

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held at 7.00pm on Wednesday 7 December 2022

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mr. T. Hankin	Clerk
Miss R. Basra (Item 6 onwards)	Deputy Head Girl
Miss P. Vorster (Item 6 onwards)	Deputy Head Girl

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, Mr. T. Fitzakerly, Mrs. S. Franklin, Ms. A. Holden and Mr. D. Roberts. Apologies were also received from Mr. A. Jones, Deputy Head, and Ms. K. Kwaku, Head Girl.

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 13 September 2022.

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

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

5. Headteacher's report

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

Trustees thanked him for a full and thorough report in what had been a very busy and active term. Trustees asked questions relating to the work on values and Mr. Crowther outlined progress so far. They also discussed the increase in suspensions this term and Mr. Crowther

informed them that the behaviour of some Year 8 and 9 students is a particular concern across many schools at the present time. This may be due to the pandemic as their transition to secondary school was very disrupted. A staff trustee commented that behaviour issues are being dealt with more swiftly and coherently than in the past couple of years and this is having a positive effect on behaviour management in school. Work on attendance is also a key focus with a lot of effort on improving attendance particularly for Year 11 students. Trustees discussed the recent Trustee/student panels which have been very informative and confirm much of what is contained in the report. They noted the work on curriculum maps which they believe will be very helpful for students and parents. Staff wellbeing and workload remains a focus and Mr. Crowther stated that he is always mindful of this whenever anything new is being considered.

Mr. Crowther thanked all staff and Trustees for their support this term. Every member of staff is working extremely hard to achieve all that is being asked, and he is extremely grateful.

6. Head Girls' report

The report was given by the two deputies, Miss R. Basra and Miss P. Vorster. They highlighted some of the events that have taken place this term for Sixth Form students including joint activities with Hitchin Boys' and The Priory School Sixth Forms for the Cole-Swinburne Cup, Year 13 students providing guidance to Year 11 on A level choices, meditation sessions for Year 13, and a Talk the Talk workshop for Year 13 which gave very helpful tips on presenting for interviews and building confidence when speaking.

Across the whole school there have been activities and speakers for Black History Month, a charity fortnight where each House put on an event to raise money for their chosen charity, support for a Christmas Shoe Box appeal, the termly Food Drive and a rainbow laces football competition with Hitchin Boys' School. There has been significant sporting success in district netball, cross country and the regional trampolining competition. A team of students also won the Rotary design competition.

Trustees thanked the Deputy Head Girls for the report and shared their delight that so many activities and events are taking place. Mr. Crowther added his thanks for all the support the whole Sixth Form has given to the school this term.

7. Committee reports

7.1 Admissions committee

Mrs. King reported on the meeting held on 1 November. An update on admission numbers and movement was received and there was a discussion on the potential maximum size of the Sixth Form. The destinations of students leaving Year 11 and 13 was noted and it was pleasing to read that 80% of Year 11 students opted to continue into the Sixth Form at HGS. The Open Mornings had been very successful.

7.2 Curriculum and Performance committee

Mrs. Frost reported on the meeting held on 1 November. A presentation on student achievement in the summer examinations was received and this highlighted the exceptional results at both GCSE and A level which are the best for many years. Trustees had discussed the activities taking place as part of the self-evaluation process and the work being done to improve attendance levels which are above national levels but still

have areas for improvement. An update on curriculum events and plans was given by the Deputy Head. A Pupil Premium and SEND report were received. Work on preparing for an Ofsted inspection was discussed and Mr. Crowther will be circulating some one-page summaries to Trustees with relevant and useful information. It was suggested that another date for Trustees to meet with Mr. Peter Monk who is working with the school on readiness for Ofsted will be helpful.

The updated ESMA Policy and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Policy were reviewed and recommended for approval. These were **APPROVED** by Trustees.

Updated versions of the Behaviour for Learning Policy, Non-Examination Assessment Policy, Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy and Substance Use and Misuse Policy were reviewed and approved by the committee. This was **NOTED** by Trustees.

7.3 Finance and Resources Committee

Mr. Edwards reported on the meeting held on 8 November which was attended by the Auditor. She reviewed the draft annual financial statements and the management letter to Trustees. As in previous years, she reported that the school is in a very good financial position, with strong procedures and controls, and that there are no areas of concern. She expressed thanks to the Finance team for their support during the audit and this was reiterated by the committee.

