

# DOWNLAND VILLAGE SCHOOLS FEDERATION

## INTERIM EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

**A meeting of the IEB held on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2023  
at 12.00. This was a virtual meeting.**

**Present:** Mrs R Cumming (RC), Mr C Hawker CH), Mrs N Waters (NW)(Chair).

**In attendance:** Mr P Brown (PB)(Deputy Executive Headteacher DVSF), Mr P Little (proposed member of the IEB), Mr P Wagstaff (PW)(Assistant Director of Education & Skills) and Mrs C Vigor (CV) (Clerk).

### INTRODUCTIONS

1. The chair asked each of those present to introduce themselves to the meeting.

### APOLOGIES

2. All current members of the IEB were present. Apologies were received from the Executive Headteacher.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3. There were no declarations of interest from those present.

### CURRENT SITUATION & PRIORITIES FOR THE IEB

4. The chair invited PW to outline the reason why the IEB had been instigated and what its key priorities would be. PW explained that the application for an IEB had been made due to a breakdown in the governance of the schools and the relationship between governance and leadership within the schools. In addition, a report made under the Confidential Reporting policy had raised some significant concerns which, after investigation, required a reset of governance. This, in the short term, required the setting up of an IEB to reset governance, with the intention of moving towards placing a full governing body in situ as soon as practicable.

5. Regarding key priorities, there were two key issues for the board. Firstly, the representation to the DfE regarding the position of Compton & Up Marden CE School, following a double RI Ofsted judgement. The outgoing governing body had put forward a representation, but PW had been unable to see it before submission and had concerns regarding the context and the tone of it. Having spoken to the RSC he was clear that they were expecting a representation from the IEB which they would take into account. There was an urgent need for the IEB to complete this as the RSC would be making a decision within the next few weeks.

6. The second key priority was the need to re-establish relationships between governance, the community and the school staff and leadership, as all had experienced a difficult time in the last few months. The formal warning notice issued to the previous governing body had identified issues with regard to both governance and leadership. Whilst the establishment of the IEB had helped to address the governance concerns, issues identified regarding leadership would require following up by the IEB as a priority.

7. The IEB would also need to focus on the financial situation of all 3 schools within the federation, to move them all into a position of sustainability to allow consideration of what the future partnership might be for them.

## **Staffing**

8. NW had forwarded an email she had received from the Executive Headteacher regarding a proposed staffing structure and pay proposal. She asked CH for clarification as to whether this had been signed off by the previous GB or was a pending decision. CH confirmed that these had been ratified to continue until the end of the Spring term at which time they would be reviewed. PB confirmed that this was the understanding of staff. The chair recommended that a decision was not made regarding review until the IEB had had an opportunity to scrutinise the financial situation more rigorously and were in a position to make a firm decision as to whether the structure was right for the Summer term.

9. PW agreed that, as two of the schools were in deficit, there was a need to have a firm grasp of the situation to understand what was feasible financially. RC and CH agreed with the chair's recommendation.

10. PL commented that there was a need to ascertain whether or not the cost of the staffing arrangements in question were included within the 3 year budget forecast submission and, in addition, whether or not they had been signed off. NW replied that whether or not it had been signed off there was a need to review it, particularly as PL had raised it in the context of the staffing proposal. The new budget would be available shortly and it would then be possible to review in the context of sustainability. CH confirmed that the forecast had been approved, subject to the IEB wanting to review, and that the SFVS had also been signed off.

## **Recent Communication**

11. In the context of other priorities, PW raised the issue of an email that had been circulated into the local community by a member of the previous governing board. It was likely that the IEB would need to address this as part of its communication with the broader community of schools, to allay any concerns about the changes and why these have happened. The Local Authority had hoped to reduce any anxiety by putting out what PW considered to be a positive communication to locality schools and parents, but the email referred to had taken the issue in a different direction. The issues contained in the email had reached the Member for the area, Kate O'Kelly, who had asked for clarification. NW replied that this would be considered with stakeholder communications. PB commented that he was not aware of the email mentioned and PW undertook to forward a copy to him.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **Additional Members for the IEB**

12. The letter from the RSC approving the instigation of the IEB had stipulated that two additional members needed to be added to its membership, one of whom should bring financial acumen and experience. PW reported that two additional members were proposed for the IEB, Paul Little and Sue Samson. Those present were aware of PL's background and the chair introduced the background of Sue Samson and her suitability to be a member of the IEB. PW would recommend both names to the RSC

as their membership was subject to RSC approval. Following submission of their biographies it was expected that approval would be with immediate effect.

### **Administration & Compliance**

13. PB undertook to arrange the removal of the names of members of the previous governing body from the GIAS pages for each school.

