

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 6 December 2023

Present:

Mr. K. Balfe	Mrs. M. King
Mr. J. Crowther (Headteacher)	Mrs. N. Job (Chair)
Mr. K. Down	Mr. S. Lucas
Mr. G. Edwards	Mr. S. Mills
Dr. S. Eisenhandler	Mr. D. Roberts
Mrs. S. Frost	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mr. C. Hall	Mr. T. Scott
Ms. A. Holden	Mrs. A. Thornber

In attendance:

Mr. T. Hankin	Clerk
Mr. A. Jones	Deputy Headteacher
Mrs. J. Shaw	Director of Finance & Resources
Miss. A. Pryle (Items 1-6)	Head Girl

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mrs. Job welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Board of Trustees. Introductions were made to the new Parent Trustee, Dr. S. Eisenhandler. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. T. Fitzakerly and Mrs. S. Franklin.

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

None.

3. Declarations of interest

Trustees 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 12 September 2023.

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

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

5. Head Girls' report

Miss Pryle gave a report on life in school this term.

She spoke about a number of charity initiatives including Jeans for Genes which raised over £2,000, the 20th year supporting the Christmas Shoe Box appeal and the Christmas Food Drive. A number of cultural events have taken place such as Black History Month, the Diwali festival and the rainbow laces football tournament with Hitchin Boys' School. The Head Girl team and prefects are organising another Culture Day which will include tutor time activities, a cultural dress show,

and other events. They have liaised with Hitchin Boys' and The Priory schools and they will also be running a similar event this year.

A number of trips have taken place including an Art trip to Copenhagen, Geography trip to Sicily and the Year 8 residential and activity trip.

Open mornings were very successful and the Year 7 and Year 12 students were guides for the parent tours. A whole school photograph was taken in October. Sixth Form students have been trained as Peer Mentors and are supporting younger students. A Futures Fayre was held with representation from many companies and further education providers. An HGS Podcast has been launched. The annual Carol Concert will be held in St. Marys Church this year.

Trustees thanked Miss Pryle for her report, adding that it is always good to hear from the Head Girl about just some of the events that have taken place in school.

6. Headteachers' report

Mr. Crowther invited questions from Trustees on his report which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

He was asked whether there has been any feedback from parents on the newly launched school Values. He advised that there hasn't been any feedback. He is continuing to include reference to these in his newsletter items. They are on display around the school and being integrated into school life.

A Trustee asked whether he is aware of any change in the approach to inspections from Ofsted. He advised that he has spoken to other Heads who have been inspected and they confirmed that the process was much as expected and seemed fair.

He was asked whether the impact of the new Behaviour Policy has now settled. He confirmed that there has been a positive impact and staff are generally pleased with new policy. The clear procedures and processes have helped when communicating with parents. There is also more focus on rewards. 89% of students have no more than 2 behaviour points which is a very good position. He is continuing to monitor the impact of the policy and review and adjust where required.

A Trustee asked about attendance data and the lack of external support. He replied that the school continues to liaise with the Local Authority but external support is still very limited. The school had to undertake two home visits this week. A small number of Year 10 and 11 students are not in school which is affecting the figures. Some are waiting for alternate provision to be provided by the Local Authority.

A Trustee commented on positive feedback from a Year 12/13 student panel regarding the role of the Student Leadership Team.

Parent Trustees spoke about the recent Year 9 Options evening which had been fantastic and very useful. The updated curriculum pages on the website are also clear and helpful.

Mr. Crowther noted that it has been a very busy term and staff have worked extremely hard. He expressed his thanks to the whole staff body for all they have been doing and to the Trustees for their support.

The Chair, on behalf of the Trustees, thanked Mr. Crowther and all staff for their hard work and commitment to the school.

7. Committee reports

7.1 Admissions Committee

Mrs. King reported on the meeting held on 31 October 2023. This had looked at Year 7 and 12 numbers for September and also discussed in-year movement information. Year 11 and 13 destinations following the summer examinations were reviewed. It was clear that students continue to make choices that are right for them.

Following guidance from the Schools Adjudicator and the Local Authority admissions team, some minor changes have been made to definitions which support the admission arrangements to improve clarity. A further change to clarify definition of parish boundaries is currently being implemented.

7.2 Curriculum and Performance Committee

Mrs. Frost reported on the meeting held on 31 October 2023. An update on Student Achievement was received and it was pleasing to note the Progress 8 score of 0.52. The committee discussed the data and areas for focus and development. The student attendance report was received and the challenge of shifting parental attitude regarding absence from school post Covid was noted.

The committee had reviewed and approved the Children with health needs who cannot attend school policy, Complaints procedures, Relationships, sex and health policy, and Assessment, recording and reporting policy and this was **NOTED**.

