Diptford School – Minutes of School Committee meeting, 5 March 2020 (adopted 15 March 2021)

Present: Roger Knight (chair), Lizzie Lethbridge, Rachel Botell, Rebecca Filtness, Lucy Carrol, Janet Watts, Helen Price, David Sayle

1. Apologies were received from Jo Palmer and Laura Bell

**2.** The draft minutes of the previous meeting of 31 January 2020 were reviewed and adopted. Many of the actions arising from the January meeting had unfortunately been delayed or overtaken by events, with Covid-19 concerns beginning to impact.

3. Since the last meeting, and further to Rachel and Roger’s tour of the School with Lizzie, Roger had met at the School with Lizzie and Sharon Lord, Link’s lead in the RE/Ethos field, to consider the School’s programme further and he and Sharon attended the day’s collective worship session, led by Jodie Churchward. He had provided feedback to Lizzie and Sharon – the overall impression was that there was sufficient Christian underpinning of what was an inclusive CW session and that there had been a significant atmosphere of respect evident. Rachel and Helen had similarly previously observed a CW session, and other committee members are encouraged to do so.

Head’s Report and discussion of the Ethos Programme

4. Lizzie updated the group orally.

5. She reported that the SIAMS self-evaluation was proceeding, structured around the seven strands of the SIAMS exploration of the effectiveness of a school’s vision in enabling its pupils to flourish. Lizzie expects this to be substantially completed by Easter following review by the staff, for the committee to look at in the summer term. Janet stressed that this must not be over-influenced by the School’s CoE background. Lizzie stressed that, in any inspection, SIAMS will look for evidence – ‘Show Me’.

7. She noted how Sharon Lord has been assisting, by casting an expert eye over the programme and the self-evaluation. Lizzie has taken away two particular areas for development. One is following up on action points from the previous SIAMS inspection, in particular involving a wider range of visitors in leading collective worship to ensure children are familiar with different Christian traditions of worship. Suggestions were made as to possible initiatives involving Rachel (United Church Totnes) or Ali Townsend (former parent, Flavel Church Dartmouth). The second is developing Courageous Advocacy (strand 3) – how children can impact the world beyond the School. Discussion centred around starting with the PEG (pupil’s ethos Group), with support from the Ethos group to help frame the discussion, and possibly working with the Diptford WI and Mothers Union groupings.

8. Lizzie reported that it is planned that the pupils will be visiting Buckfast Abbey later in the school year. [Cancelled due to Covid]

9. Rev David noted that a two pronged approach is perhaps appropriate, Focus on the seven strands, yes, but also ask what is the Christian ethos? How is it embedded in the life of the School, so that it becomes second nature for the children and their parents? What is the breadth of the understanding of faith?

10. In response to a question Rev David outlined the current connection between the school and the local church. He leads collective worship each Wednesday during term times. In addition there are events at Harvest, Easter and at Christmas, and the School supports the Remembrance Service with a wreath and participated this year in the Festival of Angels. He participates in this group, whenever possible, although not as a Diocesan representative.

11. Could there be more? Rev David is already thinly spread across his Mission Community, but perhaps is more involved at other schools, eg Harbertonford. This is something that he and Lizzie can discuss and explore.

12. Further to the discussion at the previous meeting concerning the vision “let your light shine’ Lizzie reported that she is still re-visiting this, and considers that she would like to incorporate ‘flourish’.

13. Rev David cautioned that we must be careful not to over-do anything, be careful not to burden but to allow time and space to permit flourishing. He counselled that we should try not to over burden the school with expectation, but recognise that we are small. We should share out, contribute and be realistic.

Embracing the Community

14. Helen raised the question of the School’s relationship with the village community. She noted that FODS seeks to involve the village but she believes from various discussions that the community does not see FODS as representing the School. Perhaps the School needs to do more itself to involve the Community. She noted further that the village’s sustainability group is led by three parents from the School who live in the village.

15. Lizzie said that it is her aspiration to put the school at the centre of setting the community ethos. It was suggested that we might try to have a regular contribution from the School to the Parish Magazine in addition to the the FODS contributions.

16. It was noting that the community is changing with a number of younger parents recently moving into the village, with hopefully more if the Wheat Park development proceeds. Every effort should be made to get these new parents down to the School.

17. We talked about embracing the local MP whose constituency address is within the wider village (in particular in support of the ongoing fundraising for the playground but more generally to learn about the School). Roger agreed to follow up with Amanda Barnes, who had met Anthony Mangnall and had offered to follow up that contact on behalf of FODS. [Mr Mangnall did subsequently visit the School to inspect the playground site and the School’s fabric more generally and has been kept up to date with developments.]

Sustainability

18. The meeting concluded with some discussion of the sustainability initiative in the village and how the school might involve itself. In particular we re-visited the possibility of installing solar panels and Helen undertook to follow up with Sungift in relation to the School field.