

**HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL  
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY  
HELD AT 7.15PM ON TUESDAY 11 MARCH 2014**

**Present:** Mr. K. Balfe Mr. C. Minton (Chairman)  
Mr. K. Down Mrs. S. Morrison.  
Mr. T. Fitzakerly Mrs. K. Rowe  
Mr. C. Hall Mr. M. Seaman-Hill (items 1 – 5.2)  
Mrs. N. Job Mr. S. Sprawson  
Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher) Mrs. L. Vallance  
Mrs. J. Marland

**In attendance:** Mr. T. Hankin Clerk  
Mr. J. Crowther Deputy Headteacher  
Miss B. Sprawson Head Girl

**PART 1 BUSINESS**

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Mr. Minton welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. S. Burgoyne, Mrs. M. King, Mrs. M. McPhail and Mrs. K. Smith. Miss F. Barnard & Mr. G. Montgomery were absent.

**2. Notification of items to be raised under Any Other Business.**

None

**3. Declarations of Interest**

Governors were reminded of the need to declare any interest in the items for discussion. Mr. Minton clarified that although staff Governors are naturally interested in all items, a declaration needs to be made where the item relates to staff matters, or any other item a Governor has a direct or indirect personal interest in. The Governor should then absent themselves from any discussions of the matter.

Mr. Balfe, Mr. Down, Mrs. Manning and Mrs. Rowe all declared an interest in the Part II business of the meeting.

**4. Minutes of previous meeting.**

4.1 Approval

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2013 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Matters arising

Student Global Leadership Institute (from item 1). Mrs. Manning advised that 3 students have been selected to attend this years SGLI conference in Hawaii in July.

Miss Sprawson explained that the 3 attendees from 2013 were involved in the selection for this year and gave an overview of the tasks that the applicants had to complete as part of the selection process.

Academies Capital Maintenance Fund (from item 7.3). Mrs. Manning advised that two bids have been made to the ACMF this year and a decision is due next month.

Curriculum changes communication (from item 7.4). Mrs. Manning confirmed that parents were informed via the school newsletter of issues relating to the changes being introduced by the Government and further updates will be provided as appropriate.

Learning Leaders (from item 7.1). Mrs. Manning confirmed that the Learning Leaders will be attending the summer meeting of the Governing Body to talk about their activities in school.

## 5. **Reports**

### 5.1 Headteacher's report

Mrs. Manning referred to her report and highlighted a number of key points.

#### Progress on the School Improvement Plan (SIP)

- The SIP has been reviewed at the half year stage.
- Governors are invited to attend some or all of the INSET day on 22 April when a full review will take place. They are also welcome to join their link departments who will be planning for next year.

#### Teaching & Learning

- The Learning Leaders attended the first British WE Day at Wembley Arena. WE Day is a movement to empower a generation of young global citizens to take action as agents of social change.
- The Learning Leaders are now planning their project which will be shared with the whole school and at the summer meeting of Governors.

#### Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- The credit training scheme for staff continues to run with a wide range of training and development initiatives taking place.
- The list of CPD undertaken by staff was noted.

#### Secondary Transfer and Admissions

- There were 610 applications for HGS for entry in September 2014 (561 in 2013). 166 places have been offered.
- There are currently 93 students on the waiting list and a number of appeals have already been made.
- Any student who was allocated a place under the Hitchin parish rule will this year be asked to provide confirmation of their address. Letters are being issued by the Admissions team at the Local Authority. By undertaking this check now, it is hoped that any uncertainty over the validity of an address can be resolved quickly before a student joins the school.
- Mrs. Manning confirmed that students on the Continuing Interest (CI) list are allocated places in accordance with the agreed admissions criteria.

#### Student Attainment and Achievement

- A lot of work is being done on attendance, linked to the Government guidance on the issue of fixed term penalties for students with poor attendance at school.

- Any penalties levied are retained by the Local Authority.

#### Progress on the Headteacher's Objectives

- The report includes an update on progress on each objective.

#### Safeguarding

- Hertfordshire County Council is working with Hertfordshire Police on a new programme highlighting the problems of sexual exploitation in the County. A further briefing on the programme will take place shortly.
- The school is also working with students on the issue of self harm, which has become an increasing problem nationally.

