

## **Minutes of the Annual Meeting of NASS held at The Place, London at 11.00am on Saturday 10th March 2018.**

1. Attendees: Mervyn Benford, Roger Hamblin, Kathryn Solly, Neil Short (Chairman), Barbara Taylor (Secretary) and Andrew Taylor,
2. Apologies: John Chamberlain, Richard Maudsley and Rosie Edmonds.
3. Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 4th March 2017 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the chairman.
4. The Chairman welcomed those present and thanked them for attending.
5. Chairman's Report: National Association of Small Schools

It would be an accurate statement to say that this has been a very busy year!

Aside from the usual activities there have been several projects, which have projected NASS onto a wider audience.

### **Laurel Trust Report: Collaboration not Collision.**

At this time last year, the research for this project had only just started. During the following six months many school visits were undertaken in various parts of the country alongside meetings of the steering group and representatives from the Trust. It was a very exciting journey. The findings within the report demonstrate the enormous capacity and potential within small schools and how this is enhanced through collaboration. The final report was accepted by the Trust and their comments, alongside others are attached. It is hoped to extend this research further and we await the deliberations from the Trust within the near future as to whether this will be feasible.

### **Publicity:**

Once we have the permission of the Trust we will place the report onto the newly developed NASS website. Following many discussions this went 'live' in September. It has been enhanced and is clearer to read and navigate. There remains much to do to provide further information and content and this is another area for further development.

The website is just one of many areas where we are developing greater access to social media. We now have a Twitter account and this allows friends of NASS to be made aware of developments, meetings and information instantly. It also allows NASS to 'follow' other similar groups, schools and members of the media. These can include the 'movers and shakers' in the world of education, media and individuals worldwide. Photographs and other material can be uploaded and instantly shared with a wide audience for greater impact. For example – when I send a tweet with the NASS name, this will immediately reach my 700 followers who in turn can 're-tweet' or 'like' what they read. The process then 'snowballs' reaching a progressively wider audience. Our Twitter page is slowly developing and should prove a great boon in 'spreading the word' in the future, particularly should we develop the capacity to send out blogs and other information.

The Facebook page – although not yet as fully utilised is another area to be explored and developed.

We have yet to present a specific unified strategy with the national press. Here I will acknowledge my failing in this regard. Once we are given permission by the Laurel Trust then perhaps we should devise a plan using the report as the vehicle. Here it is a 'watch this space' moment.

Whilst all the social media, instant access material is of value in some areas, there still remains a place for the printed word on paper!! For this reason, the termly newsletter remains vital to publicising the work of NASS. Here tribute and grateful thanks must be paid to Mervyn for his great efforts in producing this document for so many years. The change in format, which has been introduced, allows for greater flexibility in presentation but does not in any way diminish the importance of the content and message we wish to

present to the world at large. Again, we are at the beginning of a long process in what promises to be an exciting journey.

A more recent development has been the production of brochures to be sent to schools highlighting the services available via NASS. We have to recognise that there is a great deal of experience and talent within the NASS committee and this could be of great value to small schools across the country, particularly at a time when support from elsewhere is receding. There is much potential here and we now have the publicity mechanisms to take this forward. Another 'watch this space' area!

### **Conference: November 11 2018**

One of the important and valuable links, which has been established in the recent past, has been with Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) and this was fully utilised for a conference in November. On that day 14 participants from Kent, Cumbria, Essex, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire made the journey to spend their Saturday meeting with fellow small school stalwarts and to share views, ideas and experiences. There was a pleasing mix of heads, deputies and other staff and governors, who were pleased to be part of the experience. Thanks are due to our good friend Will Ryan who stepped in to lead the day at short notice. He is now an honorary member of NASS. Following the success of the conference we hope to arrange others later in 2018, weather permitting of course!

### **Other links/school visits/meeting etc.:**

There have been many interactions between NASS and other groups and individuals over the past year and these include:

- | Paul Armstrong at Manchester University re: Laurel Trust
- | Trustees at Laurel Trust
- | David Reynold at Swansea University
- | Kay Smith at Huddersfield University
- | Midori from Japan who has spent time with Barbara
- | Andy Lancashire for North Yorkshire CC
- | Sam Twistleton / Sean Cavan from SHU
- | All the heads/teachers from the research project
- | Colleagues from the School Food Plan Alliance
- | Colleagues who attended the LACA Conference in October
- | Cumbria heads, who attended a meeting in April about sharing knowledge and information
- | The small school heads groups in Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Shropshire
- | Heads of all the schools, far too numerous to mention who have been visited, supported or provided information for the newsletter
- | Colleagues, who have been encountered at national or regional conferences during the year.

Apologies for any I have omitted.

Whilst the future looks bright and we have much to celebrate, there are still many challenges ahead. We have had reports of schools closing during this past year despite the best efforts of Barbara and Mervyn to prevent such occurrences. There may be others in the pipeline. There is no doubt the dramatic changes brought about by ruthless government policies since 2010 are taking their toll. The growth of MATs and the haphazard fashion in which many are being developed – particularly those under Diocesan control, leaves a sense of frustration. It is still our remit to ensure that those under threat of closure are given the necessary advice, guidance and active support when such plans are mooted. It is also our duty to provide the same advice, guidance and support *before* such action becomes necessary. The brochures and other publicity materials will provide some guidance there. The higher profile through the website, Twitter etc. along with the Laurel Trust report should be of great benefit here too.

The ability of NASS to respond rapidly to the ever-changing educational landscape, even before the Brexit saga unfolds, will continue to be crucial. The work of the Banbury steering group in navigating a path

through these difficulties remains crucial. Of late there have been many fruitful discussions about future developments. Once again, the great experience of the entire group has been vital and the willingness to look at every possibility remains key to progress. It is our role to ensure that we prepare our colleagues in small schools for the future whilst ensuring that we retain our core belief in the value of the small school model. We will also endeavour to support colleagues in the maintained nursery sector in resisting any efforts to disrupt their work through misguided government initiatives. The nursery schools continue to achieve the highest Ofsted outcomes at every inspection.

With this in mind grateful thanks must go to Barbara, Kathryn, Rosie, Mervyn and Andrew for their tremendous work. Alongside this, Roger and John for their work on the committee; George for providing an external insight and Ralph for his work on the newsletter – also need to be acknowledged. My thanks to you all.

6. Finance Report:

a. Andrew presented the accounts for the period 1st September 2016 to 31st December 2017. The result for the first period of the Charity from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017 showed a loss of £3882.25. This loss had been planned as part of the Charity launch. However a fall in the number of members was cause for concern. A continuation of this trend would require the organisation to make reductions in their regular expenditure. Plans are in hand to reduce the cost of the printed newsletter, which will in future be produced and distributed on line; hard copies would continue to be produced on request. The accounts were agreed, proposed by Roger Hamblin and seconded by Kathryn Solly.

b. Andrew requested that Mr. D. Woodage should be elected as examiner of the Accounts. This was agreed being proposed by Roger Hamblin and seconded by Kathryn Solly.

7. Election of Trustees: John Chamberlain and Richard Maudsley had notified their wish to resign as Trustees, Richard would be continuing as a member. It was agreed that Mervyn Benford, Roger Hamblin, Kathryn Solly, Neil Short, Barbara Taylor and Andrew Taylor would continue as Trustees of the charity. Whilst the number of Trustees is enough to meet the charity constitution we should look to increasing this number by at least 2 new trustees. With the loss of Richard Maudsley we need to replace our church representative, Barbara and Neil would make enquiries about the replacement of the church representative.

8. There being no notified other business the meeting closed at 11.30am