

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held at 6.00pm on Tuesday 12 September 2023

Present:	Mr. K. Balfe	Mrs. M. King
	Mr. J. Crowther (Headteacher)	Mrs. N. Job (Chair)
	Mr. K. Down	Mr. S. Lucas
	Mr. G. Edwards	Mr. S. Mills
	Mr. T. Fitzakerly	Mr. D. Roberts
	Mrs. S. Franklin	Mrs. K. Rowe
	Mrs. S. Frost	Mr. T. Scott
	Mr. C. Hall	Mrs. A. Thornber
		Mr. M. Winter
In attendance:	Mr. T. Hankin	Clerk
	Mr. A. Jones	Deputy Headteacher
	Mrs. J. Shaw	Director of Finance & Resources

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mrs. Job welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Board of Trustees. Apologies were received and accepted from Ms. A. Holden.

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Clerk invited nominations for the role of Chair. Mr. Lucas proposed Mrs. Job and this was seconded by Mr. Hall. There were no other nominations and Mrs. Job was appointed as Chair.

Mrs. Job nominated Mr. Lucas as Vice Chair and this was seconded by Mr. Edwards. There were no other nominations and Mr. Lucas was appointed as Vice Chair.

Mr. Lucas then suggested that it may be helpful to have a second Vice Chair to work with him and the Chair. He asked that anyone interested in undertaking this role should speak to the Chair.

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

Budget 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 20 June 2023.

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

5.2 Matters arising.

Diversity of Trust Board (from item 10). Mr. Lucas confirmed that he has provided Mr. Crowther with some thoughts on finding new Trustees and they will be discussing this shortly. Trustees

who attended the Year 7 transition evening in July advised that there was some interest from parents in the work of the Trustees. The Clerk advised that a Parent Trustee election will need to take place next month.

6. Examination results summary

Mr. Jones gave a presentation providing an overview of the summer A level and GCSE results. More detailed information and analysis will be provided at the next meeting of the Curriculum & Performance committee.

Whilst some comparison with 2019 (pre Covid) can be made, he reminded Trustees that those completing A levels had not undertaken public examinations at the end of Year 11. No national performance table data will be published for 2023. A level results are broadly similar to 2019 which is a good position to be in. 72 students, almost half of the cohort, achieved at least one top grade.

At GCSE, performance tables will be published in October, but these will need to be adjusted as this cohort had not undertaken SATS. Again, results are pleasing. This is the first cohort with the expanded number of 210 students and will set the baseline going forward. Mr. Crowther stated that there are a lot of reviews of marking outstanding, particularly for English, and this may impact the final data. A Trustee asked what prompts the school to request a remark and Mr. Crowther explained the basis for this.

Low attendance remains the biggest impact on achievement.

A Trustee asked whether the results have impacted the number joining the Sixth Form. Mr. Crowther confirmed that approximately 25 external students have joined, but numbers are still settling down after the first few days of term.

7. Headteachers' update

Mr. Crowther gave an update on the start of term which has been successful. He thanked Trustees for their support over the summer, when a number of policies were circulated for review. The new Behaviour for Learning policy has been launched to students and staff and a positive impact is already being seen. He referred to the considerable work undertaken by the site and IT teams including new gates and fencing, enhancements to toilet facilities, new interactive boards in many classrooms, redecoration and the new values branding which is now displayed around the school.

A Trustee asked about the removal of some of the outer doors from the toilets. Mr. Crowther explained that this work was as a result of feedback from students. Some toilet areas were used as gathering areas for students, making it harder for younger students in particular to use them. There was also evidence of vaping taking place. Research was undertaken looking at other schools and most had more open toilet areas. Since the remodeling, he has spoken to a number of students on their return and the feedback had generally been very positive. There has also been no evidence of vaping taking place in the toilets.

Student numbers at the start of term are stable and in line with PAN. The Year 7 Transition week has been very successful. Work to look at increasing diversity has been launched to the Middle Leader team today.

Trustees thanked Mr. Crowther for his report. Mrs. Job noted that she has looked around the school with Mr. Crowther and it is looking very good. Trustees agreed that thanks should be sent to all staff for their efforts last year and over the summer.