Mrs. Manning also reported on a staff wellbeing initiative being run by all 3 secondary schools in the town, which has been well received. She also advised that there is NUT strike action planned for 26 March. The priority is to try and ensure examination classes are not detrimentally affected, although it is not known how many staff in school will be involved. An omission to the CPD report was updated – A whole staff INSET with representatives from Knights Templar and Barnwell schools took place this term with Andy Brumby who spoke about Stretching our Most Able students.

Mrs. Manning was asked about the school's involvement with the Hitchin Partnership. She confirmed that the school makes some use of their services, but that a large part of the Partnerships work is in primary schools. The secondary schools recognise that this early intervention does provide a benefit when a student transfers.

Mrs. Manning was thanked for her report.

#### 5.2 Asset Management Committee

Mr. Seaman-Hill reported on the meeting held on 25 February 2014. He summarised the matters discussed which included the updating of the asbestos register, electrical work, replacement of the doors to the Lower Block hall, the need to replace a boiler in the main school building, the Salix funding obtained to install new energy efficient lighting and roof leaks following the recent heavy rain.

Work on the new Sixth Form Centre is progressing well despite the wet weather and is still within budget and on target for completion in mid July.

Summer work this year will focus on fabric and premises maintenance including new water tanks and replacement electrical distribution boards.

Mr. Hankin was asked about the age of the failed boiler and whether its replacement, along with the other unforeseen work, has any impact on the budget. He confirmed that the boiler is considerably older than the other two that heat the main school building so hopefully there will not be a need for another replacement for some time. The work that has been completed or planned is all covered by the budget allocated for repairs & maintenance.

**The report was received.**

#### 5.3 Admissions Committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 10 December 2013. The main focus of the meeting had been a discussion of potential options for the 2015/16 Admission criteria, in light of the forecast increase in demand for secondary school places in Hitchin. The

three secondary schools in the town are all in agreement regarding the need for expansion by 2018 to handle the projected growth, but there is also a need for additional places from 2015.

The committee had considered four options and the Local Authority Admissions Service provided modelling data based on 2013 admissions to allow the impact of the options to be assessed. A long discussion had taken place on the benefits and disadvantages of each option. As a result of this, it was agreed to undertake an admissions consultation on two changes to the criteria, namely the increase in places allocated to the Parish of Hitchin from 65 to 80, and a change to the sibling rule so that it only applies to siblings who live in the priority area for the school.

Mrs. Job then reported on the meeting held on 11 February. This meeting took place part way through the admission consultation period and reviewed the feedback received at that time. There had been another long and detailed discussion regarding the proposed changes. Feedback had been received both for and against the proposed changes. Having considered all the comments, the committee agreed that there was no simple black and white solution that addressed all the concerns raised whilst also meeting the need of accommodating some of the projected increased demand for Hitchin. The modelling data provided showed that the option being consulted on would provide increased places in Hitchin and that the impact on the number of places allocated to village parishes would be minimal. The extra places for Hitchin would primarily come from a reduction in places allocated to Letchworth and the committee agreed that the reasons for the proposed change to the criteria were still valid.

The consultation period closed on 28 February and the committee reviewed by email the additional feedback received since their last meeting. Further comments for and against had been received, but these were all similar to those raised and discussed on 11 February.

Governors discussed the proposals and Mrs. Job confirmed that if the proposed change is made to the sibling rule, it will affect any student already in school who moves outside the parishes in the priority area.

Mr. Minton noted that the changes being discussed were for 2015/16 admissions and that it was probable that the criteria will need to be reviewed and discussed annually whilst the projected growth in demand for places continues. Governors agreed that the popularity of the school, as shown by the admission numbers referred to in the Headteacher's report, meant that it was never going to be possible to offer a place to everyone who wanted to attend the school.

Having taken into account all the feedback received during the consultation, the discussions that had taken place at the Admissions Committee meetings and the modelling data provided by the Local Authority, Mrs. Job proposed that the proposed admission criteria for 2015/16 be adopted. This was seconded by Mr. Hall.

Ten Governors voted in favour, with none against. There were two abstentions. The proposed criteria for 2015/16 was therefore **AGREED**.

Mrs. Manning was asked whether there was any further information available regarding the potential expansion in 2018. She advised that the Local Authority have confirmed that expansion in Hitchin is still required but no timescale has been provided regarding the planning and preparation for this.

