

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

**Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees
held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 10 September 2024**

Present:	Mr. K. Balfe	Mr. K Jenkins
	Mr. J. Crowther (Headteacher)	Mrs. M. King
	Mr. K. Down	Mrs. N. Job (Chair)
	Mr. G. Edwards	Mr. S. Mills
	Dr. S. Eisenhandler	Mrs. K. Rowe
	Mr. T. Fitzakerly	Mr. T. Scott
	Mr. D. Roberts	Mrs. A. Thornber
	Mrs. S. Franklin	
	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. Mr. Jenkins was introduced as a newly appointed Parent Trustee. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. S. Lucas.

2. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk informed Trustees that Mr. Lucas wished to nominate Mrs. Job as Chair for this year, and invited any other nominations. There were none and Trustees approved the appointment of Mrs. Job as Chair.

Mrs. Job thanked the Trustees for their support and nominated Mr. Lucas as Vice Chair. There were no other nominations and Mr. Lucas was appointed.

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

None.

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 18 June 2024.

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

5.2 Matters arising.

Trustee vacancies. Mrs. Job informed Trustees that Mr. Lucas is still in discussion with a local businessman regarding his potential appointment as a Trustee. It was noted that an election for

a Parent Trustee will be required this term, and also for a Trustee appointed from the non-teaching staff.

6. Examination results summary

Mr. Jones provided a summary of results from the summer examinations. He advised that the 2024 results can be seen as a return to normality after Covid and the subsequent examination concessions. The school is very pleased with the results which recognize the hard work of students and staff.

At A Level, the average grade remained B- and the Average Points Score increased from 35.76 in 2023 to 37.04. 29.5% of grades were A-A* (2023 – 30.2), 59.1 were A*-B (52.1) and 81.5% were A*-C (78.9). 16 students achieved 3 or more A* or A grades and 98 students, more than two thirds of the cohort, achieved at least one A*, A or Distinction.

At GCSE, he explained that the overall result measures are provisional and won't be confirmed until the Government publishes final data in November. However provisional data show that P8 has risen from the 2023 figure which is very pleasing. There has been a particularly good increase in Mathematics. A large number of result reviews have been submitted and the outcome of these may affect the final figures.

Mr. Jones also explained how the results show that students with poor attendance do considerably worse on average than those with high attendance. Improving attendance remains a key focus for the school.

Trustees congratulated staff and students on these results.

7. Headteachers' update

Mr. Crowther provided an update on the start of term based on his message to staff on the INSET days. He referred to the three key areas of focus for this year:

- Teaching & Learning, and the drive to become more of a thinking school
- The approach to relational behaviours
- Staff development initiatives

He was very pleased with the examination results and thanked staff for the support they have given students. He updated Trustees on some of the site work that has taken place, including more interactive boards around the school, the improvements to the staff room and work to install new fire doors. He thanked Mrs. Shaw and the site team for all their work over the holiday.

The roll out of changes introduced by the new catering company has generally gone well, with a few tweaks to be made. Most students are happy and there is a greater choice of food. Mrs. Rowe mentioned the slight changes to break and lunch times. Mr. Crowther explained that break has been increased by 10 minutes to allow all student using the dining room to have time to get through. Mrs. Rowe confirmed that this has been welcomed by staff. The lunch break has been shorted by 10 minutes, and although this has had a slight impact on some extra-curricular activities, it has also been successful.

Sixth Form numbers are slightly lower than planned, with fewer external students joining. Increasing this number is something to look at for next year.

He referred to the very recent Ofsted announcements regarding the abolition of a single word judgement and other changes. Trustees asked whether he thought the school would be inspected very soon. He replied that he had expected an inspection last year, so thinks it likely the school will be called soon, but may be proved wrong.

8. Governance & financial oversight

8.1 Committee structure and terms of reference

Trustees agreed that no changes are required and the terms of reference were approved.

8.2 Committee membership and appointment of chairs

Mrs. Job asked Trustees if anyone wishes to change committees. There were no requests. Mr. Jenkins will attend all initially to gain an understanding of their work before making his decision. Chairs of committees for the year were approved as follows:

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

8.3 Scheme of delegation

Trustees reviewed these and agreed that no changes are required. The scheme was approved

8.4 Trustee link departments

The following changes were agreed:

- Modern Foreign Languages – Mr. Jenkins
- Healthy schools to be incorporated with wellbeing
- Drama to be added

Link Trustees are still required for History, Drama, Wellbeing & Healthy Schools.

8.5 Trustee training

Mrs. King informed Trustees that training is up to date, but some Trustees will need to renew safeguarding next year. She encouraged Trustees to undertake exclusions and complaints training if they haven't done so, and also promoted the Cyber Security video and Prevent training.

9. Audit arrangements

9.1 Audit planning letter

Mrs. Shaw explained the audit process and timescale for this year. This was noted by Trustees.

9.2 Related party questionnaire

Mrs. Shaw asked Trustees to review this and advise of any changes.

9.3 Board assessment of fraud risk

The questionnaire was reviewed and Trustees approved the responses.

9.4 Board assessment of business risk

The questionnaire was reviewed and Trustees approved the responses.

9.5 Checklist of ESFA 'musts'

This summarises the requirements set out in the Academy Trust Handbook. The responses were reviewed and approved.

9.6 Letter from the ESFA

This advises Trustees of the main changes in the handbook and was noted. Trustees asked whether there is any impact for the school. Mrs. Shaw advised that the school is compliant, but there may be further work in future regarding digital and technology standards.

9.7 Risk Register

The register was removed. No changes were identified and it was approved.

10. Safeguarding updated for Trustees

Mr. Crowther read a report from Mrs. Cole, Assistant Headteacher, regarding changes to the safeguarding team in school. Mrs. Cole is now the Designated Safeguarding Lead with strategic oversight of safeguarding and there is a core team completing day to day safeguarding duties supported by a wider team to draw on as necessary. Ms. Stojko, Director of Sixth Form is the Prevent Lead and Mrs. Cole remains Mental Health Lead and the Designated Teacher for Children Looked after.

Mr. Crowther also read a brief update from Mrs. Cole on SEND.

11. Policies

11.1 Schedule of policies

Mrs. Shaw advised that this lists all the policies held by the school and is cross checked against DfE requirements. The schedule was noted.

11.2 Child Protection Policy

Minor changes have been made for this year. The policy was reviewed and approved.

11.3 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities policy

Minor changes have been made for this year. The policy was reviewed and approved.

11.4 Attendance policy

Mr. Crowther advised that changes to this policy are awaited from Herts for Learning. Once received, details will be circulated to Trustees for approval.

12. Admission arrangements 2026/27

Mrs. Shaw informed Trustees that no changes are proposed to the arrangements. Mrs. King noted that some clarification of definitions were made during the current year. The proposed arrangements were agreed as the Determined Admission Arrangements for 2026/27.

13. Any other Business

The Chair asked for Trustees to assist at the forthcoming Open Mornings.

14. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 3 December 2024