

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 20 June 2023

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mr. T. Hankin	Clerk
Mr. A. Jones	Deputy Headteacher
Mrs. J. Shaw	Director of Finance & Resources

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mrs. Job welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Board of Trustees. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. K. Down, Mrs. M. King and Mr. M. Winter.

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

Trust Board vacancies and diversity.

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 6 June 2023.

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

4.2 Matters arising.

Management Information System (from item 5). Mr. Crowther informed Trustees that the three schools in the consortium have decided not to move to a new MIS system next Easter and to defer any change for at least another year. They will continue to review the options and functionality available and will review the position in a years' time.

5. Headteachers' Report

The report had been circulated prior to the meeting and Mr. Crowther invited questions and comments.

A Trustee asked whether actions by students that lead to a suspension have to happen in school, or can also have taken place outside the school gates? Mr. Crowther advised that most suspensions are as a result of an event in school, but occasionally a student may receive a suspension for something that has happened outside school where they bring the school into

disrepute. Assemblies have recently been held reminding students about upholding the school values and the vast majority do the right thing all the time. A small number struggle with social relationships and Mr. Crowther was asked whether parents and families are signposted to the support available. He confirmed that they are given guidance and contacts for local services and support.

A Trustee asked about attendance, especially of Year 11 students prior to examinations. Mr. Crowther advised that a small number decided not to regularly attend leading up to the exams, but this tended to be the same students whose attendance has been poor throughout the year, and where parents have not pushed their child to attend. A staff Trustee noted however that Year 11 attendance at the actual examinations has been very good with no issues.

A Trustee asked about the students identified as being below reading age in Years 7-10. Mr. Jones replied that a new suite of assessments has been used to identify those needing additional intervention support and a programme for this is in place. Whilst the number of students is a reasonable proportion of the cohort, it is still below national figures.

A Trustee commented on the standout work being done to support SEND students, including the Headstrong programme and Year 11 trip to Grafham. Trustees also expressed their pleasure on reading about the wide range of trips and extra-curricular activities available.

The actions and focus during the year on behaviour was noted and a staff Trustee stated that this will be a real benefit for next year.

Mr. Crowther informed Trustees that a number of objections have been raised with the Office of the School Adjudicator regarding the admission criteria and the impact in particular on two villages. The objections relate to the changes that the school had to make following the objection made in 2021 and the decision of the Inspector at that time. Information is being prepared to send to the Inspector.

The Chair thanked Mr. Crowther for an overwhelmingly positive and detailed report and also for all that he has done during his first year as Headteacher.

6. Committee reports

6.1 Admissions Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2023 were noted.

6.2 Curriculum & Performance Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2023 were noted. The committee had received an update on student achievement, intervention activity and a Self-Evaluation review. Work on the school values was discussed. Mr. Crowther then shared with Trustees a final draft of the graphic showing the school values which will soon appear around the school.

6.3 Finance & Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May were noted.

Mr. Edwards spoke about the budget and financial projections. The school remains in a healthy position but the uncertainty over Teacher pay awards and any funding towards this is making future financial planning very difficult.

The budget for 2023/24 was discussed and agreed by the committee. Trustees noted this and **APPROVED** the budget for 2023/2024.

A Health & Safety Audit was due on 7 June and Mrs. Shaw confirmed this has now taken place. The draft report has been received which is good. A number of items for action have been identified.

The committee had reviewed and **APPROVED** the updated Trustees Allowance Policy and this was noted.

6.4 Audit & Risk Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May were noted.

6.5 Personnel Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 May were noted. A staffing update was received along with a report on staff wellbeing. The staff FTE for 2023/24 was agreed, and it was noted that staff costs as a percentage of revenue income are increasing and approaching 80%.

Mr. Crowther informed Trustees that two further strike days have been announced, for 5 & 7 July.

Mrs. Shaw informed Trustees that a change is required to the Terms and Conditions document for non-teaching staff as a result of the extra days holiday agreed as part of the 2023 pay award settlement. She will share an updated document with members of the Personnel Committee.

7. Governance matters

A number of Trustees confirmed that they have recently attended a very good training session on Exclusions. Others have also attended a safeguarding update.

The chair confirmed that the Trustee Training link, Mrs, King, will inform Trustees when renewal or refresher training is due.

8. Department link visits

Mrs. Frost reported on a link visit to the History department which she found very informative. She joined in with a department meeting and also visited a number of lessons.

Ms. Holden visited the Modern Foreign Languages department and discussed the curriculum. They had a good conversation regarding moving from text books to apps for use on Chromebook. They also discussed the issue of cost, particular regarding annual fees for some apps.

Mr. Mills advised that some MFL students have visited Whitehill school to work with Year 5 and 6 students as part of Project Polyglot.

Mr. Edwards has visited the Geography department. The department are very appreciative of the support received from the Senior Leadership Team. They also spoke about the use of Chromebooks and the appropriate use to support teaching and learning. He also mentioned that he supported the DoE session at the weekend and the students did extremely well.

Mrs. Job reported on a meeting with Ms. Freeman, Assistant Headteacher, regarding CPD. She is very enthusiastic and has impressive plans for CPD next year which include a flexible credit based system to promote training, along with opportunities for staff to complete training as a coach.

She has also met with Mr. Crowther in school on a number of occasions. They often walk round the school and students are almost always smiling, happy and moving around in a calm manner.

Trustee visits to the English department and to discuss Pupil Premium will take place before the end of term.

9. Proposed meeting dates 2023/24

The proposed meeting dates were agreed.

10. Any other Business

Trust Board vacancies and diversity. Trustees discussed the need to increase the diversity of the Board of Trustees to better reflect the school community. Mr. Crowther advised that he has spoken to someone in the local community who may be interested in joining and he will discuss this with the Chair.

Trustees also discussed ways of being proactive when looking for new Trustees. Three Trustees agreed to attend the new Year 7 transition evening to promote the work of the Trust Board. Mr. Lucas agreed to take a lead on looking at other ways of finding new Trustees to create a more diverse board.

It was also noted that a new Member is required. Mr. Crowther will contact a former Head Girl regarding this.

11. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 12 September 2023