

**HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL  
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY  
HELD AT 7.20PM ON TUESDAY 12 MARCH 2013**

**Present:** Mr. D. Ashley (Items 1-5.1) Mr. C. Minton (Chairman)  
Miss F. Barnard Mrs. S. Morrison  
Mr. K. Down Mrs. K. Rowe  
Mr. T. Fitzakerly Mr. M. Seaman Hill  
Mr. C. Hall Mrs. K. Smith  
Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher) Ms. T. Stojko  
Mrs. J. Marland Mrs. L. Vallance

**In attendance:** Mr. T. Hankin Clerk  
Mr. J. Crowther Deputy Headteacher  
Miss C. Taylor (Items 1-6) Head Girl  
Miss G. Hammond (Items 1-6) Deputy Head Girl

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Mr. Minton welcomed Miss Barnard, newly appointed Community Governor, to the meeting. Mr. Minton then referred to the decision by Mr. Ashley to retire from his role as a Community Governor following this meeting, after over 30 years service to the school. He has been a Vice Chair of the Governing Body and Chairman of the Finance Committee and his guidance and support for the school and the Governors over this time has been invaluable. The Governors expressed their thanks to Mr. Ashley for all that he has done. Mr. Ashley responded by stating that he felt this was a good time to stand down, as he believed the current Governing Body was one of the strongest he has experienced, with Governors having a wide range of knowledge and expertise in support of the school. He will still be available to support and represent the school whenever required.

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. S. Burgoyne, Mrs. N. Job, Mrs. M. King, Mrs. M. McPhail and Mr. S. Middleditch.

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

There were 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 item 8. Mr. Minton declared an interest in item 5.4 (Herts. for Learning) and Mrs. Manning declared an interest in the Part 2 business.

**4. Minutes of previous meeting.**

4.1 Approval

Mrs. Manning reported that the percentage of students achieving 5 A\* - C incl. English & Maths should be 84% (item 5.2). Subject to this change, the minutes of the meeting

held on 4 December 2012 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 4.2 Matters arising

There were none.

### 5. Reports

#### 5.1 Headteacher's report

Mrs. Manning referred to her report and highlighted a number of items including:

- The review of the School Improvement Plan and the Review & Development Day on 15 April. Governors are encouraged to attend as much of the day as possible, as it is a good opportunity to spend time with their link departments.
- The Year 9 options process and the 1:1 interviews held with students. Parent Governors with students in Year 9 noted that the support and guidance provided to parents and students has been clear and very useful.
- The Learning Leaders group who have visited Sandringham School in St. Albans as part of the work looking at teaching and learning.
- The Learning Walks that will be undertaken by the Senior Leadership Group and Middle Leaders. The first walks will focus on written and verbal feedback.
- The Secondary transfer and admissions process for September 2014. 166 students have been offered a place in Year 7. No appeals have yet been heard. The change to the admission criteria has seen an increase in the number of students from Hitchin being allocated places. It has not reduced the number of places allocated to students from the local villages overall, although the distribution changes each year linked to the number applying from each village.
- 4 students in Year 9 have applied for a place at the Da Vinci Studio School. It is not yet known whether they have accepted their place. Governors discussed the process for filling the places should these students leave at the end of Year 9 and possible options for mitigating against similar movement in future years.
- Progress on the Headteacher's Objectives was noted.
- A staffing update was reviewed.
- No exclusions were necessary during the Spring Term.

Mrs. Manning advised Governors that further information on many of the items in the report will be provided at the Review & Development Day.

Mr. Ashley left the meeting.

#### 5.2 Admissions Committee

Mr. Down reported on the meeting held on 12 February 2013. The Committee reviewed the current admission rules and proposed that no change to the criteria be made for 2014/15. Mrs. Manning confirmed that Rule 4, Children of Staff, can apply for In Year admissions.

**The Governing Body AGREED the Determined Admission Arrangements for 2014/15.**

The committee also discussed the work being done with the Local Authority regarding the need for additional Secondary School places from 2015 and supported a potential

increase in PAN subject to funding being made available to provide the additional facilities required.

