

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the CURRICULUM COMMITTEE held at the School at 5.00pm on Wednesday 14th November 2018

Present:	Mike Worboys Nicole Chapman Sarah Clements Lauren Smith	Chair Head
In Attendance:	Stephen Lawlor Michael Palmer Wendy Newton	Deputy Head (Curriculum) Assistant Head (Head of Sixth Form) Clerk
Apologies:	Lee Palmer Mary Argent Nicholas Minnican	Associate Member Assistant Head (Teaching & Learning)

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Lee Palmer, Mary Argent and Nicholas Minnican.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no declarations of interest other than those already stated on the Register of Business Interests for 2018-19.

ITEM 3 – ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

3. Nominations were sought for the position of Vice Chair of the Committee for the next academic year. Sarah Clements volunteered her services and the Committee unanimously approved.

ITEM 4 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th May 2018 were approved and signed as a true record.

ITEM 5 - MATTERS ARISING

5. Item 4, Para 6 – STEM Activities. The Committee were informed that Mark Rowell was currently investigating student placements at the Weizmann Institute.

5.08pm – Lauren Smith joined the meeting.

6. Item 14, Para 18 – Career Update. The Head of Sixth Form summarised an update on the current Careers situation written by Dr Alex Hiner, the new Leader of Careers Education. The School is addressing the new Government requirements for Careers education but the actual external providers of Careers guidance were not yet in a position to assist the school. A mandatory policy statement advising of education providers outside was due to be uploaded onto the School website before the end of term. It was stated that the School was in a reasonably good position when viewed against the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks relating to the provision of Careers guidance. The biggest area of concern related to the requirement for student contact with work places; this issue was to be taken up with the Careers guidance providers once they were in place. The meeting discussed the issue of work experience and its relevance to CCHS students. It was noted that the future employment of the School Business Manager in the City of London may be a useful networking contact.

ACTION

ITEM 6 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

ACTION

7. The Terms of Reference for the Curriculum Committee were presented for annual review; the document had been received and approved by the Full GB in October.

8. **Decision.** After two minor amendments, the Terms of Reference for the Curriculum Committee were approved.

ITEM 7 – PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS REVIEW 2018

9. The Public Examinations Review 2018 was received for information and discussed. The document had been updated to factor in re-mark results since it had been received at the last Full GB meeting. Governors noted that A level results were not as had been hoped and the reasons behind the results were discussed. The meeting was advised that the School now had a better understanding of the new A level courses and were revising their teaching and examination preparation accordingly. The forthcoming TA1 data would give an indication of the current performance of Year 13 students.

10. The issue of dropping subjects at the end of Year 12 was discussed. It was stated that the exams where grade C or below were achieved tended to be for a student's fourth subject as they tended to concentrate more on their university offer subjects. The effect of the few lower grades on the overall percentages was noted. Other Sixth Form issues which affected results, e.g. health and attendance, were also being very strictly monitored. The meeting noted the effect of previously losing forty Year 11 students to other sixth form providers and the effect it had had on the spread of ability and therefore the resulting grade outcomes - 7% of the entries had been achieved at grade D or below. The issue of unconditional university offers was raised and discussed. It was believed that CCHS students did not tend to generally reduce their study efforts in such cases.

11. Governors suggested that the School may need to re-assess its overall result expectations in light of the new courses and the current ability of Sixth Form students but were advised that the School was aiming to raise results back to previous levels. The Deputy Head confirmed that the School now had a far better understanding of the new A level courses and examinations as a result of staff being able to attend exam board feedback sessions and receive copies of actual examination papers, allowing teachers to better understand the application of both generic and specific mark schemes. The effect of the starting ability at the start of Year 12 was noted. The meeting was advised that the new DfE KS5 performance indicator gave the School an average point score by grade of B+ an increase from last year's B-. Similarly, the new KS4 Progress 8 indicator had risen from +0.76 last year to +0.85 this year (meaning our students achieved just over four-fifths of a grade higher, on average, compared to their similar ability peers nationally). Examination information was also received from SSGS and other Essex grammar schools for comparison.

ITEM 8 – CURRICULUM MONITORING

12. The Subject Review for Mandarin dated February 2018 was received for information. There were no specific questions on the report but the situation with the next School's China trip was queried. The Head advised that the decision to cancel the trip had not yet been made and the administrative factors behind the trip were explained. A potential exchange-type trip was still being investigated. The long-term viability of continuing Mandarin as a curriculum subject was also under debate by the School. It was reported that most universities do not demand A level Mandarin as a pre-requisite for studying Mandarin and that language acquisition in other modern languages, with the resultant benefits in strengthening language learning aptitude, was more important.

13. The Year 7 Group Review dated June 2018 was received for information and the Deputy Head summarised the areas for development. Points were also made in relation to lessons observations, work scrutiny and the noting of student feedback from the Student Voice meeting with Mrs Chapman. The relatively low ratings for 'promoting high standards of literacy' within the Teachers' Standards section was queried by Governors. The situation behind the values was explained and it was agreed that this was an area which could be addressed quite easily by teachers.

