

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY
HELD AT 7.00PM ON TUESDAY 26 JUNE 2012

Present:

Mr. D. Ashley	Mrs. M. McPhail
Mr. S. Burgoyne	Mr. D. Miller
Mr. K. Down	Mr. C. Minton (Chairman)
Mr. T. Fitzakerly	Mrs. S. Morrison
Mr. R. Johnson	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mrs. M. King	Mr. M. Seaman Hill
Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)	Mrs. K. Smith
Mrs. J. Marland	Ms. T. Stojko

In attendance: Mr. T. Hankin (Clerk)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. C. Hall and Mrs. N. Job. The Chairman advised the meeting that, unfortunately, Mr. Fatharly has resigned as a Governor and Member of the Academy Trust due to work commitments which are preventing him from attending meetings. A ballot for a new parent governor will take place in September.

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. Ashley declared an interest, as the applicant for Village Green status, in any discussion regarding the Benslow field.

4. Minutes of previous meetings.

4.1 Approval

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2012 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2012 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Matters arising

School Improvement Plan 2011/12 (from item 9 of 12 June). Mrs. Manning confirmed that she will provide a report at the meeting in September on those areas of this years plan where the outcomes are not yet known.

5. Reports

5.1 Headteachers' report

Mrs. Manning presented a summary of her report. A number of items that would normally appear in the report have been covered in the minutes of recent committee meetings and the Governing Body meeting held on 12 June and have not been repeated. Governors were also reminded to read the end of term newsletter as this will contain reports of the main events taking place during the last few weeks of term. Items highlighted included:

- Olympics week – this week is Olympics week and includes whole school zumba, rugby, cheerleading, the Great Britain jump rope team, and wheelchair Basketball. Sports Day will have an Olympic theme with students adopting a country and processing behind flags onto the field, complete with mascots.
- BTEC – there has been a change to the decision concerning the new BTEC Health & Social Care and ICT courses due to uncertainty regarding the specification. All students and their parents affected by the change have been notified.
- Moodle – work progresses in readiness for the new learning platform which will be in use from September.
- Buildings
 - The Department for Education has informed the school that it has not been successful with bids for funding under the Academies Capital Maintenance Fund. Feedback on why no projects were approved has been requested. The decision taken by the Governors on 12 June to proceed with the replacement of the mobile classroom does mean that this urgent project can still proceed.
 - Sport England have also declined the application for a grant under the Inspired Facilities fund towards the refurbishment of the Highbury courts. The main reason is the lack of floodlighting, for which the school was unable to obtain planning consent. Refurbishment will still proceed over the summer holiday, but this will use funds earmarked for the final stage of the project, the relocation of car parking from the edge of the main field to a new area on the Highbury site,
 - The Wolfson Foundation has approved a grant of £40,000 to assist with the refurbishment of the final science lab and the provision of a class set of notebook computers. This refurbishment will take place over the summer.
- Secondary transfer – The intake into Year 7 in September is 170, which includes 5 students admitted following appeal. There are still 51 students on the continuing interest list. The school has been advised that it cannot take any students from this list until numbers in Year 7 fall below the PAN of 165. Governors discussed the demand for places at the school and the need to re-visit numbers for all year groups. It was recognised that there is likely to be an optimum number for each year group and Mrs. Manning confirmed that a review and analysis of any potential increase would be carried out.
- Future demand for secondary places – the Local Authority has identified a need for additional places in 3 years time. The school has held meetings with the Local Authority in the past expressing a willingness to assist with this demand

but no discussions have taken place or proposals made recently with regard to this need. A response is awaited from the Director of Education at the Local Authority regarding the plans for Hitchin. Mrs. Manning confirmed that she would be seeking the involvement of Governors in pursuing matters if appropriate.

- Staff changes in July include the retirement of 5 long serving staff and the relocation of 4 other staff.
- Exclusions - the slight increase in one day exclusions in summer 2011 compared to previous terms figures was partly due to some malicious damage to toilets.

Mrs. Manning was thanked for her report.

5.2 Admissions Committee Report

In the absence of Mrs. Job, Mrs. Manning reported on the meeting of the Admissions Committee held on 9 May 2012.

