

## **CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

### **Minutes of a Meeting of the STAFF & STUDENT MATTERS COMMITTEE** **held at the School at 5.00pm on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023**

Present:	Sarah de Souza-Ingle Stephen Lawlor Jason Oster Aisha Sohail Svetlana Warhurst	Chair Headteacher
In Attendance:	Fiona Harrison Michael Palmer Emily Yarham Wendy Newton	Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) Assistant Headteacher Chair of the Sixth Form Council Clerk to Governors
Apologies:	Funmi Osilaja, Elodie Bennie (Chair of the Student Voice)	

#### **ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence were received from Funmi Osilaja and Elodie Bennie and accepted.

#### **ITEM 2 – DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

2. The Headteacher advised that his daughter, a CCHS Alumna, was now employed as a student tutor on a casual basis and that a new declaration of interests form had been received by the School. The Headteacher was not involved in the selection and interview process. This was not deemed to be pertinent to the current meeting. There were no other declarations of business interest further to those already stated on the Register of Business Interests for 2023-24, or conflicts of interest or receipts of gifts or hospitality reported.

#### **ITEM 3 – STUDENT ISSUES**

3. Item 3.1 - Student Voice Minutes. In the absence of the Chair of the Student Voice, the minutes of Student Voice meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were noted by the Committee.
4. Item 3.2 – Sixth Form Council Minutes. The minutes of Sixth Form Council meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023 were received and summarised by the Chair of the Sixth Form Council. There had been issues earlier in the term relating to the pressures of homework for UCAS early applicants, but this was now over. Students were very positive about the use of PowerPoints and the lesson-related functions on Teams. A request for the publication of PowerPoints in advance of lessons had been rejected on the grounds of possible decreased engagement by students. School staff were to receive additional training on the use of Teams for passing lesson information on to students. The increased range of vegan and vegetarian food options in the Costa canteen had been very well-received by students to the extent that there were sometimes shortages in these options. Governors noted a comment in the minutes concerning careers talks. The lunchtime careers talks had received positive feedback from Sixth Form students along with requests for more Humanities and Computer Science-related talks. This was to be investigated by the School and the topics for future careers talks would be led by student demand. The possible use of Speakers for Schools, Unifrog and the STEM Hub were suggested in relation to careers talks.
5. Item 3.3 – Other Student Issues. No other items were raised for discussion.

**5.15pm – Emily Yarham, Student Representative, left the meeting.**

#### **ITEM 4 – ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR 2023-24**

6. **Decision.** Nominations were sought for the role of Vice Chair of the Committee for 2023-24. Svetlana Warhurst volunteered to continue in the role and this was unanimously **approved** by the Committee.

#### **ACTION**

## **ITEM 5 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

## **ACTION**

7. The minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023 were approved as a true record.

## **ITEM 6 - MATTERS ARISING**

8. Item 11, Para 16 – Sixth Form Data. Apologies were given for not having sent data on the conversion rate from Year 12 taster lessons to Sixth Form applications. (**Clerk's Note**: This data was sent to the Committee by email the following day).

## **ITEM 7 – CHAIR'S ACTION**

9. The Chair had approved the Child Protection Policy early in September 2023 as the policy was required to be in place and on the School website at the start of the Autumn Term. The policy had further been approved by the Full GB in October 2023. The Chair has also approved a newly re-written Uniform Policy in mid-September. Both policies were to be reviewed later in the meeting.

## **ITEM 8 – COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP**

10. Item 8.1 to 8.3 – Terms of Reference - Decision. The terms of reference for the Staff & Student Matters, Staff Disciplinary, Staff Disciplinary Appeals, Staff Pay and Staff Pay Appeals Committees were presented for annual review. It was noted that one SLT title needed updating, and with this revision the terms of reference were **approved**.

11. Item 8.4 – Staff Pay Committee - Decision. It was **agreed** that the membership of the Staff Pay Committee for 2023-24 would be Sarah de Souza-Ingle (Chair), Jason Oster and Svetlana Warhurst. The Clerk advised that Aisha Sohail or Funmi Osilaja would need to act as chair of the Staff Pay Appeals Committee were it to be required.

**5.20pm – Aisha Sohail joined the meeting**

## **ITEM 9 – GENERAL SCHOOL UPDATE**

12. The Headteacher brought to the attention of the Committee the CCHS Achievement Strategy which continued to focus on the ongoing needs of the students post-pandemic, both pastorally and academically. The work of the School Development Leaders was also highlighted. It was reported that the Government intended to replicate the public examination conditions for Year 11 and 13 students for a further year i.e. only providing formula sheets for Maths and Science subjects. There would be no other modifications for the public examinations, as there were not for the Summer 2023 series for schools in England. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) gave a summary of the CCHS Leaders of Tomorrow programme. The new Year 7 Entrance Test had been held in September and, before the CAF deadline, all potential PPG candidates had been invited to visit the School. The CCHS programme of visiting local primary schools was now running again and students from local primary schools also come into CCHS weekly. In addition, Year 12 students also undertake community service within local primary schools. The School's outreach work was for both girls and boys. Governors raised questions on the School's outreach work and additional clarification was received. A query was also raised on the School's use of Elevate training and it was confirmed that Years 7 and 12 receive introductory sessions and other year groups receive specific sessions relating to their year and point of education. It was reported that the use of Elevate by parents, with their webinars, was increasing.

