

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 26th June 2024

Present:	Sarah de Souza-Ingle Stephen Lawlor Jason Oster Aisha Sohail	Chair Headteacher
In Attendance:	Fiona Harrison Michael Palmer Ciara Ni Bhraonain Wendy Newton	Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) Assistant Headteacher (Community, Enrichment & Opportunity) Chair of the Student Voice Clerk to Trustees
Apologies:	Funmi Osilaja, Svetlana Warhurst, Katelyn Hornagold (Chair of Sixth Form Council)	

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Funmi Osilaja, Svetlana Warhurst and Katelyn Hornagold.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no 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. The Chair of the Student Voice summarised the minutes of Student Voice meeting held on 24th April 2024. Questions about homework deadlines were raised and students had been advised to discuss the matter with the relevant teacher. Other issues had included the lack of essay practice before the Year 10 English mocks, the range of GCSE subject options and having more school trips, with clarifications provided by staff. A request had been raised for additional study support sessions and these would become available after the end of the public examinations. Trustees queried an item relating to space and laptops and additional clarification was received.

5.05pm – Aisha Sohail joined the meeting.

4. Item 3.2 – Sixth Form Council Minutes. The minutes of Sixth Form Council meeting held on 21st March 2024 were received and, in the absence of the Chair of the Sixth Form Council, were summarised by the Chair of the Student Voice. Issues discussed included timescales for overnight homework, subject clinics, additional help with Teams and the attendance requirements for the issue or removal of home study passes. The need for cleanliness in the Sixth Form kitchen had been reiterated to students and the situation had generally improved. Problems sometime arose for prefects identifying the correct year group for students entering the correct lunch session. Trustees queried the issue of time given for subject assessments and an explanation was received from School staff.

5. Item 3.3 – Other Student Issues. No other items were raised for discussion.

5.25pm – The Student Representative left the meeting.

ITEM 4 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

6. The minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2024 were approved as a true record.

ITEM 5 - MATTERS ARISING

7. There were no matters arising.

ACTION

ITEM 6 – CHAIR’S ACTION

ACTION

8. There had been no Chair’s Actions since the last meeting.

ITEM 7 – GENERAL SCHOOL UPDATE

9. The Headteacher reported that GCSE and A level public examinations had now finished and that the students had had a positive experience. No major examination issues were known to date. The School had adopted a ‘Quiet Campus’ status for the duration of the examinations. Year 9 school examinations were currently underway, and a formal ‘public examination’ format had been used for the Maths and English examinations using the Main Hall and Old Hall in order to prepare students for future years. The remainder of the Year 9 examinations were undertaken in classrooms. It was reported that the Year 9 students now only sit examinations in the subjects they have chosen to study at GCSE, as well as their core subjects, the results of which are used as a baseline for their progress in Years 10 and 11.

10. The current term was very busy with trips, sport and many other school activities. The Assistant Headteacher (CEO) advised that trips take up a very large amount of staff time, especially overseas trips post-Brexit as travel requirements varied. Staff confidence in running trips was being rebuilt after the pandemic. The workload on support staff for trips plus the related staff costs were noted by Trustees. The Headteacher advised that there were a lot of STEM activities being carried out both inside and outside school, as well as a large number of sports fixtures this term. Trustees queried if there were any issues relating to transport for trips and sports fixtures. It was confirmed that costs had increased significantly over recent months and that the School had borrowed minibuses from other schools on occasions in an attempt to reduce costs. Increased petrol costs and driver issues had both affected the cost of coach hire and availability.

ITEM 8 – STAFFING

11. A summary of staff changes from 27th February to 5th June 2024 was received for information. The Committee was advised that the Summer Term was busy in relation to end-of-year staff leavers and recruitment for the Autumn Term. The new staff induction day had been held recently for September starters. The Headteacher reported that the School was fully staffed for September but that there was one maternity cover vacancy which was required for November - advertising was currently underway. Recruitment for schools nationwide was very challenging, and a number of grammar schools had vacancies for September which may result in lessons being taught by non-specialists. The CCHS recruitment and interview process was summarised for Trustee information.

12. The change in the School’s Capability Policy in 2023 was raised and Trustees asked if the new system was working. It was stated that the change of policy would help if it were to be required. The Headteacher stated that issues often arise with staff members post recruitment and that the School was professionally assisted by Juniper Education HR for such matters. The meeting discussed the situation of short-term maternity cover and permanent staffing. It was confirmed that some maternity staff have been retained at the end of a period of maternity cover if the staffing needs of the School required it. The minutes of the Staff Voice meeting held on 29th April 2024 were received for information and noted. The final Staff Voice meeting of the academic year had occurred that week and no items had been raised by the NEU or NASUWT representatives. The Headteacher advised that the migration of School data to the Cloud was underway, and that staff were being fully assisted in the migration process. Trustees queried the new wellbeing phone app, Smart Clinic, and it was confirmed that it was a useful tool and was being used by staff. It was confirmed that general staff absences were consistent with previous levels and that the School was not worried by current levels.