7.3 Finance and Resources Committee

Mr. Edwards reported on the meeting held on 7 November 2023. The auditors were in attendance and had given their report on the financial statements. The school is in a good financial position and the auditors had given the school a clean bill of health. No regulatory or other issues were reported. Thanks were expressed to Mrs. English and the finance team for their work during the audit and throughout the year.

The Audit Findings Management Letter was **NOTED** by Trustees and the Financial Statements **APPROVED**. These were signed by the Chair and Headteacher (Accounting Officer).

An updated budget was reviewed at the committee meeting following settlement of Teacher pay awards. Large contracts due for renewal had also been discussed.

Premises and Health and Safety reports were reviewed and two Condition Improvement Fund bids were approved.

The committee reviewed the Data Protection Policy and Health & Safety Policy and recommended these for approval. Trustees **APPROVED** these policies.

They also reviewed the Fire Safety Policy, Schedule of Financial Delegation, Minibus Safety Policy, Data Security Policy, Reserves Policy and Privacy Notices and this was **NOTED** by Trustees.

7.4 Audit & Risk Committee

Mr. Down reported on the meeting held on 7 November 2023. The Audit Management letter was noted. The committee reviewed the Internal Scrutiny report and report from the Responsible Officer. The annual Internal Scrutiny report to the DfE was agreed.

7.5 Personnel Committee

Mr. Lucas reported on the meeting held on 10th October 2023. The appraisal and pay review process had been reviewed and the committee were very happy with the recommendations, and

were pleased to note the many positive actions and activities taking place in and outside the classroom.

The committee reviewed and recommended the Protection of biometric information of children in school policy. This was **APPROVED** by Trustees.

The committee also reviewed and approved the Appointment of support staff – Terms and Conditions, LGPS discretions policy, Safer Recruitment policy, Allegations of abuse against staff procedures, Bullying and harassment policy, Code of conduct, Capability policy, and Disciplinary policy and this was **NOTED** by Trustees.

8. Approval of the school's estate vision, strategy and asset management plan

Mrs. Shaw informed Trustees that the strategy consolidates existing documents setting out how the school manages its estate. It includes a 5 year maintenance plan. A condition survey has been completed and sets out what work will need doing going forward, with estimated costs. Detailed review of this will take place at the Finance and Resources committee.

Mrs. Shaw was asked whether the condition survey highlighted anything that was unexpected. She advised that most items were already known, although the need to consider refurbishing some of the science labs was extra.

Trustees commented that this is a very useful document and plan to help with forward planning and the Strategy and Asset Management Plan were **APPROVED**.

9. Governance – Trustee training

Mrs. King advised that all Trustee Safeguarding training is up to date. A Trustee asked about a knowledge check questionnaire and Mrs. King will discuss this with Mrs. Mills. A number of Trustees have completed exclusion and complaint handing training, but others are encouraged to do these if they can to ensure a good pool of Trustees is available if required.

Trustees were reminded of the courses and training available at any time via Modern Governor.

10. Link Department visits

10.1 Department links.

Dr. Eisenhandler will be the link Trustee for Mathematics.

10.2 Trustee visit reports

Mr. Edwards reported on the Year 7 and Year 12/13 student panels he attended with Mrs. Job earlier in the day. The students were very articulate and positive about the school. Transition from Primary School had gone well and students in the Sixth Form felt they were treated as adults and valued the friendship and support they found in school.

Mr. Down reported on his visit to the Technology department. He saw a technology lesson and was impressed how well and safely the students were using the equipment. He was also impressed by the quality of food produced in a Food Technology lesson. The department make great use of Google Classroom.

Mr. Scott visited Business and Computing and discussed progress since his last visit. Some students don't like the coding aspect of the current syllabus and it was pleasing to note that a GSCE for IT is being introduced for those that want to study IT without the coding element.

Mr. Roberts advised Trustees that he completed a Health & Safety visit in November. He was very impressed with the work undertaken by Mrs. Shaw and Mr. Collins, the Site Manager, to ensure the school buildings and grounds are kept safe and in such a good condition.

Mr. Mills met with the Head of PE earlier in the term. Their big challenge at present is the lack of minibus drivers to take students to fixtures. He also met with the Head of Music to discuss their plans, and saw a fantastic Year 9 keyboard lesson and a rehearsal of the senior orchestra. He will be visiting the Classics department this week.

He also added that two science teachers have visited Whitehill School recently to provide fantastic sessions for a number of year groups and this link is very much appreciated. Sports Leaders from HGS also regularly attend to support PE in Years 2, 3 and 4.

Mr. Edwards advised that he attended and assisted with the Year 8 residential trip. Despite the weather all had a great time. Pastoral and Year staff had put a lot of effort in to ensure that those students who were uncertain about the trip could fully participate and enjoy it.

Mrs. Job informed Trustees that she had accompanied Mrs. Cole, the SENCo on a walk around the school, looking in particular at the needs of some Year 7 students. She was impressed at how well staff integrate them into the class and lesson.

11. Any other Business

None

12. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 19 March 2024