

**HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL  
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY  
HELD AT 7.00PM ON TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2013**

**Present:** Mr. K. Balfe Mr. C. Minton (Chairman)  
Mr. S. Burgoyne Mr. G. Montgomery  
Mr. C. Hall Mrs. K. Rowe  
Mrs. N. Job Mr. M. Seaman-Hill  
Mrs. M. King Mrs. K. Smith  
Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher) Mrs. L. Vallance  
Mrs. J. Marland  
Mrs. M. McPhail

**In attendance:** Mr. T. Hankin Clerk  
Miss B. Sprawson Head Girl  
Mr. A. Kariya (items 1-6) MHA MacIntyre Hudson  
Mr. B. Chambers Head of Music

**PART 1 BUSINESS**

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Mr. Minton welcomed Mr. Montgomery, newly appointed Parent Governor, to the meeting along with Mr. Kariya and Mr. Chambers.

Apologies were received and accepted from Miss F. Barnard, Mr. K. Down, Mr. T. Fitzakerly & Mrs. S. Morrison.

**Student Global Leadership Institute presentation**

The Governors received a presentation from the three Sixth Form students who represented the school in August 2013 at the SGLI in Hawaii. Participants came from 7 countries including the USA, Jordan and China. This was the second time that HGS has been invited to participate and we are also the only school from the UK involved in the project.

The focus for the 2013 gathering was food, and participants were involved in research, community tasks, data collection and presentations on a variety of food related issues.

Each attending school has returned home with a project to organise in their local area and the project the three have chosen is the support of the local Foodbank. Students are being asked to bring in certain types of food for distribution to those in need, and presentations have also been made to others schools in the town, seeking their support.

All three referred to the impact that attending the SGLI has had on their own development and thanked the Governors for supporting their attendance.

Mrs. Manning reported that the school has been invited to participate again in 2014 and the selection process for attendees has already begun.

Mr. Minton thanked the students for their presentation and asked that the Governors be kept informed on the progress of the project. He wished them well with their work.

## **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. There were none.

## **4. Minutes of previous meeting.**

### 4.1 Approval

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2013 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

### 4.2 Matters arising

*Examination results (from item 7.1).* Mrs. Manning advised that all GCSE re-marks have been completed. There were 28 grade changes as a result of re-marks and 68 grade changes following re-moderation. 25% of papers returned for re-mark had the grade changed and there is great concern over the reliability of marking by the examination boards.

Governors asked whether the issue has affected any students entering the Sixth Form or seeking university places. Mrs. Manning confirmed that the school has allowed a small number of students to take a Science A level, despite not initially gaining a B grade at GCSE, based on their predicted grades. Following re-marks, most now have the required grade. One student had dropped a subject following the AS results only to find that her grade was increased from D to B following re-mark. She is now continuing with the subject at A2.

## **5. Financial Statements 2013**

Mr. Kariya introduced this item by confirming that the audit process has been very smooth, no major issues were identified and he was presenting a clean set of accounts. The draft statements were reviewed in some detail at the November Finance Committee meeting. The Governing Body were now asked to approve these, after which they would be submitted to the Department for Education, Education Funding Agency and Companies House.

### 5.1 Management Letter

The Management letter from MHA MacIntyre Hudson was **NOTED**. There were no issues of concern or matters requiring further attention.

### 5.2 Financial Statements for the period ending 31 August 2013.

Mr. Kariya confirmed that the audit report is unqualified and that the financial statements comply with Company and Charity reporting requirements. No issues have been found with any of the information provided or the controls that are in place.

He was asked about transfers between restricted funds and fixed assets and explained the accounting process for this.

**Mr. Minton asked Governors whether they were happy to approve the Financial Statements of Hitchin Girls' School for the period ending 31 August 2013. Mrs. McPhail proposed approval, seconded by Mr. Burgoyne, and this was unanimously AGREED.**

### 5.3 Letter of Representation

The Letters of Representation to MHA MacIntyre Hudson were also unanimously **APPROVED** for signing on behalf of the Governing Body.

## 6. Appointment of Auditors

Mr. Minton thanked MHA MacIntyre Hudson for their audit work and proposed that they be re-appointed as auditors for 2013/14. This was unanimously **AGREED**.