### 5.3 Asset Management Committee

Mr. Seaman Hill reported on the meeting held on 5 February 2013. The committee discussed the maintenance work that has been completed, including work to high level gutters, and reviewed future plans. Repairs and replacement of the steps and paving around the Lower Block will begin during the Easter holiday.

The new pavilion and refurbished courts are now being fully used, and the committee hope that funding can be found to complete the work on the Highbury site and relocate the cars that currently park alongside the main field.

The tender process for the new Sixth Form Centre is underway, with a decision on the funding application expected in April.

Mr Seaman Hill advised that, along with Mr. Middleditch, he had reviewed a number of logs and record sheets relating to maintenance and health & safety matters and they were satisfied that appropriate checks and controls are in place. The annual review of the Health & Safety Policy had been completed and the committee recommended this for approval.

**The Governors noted the recommendation and APPROVED the Health & Safety Policy.**

In response to a question regarding future maintenance plans, Mr. Hankin confirmed that a schedule of requirements is maintained, and the priority of items on the schedule is regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Group and the Asset Management Committee.

### 5.4 Curriculum & Performance Committee

Mr. Hall reported on the meeting held on 5 February 2013. The committee had been given a detailed review of the RAISEonline report which analyses school achievement data. It confirmed that in many areas, the school performs higher or significantly higher than national averages. Mrs. Manning was asked about the performance in both Business Studies and Drama. She advised that data relates to a small cohort but that results in both subjects are lower than expected and this is an area for management focus. It is encouraging to note that indications from the recent Drama modular exams are encouraging.

The committee were also very pleased to note the letter received from the Minister of State for Schools and the Cabinet Office congratulating the school on its 2012 GCSE performance, for being in the top 100 non-selective schools based on performance in 5 GCSE's including English, Maths and the students three best other GCSE's, and for being 'exceptionally effective in educating its pupils'. Mrs. Manning advised that she has invited the Schools Minister to visit the school and dates are being discussed.

The Committee also discussed the ongoing education changes being discussed or introduced by the Government and the impact these have on the school, staff and students.

Whole school targets for 2014/15 had been discussed, and Mrs. Manning distributed details of these targets to all Governors.

The Sex Education Policy had been reviewed and was recommended for approval.

**The Governors noted the recommendation and APPROVED the Sex Education Policy.**

The Collective Worship Policy had also been reviewed and approved **and the Governors NOTED the approval.**

The Committee discussed the new Herts for Learning Ltd Company being established to provide traded services to schools and agreed to purchase a share in the new company.

**The Governing Body RATIFIED the decision to purchase one share in Herts for Learning (HfL) at a total cost of £25 in accordance with the terms of the HfL share offer.**

Mr. Hankin advised that, as a shareholder, the Governing Body is eligible to vote for up to two non-executive directors in the new company. Six candidates have been nominated, including Mr. Minton. Mrs. Manning provided a brief overview of the six. After discussion, the Governing Body agreed on its two preferred candidates, and **Mrs. Manning was AUTHORISED to sign the voting paper on behalf of the Governing Body.**

#### 5.5 Finance Committee

Mr. Minton reported on the meeting held on 12 February. Finances are being managed effectively with a balanced budget but there is a need to monitor projections for the next 3 to 5 years as the uncertainty over funding and the costs linked to incremental increases in staff salaries does have an impact on future budgets. Maintaining student numbers is key to balancing the budget.

Staff costs are running slightly below the target figure of 75% of revenue income which is encouraging. New cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts have been agreed with a saving on previous levels.

Following Government changes to the Funding Agreement, the restriction on the amount of the General Annual Grant (GAG) that can be carried forward has been removed.

The Charges, Refunds & Remissions Policy has been reviewed following guidance from Stone King Solicitors and was recommended for approval.

**The Governors noted the recommendation and APPROVED the Charges, Refunds and Remissions Policy.**

Mr. Minton asked Governors if they felt they received sufficient information regarding the school finances. They agreed that the information regarded was sufficient as it supported the more detailed reporting and discussions that take place at the Finance Committee meetings.

