F&RD will provide a termly update report on the progress of the marketing of the Privett Centre.	JB
Action 2 Item 5 14/12/21	Safeguarding Report: The Assistant Headteacher (DSL) was asked to review the external safeguarding report with the Headteacher and update the safeguarding action plan for review at the March Trust Board meeting	KO
Action 3 Item 7e 14/12/21	ECT Policy: The Governance Lead will obtain an answer to the question and revert to trustees by email.	JH
Action 4 Item 9c 14/12/21	Trustee Visits: The Headteacher was asked to review the visit reports and report back to the Board any changes that the school will implement.	OP
Action 5 Item 9c 14/12/21	Trustee Visits: The Governance Lead will send a note of thanks to the HR Officer as requested.	JH