The committee had noted the completion of the work to the lower block and science roofs and the lower block windows, funded by grants under the Condition Improvement Fund scheme. Two new bids are being prepared for next year. The committee also discussed proposals to improve the site security with additional fencing and gates. Three quotes have been received and this work was approved, although it may not be possible until next summer.

The possible project to construct additional classrooms was discussed. It was agreed that due to uncertainty regarding future funding, costs and budget pressures, work on this would be placed on hold.

The current tender process for the Cleaning contract was discussed.

A Trustee asked about the investment policy and how this is used to maximise returns and Mr. Hankin explained the policy that is followed.

The updated Data Protection Policy was reviewed and recommended for approval. This was **APPROVED** by Trustees.

Updated versions of the Fixed Assets and Depreciation Policy and the Schedule of Financial Delegation were reviewed and approved by the committee. This was **NOTED** by Trustees.

The Financial Statements of Hitchin Girls' School for the period ending 31 August 2022 were **APPROVED** by Trustees and signed by the Chair and Headteacher (Accounting Officer).

The Audit Findings Management letter was **NOTED** by Trustees.

7.4 Audit and Risk Committee

Mr. Hankin reported on the meeting held on 8 November. The feedback from the Auditor regarding the strong financial controls and procedures in place and the content of the Audit

Findings Management Letter was noted The Internal Scrutiny reports from July 2022 were reviewed and there were no issues raised. The programme of Internal Scrutiny work for 2022/23 was agreed.

7.5 Personnel Committee

Mr. Lucas reported on the meeting held on 11 October. Three members of the committee had completed the review of the staff appraisal process and looked at a sample of recommendations. They confirmed that the process was very sound and supported all the pay progression recommendations.

A staffing report was received and the committee noted the decision of the Director of Finance & Resources to retire at the end of March 2023. An update on the expected increase in the pay scales for teaching and non-teaching staff was discussed and the additional impact on the budget noted.

An updated job description for the role of Clerk to Trustees was reviewed and the committee agreed that they would like Mr. Hankin to continue in this role.

Updated versions of the Adoption Policy, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling at Work Policy, Bullying and Harassment Policy, Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Policy, Maternity Policy, Parental Bereavement policy, Paternity Leave Policy, Relationships at Work Policy, Staff Health & Attendance Policy, Wellbeing Policy and Unpaid Parental Leave Policy were reviewed and approved by the committee. This was **NOTED** by Trustees.

A Trustee raised a question regarding the application deadline for a member of staff who wished to apply to move to the Upper Pay Scale as part of their performance review. Mrs. Job replied that the matter had been carefully considered at the Committee meeting and that the deadline date is stated in the Teacher Pay Policy. Mr. Crowther confirmed that he has signposted this date to staff for the current year.

7.6 Strategic Planning Committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 6 October. An update on the latest position regarding a potential Multi Academy Trust was received and discussed.

8. Multi Academy Trust update

Mr. Crowther referred to the information circulated to Trustees a few days previously. The DfE had advised that they would not be putting the proposed application forward for consideration by the Regional Director at the current time. The Schools Bill which included the aim for all schools to be part of a MAT by 2030 has been dropped by the government and, given the general political uncertainty, it was agreed not to pursue this any further at the moment. Collaboration with local schools will continue.

9. Link department visits

Mrs. Job reminded Trustees of the importance of visits and encouraged all trustees to make a visit to their link department next term if they have not already completed one this academic year.

Two Trustees spoke about recent training from Herts for Learning on the purpose of the visit, how trustees can make best use of this and linking discussion to aims in the School Improvement Plan. Information from the training will be shared with all Trustees.

Mrs. Thornber reported on a visit to the science department where she had met with the three Heads of Department. She was impressed by their dedication, the support provided by students and the use of blended learning. She did note the amount of work required to ensure material is available to students online.

Mr. Hall reported on a meeting with the Head of Sixth Form which also discussed the careers programme in school. The careers fayre had been very well organized and supported. Support for students relating to UCAS applications, Unifrog and Post 16 options is also strong. Sufficient space for the large Sixth Form remains an issue.

Mr. Mills informed Trustees that two members of the science department have visited Whitehill School to assist with science activities. They have worked with Year 5 and 6 students and have been very inspiring. This has been extremely well received by staff and students.

Mr. Edwards spoke about his recent involvement in Trustee/Student panels and he appreciated the opportunity to undertake a learning walk around the school as part of this. He was very impressed with the behaviour and response of students and staff when he entered the room as they simply continued working and were not distracted. Other Trustees confirmed that they had also enjoyed being part of the recent panels.

10. Any other Business

None

11. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 21 March 2023