ITEM 9 – CURRICULUM UPDATE

ACTION

14. The Deputy Head advised that Philosophy was continuing for its second year in Year 7 and was an effective way of delivering on the School's Learner Profile. It was stated that the course had a positive impact on students' confidence, public speaking and the ability to listen and challenge the views of other students. The meeting was reminded that the current Year 10 were the first cohort to undertake a reduction to 10 GCSE subject course. The forthcoming TA1 data would be the first performance indicator for this group of students. It was stated the extra teaching hour for option subjects in Year 10 had been welcomed by the teachers.

15. A summary of School STEM activities was tabled for information; the document had also been uploaded onto the School website. The Deputy Head summarised and expanded the content of the document. Governors were re-assured that students still have many opportunities to be involved in a wide range of STEM-related activities. It was also noted that there was the opportunity to include a STEM-related talk within the CCHS Lecture series in due course. The recently reported loss of manual dexterity in university medical, dental and engineering students was discussed. The Deputy Head noted that STEM provision was being allied with a wider programme across creative and artistic subjects as part of a developing Renaissance Project at KS3, which was linked to our Artsmark work.

ITEM 10 – SUBJECT NUMBERS AT KS4 & KS5 AND SIXTH FORM SUBJECT OFFER

16. The September 2018 subject and group sizes for KS4 and KS5 subjects were reviewed and discussed. The Head advised that SLT were planning to restrict the subject options at KS5 into 4 blocks which would achieve bigger and more economic teaching groups. The meeting reviewed the size of the current teaching groups and discussed the subjects with smaller group sizes. It was suggested that some of the smaller subjects which are only taught at KS5 are likely to be dropped in the future, e.g. Mandarin, Russian and Italian. It was stated that group sizes should be a minimum of 10-15 students. The need to offer a good breadth of subjects in order to attract students into the Sixth Form was noted. The problem of co-teachable AS and A levels was explained in relation to the number of subjects studied at A level and the dropping subjects at the end of Year 12. The Chair reminded the Committee of the financial implications relating to the number of subjects offered and taken by students and that the need to trim both courses and groups was ongoing. The concept of only allowing 3 A levels still needed to be considered particularly when dropping a subject at the end of Year 12 now led to no end qualification. It was also noted that a 4 A levels offer was an important feature of an academic and ambitious Sixth Form offer for very able students. It was reported that some of the smaller A level subjects such as Music attracted students as it was unavailable elsewhere.

17. The subjects and group sizes of KS4 were reviewed, it was noted that they were all healthy group sizes. It was suggested that some of the subject groups had still reduced despite having a larger cohort overall this year, i.e. 120 to 150 students, and the comment was discussed.

ITEM 11 – RISK REGISTER

18. **Decision**. The curriculum-related section of the CCHS Risk Register was received for termly review. It was agreed that no amendment was necessary. The Head advised that there may be certain situations when a student is given permission not to follow the full curriculum, this would generally be only for medical reasons.

ITEM 12 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

19. The curriculum-related section of the School Development Plan 2018-19 was reviewed. The Deputy Head advised that the Director of Music, who holds responsibility for the Artsmark, was currently liaising with other schools and collating information in order to hopefully submit the School's submission for the Artsmark in February 2019. Further investigations were also being made in relation to the possibility of awarding the Bronze Arts Award to Year 9 CCHS students at the end of KS3. Governors commended the School's presentation of a CCHS certificate for languages subjects, which formally acknowledged the subjects taken until the end of KS3, it was suggested that same concept could be repeated at the end of Year 12.

ITEM 13 – INFORMATION ITEMS

ACTION

20. **Item 13.1 – Monitoring Schedule 2018-19.** The schedule for subject and year group monitoring planned for academic year 2018-19 was received for information. The question of repeat monitoring of Chemistry was raised by Governors, as it had been reviewed for a second time during AY 2017-18. The Deputy Head advised that the action points raised by the previous Chemistry monitoring report were still being monitored by SLT via their development plan. After the summer examination reviews with the Head, Subject Leaders produce a Department Self-Evaluation Form (DSEF) and are required to formally report their progress back to the Head at the October and February half terms and at Easter via newly introduced DSEF1 Action Plans. It was noted that Faculty Leadership monitoring had just been completed by SLT and their report would be received at the next meeting.

21. **Decision.** It was agreed that the DSEF reports would be presented to the Curriculum Committee in future meetings.

Head

22. **Item 13.2 - Student Voice & Sixth Form Council Minutes.** The Committee received curriculum-related extracts from the minutes of the Student Voice meetings held on 25th April and 26th September 2018 and Sixth Form Council meetings held on 2nd May and 19th September 2018. The Head advised that the quality of the subject matter of the meetings had improved in recent years with far more focus on the discussion of education, particularly in the Sixth Form Council meetings.

ITEM 14 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23. **OCR Exam Board Visit.** The Deputy Head advised that the OCR Exam Board had visited the School on 5th November 2018 to see how the School had implemented the practical endorsement of A level Chemistry. Their report had been very complimentary about the School systems and the inspectors had been very impressed with the quality of the practical work undertaken by students. As a result, all the Sciences at the School had been signed off as implementing the practical endorsement appropriately, and this would cover all awarding organisations.

ITEM 15 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

24. **Decision.** The date for the next meeting was agreed as 5.00pm on Wednesday 13th February 2019.

Clerk

The meeting closed at 6.45pm.

Agreed as a true record

M Worboys
Chair

13th February 2019