

# Footprints

Step by step together

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
Diocese of Norwich

Your newsletter from the Diocesan Board of Education

February 2024

## A flourishing school system – the DBE's Strategic Plan 2024-2030



**Paul Dunning**  
Diocesan Director of Education

With this edition of Footprints every school will receive a hard copy of the Diocesan Board of Education's Strategic Plan covering the next six years (an electronic version has also been shared). The strategy encourages those in

our family of schools to 'build together' an education system where all flourish and the teachings of Jesus Christ are the 'cornerstone' holding everything together. This will lead to children and adults developing their full potential and deliver educational excellence. I hope that chimes with your aspiration when you come to work each day!

Of course, we live in a world with many challenges and schools are not immune from this reality. Finances are tight in schools and personally, mental health challenges have increased for pupils and staff, attendance and behaviour are significant challenges – I could go on. At

times like this it is often the bigger picture vision of why we are here and why we do what we do that sustains us. That's where the Christian vision of our schools plays a significant part, and I've seen great examples of this across our schools. Where teamwork is strong, and everyone is supportive of each other and their mission then much is achieved!

Therefore, our strategy has sections that speak into all aspects of school life, not just educational standards. These include supporting the vulnerable and marginalised, looking after pupil and staff wellbeing, ensuring inclusion, working...

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towards net zero carbon and good governance.

SIAMS inspection too is a fundamental component of the church school system. All our recent reports have been a celebration of the good things going on in our schools. That makes me proud to be the Director of Education! One example of a school's Christian vision impacting on pupil wellbeing is featured in the following pages and it starts with a lovely quote from their SIAMS report.

As we continue to 'build together' as a church school family the DBE is increasingly convinced that the best way to secure long-term sustainability is as part of one of our school trusts – DNEAT or St Benet's. This is not a 'magic bullet' but a proven way of supporting ongoing school improvement and ensuring organisational resilience in a system where the Local Authority has fewer resources and central government, of all colours, is committed to developing strong trusts. There are two examples in this edition which



describe the journey into our trusts and the strategy document itself also contains case studies demonstrating the impact and benefits of being part of a 'hardwired' group of schools.

Collectively we know that children are at the heart of all we do, day by day. You,

we, are making a difference and for that I thank you. I will end with one of the Bible verses (Ephesians 3:20) in the strategy which inspires me and says that God is able to do 'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine'. I encourage you to hold onto that hope and aspiration.

## Natalie Butcher

Headteacher  
Swallowtail Federation

Swallowtail Federation consists of three CofE schools: Catfield Primary, Hickling Infant and Sutton Infant. Working together closely in a federation showed the school communities the positive impact of shared working and they were keen to extend that further.

Initial work with St Benet's began after the governing body invited the Trust to present at a Local Governing Body (LGB) meeting to explain the Trust's approach to school improvement. Keen to become involved but aware of the waiting time due to other schools joining, we managed to utilise the DfE 'Trust School Improvement Offer' to begin working with each other prior to conversion.

Through that approach the schools have been able to access a wide range of support and expertise from St Benet's Central Team. They have attended the regular specialist groups (SEND, Early Years, Maths, English, Leadership) which have provided school improvement support as well as valuable networks for staff with other schools in their local area.

As part of a group of schools working with St Benet's, Swallowtail were able



to go through collaborative reviews with Trust leaders and from these begin to consider curriculum changes. Working with a group of likeminded schools, supported by St Benet's, Swallowtail engaged on a redesign of their curriculum. A group of 8 schools all worked together to introduce a CUSP based curriculum, subsidised by the Trust's DfE project funding, which has helped subject leaders and teachers design and resource a high quality curriculum. The work completed through the St Benet's North group has been invaluable. Working collaboratively has enabled us to develop and implement a curriculum using CUSP. Networking and

high quality CPD has developed a culture across the Federation where managing ambitious change has been effective and, even at this early stage, the raising of standards are clear to see. We are incredibly excited to continue this work and go from strength to strength.

After the successful collaborations, Swallowtail's application to join the Trust was approved by the Advisory Board and they will join the Trust formally later this year. This process will be a smooth transition with shared work already underway in areas such as Adaptive Teaching and Coaching which will continue to be developed and refined when they are formally part of the Trust.

**Chloe Cole**  
Headteacher

**Patricia Waller**  
Chair of Governors

Dereham Church of England  
Infant & Nursery Academy

The school's governing body decided to contact the Diocese in summer 2022, having identified concerns about the standards of teaching and learning. During the initial discussions with representatives from the Diocese and DNEAT, governors were frank about the problems the school faced and shared their belief that the best way forward was to join DNEAT.

From the beginning the CEO Oliver Burwood and the other DNEAT representatives were so supportive and sympathetic that concerns governors may have had about joining a MAT were soon removed. Both parties recognised that the academisation process would take many months, but that in the

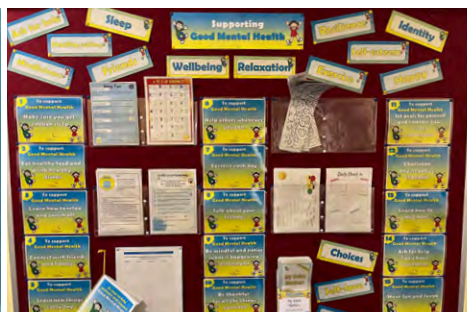
meantime, the school needed to make radical changes to drive improvement. In addition, the leadership of the school was in flux and governors were anxious that the school get assistance to ensure the improvement work could get going. Governors formed a School Improvement Board with David Oldham, the QA and Intervention Officer for Norfolk County Council's Childrens Services, and DNEAT were marvellous in agreeing to provide a School Development Partner to work collaboratively with the governors, school leaders and the LA to support the implementation of the required changes. Central to these changes DNEAT's School Development Partner, Peter Whear spent time working alongside the Head to guide and provide recommendations for the creation of a brand new curriculum across the whole school.