**Action:** PB

14. Clerk to confirm the arrangements regarding election and appointment of new governors to the IOG and whether or not a shadow governing body would be required. RC would ensure the diocesan process required.

**Action:** Clerk

15. The clerk confirmed that a revised IOG had recently been approved, the only difference being the removal of Heads of School from membership. Clerk to circulate current IOG to members for any comments. The chair commented that unless there was anything untoward it was likely that the new IOG would be taken forward for the new GB. RC would take the lead with regard to the foundation governors and staff and parent elections would take place. The chair recommended that a skills audit of those elected and appointed governors should then be undertaken to identify any gaps. The consideration and appointment of co-opted governors could then be used to ensure that there was a full complement of skills across the governing body, in particular the strategic ability to take the schools forward and ensure the federation is sustainable in the long term.

**Action:** Clerk

16. Members were asked to confirm that they had read the relevant parts of KCSiE 2022. All present confirmed this.

17. Members were asked to complete and return a document circulated by the clerk regarding the required register of interests. The clerk would then compile the register.

**Action:** All/Clerk

18. Pen portraits and photographs were also required for the schools' websites and were to be submitted to PB for action. RC and NW had completed theirs and CH would rewrite his before submission. New members were asked to provide the required information as soon as practicable.

**Action:** PB

### **Terms of Reference for IEB**

19. Draft TOR had been circulated for consideration. Copies would be sent to PL and Sue Samson for their input. NW commented that as the proposed TOR also included a code of conduct, this would cover both requirements.

20. **Resolved** – that the IEB approve the proposed TOR, subject to any input from PL and Sue Samson.

21. NW explained that the TOR required the IEB to agree spending thresholds for the Executive Headteacher. This would be done offline after the meeting.

**Action:** NW

## **Link Roles**

22. The following link roles were agreed and PB undertook to amend the website:  
Safeguarding – Mr C Hawker  
SEND – Mrs R Cumming

**Action:** PB

## **CHAIR'S ACTIONS**

23. There were no actions to report.

## **REPRESENTATION LETTER**

24. A draft had been circulated and had been seen by all present with the exception of PL. The Executive Headteacher and Yasmin Maskatiya had also had sight of it and responded positively. RC had made recommendations for small amendments which NW recommended were approved for inclusion.

25. CH had suggested that consideration be given to including a statement in the letter stating that, despite the double RI judgement, Compton & Up Marden was not a coasting school and clarified his reasons for suggesting this. RC asked PW for confirmation of what the opinion of Ofsted would be. PW replied that a conversation had taken place with the RSC regarding this and despite the improvements noted in the second inspection, the school would still be regarded by Ofsted as 'coasting' as it had been judged as RI. It was therefore his opinion that the statement's inclusion would not alter this assessment.

26. PW indicated that he was fully supportive of the proposed letter, with the inclusion of RC's recommendations. He commented that it aligned with the messages that had been given by both the diocese and the Local Authority. As PL had not had sight of the letter, NW asked if he would prefer to see it before considering it for approval. PL indicated that he was happy for approval to be considered. NW undertook to send a copy of the letter to PL and Sue Samson.

27. **Resolved** – that the IEB approve the proposed Representation letter, with the inclusion of the additional recommendations from RC. NW would submit this to the DfE and RSC as soon as possible. PW would confirm the correct email address.

**Action:** NW/PW

## **STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION & CONSULTATION**

### **Internal**

28. The chair had already met with the Executive Headteacher and PB at Compton & Up Marden School, although time restraints had prevented a tour of the school taking place. NW, RC and CH had arranged to meet with all staff from all three schools at Rogate on 6<sup>th</sup> March at 3.45pm. The principal reason for the staff meeting was to provide reassurance, gain staff confidence and provide an opportunity for them to ask questions. PL and Sue Samson were also invited if available. NW had arranged to undertake a tour of Rogate and intended, with Sue Samson, to also visit Rake and Compton & Up Marden prior to the staff meeting. An introductory email

from the IEB would be sent to all staff ahead of the meeting.

**Action:** NW

## **External**

29. The Local Authority had already sent a letter to all parents and the chair would draft a follow up from the IEB to introduce members and reassure parents that the IEB had the federation's best interests at heart. The letter would build on the LA's introduction and put a 'face' to the IEB.

**Action:** NW

30. Regarding the communication mentioned in minute 11 to all Rother Valley schools, NW commented that although a direct response was not required from the IEB, there was a need to build a relationship with locality schools. This would avoid a breakdown in the relationship that already existed and retain close links. RC offered to speak to a few headteachers in local diocesan schools to gauge current thinking. PW agreed that a sense check from local church schools would be a helpful input.

