

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL
MINUTES OF AN ONLINE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY
HELD AT 6.00PM ON TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present:

Ms. J Briggs	Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Mr. K. Down	Dr. K. Middleton
Mr. G. Edwards	Mr. S. Mills
Mrs. C. Emmings	Mr. C. Minton
Mr. T. Fitzakerly	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mr. C. Hall (Chairman)	Mr. T. Scott
Mrs. N. Job	Mr. M. Seaman Hill
Mrs. M. King	Mr. M. Winter
Mr. S. Lucas	

In attendance: Mr. T. Hankin (Clerk)

1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence

Mr. Hall welcomed everyone to the online meeting of the Governing Body. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. K. Balfe. Mr. Hall informed Governors that Mrs. S. Morrison and Mr. S. Sprawson have both resigned as Governors and Members of the Academy Trust after many years' service. He will write and thank them for their time and service as Governors.

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk asked for nominations for the role of Chair. Mr. Mills nominated Mr. Hall and this was seconded by Mrs. Job. There were no other nominations. Mr. Hall was therefore appointed Chair. Mr. Hall thanked Governors for their support.

Mr. Hall asked for nominations for the role of Vice Chair. He nominated Mrs. Job and this was seconded by Mr. Down. There were no other nominations. Mrs. Job was therefore appointed Vice Chair.

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

None

4. Declarations of Interest

Governors were reminded of the need to declare any pecuniary or other interest in the items for discussion. There were none.

5. Minutes of previous meeting

5.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2020.

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

5.2 Matters arising.

None.

6. Examination results summary

Mrs. Manning reminded Governors of the process the school had to follow to produce Centre Assessment Grades (CAGs) in place of the summer examinations. She believed that staff had done a very good job in preparing and submitting these, and that the necessary checks and balances would be in place nationally. However, as was reported in the press, there were lots of issues with the national process and changes and different messages were being given almost daily in the lead up to results days and also afterwards. Unfortunately, many schools were unable to celebrate the results as they would usually do because of the changes and uncertainty. There will be no Government performance tables issued this year.

More detailed information regarding outcomes will be given at the next Curriculum & Performance committee which all Governors are welcome to attend.

In summary, A Level results were slightly better than last year with the average grade increasing from B to B+ and the Average Points Score (APS) increasing from 38.5 to 42.6. The changes in school results were broadly in line with the changes in National outcomes. All students who intended to move on to university have a place.

At GCSE, the CAGs were used and the Attainment 8 score increased from 5.9 to 6.2, again in line with the expected outcome. 42% were at Grade 7 or above (37.5% last year), and 95% at Grade 4 or above (2019 91%).

Mrs. Manning thanked all staff involved in preparing, producing and checking the CAGs and Mr. Crowther, Mrs. Mills, Mrs Emmings and Mrs Pargeter who had to deal with the changes and last minute alterations to the results.

Governors asked whether there is anything that can be taken forward from the process in case the situation arises again. Mrs. Manning replied that the departments who found the process most straightforward were those who had both marks and grades in Go4schools and it also showed the importance of including high stakes assessments during the year.

Governors also asked about resits. Mrs. Manning advised that there are just 9 planned across GCSE and A level.

Governors expressed their thanks to all staff involved in the 2020 examination process. It was agreed that the way in which staff assessed and provided accurate grades helps prove that HGS has some of the best staff in the country.

7. Headteacher's update and return to school review

Mrs. Manning updated Governors on the start of term.

Two INSET days were held to allow staff time to prepare and staff appreciated the chance to be together. Year 7 were in school for the first two days, with Sixth Form students having 1:1 sessions and all have settled in well. All students returned at the start of last week and arrangements have generally gone very smoothly. Attendance is high although starting to see an increase in self-isolation, colds, and anxiety. Year groups are in different zones of the site for most lessons.

The biggest impact and challenge for teachers is that many are no longer teaching in their own rooms and are moving from building to building for each lesson. If zoning is to continue,

this is the only way of scheduling this. Offices all have capacity limits and most meetings are being held remotely.

From tomorrow, all staff and students will be required to wear a face covering in communal areas, and whilst queuing for the dining room. The Risk Assessment has been updated to reflect this change. Personal hygiene and ventilation of rooms etc. remains a key message.

Mrs. Rowe noted that many staff feel as if they have started a new job in a new school as a result of all the changes. It is proving stressful but staff feel well supported

Mrs. Manning replied that maintaining staff wellbeing will be a big challenge and some Governors offered to share wellbeing ideas and resources from their own workplaces.

Mr. Hall stated that he and Mrs. Job had attended the staff INSET session at the start of term and there was a good buzz amongst staff who were pleased to be back in school.

Governors asked whether students are being encouraged to bring their own device into school to support online learning. Mrs. Manning confirmed that Sixth Form students can already do this and the option for Key stage 4 students to do so will be discussed soon.

Governors asked whether the school is able to procure sufficient suppliers of sanitiser and other cleaning items. Mr. Hankin replied that at present supplies are available, although usage is high and the cost is having to be met from within the school budget.

8. Multi Academy Trust update

Mrs. Manning reported that the application was considered at the May Headteacher Board and some further information was requested. This has not been a priority during lockdown, but she hopes to speak to the school's contact at the DfE in the next week to confirm exactly what is required and will update Governors at the next committee meetings.