Mr. Kariya left the meeting.

## 7. Reports

### 7.1 Headteacher's report

Mrs. Manning referred to her report, distributed prior to the meeting. She advised that the end of term newsletter will contain more information on all that has taken place this term. She then referred to a number of items in her report.

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

- The school has achieved Stage 3 'Investors in Careers' accreditation, only the second school in Hertfordshire to achieve this.
- A working party has been formed to establish a whole school marking policy and identify good practice. This is a post OfSTED action. Marking is one of the biggest time issues for staff and the group are looking at ways of effectively managing marking. Mrs. McPhail thanked staff for the time spent on marking.
- The school has also achieved Full International Schools Award accreditation and been invited to participate again in the Student Global Leadership Institute conference in Hawaii for a third year.
- A new Healthy Schools Co-ordinator has been appointed and is working with Healthy Schools prefects on promoting initiatives and information.
- Staff well-being co-ordinators are meeting regularly with the Deputy Headteacher and a programme of events is part of the credit training system.

#### Curriculum

- There is a huge amount of uncertainty regarding curriculum changes, with information being released gradually by the Department for Education (DfE).
- Final content for GCSE changes for teaching from 2015 is still awaited and this is affecting decisions about the Key Stage 3 curriculum.
- National Curriculum levels are being removed, but there still needs to be a system in place to measure progression.

#### Teaching & Learning

- The school has a group of student Learning Leaders who are taking a keen interest in teaching and learning.
- They have asked to attend a future Governors meeting to talk about what they are doing and this was warmly welcomed by the Governors.

### School Self Evaluation

- The programme of self evaluation for the term was noted.
- An overview of outcomes will be discussed at the Curriculum & Performance committee.

### Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

- The list of CPD undertaken by staff was noted.
- A number of twilight CPD sessions have taken place as part of the credit training programme.

### Progress on the Headteacher's Objectives

- The objectives set in October as part of the Headteacher's Performance Management review were noted.
- Progress on these will be reported at each meeting.

### Safeguarding

- This is a new section in the report.
- Four members of the Senior Leadership Team have either updated or completed safer recruitment training.
- Assemblies have been held and presentations made to staff focusing on issues surrounding self harm, which is a national issue but also an increasing problem in parts of Hertfordshire.

The staffing update, attendance data and exclusions report were reviewed. Governors noted the low level of exclusions which reflected the strong pastoral support and guidance provided to students, along with the provision of clear behaviour policies.

Mrs. Manning was thanked for her comprehensive report.

## 7.2 Admissions Committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 5 November 2013 which had received an update on September 2013 admissions.

The meeting had also discussed the requirement for additional secondary school places in the town to accommodate future increases in demand, both in the short term (2015/16) and longer term (2018/19). An additional 63 places are required in 2015/16, reducing to around 40 extra for the next 2 years, but from 2018/19 100 more places are needed. All three secondary schools have been discussing with the Local Authority how this demand can be met.

To meet the need from 2018/19, the Local Authority have recognised that additional buildings, facilities and resources will be required to accommodate the additional numbers and they hope to start planning for this from next year. Discussions have also been held on ways of managing the more immediate demand for places from 2015/16.

Mr. Hankin advised that, since the Admissions Committee, further meetings have been held with the Local Authority regarding ways in which the three Secondary Schools could help provide for the need in 2015/16 and the school is continuing to liaise with Hitchin Boys' School and The Priory School on this issue. A number of options are possible, some suggested by the Local Authority and some by the school and the Local Authority has modelled the impact of the various alternatives at the

school's request. This modelling information and a covering briefing note will be circulated to all Governors prior to an additional admissions committee meeting to discuss the matter. Any changes to the admission criteria for the school for 2015/2016 will require a consultation period and the statutory timescale for this means that a decision is required on any change by the end of this term. It was **AGREED** that an extra Admissions Committee meeting will be held the following week and the Governing Body unanimously agreed to delegate to the Admissions Committee any decisions that need to be made regarding changes to the admissions criteria for 2015/16. All Governors are invited to attend this meeting, although only members of that committee will be able to vote.

**The report was received.**

Mr. Minton advised that Mrs. Vallance has asked to become a member of both the Admissions and Curriculum & Performance Committees instead of serving on the Finance Committee, and this was **AGREED**.