**Action:** RC

31. PW suggested that there was also a need to communicate with the local Member, Kate O'Kelly (minute 11), who showed a lot of interest in local schools. PB confirmed that until summer 2022 she had been a member of the governing body. The IEB were informed that she would not have been party to any relevant issues during her term of office. PW therefore felt there was a need to speak to her to increase her understanding of the situation as she would not have any detail and would have only received one viewpoint. The chair would make contact with her to arrange a conversation. She asked if there was any privileged information that needed to be taken account of. PW replied that Ms O'Kelly would be aware of the formal warning and the whistleblowing report, but not any detail and also needed to be assured that both the formal warning and the response to the confidential report were supported by the diocese as well as the local authority.

**Action:** NW

32. It was also considered prudent to contact Gillian Keegan, the local MP, who, as Secretary of State for Education, would be aware that an IEB was in place and also showed an interest in schools in her area. The chair would undertake this.

**Action:** NW

33. PB asked if previous foundation governors such as Rev. Trish had been contacted. RC undertook to follow this up.

**Action:** RC

34. NW reported that a member of the previous governing body had contacted the Local Authority to ask if it would be possible to speak to the chair of the IEB to provide some context. It was agreed that this would not be necessary as CH's membership of the IEB provided this. The chair would ensure an appropriate reply was sent.

**Action:** NW

35. CH asked what the protocol would be regarding contact with previous governors if they contacted him and whether anything could be shared. The chair asked what he

had in mind regarding this. He replied it was more about what to say if they contacted him and what could and could not be said. It was agreed that as a member of the IEB it would not be appropriate for any contact to be made and that information would be available in the minutes which, once approved, would become publicly available. NW confirmed that the minutes would be published on school websites.

36. PB was asked to confirm that email addresses for previous governors had been removed. PB had asked JSPC to block all old email addresses which had been done, although there had been a concern regarding a forwarding address set up by one previous governor. PB would ask JSPC to confirm the forwarding address had been removed. Information on and access to TTG had also been removed.

**Action:** PB

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

37. The date of the next meeting was agreed as **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March at 3.30pm.** This would be a virtual meeting. It was confirmed that the Executive Headteacher would attend all meetings but was not a member of the IEB. PB asked if this meant that the Executive Headteacher would not have a vote and this was confirmed.

38. The agenda for the meeting would be broadly linked to the IEB Action Plan, to ensure the remit of the IEB was covered. It would also include the usual governing body business. Regarding a report from the Executive Headteacher, the chair reminded members that it was for the IEB to tell the headteacher what it would like a report on. She undertook to draft a list of items to be included in the report, for IEB approval.

**Action:** NW

39. PW commented that there would be a need for an update on actions taken regarding relationships and engagement with staff in all schools, as this had been identified as a recommendation in the follow up to the Confidential Report investigation and identified in the formal warning. PB asked for clarification that this was in regard to relationships between the staff and SLT. PW replied that this was the case, as it had been suggested that the leadership should consider the issues identified and plan a way forward and the IEB would need an update on what had been done so far.

40. Projected numbers was also suggested for the next agenda, particularly with regard to financial implications. NW informed the board of the projections she had already received. A financial report would also be required for the next meeting.

41. CH was asked to review the minutes of the last two meetings of the previous governing board for items needing to be followed up or actioned by the IEB. The minutes of the last meeting of the previous board would need to be approved at the next meeting. The chair and clerk would compile an agenda for the meeting.

**Action:** CH

## DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

42. It was agreed that a meeting would take place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March at 3.30pm. Dates beyond that would be considered at the 8<sup>th</sup> March meeting.

43. PB was asked to inform the chair of any booked meetings with external partners for the next half term that would require the presence of a member of the IEB, such as those with Local Authority Advisers.

**Action:** PB

44. There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.56pm.

**CHAIR**.....**DATE**.....

### ACTION LOG

Minute	Action	By Whom	Reported completed
13	Amendments to IAS required	PB	
14	Confirmation of arrangements for new GB	Clerk	
15	Circulate IOG	Clerk	
17	Completion of Decs of interest & Register	All/Clerk	
18	Members to provide pen portrait and photo for website	All/PB	
21	Agree spending thresholds for Exec H	NW	
22	Add SEND & Safeguarding link governor info to website	PB	
27	Confirm RSC email address Submit Representation letter to RSC	PW NW	
28 & 29	Introductory letter/email to staff and parents	NW	
30	Sense check with HTs of local diocesan schools	RC	
31	Communication with local WSCC Member	NW	
32	Communication with local MP	NW	
33	Communication with ex foundation governors	RC	
34	Reply regarding approach from previous governor	NW	
36	Confirmation with JSPC that forwarding address removed	PB	
38	Draft list of items for HT report & circulate for comment	NW	
41	Review minutes of last 2 sets of minutes of previous GB for items requiring follow up or action of IEB	CH	
43	Inform chair of any prebooked meetings with external partners	PB	

