

**HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY
HELD AT 7.00PM ON TUESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2018**

Part 1 Business

Present:

Mrs. C. Astill	Mrs. M. King
Mr. K. Balfe	Mr. S. Lucas
Ms. J. Briggs	Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Mr. K. Down	Mr. S. Mills
Mr. G. Edwards	Mr. C. Minton
Mrs. C. Emmings	Mrs. S. Morrison
Mr. T. Fitzakerly	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mr. C. Hall (Chairman)	Mr. T. Scott
Mrs. N. Job (Vice Chair)	Mr. M. Seaman Hill
Mrs. D. Kaur	

In attendance:

Mr. T. Hankin	(Clerk)
Mr. J. Crowther	(Deputy Headteacher)
Miss R. Crowe	(Head Girl)

1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and, in particular, Ms Briggs attending as a newly elected Parent Governor, Mrs. Rowe as a newly elected Staff Governor and Miss Crowe, Head Girl. Apologies were received and accepted from Dr. K. Middleton and Mr. S. Sprawson.

2. Student Global Leadership Institute presentation

The school sent 3 Year 12 students to the two SGLI conferences in the summer, one in Hawaii and one in India. The students gave a short presentation on their trips and provided Governors with information on the projects they have developed and brought back into school.

SGLI Hawaii – The theme of the conference was Social Conscience and the students gave details of their project, entitled Reconnect, which is focussed on creating links between students and the residents of care homes for the elderly.

SGLI India – The theme had been Conservation and the students spoke about their project which is about making students aware of the environmental impact of providing meat for food. They have arranged for a 'Meat free Monday' where the school dining room does not include meat in its hot meals to promote alternative foods.

Governor's asked a number of questions regarding the visits and projects and thanked the students for their presentations.

3. Update on mental health work

Mrs. L Cole, Head of Philosophy & Ethics and Learning for Life, and the school's Mental Health lead gave a presentation on the issues facing schools relating to mental health and the actions and initiatives in place at HGS. There is a focus on changing the language and focus from mental ill health to mental health and wellness, with more emphasis on proactive support and guidance.

All staff have been trained in mental first aid, the first school in Hertfordshire to have done this.

Exam pressure is a big issue for students, but the aim is to provide them with the tools and support to deal with this, as pressure is something they will need to be able to handle throughout their lives.

The work at HGS is highly regarded by CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and the school is often used as an example of best practice. There are grave concerns that the health service does not have sufficient funding to provide the support that is needed for young people and adults and more and more of the impact of mental health issues is falling on schools.

Mrs. Manning informed Governors that Mrs. Cole has delivered training to PGCE students at Cambridge University and the University of Hertfordshire and has also spoken at national and local conferences. She is working closely with organisations in the local community such as PHASE. Dr. K. Middleton is the governor with specific interest in Mental Health and supports Mrs. Cole.

Governors asked a number of questions covering subjects such as parental awareness, the impact on student absence, the wellbeing support for staff and students, and the lack of funding.

Governors thanked and praised Mrs. Cole for her presentation and detailed knowledge and understanding of this issue.

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

None.

5. Declarations of Interest

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

6. Minutes of previous meeting.

6.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018.

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

6.2 Matters arising.

Governor Safeguarding training (from item 8.7).

Mrs. Manning informed Governors that Governor safeguarding training is due for renewal by January 2020. Herts for Learning organise 2 hours evening training sessions around the county and details will be circulated. Governors are encouraged to sign up to one of these during 2019 as soon as possible as places are limited.

7. Financial Statements 2017/18 & report from the Auditors

Mr. Hankin informed Governors that, unfortunately, Mr. A. Kariya from the auditors MHA MacIntyre Hudson had sent apologies that afternoon and was unable to attend the meeting.

The Financial Statements and Management Letter had been presented by Mr. Kariya at the November Finance Committee meeting and matters reviewed and discussed. He had confirmed that the school has excellent financial processes and procedures in place. No issues or concerns were raised and the report from the auditors is unqualified.

Mr. Hankin noted that school finances remain very tight and that the report shows that school reserves has reduced, but remain just above the level set by the Governors.

Mr. Hall advised the meeting that the auditors had been very complimentary about the management and control of the finances and thanks had been passed on to the finance team. He had recently attended a conference on financial management in schools and it had been pleasing to note that many of the actions and recommendations made were already in place at HGS.

The pensions deficit remains an issue for all schools, but there is very little that can be done within school regarding this.

The Management Letter from the auditor was reviewed and **NOTED**.

The Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 August 2018 were recommended for approval by Mr. Hall, seconded by Mr. Down, and unanimously **APPROVED** by the Governing Body.

8. Head Girls' report

Miss Crowe reported on school activities this term.

Year 12 students have settled in well and the transition process has gone smoothly. A welcome breakfast was held for external students joining the Sixth Form. The GCSE celebration evening had been very successful and was a good occasion for students to showcase some of their practical work.