#### 5.6 Head Girl's report

Miss Taylor reported on various initiatives that have taken place including:

- Links within the consortium
- The student consortium newsletter

- The School Council meeting with Local Councillors and in particular the discussions on the planned development of the Town Centre. It was suggested that the School Council could also provide feedback on the consultation regarding the development of the sorting office site.
- Planning for a Health week. This is being led by a group of Year 13 students and it is hoped that it will become an annual event. Plans include special assemblies, speakers and mentoring of younger students.

Miss Taylor was thanked for her report.

## **6. Ofsted update**

Mrs. Manning provided Governors with an update on the Ofsted inspection framework and the involvement of Governors in an inspection. Governors were provided with information on sources of data and the evidence and documentation available to support this. Details of further supporting documentation and suggested reading will be distributed to all Governors.

A summary of the latest School Data Dashboard was distributed and reviewed. There is still some confusion and concern over the accuracy of some of the information that is included.

Mr. Crowther briefed Governors on the Pupil Premium and the way in which the funding is calculated and used. All schools are required to publish a statement on their website setting out how the school uses its Pupil Premium. Hitchin Girls' School does not have a large cohort of students in receipt of Free School Meals, and this low percentage can affect the statistical data.

The approach adopted by the school is to use Pupil Premium funding in a targeted way to provide support for both individuals and the school cohort as a whole in order to benefit all students in receipt of Pupil Premium. The aim is to ensure all students have equal access to an outstanding education.

Governors asked how parents and carers were informed about eligibility for Free School Meals. Mrs. Manning advised that this is publicised through school newsletters, emails to parents, information packs for new parents and publicity from Hertfordshire County Council.

Mr. Minton encouraged Governors to read through the information available to ensure they are able to support the school at a future inspection, and to ask questions if further information is needed. The information can be found in the Governors section of the Moodle Learning Platform and includes:

- OfSTED: The framework for school inspection
- OfSTED: School inspection handbook
- OfSTED: Subsidiary guidance
- OfSTED: Inspecting safeguarding
- OfSTED: Data Dashboard

Miss Taylor & Miss Hammond left the meeting.

## **7. Link Governors**

There were no visits for report.

Miss Barnard agreed to become the Link Governor for Physical Education and Mr. Minton agreed to link with History.

It was noted that there is still a vacancy for a Community Governor following Mr. Johnson's resignation in December, and a further vacancy now exists to replace Mr. Ashley.

Mr. Hankin advised that the term of office of a number of Governors ends later this year and elections or re-appointment will be required. This will be discussed at the next Personnel Committee meeting.

## **8. Benslow Field Village Green Application**

Mr. Hankin advised that the Public Inquiry will take place at Christchurch, Hitchin from 8 – 10 May 2013. The public notice regarding the Inquiry will be published on 14 March. A draft press statement is being prepared. Stone King Solicitors are producing the pack of information that is required for the Inquiry. Governors agreed that the school should continue to oppose the application as the field is an important asset for the school. It was noted that if the application was successful, the school would still be liable for maintaining the field.

## **9. Any Other Business**

- 9.1 Mobile Phone Policy Mr. Seaman Hill asked whether the school had a policy on Mobile Phones. Mrs. Manning confirmed that one existed and that students were allowed to bring these to school and use them at break and lunchtime, but were not permitted to have them on or out of bags during lessons. The only exception is where a staff member has given permission, for example in order that the phone can be used to photograph work. She confirmed that the policy is generally adhered to.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

The next full meeting of the Governing Body will be on Tuesday 4 June 2013 at 6.00pm to review and approve the School Improvement Plan. An additional meeting has been scheduled for 6pm on Monday 25 March to consider the tenders received for the proposed Sixth Form Centre.

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**PART II – CONFIDENTIAL**

Mrs. Manning left the meeting for this item.

**11. Personnel Committee report**

Mr. Minton reported on the meeting held on 12 February 2013. The meeting reviewed the Performance Management report for 2011/12 and the update on the Performance Appraisal process for 2012/13. The report on the Headteacher's Performance Management review was received and following discussion a recommendation and decision made regarding the Headteacher's pay for 2012/13.

The report and recommendation were noted.

The meeting closed at 9.35pm