

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees Held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 21 June 2022

Present:

Mr. K. Balfe	Mrs. M. King
Mr. K. Down	Mr. S. Lucas
Mr. G. Edwards	Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Mrs. C. Emmings	Mr. S. Mills
Mr. T. Fitzakerly	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mrs. S. Franklin	Mr. T. Scott
Mrs. S. Frost	Mrs. A. Thornber
Mr. C. Hall (Chair)	Mr. M. Winter
Mrs. N. Job	

In attendance: Mr. T. Hankin (Clerk)

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mr. Hall welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Board of Trustees. Apologies were received and accepted from Ms. A. Holden, Mr. D. Roberts and Mr. J. Crowther (Deputy Headteacher).

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

Founders' Day

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 7 June 2022.

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

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

5. Headteacher's report

Mrs. Manning reviewed her report. Items discussed included the following:

GSCE Year 9 options choices – the preferred subject choices for every student has been met. There has been an increase in students opting for many practical subjects compared to last year e.g. Product Design, Drama, Food Technology, Music, and a fall in some other subjects such as Health & Social Care, History and Latin. Trustees asked if there were obvious reasons for this change. Mrs. Manning replied that students are now back in school post

Covid and able to understand the content of these practical subjects more easily than was possible during lockdown.

Update on Headteacher's Objectives. 1) Public examinations are underway and support provided to students before and during these. There has been an increase in requests for Special Consideration. 2) The SLG team is in place for September and roles and responsibilities are being reviewed. 3) The school has just been reaccredited as a World Class School and opportunities will be sought to promote this.

Staffing update and CPD. The school is fully staffed for teaching from September. Staff Induction for most new employees takes place next month. A lot of staff CPD has taken place with two members of staff completing their NPQL qualification with a focus on Behaviour and Culture.

Attendance. Attendance data was reviewed. HGS is still well above national figures but not quite at the level seen pre Covid. The focus for next year will be in returning to those levels. County support from the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) has now improved. A Trustee asked about the process for agreeing a reduced timetable for a student. Mrs. Manning explained that this would be a temporary arrangement, usually to support return after illness, and details are sent to the Local Authority.

Suspensions. There has been an increase this year, with vaping being the reason for many. This is a national problem in schools and retailers are finding ways to sell vapes that look like other routine items e.g. highlighter pens, which make them hard to identify.

Mrs. Manning was thanked for her report.

6. Committee Reports

6.1 Curriculum & Performance

Mr. Lucas reported on the meeting held on 3 May 2022. Plans for the upcoming public examinations were discussed along with predicted student outcomes. Mr. Crowther had reviewed the self-evaluation activities that had taken place and the feedback from Trustee/student forums was reviewed. Year Heads had also held student panels and the points raised during these had been noted.

The updated Complaints Policy and Home-School Agreement were reviewed and recommended for approval. Trustees **APPROVED** these documents.

6.2 Finance and Resources

Mr. Edwards reported on the meeting held on 10 May 2022. The year to date financial information and management accounts were reviewed. The position remains healthy with no issues identified. Plans for IT hardware upgrades were approved.

The school has been successful with two grants made under the DfE Condition Improvement Fund scheme totaling £520,000. The flat roofs on the Science and Lower Blocks will be renewed. The windows in the Lower Block will also be replaced. The school contribution to these projects is just over £100,000.

Mr. Roberts had agreed to become the new Health & Safety link trustee.

The updated Health and Safety Policy was reviewed and recommended for approval. Trustees **APPROVED** this policy.

The draft budget for 2022/23 was reviewed and discussed. Mr. Hankin had explained the main changes from this year, including staffing increases due to expansion, potential pay awards, increases in contract costs due to inflation and other cost pressures, and energy price increases. The school will also be receiving an additional Government grant to assist with the increase in the National Insurance contribution rate and energy costs. The DfE has advised that some of this grant should be held over to support possible pay cost increases in 2023/24.

Since the finance committee meeting, work on the budget has continued and Mr. Edwards asked Mr. Hankin to review the proposed budget for next year.

This has been updated to reflect known staff changes since the finance committee meeting, as well as confirmation of non-staff contract costs, increased budgets for staff CPD and training and additional budget for planned premises work.

A surplus is projected for next year and also 2023/24. Reserves are higher than the minimum 4% level set in the reserves policy. This higher amount is being retained for the possible construction of additional teaching space to support the increased number of students attending the Sixth Form.

The budget for 2022/23 was **APPROVED**.

6.3 Asset and Risk

Mr. Down reported on the meeting held on 10 May 2022. The Internal Scrutiny process had been explained for the benefit of new Trustees. The latest report from the Responsible Officer was received and noted. There were no issues identified.

6.4 Personnel

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 10 May 2022. Leadership team appointments were discussed along with the support available for Mr. Crowther as the new Headteacher. The staffing budget, cost metrics, and FTE for 2022/23 were reviewed and the FTE figure for 2022/23 agreed.

Updated versions of the Flexible Working Policy, Staff Probation Policy and Staff Health & Attendance Policy were reviewed and approved by the committee. This was noted by Trustees.

7. Link Trustee report

History – Mrs. Frost reported on a visit to the history department where she had seen good rapport between students and staff, lots of focus on learning with a range of teaching resources and style used and teaching staff encouraging discussion.

Science – Mr. Mills advised that he had recently brought some Year 6 students to HGS as part of the transition process and they had a great time. He was impressed with the independence given to them by staff so that they were able to undertake simple experiments.

Science – Mr. Down advised that he visited school and spent time in 6 lessons. He was also impressed by the level of independence given to students, including those in Year 7. There was clear instruction from staff with students asking questions and then working in groups.

Art - Mr. Edwards spoke about the extremely high quality of work he had seen at the GCSE and A level Art display. The quality was impressive and this should be celebrated and shared

with students and parents when exam restrictions allow. He had also been pleased to hear that the issues raised previously regarding equipment and resources have all been resolved.

8. Governance

8.1 Appointment of Headteacher as Trustee

The Clerk advised that in the Articles of Association there is no ex officio position on the board for the Headteacher of the Company. As Mr. Crowther has been appointed as Headteacher from 1 September, a resolution is required to appoint him as a Trustee.

The Chair proposed the following resolution:

***IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED THAT** pursuant to article 57 of the Articles of Association, Mr. James Crowther is appointed as a director/trustee*

This was unanimously **AGREED** by the Trustees.

8.2 Proposed meeting dates 2022/23

The schedule of meeting dates was noted.

8.3 Trustee skills audit and effectiveness review

Trustees were reminded to complete these reviews if they have not already done so.

9. Cyber Security

Mr. Hankin shared a presentation given to staff regarding Cyber Security in schools, and the measures required to reduce the risk from cyber attack. He reminded Trustees that they also have school email accounts and some access to the school system and should also be aware of this risk and the various preventative measures. In particular, Trustees were asked to review passwords to ensure these are secure, not shared and are changed if there is a risk that they have been disclosed.

10. Any Other Business

Founders' Day – Trustees were asked to reply to the invitation for Founder's Day if this has not yet been done.

11. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 13 September 2022

Mr. Hall and Mrs. Job then thanked Mrs. Manning for her 15 years as Headteacher and reflected on the changes and improvements seen over this period. Mrs. Manning was presented with a gift from the Trustees.

Mrs. Manning thanked the trustees for the gift and also for all their support, questioning, guidance and help during her time at the school.