In the meantime the DNEAT Project Manager Sue Ryall worked with the Head and the Chair of Governors to assemble all the documentation and papers required for the conversion process. It was a lengthy and time-consuming business, but we always knew we



could rely on Sue and her colleagues to answer queries or provide additional information and to guide us through the conversion timeline.

What could have been a very traumatic time of transition and conversion, was in fact a positive and constructive period, which concluded with celebrations on 1 November 2023 as we opened the doors of Dereham Church of England Infant and Nursery Academy for the first time.



**Paul Henman**  
Headteacher  
Taverham VC Junior

**"Leaders make bold decisions, which are rooted in the vision. These are often focussed on supporting wellbeing, which is a high priority for the school. As a consequence, pupils and staff learn, work and flourish in this supportive environment."**

Supporting wellbeing is an intrinsic and important part of what we aim to do as a Church of England school with the aim of giving everyone the best opportunity to flourish at our school.

During the pandemic, our Deputy

Headteacher began doing weekly wellbeing assemblies for children to watch and engage with, often whilst at home. This was a direct response to what was happening in the world at the time and an attempt to support children to make sense of what was going on and, as a result, how they were feeling. These have proved to be so successful, and so well-received, that they have become a permanent fixture at our school and the impact on children has been significant.

We also try to make it really clear to the children where they can go and what they can do if they are struggling at any time or just need someone to talk to. Introducing 'Zones of Regulation' has helped children understanding their emotions better. Our Pastoral Worker produces interactive displays that help

children understand that whatever they are feeling is OK, and how they can support their own wellbeing. These displays also detail things they can do, and places they can go, if they need additional support.

The weekly 'Prayer Space' sessions in our 'Garden of Hope', run by our local Vicar and his team, also give children a 'sanctuary' and a place/time to reflect and think. These sessions are open to all and although totally optional, have been very well attended so far!

It's always a challenge to effectively support all pupils in a big school and we don't get it 100% right all the time. However, being open and explicit about mental health and wellbeing, and providing a 'menu' of support goes a long way to achieving this important aim.

## Governor and Clerk update



**Hannah Monk**  
Head of Governance  
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We all recognise that the Education Strategy sets out a general move towards the Diocesan Academy Trusts (DNEAT and St Benet's MAT) for all schools. As the strategy document says, both Diocesan Trusts have recently reviewed how their governance structure can support the inclusion of more schools in the future.

From a governor's perspective the prospect of academisation can be quite intimidating as you try to imagine what that will mean for governors. For that reason, I want to use this opportunity to go through some of the questions I get asked most often.

### **How does the governance of a school change when it joins a Multi-Academy Trust?**

On conversion the Trust Board assumes the accountability for the school or

schools performance in all aspects. The school also gains an additional layer of expertise in our Trusts with the central teams of senior educationalists, management accountants, HR professionals, estates management, safeguarding leadership and governance professionals. It is the Trust who will therefore hold the majority of the responsibilities. However, in both of the Trusts in the Diocese of Norwich we are committed to a layer of local governance whose focus is the ethos and Christian identity of our schools, the links with the community, the wellbeing of their stakeholders and the overall experience of the pupils.

### **What about Foundation Governors?**

Local Governance in the Trusts does not have Foundation Governors, but in their place they have Trust Appointed Governors who are likewise committed to upholding the Christian ethos of the Trust. The term Trust Appointed means that they are appointed by the Trustees, and in a similar way to the Bishop, PCC or DBE would appoint a Foundation

Governor, this maintains a direct link to the Diocese through the DBE's role with both Trust Boards.

### **Who can be a governor in a Trust?**

We invite all existing governors to come into the Trust with their school. From then on, the succession planning for local governance stays with the local governors, so they maintain that level of close community connection.

### **Can the PCC maintain a connection to the school?**

While there is no formal role in the governor appointment process in the Trusts for the PCC, we would hope that the PCC would continue to work with the school to identify volunteers in the community.

We continue to support and work with the Church of England Education Office as they strengthen and safeguard the role for the Church of England in the academy sector. And we will continue to work with all comers, wishing or needing to join our Trusts.

## Welcome

### Heads starting

**Chloe Cole** – Dereham Infant & Nursery Academy

## Federations

**North Star Federation** –  
Worstead & The Belfry, Overstrand

## Farewell & thanks

### Heads leaving at Easter

**Sean Wright** – Ingoldisthorpe VA Primary

## SIAMS congratulations

Congratulations to the following schools that have had their SIAMS inspections this term.

**Clover Hill CE VA Infant School**  
**Worstead CE VA Primary School**  
**Alburgh with Denton CE Primary Academy**



## Headteachers Conference 2024

To book your place please visit:

[www.DofN.org/Headteachers2024](http://www.DofN.org/Headteachers2024) / Password: HTconference 2024