

**OAKINGTON C OF E (A) PRIMARY SCHOOL  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
HELD ON THURSDAY 16 March 2017, 7.30pm**

**PRESENT:** Edmund Buss (EB, Chair), Sally Daggianti (SD, Head), Ann Webster (AW), Paul Lloyd (PL), Jenny Prince (JP), Dawn Mansell (DM), Clare Chapman (CC), Peter Nicholas (PN), Sharon Oakley (SO), Anne Christie (AC), Karen Sutherland (KS), Jo Bryant (Clerk)

**APOLOGIES:** Lindsay Born (LB)

**GUEST:** Andrew Taylor

**Prayer:** EB opened the meeting in prayer.

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from LB for family reasons. This was accepted by the governing body.

**2. Declarations of Interest, Register of Pecuniary Interest**

None were declared.

At this point EB suspended the agenda for the meeting and introduced Andrew Taylor, who is Chair of Governors at Dry Drayton Primary School, inviting him to talk to the meeting about the situation at his school. EB explained that going into partnership with Dry Drayton as a federation was under consideration, and the purpose of this meeting was to open discussions. The major implication for Oakington would be that SD would become Executive Head of both schools, spending 3 days at Oakington and the other two days at Dry Drayton. EB emphasised that no decisions were being made at this point and that another full governing body meeting would be arranged shortly.

Andrew Taylor (AT) explained that Dry Drayton is a small C of E village school. The PAN is 10, and the maximum capacity is 70 pupils. It is an inviting small scale setting with an attractive combination of old and new buildings, but there are some issues to be resolved. Currently the school is functioning in partnership with Caldecote Primary School and at its recent Ofsted inspection was graded as Requires Improvement. The number of in-year arrivals is quite high, many bringing additional issues with them. Dry Drayton is a small village with a population of around 600, and about half of the local families choose to educate their children privately. That said, the community supports the school and there is a School and Village Association (rather than a PTA). The local authority would like the school to continue, not least because of recent significant investment in the school buildings.

Five years ago, Dry Drayton was described by Ofsted as a "Good" school, and its rating with SIAMS was "Outstanding". Since then two periods of maternity leave by the head teacher and a lack of continuity of leadership, coupled with curriculum and standards changes from the DfE has led to a decline in standards and last year's KS2 results were poor. Parents become anxious and families are beginning to leave - there are currently 52 children on roll. Following the Ofsted inspection, there has been a significant turnover of both staff and governors and the most recent head resigned on 1 May 2016. It is not financially possible for the school to have a full-time non-teaching head. On balance, this change has been good for the school, because with a lack of strong leadership, bad practice had set in. Older staff were more expensive, and new staff have been recruited. The school benefits from longstanding, experienced, high level teaching assistants. Staffing in Years 1 and 2 has remained stable, with most of the turnover occurring in KS2.

In order that the school could continue to function, the local authority arranged for Caldecote to provide interim leadership for Dry Drayton and this collaboration has proved to be very positive not just in terms of leadership, but with staff sharing curriculum ideas and working together. It has demonstrated the benefits of partnership but it will shortly be coming to an end, and in any case, is not a financially viable arrangement. It is difficult to recruit a teaching head in a small school and there would be pension and other costs to add to the bill. Recently, the cost of a SENCO had to be found before the funding became available, and staffing changes mean that additional supply will be needed.

CC asked AT why Oakington had been approached as a potential partner, and whether Coton had been considered. AT explained that DEMAT had effectively vetoed the possibility of a federation of Dry Drayton and Caldecote because Caldecote was not a church school. Oakington is a church school, it is physically close and the head has the capacity and the enthusiasm to help.

KS asked whether the secondary school catchment might affect parents' choice of Dry Drayton as a primary school. Federating would not affect this, as the schools would continue to function independently. The two school budgets would be separate, but it would be possible to share costs and facilities.

PL asked what would happen to the children should the school have to close. AT said that they would be dispersed to other local schools such as Coton, Caldecote, Hardwick, Oakington and Bar Hill.

JP observed that, like Oakington, Dry Drayton had a positive ethos and this would be lost if the school closed. CC raised the issue of behaviour. Difficult children can cause problems for others. Both SD and AT responded that this can be dealt with by good leadership and discipline.

The new school building replaced two portakabins and not only accommodates Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, but also a private pre-school. It was suggested that the rent for this might be increased to improve revenue. KS also suggested that space could be hired out for joint activities for home-schooled children.

