

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL
MINUTES OF AN ONLINE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY
HELD AT 6.00PM ON TUESDAY 16 MARCH 2021

Present: Mr. K. Balfe Mr. S. Lucas
Mr. K. Down Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Mr. G. Edwards Dr. K. Middleton
Mrs. C. Emmings (Items 1-7) Mrs. K. Rowe
Mr. T. Fitzakerly Mr. T. Scott
Mr. C. Hall (Chairman) Mr. M. Winter
Mrs. N. Job
Mrs. M. King

In attendance: Mr. T. Hankin (Clerk)
Miss T. Brewster (Items 1-5) (Head Girl)

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mr. Hall welcomed everyone to the online meeting of the Governing Body. Apologies were received and accepted from Ms. J Briggs, Mr. S. Mills, Mr. M. Seaman Hill and Mr. J. Crowther (Deputy Head). Mr. Hall welcomed Miss Brewster, Head Girl.

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 pecuniary or other interest in the items for discussion. There were none.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record and confirmed by the Chair.

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

5. Head Girls' report

Miss Brewster gave a report on some of the recent activities in school. Key Stage 3 & 4 students have participated in a number of online and remote challenges. Participation in online learning has been good and students have appreciated being able to see other students on screen.

At Key Stage 5, online learning has been welcomed by many students as it helps prepare for University, although some students have struggled. Students have generally welcomed being back at school and the structure that this provides. Students have not been able to visit Universities prior to making choices and a number are planning to take a gap year next year.

Students have concerns about the process introduced by the Government this year in place of the summer public exams. They appreciate the two week assessment periods being organised by the school which they feel is better than that offered in some other local schools, but there is still a lot of anxiety. They are worried about grades, content and lack of standardisation between subjects. They understand this is not the fault of the school but the way in which the system is being implemented by the Government and exam boards.

Governors discussed these concerns with the Head Girl. The school aims to give students as much time as possible with their teachers prior to the assessments, to allow them to consolidate their learning. Miss Brewster was thanked for her report and for raising the concerns and was asked to re-assure students that the Governors and Senior Leadership Team understand the pressures faced and will do all they can to help reassure students.

6. Covid019 update

Mrs. Manning updated Governors on the return to school which has gone relatively smoothly. The vast majority of staff and students are pleased to be back in school. Covid restrictions and adjustments remain in place. Attendance is high.

The Lateral Flow testing is going well. All students are offered three in-school tests before moving to testing at home. Over 91% of students are participating. The test centre is run by a team of volunteers assisted by some staff and Governors and thanks were expressed to all those involved.

7. Headteachers' report

Governors reviewed the report and Mrs. Manning highlighted some aspects.

A brilliant Teachmeet session was held recently and was well received. The Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) process which will replace summer exams is different to last year and a lot of work is required to put a robust system in place which will then need to be approved by the exam boards. Work on TAGs will limit the time available to start preparing the School Improvement Plan for next year and Mrs. Manning proposed that this is delayed by a few months. Instead of being considered by Governors in June, she asked that the meeting to review the plan is delayed until September and this was agreed.

The outcome of the bids for the new Teaching School Hub leads has been announced and the bid of which HGS was part has not been successful. This will mean that the North Herts Teaching Alliance will be disbanded.

Recruitment has been taking place for five new teaching staff for September and the calibre of applicants has been very high. All those interviewed spoke very positively about the school and it was clear that many had gathered information from the school website and social media posts. Governors were pleased to note the benefit the website and social media activity is having.

8. Committee reports

8.1 Admissions Committee

Dr. Middleton reported on the meeting held on 9 February. Details of in-year movement and Sixth Form external applications were discussed. It was noted that the Determined Admission Arrangements for 2022/23 were **APPROVED**.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

8.2 Curriculum & Performance Committee

Mr. Lucas reported on the meeting held on 9 February. The committee considered data analysing the summer grades by ethnicity, had an update on Covid-19 and remote learning, discussed support for Pupil Premium students, and were given a presentation on the curriculum mapping process and Ofsted requirements.

The Supporting Students with Medical Needs Policy was reviewed and recommended, and this was **APPROVED** by the Governors.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

8.3 Finance & Resources Committee

Mr. Edwards reported on the meeting held on 2 March. An update on the current financial position was received. The grant funding allocation for 2021/22 was discussed and work on preparing the budget for next year will start shortly. The contracts register was reviewed and a change to the water supply contract noted. Governors discussed the Careers Guidance contract and suggested that a report on the work provided under this contract should be made to the Curriculum & Performance committee.

The annual School Resources Management self-assessment return was reviewed and approved. Benchmarking data from the DfE View My Financial Insights was also discussed. A premises and health and safety report were received.

The Debt Recovery Policy, Gifts and Hospitality Policy, Statement of Accounting Policies and Staff Travel Policy were all reviewed and approved. This was **NOTED** by Governors.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

8.4 Audit and Risk Committee

Mr. Down reported on the meeting held on 2 March. The first report from the new Internal Scrutineer was received and reviewed. It was very clear, thorough and no issues were raised.

The committee also considered the tenders received for audit services for the next three years. Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend that MHA MacIntyre Hudson are asked to continue for a further three year period and this was **APPROVED** by the Governors.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

8.5 Personnel Committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 2 March. A staffing report was received and reviewed. Exit interviews for staff leavers have taken place. New staff are supported through the induction programme which has been adjusted to allow for some online activity.

The comments received during the consultation on the Pay Policy were noted, along with the approval of the policy in November 2020 to allow staff to receive backdated pay increases. A response to the comments submitted will be provided by the Chair and Headteacher.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

8.6 Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Hall reported on the meeting held on 9 March.

The completion of the governance changes to comply with the Academies Financial Handbook was noted and a discussion held regarding vacancies for a Member of the Academy Trust and also parent trustees. It was agreed to hold a parent election after Easter. Ofsted preparation plans and the proposed introduction of Chromebooks in Years 7 & 10 were discussed.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

9. Link Governors

A series of Governor/Students forums are taking place and reports were received.

- Mrs. Job commented on the Year 7 forum. Students felt that they adjusted to remote learning but are pleased to be back in school.
- Mr. Edwards noted that Year 9 students had also adjusted to remote learning with few issues. They were very appreciative of the options choice process and the videos provided by staff to help them make their choices. They have missed the Careers Fair. There were lots of positive comments about Google Classroom.
- Mr. Lucas spoke about the Year 8 & 10 forums. Students agreed that the remote learning experience has been much better than in the previous lockdown, and is also better than that offered by other schools.

Dr. Middleton gave an update on Mental Health & Wellbeing. The Headstrong programme in school is working well. There is lots of media publicity on mental health issues for this age group but the general feedback in school is very positive. The pastoral team has been very proactive during lockdown, quietly assisting and supporting students. Two main areas of concern to note are an increase in diagnosis of autism, with many parents paying for private assessments, and an increase in eating disorders which mirrors the national trend. Staff morale is good but needs to be monitored as education staff have been under enormous pressure during lockdown and this is continuing with the work needed for Teacher Assessed Grades.

10. Any Other Business

None.

Mr. Hall thanked all staff for everything they have done to support students over the past year, and for all they continue to do.

11. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 22 June 2021

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.