- 40 appeals were made regarding the September 2012 allocation and heard by the Local Authority Appeals Service, and 5 upheld.
- The Determined Admission Rules for 2013/2014 have been published on the school website.

The report was received.

5.3 Asset Management Committee

Mr. Seaman-Hill gave a report from the meeting held on 16 May 2012. The main items discussed were:-

- Progress of the Highbury development with the new pavilion nearing completion and tenders in progress for the refurbishment of the courts. Mr. Seaman-Hill noted that the school was fortunate in having good professional support from the Architect and Chartered Surveyor for the project.
- The replacement of the mobile with a new two storey teaching block.
- Initial feasibility studies regarding the use of the lower field, which will be reviewed by the committee.
- Progress with the refurbishment of Highbury House.

Mr. Hankin advised the Governors that a combined opening event is planned for the new pavilion and courts along with the refurbished Highbury House, and a date in early October will be confirmed shortly.

The report was received.

5.4 Curriculum & Performance Committee

In the absence of Mr. Hall, Mrs. Morrison gave a report of the meeting held on 16 May 2012. The main items discussed were:-

- The potential impact of any expansion of the new Studio School.
- A review of the January examination results and progress towards 2012 targets.

- The results of the 2012 Parent Questionnaire.
- The review and approval of the Attendance Policy and Young Carers Policy.
The committee NOTED the approval of these policies.
- The review and recommendation for approval of the Home School Agreement and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy.
The committee noted the recommendation and APPROVED these policies.

In response to a question, Mrs. Manning confirmed that the procedure and support available for students on long term absence due to illness are detailed in the attendance policy.

The report was received.

5.5 Finance Committee

Mr. Ashley gave a report on the meeting held on 9 May 2012 and the budget discussion on 12 June. Key points to note were:

- The use of some reserves towards the cost of the new two storey classroom in place of the mobile classroom.
- The link between student numbers, staff costs and maintaining a balanced budget. The school continues to closely monitor class sizes and outcomes.
- The freedom of Academies to review and amend Published Admission Numbers without statutory consultation compared with the statutory consultation required within fixed time scales for admissions criteria changes.
- The regular review at each finance meeting of medium term financial projections to ensure necessary actions are taken in sufficient time.
- The review and approval of the Anti-Bribery Policy and Statement of Accounting Policies.

The committee NOTED the approval of these policies.

- The review and recommendation for approval of the Data Protection Policy.
The committee noted the recommendation and APPROVED the policy.

The report was received.

5.6 Consortium Governance

Mr. Minton reported on the meeting held on 8 May 2012 between the Headteachers and Governor representatives of the three secondary schools in Hitchin. The role of the group is to review and oversee the operation of the Sixth Form Consortium. Matters discussed included:

- The review the funding exchange process and approval of costs.
- The need to pay for consortium transport costs in future.
- The ending of funding from SAPG (Strategic Area Partnership Group) for the consortium. Some funds will be transferred from their reserves for next year, but following this, the three schools will need to bear the cost of employing the consortium co-ordinator.
- All members delighted at the closer working and very successful relationship between the students in the three schools and the collaboration between the

Head Boys and Girls. This included training and handover to incoming prefects, a very good example of succession planning.

The report was received.

6. Consultation review and recommendations

Mrs. Manning reported on the feedback received following the recent consultation process regarding the possible removal of the 10 minute afternoon registration slot and the introduction of blazers for students in Years 10 and 11. Parents, students, staff and Governors were all invited to respond, along with parents of those students joining the school in September. The results of the consultation, including the additional comments, have been reviewed by the Senior Leadership Group.

6.1 Afternoon registration.

A large majority were in favour of removing the 10 minute afternoon registration slot. The main benefit was seen as the removal of the need to move large numbers of students around the school twice within 10 minutes. Some concerns were expressed about a possible rush from lunchtime activities to the start of period 4 and the lack of a sharp start to afternoon lessons. Mrs. Manning confirmed that students will still need to be registered, but that the lesson register for period 4 will be used for this, and is to be taken within the first 15 minutes of the lesson. There would be a bell at 1.25pm to remind students and staff to move to lessons. The change would mean the school day ending for students at 3.30pm which is in line with both Hitchin Boys' and The Priory Schools. The majority of staff who responded were also in favour of the change.