ITEM 9 – STAFF DEVELOPMENT

13. A Staff Development Report dated June 2024, prepared by the Assistant Headteacher (Teaching & Learning and Staff Development), was received for information. The term ‘adaptive teaching’ was queried and explained. Trustees notes the large number of staff trained in mental health first aid and queried if it had any negative effect on the staff members involved. It was stated that it was mainly the year leaders who undertook this training, and it was used as part of their primary role. It was not

considered to have a negative impact on the individuals involved. It was confirmed that information from CPD courses was fed back to other colleagues at the School.

ITEM 10 – ENRICHMENT & STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

14. An Enrichment & Student Development Report dated June 2024 was summarised by the Assistant Headteacher (CEO) who reiterated that it was a very busy time for trips and enrichment activities. Planning for future trips was already underway for academic year 2024-25 and also as far ahead as 2026. It was reported that trips were a very positive experience for students, staff were fully briefed on administrative actions should any emergency arise on a trip. House events were ongoing and academic enrichment for 2024-25 was being planned through CCHS lectures.

15. The Careers offering within the School was being developed, and Year 10 were undertaking a World of Work experience the following day. The external assistance expected from the Greater Essex Careers Hub had not appeared as hoped and some students had difficulty finding work experience. Details of the new work experience system were explained, and it was hoped that system would improve in future years. University open days, UCAS predicted grades and application support were all ongoing, and this was time-consuming for the staff involved. Trustees questioned the problems relating to employer offers for work experience and the Greater Essex Careers Hub, and the situation was discussed. It was suggested that direct letters of explanation from CCHS to employers may increase the work experience offers. Trustees noted that a Year 10 trip to Cambridge planned for July 2024 was only for a small number of students. It was explained that Cambridge University would no longer take whole year groups as they had done a few years back, but now had very specific eligibility criteria for student visits, such as disadvantage and diversity requirements. It was stated that the School had individual subject contacts within Cambridge and will continue to push for bigger or additional visits.

ITEM 11 – CARE & GUIDANCE REPORT

16. The Care & Guidance Report dated June 2024 was received and the contents of the report were noted. Trustees noted that student counselling hours were to be reduced from 20 to 15 hours per week next year due to budget restrictions and queried the impact of the change. It was stated that there would be delays in students receiving counselling but that the School would manage. Online counselling services and resources would continue to be used whenever appropriate. A new School Nurse had been allocated to CCHS who came in fortnightly for five appointments, but all appointments were allocated through the Hub and not by the School. Details on the management of the School's own Pastoral Hub were explained to the Committee.

17. The Headteacher confirmed that other schools nationwide were experiencing similar pastoral problems to those of CCHS. The specific issues of Year 10, who were in Year 6 when the pandemic hit, were explained. It was reported that the CCHS Achievement Strategy was revised annually to address the different issues for each year group. Trustees queried if there was anything further that could be done to assist students and the issue was discussed. It was stated that schools were now expected to address all pastoral issues and that there was much early intervention with students and additional contact and support with parents. The issue of students missing school for holidays was raised and it was confirmed that the School did fine parents in line with ECC guidance nowadays, although all fines money remained with ECC. There was now an escalating scale of fines (from £60) relating to how many times a student had been on unauthorised leave. It was stated that the School now took a hard line with absences and doesn't authorise when not appropriate.

ITEM 12 – SEND

18. A SEND Report dated June 2024 was received from the SENCO for information. There were now 48 students on the SEND Register (up from 47) including 3 students with an EHCP. Trustees noted the Year 6 to Year 7 SEND transition meetings and additional details were given. It was reported that the meetings went well and had been well-received by parents. It was noted that the Quiet Space was not mentioned on the SEND Information Report (to be received at Item 16.3). The SEND parents coffee mornings continued to go well and were a great addition to the School's SEND provision. The large number of Normal Way of Working (NWW) documents (48) were queried in

relation to staff workload. It was reported that they were written by the SENDCO after teaching staff input and confirmed as being a lot of work. The School was now looking at reducing the size of the NWW document to be a one-page summary and more accessible for September 2024. The SEND Link Trustee report dated 16th June 2024 was received and its content noted.

ACTION

19. **Decision**. It was agreed that the SEND Quiet Space would be added to the SEND Information Report.

