

HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 3 December 2024

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mr. T. Hankin	Clerk
Mr. A. Jones	Deputy Headteacher
Mrs. J. Shaw	Director of Finance & Resources
Mrs. V. Targett	Trustee Designate
Ms. B. Winter	Head Girl

1. Welcome & apologies for absence

Mrs. Job welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Board of Trustees. Mrs. Targett was introduced as the newly elected Parent Trustee and Ms. Winter as Head Girl. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. G. Edwards.

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

Mrs. Job – Carol service & Staff celebration

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 10 September 2024.

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

4.2 Matters arising.

None

5. Head Girls' report

Ms. Winter gave a report on school life this term. She had asked some students for their thoughts and the responses received included busy, fun, eventful, stressful and absolutely bananas!

She listed some of the many events that have taken including:

- Year 7 – Meet the Tutor evening, Book buzz vouchers, transition conference, lots getting involved in clubs, Talk the Talk
- Year 8 – Caythorpe residential
- Year 9 – The start of the options process
- Year 10 – Settling in to GCSE's and wearing new blazers!
- Year 11 – Mocks, Sixth Form open evening
- Year 12 – Integration of external students who are settling in well, GCSE certificate presentation evening,
- Year 13 – UCAS process with offers now starting to be received, Talk the Talk
- Whole school – Charity initiatives including Jeans for Genes and the Shoe Box appeal, Futures Fayre, autumn concert, auditions for the whole school production taking place next year, sporting successes, Black History Month, the House Cup
- Ofsted – student involvement in panels. They were pleased they could tell the Inspectors that they are very grateful to attend HGS with its excellent staff and opportunities to be involved in school life in so many ways.

Trustees thanked Ms. Winter for her excellent report.

6. Headteachers' report

The report was circulated in advance of the meeting. Mr. Crowther highlighted the Ofsted outcome and added that this reflects what happens at HGS every day. He advised that the DfE validated data for summer performance remains unvalidated. He invited comments and questions on the report.

Trustees thanked him for the detailed report and stated that it was very informative. Plans to increase capacity for students wishing to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh award were welcomed.

A Trustee asked about attendance figures. Mr. Crowther advised that Years 7-10 are above national average and are an improvement on previous years. Year 11 remains a challenge which is a national issue.

Mr. Crowther added that much of the content in the report links with the School Improvement Plan for the year.

7. School Improvement Plan review

Mr. Crowther informed Trustees that a simple RAG rating has been added to the plan to show progress on actions. Most are rated orange indicating work is underway. A few items have been delayed as a result of Ofsted preparation and the inspection but work on these will commence next term.

A Trustee asked about the Breakfast club. Mr. Crowther advised that take up is very low. The new catering company have settled in well now after some initial problems and he will be discussing ways to increase take up for breakfast.

He was asked about the changes to the timing of break and lunch. He advised that the increased 10 minutes at break is working very well for both students and staff. The shorter lunch break is generally well received although there are still some issues regarding lunch clubs, in particular PE and Dance. Ways to help resolve these will be investigated.

The Chair thanked Mr. Crowther for the progress report and advised Trustees that this will be a regular item at future meetings.

8. Committee reports

8.1 Admissions committee

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 5 November. The recent open mornings were discussed along with destinations for Year 11 & 13 students. Trustees asked about capacity in the Sixth Form. Mr. Crowther advised that the planned number for Year 12 is 175 and there will be an increase in offers made to external students for next year to help try and achieve this number. He added that there is some uncertainty regarding the Key Stage 5 curriculum but we are expecting an update before Christmas. Longer term, the Government has concluded the information gathering stage of the Curriculum and Assessment review and an interim report is expected in early 2025 with a full report in Autumn 2025.

8.2 Curriculum & Performance committee

Mr. Scott reported on the meeting held on 5 November which had mainly discussed the Ofsted outcome, performance data and attendance. The ESMA policy was reviewed and is recommended to the Trustees for approval. The policy was **APPROVED**.

The committee also approved the updated Complaints policy and procedures, Relationship sex and Health Education policy and the attendance policy. This was **NOTED**.

8.3 Finance & Resources committee

Mr. Fitzakerly reported on the meeting held on 12 November. The main business was to review the draft financial statements and management letter from the auditors. The auditor confirmed that no issues or concerns were raised and the school has very robust financial procedures. The meeting also considered the budget update for this year, premises report and plans, and the Health and Safety report.

The updated Data Protection policy, Health and Safety policy and Schedule of Financial Delegation were reviewed and are recommended to the Trustees for approval. The policies were **APPROVED**.

The committee also approved the updated Freedom of Information policy. This was **NOTED**

Trustees **NOTED** that no issues or recommendations were made in the Audit Finding Management Letter and **APPROVED** the Financial Statements for 2023/2024 and authorised the chair to sign these.

8.4 Audit & Risk committee

Mr. Down reported on the meeting held on 11 November. The draft audit report was noted and there were no matters raised in the Internal Scrutiny reports. The programme of work was agreed for this year.

8.5 Personnel committee

Mr. Lucas reported on the meeting held on 22 October. The review of the performance appraisal process was undertaken and was confirmed as robust and thorough. The appointment of a HR Manager was agreed.

The updated Protection of Biometric Information policy and the Appraisal policy were reviewed and are recommended to the Trustees for approval. The policies were **APPROVED**.

The committee also approved the updated Allegations of Abuse Against Staff procedures, Bullying & Harassment policy, Capability of Staff policy, Disciplinary policy, Relationships at Work policy, Staff Health & Attendance policy and Wellbeing policy. This was **NOTED**

9. Governance

9.1 Trustee training

Mrs. King reminded Trustees of the need to keep safeguarding training up to date. She encouraged Trustees to consider attending exclusions training if they are able to. Trustees discussed Prevent training and Cyber Security training.

9.2 Committee membership

Mr. Jenkins was appointed as a member of the Curriculum & Performance, Finance & Resources and Audit & Risk committees.

10. Link departments

10.1 Department links

Mrs. Targett agreed to become link Trustee for Drama and for Wellbeing & Healthy Schools. Mr. Down agreed to become the link for History.

10.2 Trustee visit reports

Dr. Eisenhandler reported on a meeting to with the Head of Learning for Life to discuss Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. She was impressed with everything taking place and plans for the future. The aim is to allow all students and staff to feel recognized and safe and to promote EDI. It was pleasing to note that the Ofsted report referred to the good work taking place relating to this.

Mr. Down reported on a visit to Design & Technology. There is now a strong team of staff in place and student numbers are increasing. This however brings challenges due to space constraints. He saw some very impressive examples of work and recommended attending the evening showcase of exam work when this takes place.

The Chair asked all Trustees to complete a visit to their link department during 2025.

11. Any other Business

The Chair reminded Trustees of the forthcoming Carol service and the celebration Staff Christmas lunch which Trustees are welcome to attend.

12. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 25 March 2025