13. The Headteacher informed the Committee that the School was now running a tutoring scheme employing ex-CCHS students to act as tutors for current students. This work was undertaken remotely by Teams and had been well-received by the current CCHS students as instruction from tutors of a similar age was often better received. Eleven ex-CCHS students who had left the School in July 2023 were now formally employed on a casual basis to work as tutors for nine Year 11 and six Year 13 students. All the tutors had undergone safeguarding and teaching & learning training plus all required HR checks. It was reported that the numbers on the tutoring programme were likely to increase in the future. Governors questioned the funding of the programme and were advised that it was being covered by funds provided by the central authorities for this kind of support work.

## **ITEM 10 – OFSTED**

## **ACTION**

14. As previously publicised by Ofsted, an Ofsted inspection of CCHS was to be expected before January 2024. There were now only three full weeks left in the current term for it to occur unless the visit was to happen in January 2024 itself. The School has not been inspected since 2007. Ofsted visits were known to have recently occurred in other local Essex schools. CCHS was one of two local secondary schools which still awaited an inspection. Staff were prepared and ready for an Ofsted visit whenever it occurs.

## **ITEM 11 – STAFFING**

15. A summary of staff changes since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 was received for information. The Headteacher advised of one recent additional appointment. A former member of Support Staff had now been re-employed on a casual basis to assist with SIMS data work and invigilation. The minutes of the Staff Voice meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were received for information and one error was noted, the meeting had received the 'CCHS Commitment to Staff' document as opposed to the 'Staff Code of Conduct' as stated in the minutes. The meeting was reminded that the NEU industrial action had been settled during the Summer holiday, but that the NASUWT union was now taking action 'short of strike action'. This was not causing any operational issues and was being managed by the School. Governors queried the significantly higher number of staff absences in October 2023 to those in September 2023 and it was suggested that it was the early arrival of the usual winter sickness bugs. A question was also raised as to whether the School had noticed a significant increase year-on-year to the amount of emergency cover required and if it affected School resources. The Headteacher advised that the School could usually predict certain seasonal absences, such as illness, and could plan for that but that some absences related to individual unplanned situations which were harder to cover. It was reported that the School avoided the use of supply agencies when possible and had contact with a number of past CCHS teachers who were employed for supply teaching when required.

## **ITEM 12 – STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

16. A Staff Development Report dated November 2023, prepared by the Assistant Headteacher (Teaching & Learning and Staff Development), was received for information. Governors noted the continuing large amount of CPD undertaken by both teachers and support staff. It was reported that many of the courses and training opportunities were now conducted online or in a hybrid manner. This method tended to be cheaper and was considered easier by staff as it was less disruptive than taking time away from school.

## **ITEM 13 – CARE & GUIDANCE REPORT**

17. The Care & Guidance Report dated November 2023 was received and the contents of the report were noted. Governors noted the Year 12/13 buddy system which had been reinstated by the School post-pandemic and additional details were received. The meeting discussed the success of the system as well as the other opportunities available to support students new to the Sixth Form. It was confirmed that the transition programme was highlighted at the Sixth Form Open Evening. It was believed that no new Year 12 students left after the start of the Autumn Term due to friendship issues or lack of support. Having a de-centralised Sixth Form was stressed as being a positive system for the School in as much as it integrated the Sixth Form students within the School but also the Main School students could see and identify with the Sixth Form students.

18. Governors voiced concerns for the workload of the year leaders and pastoral team and asked if their pastoral work impacted on their primary teaching and learning role. It was confirmed that the pastoral staff were very busy but that the work was manageable and that they all worked together as a team. A query was raised as to whether external assistance/counselling was available for staff and the issue was discussed. Investigations were currently being made by the School into additional staff support. The student issues continuing to arise from the pandemic were noted and discussed. An update was also received on the situation relating to traffic issues outside the School site.

## **ITEM 14 – SEND**

## **ACTION**

19. A SEND Report dated November 2023 prepared by the SENCO was received for information. There were now 42 students on the SEND Register (up from 35) including 3 students with an EHCP, and 4 further students were awaiting formal assessment. Governors were advised that the new SENCO was settling in well to her new role. There were some challenging SEND issues, but the SENCO was working with year leaders to address matters. It was confirmed that the SENCO had been allocated a generous amount of non-contact time to cover her SEND duties and that she was being supported by SLT. Svetlana Warhurst, SEND Link Governor, gave a verbal report on a recent meeting with the SENCO and summarised the findings of her visit. It had been reported that additional time was required to set up Provision Map for the younger years. It was confirmed to Governors that an external SEND assessor was in place to assist the SENCO until she was fully qualified.