In summing up, AT said it was important not to lose more pupils as this would make the school less attractive, and the security of school leadership was essential. Both the local authority and the diocese support the possibility of a partnership between Oakington and Dry Drayton. Ideally, Dry Drayton would be looking for a decision from Oakington by Easter.

A break was taken at this point and Andrew Taylor left the meeting. EB thanked him for his input.

When the meeting reconvened, EB asked for governors' responses. Governors responded warmly to AT, but had concerns about the implications of a move towards partnership with Dry Drayton. The Ofsted report had been negative, and the financial situation of the school is that there is likely to be a deficit of around £15 – 20,000 at the financial year end and the local authority will not cover it. It was felt that there would be little point in trying to save Dry Drayton if the school became financially unviable and numbers continued to fall. DM commented that Oakington does not have the middle leadership capability of Caldecote which underpins the current partnership. There are therefore concerns about management and SD's workload. JP said that this would enforce delegation.

On the positive side, there are many similarities between Oakington and Dry Drayton. It would be possible to share the swimming pool and other facilities, and there would be opportunities for staff interaction and collaboration.

Forming a federation would mean that the two governing bodies would amalgamate and reconstitute, and the workload would increase. Oakington has been considering academisation in some form, but the timescale in this instance is tight.

As part of any possible move towards federation, SD had visited two primary schools near Wisbech on Tuesday 28th February, Tilney All Saints and Anthony Curton whose situation is like ours. The head teacher there had been approached 4 years ago in the same way that SD has now by the local authority and the diocese. In 2015 the schools became an academy. The head is responsible for both schools and is at the larger school on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and at the smaller school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There are senior teachers in both schools who deputise. Both schools are now classed as "Good" by Ofsted and are assessed individually. Staff meetings alternate between the school sites, there are joint training

days, a Partnership Day in the summer and Enterprise days in each term. Some of the curriculum leaders are shared between the two schools. The head runs church services in each village.

If Oakington combined with Dry Drayton, 40% of SD's salary would derive from Dry Drayton's budget which would mean that there would be funds available for senior teachers in each school. Oakington's costs would increase because of the cost of supply. AC and several other governors were concerned that SD would be out of school for 2 days every week, and emphasised that senior teachers should be given adequate time to carry out their role in her absence. Senior teachers would need to run staff meetings on alternate weeks, be responsible for discipline and cover the SENCO function. KS questioned how sustainable these arrangements would be in the long term. DM pointed out that some head teacher functions in both schools would overlap. PL observed that SD was already out of school for such things as head teacher and SENCO meetings. JP again commented that this situation underlined the importance of delegation. CC asked SD why she wanted to pursue this. Her reply was that, with the government's proposed Fairer Funding formula, Oakington will itself be facing severe economic pressures by 2020. By partnering with Dry Drayton, the positive small village school ethos could be maintained in both places, there would be opportunities to share expertise and Oakington may be less vulnerable as an academy. EB explained that if SD was not keen, the governing body would not consider it. Action: EB asked SD to provide more detail for the governors as to how it would work out in practice to address their concerns.

EB asked the meeting for an indication from governors of who was against the proposal (1), who would consider investigating further (6) and how many abstentions there were (4). The views expressed are summarised below:

<i>Concerns</i>	<i>Positives</i>
Lack of middle management	Management opportunity
SD workload	Shared facilities
Finance	Staff interaction
How would we benefit?	Saving Dry Drayton School
Amalgamation of GBs = increased workload	Similarity of settings
Timescale – urgent decision	Close proximity of schools

A further governing body meeting has been arranged for Mon 27 March both to discuss these matters further, and to deal with those items on tonight's agenda that were not covered. JB gave her apologies.

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

An action to investigate improving the school telephone system, possibly providing an additional line for After School Club was to be added. Otherwise the minutes were signed as correct.

### **4. Matters Arising/ Action Points**

No feedback had yet been given to staff following the Staff Wellbeing questionnaire last term. DM felt that this should be done very soon. The danger is that the perception among staff might be that it was a waste of time, and the governors do not care. Action: EB and LB are to arrange with SD to visit a forthcoming staff meeting.

### **5. Finance**

The Best Value Statement, Statement of Internal Control and SFVS were all approved.

The meeting concluded at 10.15 pm.