Year 13 are preparing for mock examinations at present. The UCAS application has gone very well. On the lighter side, competitive events with the other schools in the Consortium for the Cole-Swinburn Cup will begin soon.

Charity events have been taking place with each House raising money for their chosen charity. Peer mentoring is underway, with students in older years support younger ones. A Learning Champions programme has been launched where Sixth Form students provide support in individual subjects to students in other year groups.

Miss Crowe was thanked for her report.

9. Headteacher's report.

Mrs. Manning reviewed the report which was provided in advance of the meeting. She highlighted the range of CPD opportunities provided by the North Herts. Teaching Alliance and Governors noted the breadth of training and support available. She referred to the ongoing curriculum planning work and gave an update on admission applications and the secondary transition process.

She thanked the Governors involved in the Headteacher's performance appraisal which she had found very helpful and supportive and welcomed the opportunity to meet with this group of Governors each term. The objectives sets for 2017/18 were continuing this year as they were longer pieces of work than a single year.

The schedule of staff CPD was noted.

Following the recent training on Exclusions, Governors were pleased to recall that there had not been a permanent exclusion from the school during the past 12 years and the school should be proud of the way in which behaviour is managed. They confirmed that the information in the report on fixed term exclusions is informative and the data was noted.

Governors asked a question about a change to the school uniform skirt. Mrs. Manning confirmed that a new style was introduced from September on a phased basis. This was due to the version previously available from the supplier being unsuitable. The School Council had considered three alternatives and selected this new version as their preferred style. The Head Girl advised that students liked it because it is comfortable and practical.

Mrs. Manning was thanked for her report.

10. Committee reports

10.1 Admissions Committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 23 October 2018 which had received an update on admission numbers and feedback from the open evening and mornings. Governors asked about the advertising of Sixth Form open events and Mrs. Manning confirmed that these are advertised in nearby towns and areas, with the exception of Royston. The success of this is assessed by reviewing the number that join from each area.

The committee had reviewed the proposals and arrangements for a consultation on the admissions criteria for 2020/21 and this is now underway.

The report was noted.

10.2 Curriculum & Performance Committee

Mrs. King reported on the meeting held on 23 October 2018. Mrs. Mills had given a presentation on summer 2018 examination results and the highlights and outcomes had been discussed. The committee was again delighted with the results, with the school placed in the top 14% nationally for its GCSE performance.

The meeting also received information on the actions that have taken place during the term as part of the school self evaluation process.

A number of policies had been reviewed.

The Child Protection Policy, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy and Sex and Relationships Education Policy had been updated in line with the latest model policies and were recommended to the Governors for approval.

The Behaviour for Learning Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy had been reviewed and no changes were required. These were also recommended for approval.

The Governing Body **APPROVED** the above policies.

The committee had also reviewed and approved the Non-Examination Assessments Policy and this was **NOTED** by the Governing Body.

The report was noted.

10.3 Finance & Resources Committee

Mr. Down reported on the meeting held on 6 November 2017. A large part of the meeting was spent reviewing the financial statements, which has already been referred to.

The meeting also considered financial benchmarking data and noted that the school performs well when assessed against local and similar sized schools. An update on expansion work had been received, and Governors again expressed their appreciation for the work involved in delivering the new facilities.

Initial budget projections for 2019/20 and beyond were reviewed. Pressure on budgets is increasing and further savings will be needed.

The Freedom of Information Publication Scheme had been reviewed and recommended for approval. The Governing Body **APPROVED** the Scheme.

The committee had also reviewed and approved the Schedule of Financial Delegation and this was **NOTED** by Governors.

The report was noted.

10.4 Personnel Committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 9 October 2018. The committee had received information on staff absence for the previous year and were pleased to note that there had been little long term absence. The support given to staff for family responsibilities was noted and welcomed.

The committee had reviewed the outcomes of the performance appraisal and pay recommendations process and supported all the recommendations made.

The Headteacher's performance appraisal has been completed with a new external advisor involved this year. The process had been challenging and supportive and all involved had appreciated the input from the new advisor.

An updated model Pay and Appraisal policy for 2018/19 has only just been received. It will be considered at the next meeting of the committee.

The report was noted.

11. Link Governors

Mr. Seaman-Hill reported on time spent with the Geography department. He was very impressed with the way in which they have quickly settled into the new teaching block and the displays that are in the rooms and corridors. He had noted the wide range of trips available in support of the curriculum.

Governors considered the use of a template to help gather information from their visits which can help with the feedback to the Governing Body, Senior Leadership Team and Head of Department. Mrs. Rowe confirmed that this has been used for a Classics department visit and she found it very helpful as it helps to ensure any concerns raised are shared with the Governors. Governors agreed to the introduction of the template and this will be made available.

12. Any Other Business

Mrs. Job informed Governors that Mr. Hankin, Director of Finance & Resources, has been awarded Fellowship status of the Institute of School Business Leaders. Governors congratulated Mr. Hankin on this achievement.

13. Dates of next meeting

Tuesday 19th March 2019

The meeting closed at 8.15pm