Having reviewed the responses and associated comments, Mrs. Manning therefore proposed that, ***from September 2012 the 10 minute afternoon registration slot is removed and that the Period 4 lesson register becomes the afternoon registration mark. The school day would end at 3.30pm.*** This change was **APPROVED.**

6.2 Blazers for students in Years 10 & 11

Mrs. Manning advised that the introduction of blazers has been raised by the School Council on a number of occasions, and following the latest request, it was decided to undertake this consultation. The results show a majority in favour but with a quarter of those responding not in favour. Those who supported the idea referred to smartness and appearance, and the likely longer durability of blazers compared to jumpers. Mrs. Manning advised Governors that some students have been trialling a new version of the school jumper which appears to be longer lasting than the current version. Some wished to see the introduction of blazers for all students in Years 7 to 11. The majority of the comments received against the proposal expressed concern about the additional cost of a blazer compared to a jumper, especially in the current financial climate. The extra cost is likely to be between £10 & £15. Some indicated that they believed they would end up having to purchase both.

Mrs. Manning confirmed that making blazers optional was considered but felt that this could be divisive. If the decision to proceed was made, blazers would be introduced

for students in Year 10 first, with all students in Years 10 & 11 expected to wear them from the following year.

Governors noted that the Hitchin Education Foundation has funds available to support families with the cost of uniform purchases and parents could be encouraged to apply for support. In the event, the appropriate application form to the Foundation could be published on Parentmail. In addition, if a blazer was introduced, and a student still wished to wear a jumper, then a simple plain blue jumper without the school logo would be sufficient, and cheaper than the current jumper.

Following lengthy discussion of the benefits of introducing blazers and the concerns raised against the proposal, Mr. Ashley proposed that ***'The Governing Body agree the introduction of a blazer as part of the uniform for students in Years 10 and 11 and that the school inform parents that financial assistance is available through the Hitchin Education Foundation if this is an additional financial burden. In addition, if a student wishes to wear a jumper underneath the blazer, a plain navy blue v neck jumper without a school badge will be acceptable.'*** The proposal was seconded by Mr. Seaman-Hill.

The Chairman asked Governors to vote on the proposal with the following result:-

In favour	10
Against	2
Abstentions	4

The proposal was therefore **AGREED**.

7. Committee Terms of Reference

Mr. Minton advised the meeting that the proposed change to the terms of reference for committees is to clarify the approval process for school policies. The Schedule of Policies is split into two parts. The first covers those that the Department for Education state that an Academy must have, and the second includes policies required by other legislation or good practice. The change authorises the relevant committee to approve those policies detailed in the second part, advising the main Governing Body of the decisions taken, with the committees reviewing and making recommendations for the policies listed in the first section which will require final approval by the Governing Body.

The change was APPROVED.

8. Link Governors

A number of Governors gave a brief report of their department visit on the INSET day in April.

Mr. Fitzakerly spent time in the modern Foreign Languages department. He noted the introduction of the teaching of Spanish in place of German. Mrs. Manning advised that this was in response to a change in demand with Spanish increasingly popular in primary schools.

Mrs. Morrison visited the English & Drama department and reported on very positive discussions about the future and how the department was moving forward.

Mr. Down spent time in the science department who were discussing the department vision. They were particularly supportive of cross department sharing of best practice.

Mr. Johnson joined the PE department and was impressed by the detailed planning that takes place, along with the review of student feedback. The links with many local sporting groups was also encouraging.

Mrs. Manning confirmed that she will distribute the department vision statement and development plan to the relevant link Governor.

9. Schedule of meeting dates

The proposed dates for 2012/13 were reviewed. It was agreed that termly meetings of the Governing Body should start at 7.15pm instead of 7pm. The dates were **AGREED**.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Art Display

Mrs. McPhail expressed her admiration for the work of the art department and the art display and exhibition of student work currently on show. Governors were encouraged to view the display.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Body will be on Wednesday 19 September 2012 at 6.30pm.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.