Clerk

ITEM 13 – ADMISSIONS

20. An Admissions Update for Year 7 entry in September 2024 was received for information. Eighteen PPG students had now accepted their Year 7 place at the School in September, and they had participated in the 'Leaders of Tomorrow' Programme. Sixteen admissions appeals for entry had been lodged but none had been successful. Preparations had begun for the Year 7 Entrance Test on 13th September 2024 and applications were approximately the same as last year (1380), just 30 applications down.

ITEM 14 – PUPIL PREMIUM

21. A summary of Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) spending for the year to date was received showing expenditure for the year to date totalling £59,123. The minimum anticipated PPG carry forward was £5,254 at the end of the year. Investigations were underway on the provision of music lessons for PPG students next year as lessons were very expensive and used all of a student's PPG allocation. Trustees reviewed and noted the PPG spend to date.

ITEM 15 – SAFEGUARDING

22. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) tabled a summary of safeguarding concerns since the last meeting. There had been 59 new concerns reported since the last meeting in March. There had been an increase during May and June which related to concerns over the forthcoming school holiday. Check-ins with pastoral staff were offered to students with safeguarding concerns prior to the holiday. There had been 2 new referrals to CAMHS and one to social care. Since the last meeting there had been 377 visits to the Pastoral Hub, these were closely monitored and regulated by staff. The aim was to get students back into lessons as soon as possible. Thirteen students had also accessed the School Nurse. The problems of repeat School Nurse visits, which took up appointment spaces and which were out of the School's control, were highlighted. The School continued to work with parents and outside agencies whenever necessary. Support to students through the holidays continued via NHS, counselling and other mental health apps. The School's open-door policy in relation to student safeguarding continued to work well. Trustees asked for their thanks to be passed onto to all members of the Pastoral Team for their continuing hard work

23. Aisha Sohail, Safeguarding Link Trustee, had visited the School on 22nd May 2024 and notes of her meeting were received for information. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) thanked Aisha for her visit and continuing support. Additional information was given by the Headteacher on the trauma perspective practice training undertaken by himself and the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral). The Headteacher stressed the exceptional work undertaken by the whole CCHS Pastoral Team when compared to other schools. Trustees queried whether other schools approach CCHS for advice or best practice. It was stated that the School's pastoral work was discussed at external meetings and events and that people do occasionally ask to visit CCHS. Safeguarding help from outside education agencies was suggested as being sometimes lacking, and the School sought to make its own links with its own local and national contacts. Trustees stated that the pastoral work of the School needed to be advertised as widely as possible.

ITEM 16 – POLICIES

24. **Decisions**. Six School policies were presented for re-approval.

Item 16.1 - Attendance & Punctuality Policy. After the recent publication of new guidance, the Attendance & Punctuality Policy required further amendment and it was **agreed** that the policy

Clerk

would be sent to the Committee for approval by email once finalised.

ACTION

25. The Committee discussed the remaining policies and proposed amendments, and **approved** the following policies as presented with the review periods stated below:

Item 16.2 – SEND Policy – CCHS model, statutory, annual review.

Item 16.3 – SEND Information Report – CCHS model, statutory, annual review. The Clerk **agreed** to add one further SEND provision, Quiet Space, to the document.

Item 16.4 – Staff Disciplinary Misconduct Policy – Juniper model, statutory, 3-year review.

Item 16.5 – Staff Sickness Absence Policy – Juniper model, non-statutory, 3-year review.

Item 16.6 – Staff Leave of Absence Policy – Juniper model, non-statutory, 3-year review.

Item 16.7 – Staff Code of Conduct – Juniper model, statutory, 2-year review.

Clerk

ITEM 17 – RISK REGISTER

26. **Decision.** The Staff & Student Matters Committee section of the CCHS Risk Register was reviewed. In light of the current teaching staff recruitment situation, it was **agreed** that the probability level for Risk S22 would be increased from Level 2 to Level 3. The document was then **approved**.

Clerk

ITEM 18 – INFORMATION ITEMS

27. Item 18.1 – DBS Checks. A summary of DBS and Barred List checks undertaken from 26th February to 5th June 2024 was received for information and noted.

28. Item 18.2 - School Development Plan (SDP) 2023-24. The Mid-Term Review of the SDP 2023-24 dated February 2024 was received for information. The document had previously been received at the Academy Board meeting in March 2024. The Final Review of the SDP would be formally received by Trustees at the Board meeting on 5th July 2024.

ITEM 19 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

29. No other items of business were raised.

ITEM 20 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

30. **Decision.** The date of the next meeting was agreed as 5.00pm on Wednesday 27th November 2024.

All

The meeting closed at 6.50pm.

Sarah de Souza-Ingle
Chair

Date: 27th November 2024