8. Governance and Financial oversight

8.1 New Member appointment

Mr. Hall informed Trustees that, following the resignation of Mr. Minton, a new independent Member has been sought. He is pleased to confirm that Ms. Brittany Sprawson, a former Head Girl of the school in 2014, has agreed to take on this role and has been appointed.

8.2 Committee structure and Terms of Reference

No changes to the structure were proposed and the Terms of Reference were agreed.

8.3 Committee membership and appointment of committee chairs.

No changes were requested and the committee membership was agreed as the same as for 2022/23. The following appointments as committee chair were agreed:

- Admissions - Mrs. King
- Audit & Risk – Mr. Down
- Curriculum & Performance – Mrs. Frost
- Finance – Mr. Edwards
- Personnel – Mr. Lucas

8.4 Scheme of delegation

No changes were made and this was approved.

8.5 Trustee link departments

Trustees asked whether the Healthy Schools link should be incorporated with the Wellbeing link. Mr. Crowther will review this. No changes to link Trustees were made. Mrs. King remains the link Trustee for Safeguarding and Child Protection. Dates of the last link visits were updated.

8.6 Trustee training

Mrs. King informed Trustees that training is up to date, and she thanked those who completed training last year. She encouraged all Trustees to continue to look at the courses and sessions available.

9. Audit arrangements

9.1 Audit planning letter

The letter from the auditors setting out audit dates and areas of focus was noted. A trustee asked about fees. Mrs. Shaw advised that this year is the last of a 3 year contract and the fees are likely to increase when a new contract is tendered.

9.2 Related Party questionnaire

The requirements were noted.

9.3 Board assessment of fraud risk

The assessment has been completed and is similar to last year. It was approved.

9.4 Board assessment of business risk

The assessment has been completed with the removal of some references to Covid. It was approved.

9.5 Checklist of 'ESFA' musts

The return has been completed and the responses were approved.

9.6 Letter from the ESFA

This was noted.

9.7 Risk Register approval

The register was approved. Trustees asked how the rating scores are defined. Mrs. Shaw agreed to add a definition summary to the register.

10. Safeguarding update for Trustees

Mr. Crowther informed Trustees that Keeping Children Safe in Education has been updated. The revised Child Protection Policy reflects the changes included in KCSIE.

11. Policies

11.1 Schedule of Policies

The schedule was reviewed. Mrs. Shaw informed Trustees that she has reviewed the list against the Department for Education schedule of policies that schools must hold. She will update the schedule to clarify policy review and approval dates.

11.2 Child Protection Policy

This was reviewed. A Trustee asked how Trustees fulfill the requirement to ensure staff comply with legislation. Mrs. King replied that as link Trustee for safeguarding she reviews practices and procedures termly. Trustees can also ask questions at meetings and whenever visiting school. The updated policy was approved.

11.3 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy

This policy was reviewed and approved.

11.4 Policies approved by the Curriculum & Performance Committee

The following policies were reviewed and approved by the Curriculum and Performance committee and this was noted:

- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Child Looked After Policy
- Children known to a Social Worker Policy
- Communications Policy
- Homework Policy
- Uniform Policy

11.5 Anti-Bullying Policy

Mrs. Mills, Assistant Headteacher, attended and gave a presentation on changes made to this policy. She explained the rationale for the changes, how these fit with the new Behaviour for Learning Policy and the procedures for students and staff to follow.

She was asked whether the policy allows for reasonable adjustment to be made for a SEN student and Mrs. Mills confirmed that this is in place.

The updated policy was approved. Mrs. Mills was thanked for her work on this and also the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

12. Admission arrangements 2025/26

Mr. Crowther asked Trustees whether any changes to the admission arrangements should be considered for 2025/26. Trustees agreed that no changes were required. The admission arrangements for 2024/25 were therefore approved as the determined admission arrangements for 2025/26.

Mr. Crowther informed Trustees that there may be a change required to the definition used for a sibling and clarification of the definition of Children of Staff following feedback from the Schools Adjudicator. He is liaising with the admissions team at Hertfordshire County Council regarding these. Any change will not require consultation.

A Trustee asked about the process for children 'Out of Year Group'. Mr. Crowther confirmed that the school's policy is included in the admission arrangements. He will check that these are still correct.

13. Any other Business

Budget update. Mrs. Shaw gave an update following settlement of the Teacher Pay award. Extra funding provided by the DfE will cover the additional cost to the school of the pay awards.

14. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 5 December 2023