### 7.3 Asset Management Committee

Mr. Seaman-Hill reported on the meeting held on 22 October 2012. He highlighted the considerable amount of work that had taken place over the summer and the ongoing projects looking at energy saving and replacement of the glass doors to the Lower Hall.

He also reported that work started as planned on the Sixth Form Centre in August, with completion due in summer 2014, ready for the new academic year.

Mr. Hankin updated Governors on the issues that have occurred with Hertfordshire Highways regarding access to the site. When starting work, all the necessary planning conditions had been fully met, but Highways advised that North Herts. District Council had not included the necessary conditions regarding use of the access, despite being informed of these. This has led to a 6 week delay whilst the school and builders tried to resolve the matter with Highways. Permission has now been given for use of the groundsmans entrance for construction vehicles and work is underway again. This has affected the completion date, but the building is still due to be ready for the next academic year.

**The report was received.**

Mr. Hankin reported that the latest application round for grants from the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund is now open. Academies can submit two bids relating to building condition or expansion needs. Bids need to be submitted by 31 January 2014, with the decision due in April. If successful, funds must be spent by March 2015. The guidelines this year state that schools that have previously received funds via this scheme will not be given priority.

The school will still submit two bids and these will relate to improvements to the electrical installation and wiring in the main school building, and the refurbishment of the lower block basement to provide additional art and technology space.

### 7.4 Curriculum & Performance Committee

Mr. Hall reported on the meeting held on 22 October 2013. The structure of the meeting had been change to clearly show focus on the key areas that Ofsted had looked at – Self Evaluation, Special Educational Needs and Student Achievement.

Considerable discussion took place regarding the problems experienced with the Exam Boards and the marking and grades, as mentioned in the Headteacher's report.

The rapid curriculum changes being introduced were also discussed, including the difficulty the school faces in knowing when to pass information on to students and parents. Parents trust the school to do what is best for the student, but the pace of change and lack of clarity from the Department for Education often makes it difficult to know when and what to pass on. It was agreed that parents would welcome reassurance that the school is aware of the changes taking place and will keep them informed regarding any aspects affecting their daughter. Mrs. Manning agreed to produce an item for the newsletter.

The committee had reviewed and approved the updated Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy and this was **NOTED**.

**The report was received.**

#### 7.5 Finance Committee

Mrs. McPhail reported on the meeting held on 5 November 2015 which had included a detailed review of the draft report and accounts presented by the Auditors. The meeting had also reviewed the current year budget and 5 year projections. Key to ensuring financial stability is close monitoring of the financial position, linked to future funding changes and movement in student numbers.

The committee had reviewed and approved the updated Financial Procedures Manual and Fixed Asset and Depreciation Policy and this was **NOTED**.

**The report was received.**

### 8. Report from the Head Girl

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

There has been considerable sporting success at local, district, county and national level with many individuals and teams achieving great results. Dancers have also been involved at county youth level.

Charity events have continued with a variety of house and whole school events including cake sales, an X Factor and the Christmas Fair.

The Sixth Form have attended development activities including an Inner drive workshop looking at seven steps to success and a talk focusing on Study Skills. Most Year 13 students have now completed their UCAS applications.

The Sixth Form Coles-Swinburn cup, which is a challenge event between the three schools in the consortium, is underway and a social gathering is planned following the next event to help build ties between the 3 schools.

Sixth Form Ambassadors are working with local schools, community groups and also supporting clubs in school.

Miss Sprawson was thanked for her report and Governors were pleased to note the continued sporting success across a wide range of sports, despite the shortage of PE facilities.

Miss Sprawson then left the meeting.

**9. Link Governors**

The list of Link Governors was reviewed. Mr. Montgomery agreed to become the Link Governor for Classics and it was agreed to ask Mr. Sprawson, a newly appointed Community Governor, to be the link for Philosophy & Ethics and Learning for Life.

Mrs. McPhail reported on her visit to the Geography department where things are going well. Mr. Fitzakerly had submitted a report on his visit to the Modern Foreign Languages department where he was impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and students and noted that the department is already making progress against objectives in the School Improvement Plan.

**10. Any Other Business**

There was none.

**11. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 11 March 2014