

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD AT 6.00PM ON TUESDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2021

Present:

Mr. K. Balfe	Mr. S. Lucas
Mr. K. Down	Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Mr. G. Edwards	Mr. S. Mills
Mrs. S. Franklin	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mrs. S. Frost	Mr. T. Scott
Mr. C. Hall (Chair)	Mr. M. Winter
Mrs. M. King	

In attendance: Mr. T. Hankin (Clerk)

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mr. Hall welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Mrs. C. Emmings, Mrs. N. Job and Dr. K. Middleton. Mr. T. Fitzakerly and Mr. M. Seaman Hill were absent. The Chair informed Trustees that Ms. J. Briggs had resigned as a Parent Trustee.

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk asked for nominations for Chair for the coming year.

Mr. Hall was nominated by Mr. Mills, seconded by Mr. Lucas. There were no other nominations. Mr. Hall was elected Chair for the year.

The Chair asked for nominations for Vice- Chair for the coming year.

Mrs. Job was nominated by Mr. Hall, seconded by Mr. Down. There were no other nominations. Mrs. Job was elected Vice-Chair for the year.

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

- a) Diversity of the Board of Trustees
- b) Covid-19 update

4. Declarations of interest

Trustees 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 22 June 2021.

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

5.2 Matters arising.

None.

6. Headteachers' update

Mrs. Manning provided an update on the start of term.

- The start of term has gone well and there is a real feeling of optimism in school. Staff and students are pleased to be back and able to restart many of the things that have been missed during the past year.
- The list of extra-curricular opportunities available to students is huge.
- Students were offered two lateral Flow device tests on return to school and 1,982 were administered by a team of staff and volunteers.
- The school is fully staffed. However, an Assistant Headteacher is currently absent. Their teaching commitment is covered and arrangements are being put in place with regards to their management responsibilities.
- Approximately 160 Year 7 students attended a two day Summer Step Up programme and this was very successful. Their induction programme at the start of term has also gone well.
- The Chromebook project has started and there are very few Year 7 and 10 students that don't have their own device. Year 7 are using these a lot in Tutor time.
- Numbers joining the Sixth Form are high. 73% of Year 11 have stayed on and have been joined by 48 external students, giving a total for Year 12 of 168. With 147 in Year 13, the Sixth Form is at capacity.
- The Ofsted window is now open and Outstanding Schools are again eligible for inspection. Governors discussed the preparation that the school is making and the information and guidance that will be shared with Trustees.
- There is a change to arrangements for open events for Year 6 families this year. There will not be an open evening but instead there are 4 open mornings, with parents asked to book places in advance. This will help to manage the number of people on site at any time. This is supported by a dedicated section of the website with lots of information regarding the school and admissions.

Mrs. Manning was thanked for her report.

7. Examination results summary

Mrs. Mills, Assistant Headteacher, shared a presentation which had been given to staff at the start of term on examination results. The results were awarded using Teacher Assessed Grades.

Mrs. Manning informed Trustees that she was very pleased with the results awarded and felt that they accurately reflected the grade the students would be expected to have received if there had been public examinations.

Trustees discussed the process for assessing grades, the results, and comparisons with previous year and national figures. They felt it important to acknowledge progress as well as those achieving top grades. They asked how students had felt about their results. Mrs. Manning and Mrs. Rowe advised that most were relieved as they hadn't really known what to expect. Many came in to collect their results even though they had been emailed home, and there were lots of smiling faces, both students and parents. Most Year 13 students have progressed to their chosen destination.

The Chair expressed thanks to all involved in the assessment and examination progress this summer.

8. School Improvement Plan 2021/22

Mrs. Manning explained the plan for the coming year with the format a little different to previous years.

The first section is a summary of the whole school plan. Part of the focus is revisiting and reintroducing things that help make HGS special, whilst retaining the new things introduced during the pandemic that have worked well. The plan has a separate section with more details on each of the core objectives.

The core areas are:

- Culture and Ethos - To maintain and further develop the core values, traditions and family ethos of the school and to continue to promote excellence, develop us as an exceptional and World Class school. "What does it mean and how does it feel to be a student at Hitchin Girls' School?"
- What we teach and learn and how we do it. To provide the highest provision for an exceptional educational experience and culture
- To use data robustly and consistently to meet the needs of the school. What does data tell us, what will we do as a result and what impact will that bring?
- Staff development, support and training. To ensure a culture of continuous learning for all staff. What does it mean and how does it feel to be a member of staff at Hitchin Girls' School?
- Providing the most effective leadership at all levels to ensure exceptional outcomes for us all

Each department has also prepared their own plan and this is available to their link Trustee.

