

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD AT 7.00PM ON TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2021

Present: Mr. K. Down Mrs. M. King
Mr. G. Edwards Mr. S. Lucas
Mrs. C. Emmings, Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Mr. T. Fitzakerly Mr. S. Mills
Mrs. S. Franklin Mrs. K. Rowe
Mrs. S. Frost Mr. T. Scott
Mrs. N. Job (Vice Chair)

In attendance: Mr. T. Hankin (Clerk)
Miss. D. Lehrfreund (Head Girl)

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mrs. Job welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. K. Balfe, Mr. C. Hall (Chair), Dr. K. Middleton, Mr. M. Seaman Hill and Mr. M. Winter.

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 14 September 2021.

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

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

5. Head Girls' report

Miss Lehrfreund reported on some of the activities that have taken place during the Autumn term.

- The music concert was a big success, the first time it has been held for almost 2 years.
- A group of students are working together to achieve reaccreditation as a World Class School
- The GCSE awards event for Year 12 students was well attended. Students were pleased to receive recognition for all their work.
- The Year 13 SGLI team participated in the virtual event this year where the theme was health. Events and activities relating to this are now being introduced in school.
- All students have received a talk from the police about personal safety.

- The Cole-Swinburn cup with TPS and HBS is underway. HGS won the Bake Off competition.
- House charity fundraising events are taking place.
- There is another Food Drive this week to support the local community.

Miss Lehfreund was thanked for her report.

6. Headteachers' update

The report from Mrs. Manning was reviewed. Key items noted and discussed included:

- Teaching and learning – The roll-out of the Professional Learning Hub initiative and the focus on further development and use of Google in school.
- Attendance data. Attendance is slightly down on previous years, but this is not surprising as a result of the pandemic. Figures are still above the national average. Trustees discussed the reasons as to why some students are recorded as persistent absentees.
- Careers activity and the Passport to Post 16.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities that are taking place.
- Staff CPD this term.
- An update on the Headteacher's objectives for 2021/22.
- The SEND report as previously reviewed at the Curriculum and Performance Committee.
- The use of Pupil Premium and Recovery grant funding.

Mrs. Manning was thanked for her report.

7. Committee reports

7.1 Admissions Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 were noted. Mrs. King highlighted the discussions that had taken place relating to students numbers and the increase in Sixth Form numbers. Proposals for changes to the admission arrangements for 2023/24 were reviewed and agreed for consultation.

Trustees asked about attendance at the revised Open Morning events. Mr. Hankin replied that numbers appeared similar to previous years. Holding four morning sessions allowed more time for conversations with parents and students.

7.2 Curriculum and Performance Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2021 were noted. Mr. Lucas mentioned the closure of the North Herts Teaching Alliance and the work now being done with the Alban Alliance. The five appeals against the summer Teacher Assess Grades (TAGs) had all been unsuccessful which helped confirm that the school process and controls were very robust. The committee had reviewed the work completed as part of the Self Evaluation review this term. A report from the Head of Learning Support had been reviewed along with feedback from a visit by the link trustee. It was pleasing to hear that SEND is at the centre of learning in the school.

The committee had reviewed the updated Behavior for Learning Policy and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy and recommended these for approval. The Trustees **APPROVED** these policies.

The committee also approved the updated Literacy policy and this was **NOTED**.

7.3 Finance and Resources Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 were noted. Mr. Edwards reported that the auditor had presented the draft Financial Statements and Audit Management Letter and this was all very positive. The school is in a good financial position with strong procedures and controls. No internal control or regularity breaches were noted. The Auditor had mentioned that to have no regulatory breaches reported is a very strong position to be in and not many schools achieve this.

The Trustees **NOTED** the Audit Findings Management Letter and **APPROVED** the Financial Statements for the period ending 31 August 2021.

The committee also reviewed the premises report and the issues relating to the flat roof on the Lower and Science Blocks. A grant application is being submitted under the DfE Condition Improvement Fund scheme. To try and increase the chance of success, it was agreed the school could make a contribution of around £80,000 which is 20% of the cost. A second bid is being submitted relating to replacement of the Lower Block windows.

The committee had reviewed the updated Freedom of Information Publication scheme and recommended this for approval. The Trustees **APPROVED** the scheme.

The committee also approved the updated Schedule of Finance Delegation and this was **NOTED**.

Mr. Hankin updated the Trustees regarding the license agreement changes for the SIMS MIS system. This is moving from a one year to three year agreement from March 2022. All three Hitchin Schools use SIMS and there is a link between the systems for consortium students. As all 3 schools intend continuing with the use of SIMS for at least the next two years, Trustees agreed the change to a three year agreement.

7.4 Audit and Risk Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2021 were noted. Mr. Down confirmed that the committee had noted the very positive Audit Management Letter. The Internal Scrutiny report was reviewed and no matters of concern were raised. The programme of Internal Scrutiny work for 2021/22 was updated and agreed.

7.5 Personnel Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 were noted. Mrs. Job advised that the annual Performance Appraisal process had been reviewed and again found to be very robust. All pay recommendations were approved.

The committee had discussed staff wellbeing and the DfE Wellbeing Charter which is currently being reviewed.

The committee had reviewed the updated Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and recommended these for approval. The Trustees **APPROVED** these policies.

The committee also approved the updated Safer Recruitment Policy and Part 2 of the Appointment of Support Staff Contract of Employment document, and a new Protection of Biometric Information Policy and this was **NOTED**.

7.6 Strategic Planning Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2021 were noted. Mrs. Job advised that the committee had discussed the potential changes to the admission arrangements for 2023/24 and also the preparation for a future Ofsted inspection following the recent inspection at Hitchin Boys' School. The need for the composition of the Board of Trustees to represent the diversity of the school community was discussed along with ways of encouraging nominations when the next parent election takes place.

A Code of Conduct for Trustees based on a template produced by the National Governors Association was considered. It was agreed that adopting this will be helpful in clarifying the role of a Trustee when recruiting and the committee recommended its adoption.

Trustees **AGREED** to adopt the Code of Conduct

8. Governance

8.1 Members meeting

The minutes from a meeting of the Members of the Trust on 13 October were noted. A new member, Mike Firth, has been appointed. He is a former Headteacher with a wealth of education knowledge.

8.2 Trust Board committee membership

It was agreed to appoint Mrs. S. Frost as a member of the Curriculum and Performance Committee.

9. Link department visits

- Mr. Scott informed Trustees that he has visited the Philosophy & Ethics and Business & Computing departments this week and will provide a report for the next meeting.
- Mrs. Frost reported on time spent with the Head of History. They had discussed the curriculum and she had been very impressed with some of the initiatives in place including the Q&A drop in sessions and informal lunch time support for students studying for public examinations.
- Mr. Fitzakerly reported on a visit to the English department. There are a lot of great and imaginative ideas and activities taking place including Wordy Wednesdays, Library sessions etc.
- Mrs. King informed Trustees she has visited Mrs. Mills to discuss Pupil Premium and safeguarding initiatives, actions and reporting. There are robust procedures in place to support these areas.

- Mr. Edwards advised that he had assisted on the recent Year 8 residential. It was noticeable at the start of the trip that some students struggled with relationships but by the end of the three days things were very much back to normal.
- Mrs. Job confirmed that she had spent time with the Head of Learning Support and had reported on this visit to the Curriculum & Performance committee.

10. Any Other Business

None.

11. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 22 March 2022

An additional meeting will be required in January or February 2022 to determine the admission arrangements for 2023/24.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.