9. Governance and Financial oversight

9.1 ESFA's Chief Executive letters to Accounting Officer

The letters from July and August were noted.

9.2 Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) 2020 changes

A paper setting out the main changes in the handbook was reviewed. The changes covered the governance structure, role of the clerk, audit and risk, and internal scrutiny.

9.3 Future Member and Trustee governance structure

Mr Hall referred to the paper provided for Governors which sets out the AFH changes and which require all academies to have a clear separation between Members and Trustees. A small group of Members is required (usually 5), the majority of whom are independent of the trustees. The change needs to be in place by 1 March 2021. Mr. Hall proposed that the Chairs Strategic Planning Committee review the structure and propose changes which can be made at the meeting on 1 December. This was agreed.

Mr. Hall informed Governors that Dr. Middleton's term of office as a parent governor ends on 16 October. As there are currently two vacancies for Community governors he proposed that she is appointed a Community Governor from this date and this was

unanimously agreed. A parent Governor election will be required as there will then be two vacancies, and it was agreed to hold this in January once the Governance structure changes have been made.

9.4 Clerk to the Governing Body

The Clerk left the meeting for this item. Minute taken by Mrs. Manning.

Mr. Hall informed Governors that the updated Financial Handbook guidance asked Governors to consider whether it was appropriate for the Chief Financial Officer or Business Manager of a school to also operate as the Clerk to the Governing Body. The relevant part of the guidance was read to Governors.

Mr. Hall and Mrs. Manning have spoken about this and do not have any question about the impartiality of the Clerk, Mr. Hankin, and Mr. Hall made a recommendation to the Governors that he should remain as the Clerk moving forwards.

Governors were asked for their views. Mrs. Job agreed with the proposal and seconded it.

Mr. Down stated that when he and Mr. Hall did the scrutiny earlier in the year, Mr. Hankin was very well organised, gave great clarity and presented a broad view.

Governors were in full agreement to retain Mr. Hankin as the Clerk.

9.5 Governor Skills Audit

The results of the 2020 skills audit were noted. There is a high level of skill and experience in the main Governing Body as well as at committee level. The audit will be helpful when looking to recruit future governors.

9.6 Committee structure, members and terms of reference

AFH changes require the formation of an Audit and Risk committee and Mr. Hall proposed that this is separate from the Finance and Resources committee. He also suggested that a Strategic Planning Committee be formed to consider strategic and other long term matters, comprising the Chair and Vice Chair, Chairs of committees and Headteacher. Governors agreed that this was an appropriate structure to support the school going forward.

Governors were asked to indicate if they wished to change their membership of any committee and members for the new Audit and Risk committee were agreed. Agreed committee membership is included as Appendix A.

The committee terms of reference have been updated to include the new Audit and Risk committee and Strategic Planning committee and these were agreed.

9.7 Appointment of committee chairs

With the addition of the new committees, Mr. Hall suggested that this was an opportune time to review the chairs of committees and allow additional governors to gain this experience. He had spoken to current chairs and proposed the following:

Admissions	Dr. Middleton	Seconded by Mrs. Job
Audit & Risk	Mr. Down	Seconded by Mr. Fitzakerly
Curriculum & Performance	Mr. Lucas	Seconded by Mrs. King
Finance & Resources	Mr. Edwards	Seconded by Mr Seaman Hill
Personnel	Mrs. Job	Seconded by Mrs. King

The above appointments were agreed.

9.8 Link Governors

The schedule of Governor links with departments was reviewed. Dr. Middleton agreed to become the Link Governor for Learning for Life and to include RSHE and mental health as she is already meeting with Mrs. Cole on this.

Dr. Middleton reported on a recent meeting with Mrs. Cole to discuss the arrangements, framework and provision for future need around mental health and wellbeing.

She informed Governors that the school is in an excellent position to provide support and respond to concerns and that student wellbeing is generally good. The Headstrong programme is well received and is being looked at by other schools across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. Pressures on staff will need to be monitored and she mentioned a particular concern for members of the senior leadership team who have worked throughout the summer. Parental communication has been good.

It was agreed to add staff wellbeing as a regular agenda item at Personnel committee meetings.

9.9 Future training and other requirements

Herts for Learning are continuing to run Governance training and any Governor requiring further information can contact the Clerk.

10. Audit arrangements

10.1 AFH Schedule of Requirements

The responses to the Schedule of Musts were reviewed and agreed.

10.2 Risk Register

The updated risk register was reviewed and agreed.

10.3 Business Risk Assessment

This was noted.

10.4 Fraud Risk Assessment

This was noted.

11. Admission arrangements

Governors considered the current admission arrangements and agreed that no changes are required. Mr. Hankin informed them that Hertfordshire County Council propose making a change to clarify the policy on twins and multiple births and, as the school follows this policy,

the school will also need to consult on this amendment too. HCC will coordinate this consultation.

12. Policies

12.1 Child Protection Policy

Mrs. Manning explained that the policy has been updated to include changes in the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education which is effective from 1 September. Staff will need to confirm they have read and understood this policy.

The updated policy was approved.

13. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 1 December 2020