## **ITEM 15 – ENTRANCE TEST UPDATE**

20. An Admissions Update for Year 7 entry in September 2024 was received for information and the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) gave an update on the Year 7 Entrance Test held in September. It was the biggest ever test with 1,218 candidates sitting the test at CCHS. It was reported that the new test had gone well, and the final allocation of places would be published in March 2024. Governors noted that 45% of candidates lived within the priority area and 55% lived outside it. It was also noted that there were higher levels of PPG candidates from out of area than in previous years. It was hoped that there would be a significant increase in the number of PPG students in the Year 7 entry in September 2024. It was reported that there had also been issues with people renting rooms within the priority area just before the CAF (Common Application Form) deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> October in order to be registered as living within the priority area. The School would be investigating such issues. Governors queried if there had been any feedback from parents concerning the new entrance test, and it was reported that nothing hugely negative had arisen. Governors also questioned how CCHS staff had found the marking of the creative writing element of the test. The School advised that there were a few teething problems but that overall it had gone well, and details of the marking system were explained.

## **ITEM 16 – PUPIL PREMIUM**

21. A summary of Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) spending for Academic Year 2022-23 was received for information. A summary of spending from 1<sup>st</sup> September to 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 was also received showing expenditure for the year to date totalling £22,206.31. The sum of £31,101 had been carried forward from 2022-23 and the anticipated income for 2023-24 was £38,295. It was stated that the School worked hard to spend the PPG wisely and effectively. The details of the PPG expenditure were reviewed, and explanations given for some items. Much of the income had already been earmarked for future spending such as the Year 14 Tutoring Programme, counselling and teaching & learning training. It was also reported that some of the additional Covid-related funding was now closing down.

## **ITEM 17 – SAFEGUARDING**

22. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advised that Aisha Sohail, Safeguarding Link Governor, had visited the School the previous week and was also coming in again to meet year leaders in two days. The meeting was reported as being a very useful and comprehensive. The Safeguarding Link Governor had prepared a written report of the meeting and the content of the report was summarised for the Committee. The report was commended by the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) and it was suggested that all Governors should have sight of the report. The Clerk **agreed** to send the Safeguarding Report out to all Governors for their general information. The Headteacher thanked Aisha Sohail for such an informative and comprehensive report.

**Clerk**

23. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) tabled a summary of safeguarding concerns since the start of the Autumn Term. There had been 72 new concerns reported since September against 28 for the same time last year. It was stated that the increase in concerns was partially because more concerns were being reported by staff. Staff are regularly reminded about the need to report their concerns and this leads to more concerns being put onto the MyConcern system. A safeguarding topic of the week

has been introduced within the School and had covered such issues as PREVENT, eating disorders, and domestic violence. The topics had led to further discussions in tutor briefings and keeps safeguarding issues in mind. There were currently: 5 students on safety plans; there had been no referrals to social care this term; and one new CAMHS referral. One student, who had been a school refuser, had now left CCHS to be home-schooled.

**ACTION**

## **ITEM 18 – POLICIES**

24. **Decision**. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advised that new DfE guidance was awaited on students with gender change and identity issues. Once this was received, School policies would be reviewed to ascertain if any changes were required. Eight School policies required routine re-approval. The Committee discussed the policies and proposed amendments, and **approved** the policies with the review periods stated below:

- 18.1 - Child Protection Policy – statutory, annual review, previously approved by Chair's Action,
- 18.2 - Uniform Policy – statutory, annual review, previously approved by Chair's Action,
- 18.3 - Child-on-Child Harmful Sexual Behaviour Policy - statutory, annual review,
- 18.4 - Performance Management Policy –statutory, 3-year review,
- 18.5 - Equalities Policy –statutory, 2-year review,
- 18.6 - Probation Policy – non-statutory, 3-year review,
- 18.7 - Staff Grievance Policy – statutory, 3-year review, and
- 18.8 - Restraint of Pupils Policy – statutory, 3-year review.

## **ITEM 19 – RISK REGISTER**

25. **Decision**. The Staff & Student Matters Committee section of the CCHS Risk Register was reviewed and approved as presented.

## **ITEM 20 – INFORMATION ITEMS**

26. **Item 20.1 – DBS Checks**. A summary of DBS and Barred List checks undertaken from 10<sup>th</sup> June to 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023 was received for information and noted.

27. **Item 20.2 - School Development Plan (SDP) 2023-24**. The SDP 2023-24 was received for information and noted. The document had recently been reviewed at the Full GB meeting. The Headteacher reminded the Committee that behind the SDP, there were also Department Development Plans. Following the Summer public examination results there had been a full cycle of Department Self Evaluations from which immediate Department Action Plans were formed. The Mid Term Review of the SDP would take place in February.

## **ITEM 21 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

28. No other items of business were raised.

## **ITEM 22 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

29. **Decision**. The date of the next meeting was agreed as Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

**All**

The meeting closed at 6.55pm.

Sarah de Souza-Ingle  
Chair

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024