

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 18 June 2024

Present:

Mr. K. Balfe	Mrs. M. King
Mr. J. Crowther (Headteacher)	Mrs. N. Job (Chair)
Mr. K. Down	Mr. S. Mills
Dr. S. Eisenhandler	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mr. T. Fitzakerly	Mr. T. Scott
Mr. D. Roberts	Mrs. A. Thornber
Mrs. S. Franklin	
Mrs. S. Frost	
Mr. C. Hall	

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 Mr. G. Edwards and Mr. S. Lucas.

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 4 June 2024.

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

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

5. Headteachers' Report

Mr. Crowther referred to his report, circulated in advance. He thanked the Senior Leadership Team for helping compile the report and Trustees for their support throughout the year. He mentioned the teacher and non-teacher awards instigated by the Head Girl team which have taken place this week, recognising the work of many staff. Staff recruitment remains an issue with the final few posts still to be filled. This is unusual but is also being experienced by other local schools. He then invited questions on his report from the Trustees.

Q. What happens if a vacancy is not filled?

A. Likely to require supply cover for a term, with the role advertised at the start of next term.

Q. What were the main positive feedback points from students on the steps to success initiative?

A. Students welcomed the strategies for revision introduced by the external speaker. They also appreciated the revision activities being spread over time which resulted in students feeling less stressed.

Q. What were the successful outcomes of the Extended Leadership role undertaken by Mr. Derrett?

A. He did a huge amount of work reviewing, updating and embedding the Key Stage 3 Assessment model, gathering feedback from students, staff and parents. It is now in place and being used.

Q. What is flexi-schooling?

A. There is a lack of specialist provision in the area. A current student is unable to attend school full time but has been told no specialist provision centre can meet their need. Working with the parents and the Local Authority, a timetable has been put together which contains a mix of teaching in school, ESMA support and home schooling.

Q. What impact does the ending of the Recovery Premium funding have on the Thrive and Fly programme?

A. The school may need to divert money from other work to allow this to continue if an alternative funding source cannot be found.

Trustees expressed thanks to Mr. Crowther for a thorough and informative report. The Chair congratulated Mr. Crowther for his second year as Headteacher and for his exceptional leadership. She also expressed thanks to all staff at the school for everything they have done this year.

6. Committee reports

6.1 Admissions

Mrs. King reported on the meeting held on 7 May. Admission numbers for September were reviewed and future capacity requirements across the area were discussed. The Year 7 cohort for September 2024 is 213.

6.2 Curriculum & Performance

Mrs. Frost reported on the meeting held on 7 May. Trustees had received an update on student achievement and the self-evaluation review. Attendance and behaviour reports were received and reviewed. The impact that a small number of students can have on attendance data was discussed. The committee reviewed a number of policies. An updated Child Protection policy and Behaviour for Learning policy were recommended for approval. These were **APPROVED** by Trustees. The Anti-Bullying policy, Code of Conduct, Uniform policy and Curriculum policy had been reviewed and approved by the committee and this was **NOTED**.

6.3 Finance & Resources

Mr. Fitzakerly reported on the meeting held on 14 May. The latest Management Information reports show that the finances remain in a good position with a projected surplus at year end. The main discussion related to the budget for 2024/25. A deficit of £84,000 is predicted. Mrs. Shaw explained that there are still some uncertainties e.g. pay award rates, and this figure is the worst case. It is covered by reserves. HGS remains in a good position compared to many other schools. Trustees **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2024/25.

Mr. Fitzakerly reported on the premises discussions including the successful Condition Improvement Fund bid for replacement fire doors. Discussions had also taken place regarding the future use of the cottage located at the entrance to the school site. Three options were reviewed and the recommendation is that the school looks to use the building as additional space for support services and administration. Internal work will be required to support this change. Trustees agreed with this proposal.

The committee reviewed and approved the CCTV policy, Investment policy, Financial procedures manual and Trustee Allowance policy and this was **NOTED**.

6.4 Audit & Risk

Mr. Down reported on the meeting held on 14 May. The most recent Responsible Officer report was reviewed. No issues or concerns were identified.

6.5 Personnel

Mrs. Franklin reported on the meeting held on 14 May. A staffing update was received and the difficulties of recruiting for some positions discussed. The completion of the Staff Wellbeing Charter was noted. The staffing FTE for September 2024 shows a slight increase to 120.

The committee reviewed and approved the Whistleblowing policy, Flexible working policy, Probation policy and Social media policy and this was **NOTED**.

7. Governance

7.1 Skills and diversity audit summaries

The Chair thanked Trustees for completing the questionnaires. She stated that the skills audit shows that there is a strong, experienced Trustee body, confident in their skills. The diversity audit shows that the majority of Trustees have experience of the school as current or past parents but that there is also a need to improve the wider diversity. She mentioned that this need has been considered whilst seeking additional community Trustees.

Trustees discussed ways of promoting their role to parents and the need for a more diverse Trust Board. This will be done via attendance at the forthcoming transition evening and involvement with the HGFSA.

7.2 Trustee vacancies

The Chair confirmed that discussions have taken place with a local businessman regarding joining the Trust Board and it is hoped they will be appointed for September.

Mrs. Holden has resigned as a Parent Trustee and a parent election is underway. The Chair confirmed she has thanked Mrs. Holden for her work as a Trustee.

Mrs. Frost informed Trustees that she will be returning to Australia over the summer and will also be resigning. She thanked Trustees for their support and the opportunity to serve as a Trustee of an outstanding school. Trustees thanked her for all she has done, including as Chair of the C&P committee.

7.3 Training updates

Mrs. King reported on Prevent training she recently attended. It was run by a local trainer who was able to highlight the issues faced in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. She encouraged all Trustees to undertake this online training when possible.

7.4 Proposed meeting dates

The proposed meeting dates for 2024/25 were noted and agreed.

8. Department link visits

Mr. Scott reported on a visit to the Philosophy & Ethics department. There are plenty of good things going on, although there are some issues with students undertaking non-examined RE. The Head of Department stated that he received great support from the Senior Leadership Team and the issues are more a reflection of the society and behavioral concerns that are a national problem. Mr. Crowther added that these concerns are acknowledged and actions to address these are included in the School Improvement Plan for next year.

Mrs. Frost reported on a visit to the History department where she had enjoyed a Year 7 lesson on the Spanish armada. Students were all engaged, extracting information for an assessment and receiving individual feedback from the teacher. She sat in on a department meeting which discussed the department SIP and also potential trips to support the curriculum. Lots of support for revision sessions have been provided.

Mr. Roberts advised that he has completed his termly Health & Safety check in school, which focused on COSSH. All was ok. There is lot of work taking place over the summer which the site team and Mrs. Shaw will be managing. Trustees expressed thanks to Mrs. Shaw for the work relating to the Condition Improvement Fund bid and other premises projects which are both time consuming and complex.

Mr. Edwards submitted a report on the recent PE trip to Valkenburg which he attended. Students had been a credit to HGS and displayed tenacity and drive when playing matches. The HGS core values of Aspiration, Perseverance, Kindness, Respect and Positivity were on display in abundance.

Mr. Mills informed Trustees that students from HGS studying Spanish have recently been to Whitehill School to introduce Year 5 & 6 students to the language.

Mr. Scott added that he attended the Year 8 careers day. It was very well organized and students were keen to find out more.

9. Any other Business

The chair reminded Trustees of some forthcoming events including Founders' Day, Sports Day, the Gym and Dance evening and Year 6 transition evening.

She also thanked all Trustees for their involvement and support of the school throughout the year.

10. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 10 September 2024