## 5.4 Curriculum & Performance Committee

Mr. Hall reported on the meeting held on 11 February 2014. The meeting had reviewed the November 2013 examination results information and how these will affect the performance tables. The RAISE online data was also reviewed. It was pleasing to note that Pupil Premium students achieve in line with National averages in English and above National averages in Mathematics.

A Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) report is reviewed at each meeting and the committee considered the support being provided to School Action and School Action Plus students.

The latest government education initiatives were reviewed. Media reports regarding the global PISA tests were discussed. Mrs. Manning advised that she has not yet been able to find a school in Hertfordshire that has taken part in these, so it is difficult to understand how the data and findings can be representative of the UK.

Mr. Balfe commented on the leaning walks process which had been discussed in the meeting. He stated that the NUT, NASUWT and some staff found these walks to be an unnecessary addition to lesson observations and that their inclusion could bring lesson observation time over the limit. In addition there is a postcard feedback following a learning walk which Mr Balfe chose not to accept as feedback suggests that this is an observation.

Mrs. Manning also confirmed that the guidance from the Government on Trade Union facility time relates to schools that have staff who are Area or Regional Trade Union officials. The school does not have any staff who undertake these roles.

The committee had reviewed and approved the updated Controlled Assessment and Administration of Medicines Policies and this was **NOTED**.

**The report was received.**

## 5.5 Finance Committee

In the absence of Mrs. McPhail, Mr. Hankin reported on the meeting held on 25 February 2014.

The current year budget position was reviewed and it was noted that everything was in-line with expectations. A number of savings have been made on renewal of contracts. The 5 year projections show that expenditure is forecast to exceed income over the coming years, but this is on a worst case scenario allowing for cost increases but no change in income. Funding information for 2014/15 is due this month. The pre-16 funding allocation has been received and does show a rise for next year and once the post-16 information has arrived the projections will be updated. A change to the calculation method for Sixth Form funding is being introduced for 2014/15 and the impact of this is being considered.

The Education Funding Agency is also considering the introduction of a pooled insurance arrangement for Academies to replace the need for academies to hold their own individual insurance. Further information is awaited.

The committee had reviewed and approved the updated Governors' Allowance Policy and this was **NOTED**.

**The report was received.**

## 5.6 Personnel Committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 11 February 2014.

Following the question raised at the previous Governing Body meeting, the committee had received information on the number of staff who had been in receipt of pay progression this year. All staff eligible for an increase progressed. Mrs. Manning advised that support and guidance for Headteachers and Governors on the process to be followed for the new pay review policy is being made available.

The meeting also received an update on staffing and changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme

**The report was received.**

## 6. Report from the Head Girl

Miss Sprawson gave a report on events in school this term.

- In February, there were 3 very successful evening performances of Oliver which involved a large number of students and staff.
- Sporting activity has continued with considerable success at local, district, county and national level. The trampolining team are Eastern Region Champions.
- A number of Year 10 students have been working with primary school students to complete their Leadership 1 qualification.
- There will be an inter-house lunchtime fancy dress walk for Sports Relief along with a Staff verses Sixth Form Netball match.
- Houses are holding a variety of events in support of their chosen charities.
- Another food drive is planned for 27 March and the Learning Leaders are helping to organise this with the hope that they will continue to arrange these after the current Year 13 organisers leave.
- Hitchin Boys' School are interested in setting up an ambassador scheme similar to the one operated by the school, and some students are participating in an assembly for Year 11 and 12 students to talk about being an ambassador.
- The next rounds of the Sixth Form Coles-Swinburn cup, which is a challenge event between the three schools in the consortium, will focus on Music and Gym and Dance.

Miss Sprawson was thanked for her very informative report.

## 7. Link Governors

There were no reports from any link Governor visits.

## 8. Any Other Business

Governors were reminded of the 'Emily – The Making of a Militant Suffragette' play being performed in school on 19<sup>th</sup> March.

Mr. Minton also made Governors aware of two books provided by the Hertfordshire Association of School Governors – "The Perfect Ofsted School Governor" and "the Magic Weaving Business" by Sir John Jones.

## 9. Date of next meetings

Tuesday 3 June 2014 (to approve the School Improvement Plan).