Mrs. Manning was asked how the school would measure success for the objectives in the plan. She advised that whilst some can be measured through data, others will require feedback and collation of comments from parent surveys, staff questionnaires, student/trustee panels etc.

Trustees **APPROVED** the School Improvement Plan for 2021/22.

9. Governance and Financial Oversight

9.1 ESFA's Chief Executive letter to Accounting Officers

The content of the letter was noted.

9.2 Committee structure and Terms of Reference

Trustees discussed the committee structure and agreed to continue with the six committees which provide opportunity for detailed review and monitoring of the work of the school.

The terms of reference were agreed.

9.3 Committee membership and appointment of committee chairs

Trustees were asked whether anyone wished to change committee. There were no changes. Mrs. Franklin and Mrs. Frost will attend the various committee meetings in November, prior to deciding which they will join.

The following were appointed as committee chairs for 2021/22

- Admissions – Dr. K. Middleton

- Audit & Risk – Mr. K. Down
- Curriculum & Performance – Mr. S. Lucas
- Finance & Resources – Mr. G. Edwards
- Personnel – Mrs. N. Job

9.4 Schedule of Delegation

The Schedule of Delegation was reviewed and approved. A two way communication link between Members and Trustees link is important.

9.5 Trustee Link Departments

- The following changes were agreed for 2021/22
- History - Mrs. Frost
- Modern Foreign Languages - Mrs. Franklin
- English & Media - Mr. Fitzakerly
- Mathematics - Mr. Winter
- Pupil Premium – Mrs. Franklin to assist Mrs. King

9.6 Future training and other requirements

Trustees were reminded of the online training opportunities provided by Herts for Learning and through GovernorHub. Mrs. Manning will check when Trustees are next required to undertake Safeguarding training.

10. Audit arrangements

10.1 Risk Register approval

The register was reviewed at the May Audit and Risk committee. A Trustee asked how the impact was determined. Mr. Down replied that it is currently done on a judgement basis rather than via any specified levels or threshold. The risk register was **APPROVED**.

10.2 Audit documentation

Trustees reviewed the responses to the Board Assessment of Fraud Risk, Business Risk Review and Schedule of Musts documents provided by the Auditors. These were **APPROVED**.

11. Admission arrangements 2023/24

As a result of the decision by the Schools Adjudicator, changes are required to the admission arrangements for 2023/24. These need to be agreed by February 2022. A meeting is taking place later this month with the Local Authority Admissions Team to discuss options. As Hitchin Boys' School uses similar admission arrangements, they are also involved in these discussions.

12. Policies

12.1 Child Protection Policy

Mrs. Manning advised trustees that the school uses the model policy provided by the Local Authority and Herts. for Learning. This is used by most schools in the authority as the council has responsibility for overseeing safeguarding. An update has been provided for September 2021 and the changes are shown in the circulated document.

Trustees **APPROVED** the updated Child Protection Policy.

A Trustee asked whether the school had a trained mental first aider. Mrs. Manning advised that a number of staff have training and experience in mental first aid issues. The SENCO is the mental health lead and there is a team in place to support her.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 Diversity of the Board of Trustees

Trustees discussed the composition of the Board and that it did not necessarily represent the make-up of the whole school community. The national governors Association has a campaign 'Everyone on Board' to encourage greater diversity. It was agreed to include wording in future parent trustee letters encouraging representatives from all backgrounds. The matter will also be discussed at the next Strategic Planning Committee meeting.

13.2 Covid-19 update

Mrs. Manning advised that the school is following DfE guidance regarding current Covid-19 restrictions. Their focus is on schools remaining open with activities as near to normal as possible. However, the school also has an outbreak plan with potential additional measures that may be produced on the advice of the Local Authority and Public Health, if the school has a number of connected cases. Although the Government has announced CO2 monitors for schools, at present these are only being issued to special schools. The school is responding to parents who have asked about the use of additional measures, advising that we are required to follow the DfE guidance.

There is also a lot of media activity regarding vaccinations for 12-15 year olds and letters from parents are also being received regarding these. The vaccination process is organized and run by the NHS and not the school and parents are directed to the NHS Immunisation Service with any queries.

14. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 7 December 2021

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.