

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the GOVERNING BODY held in the School and remotely via Microsoft Teams at 8.00am on Thursday 23rd March 2023

Present: Steve Miles Chair of Governors
Stephen Lawlor Headteacher
Mary Argent (via Teams), Andrew Bonwick, Richard Brown (via Teams),
Sarah Clements, Sarah de Souza-Ingle (via Teams), Jenny Fowle, Jason Oster,
Lauren Smith, Aisha Sohail, Svetlana Warhurst.

In Attendance: Jo Cross Deputy Headteacher (Academic)
Fiona Harrison Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)
Melissa Mulgrew Business Manager
Wendy Newton Clerk to Governors

Apologies: Chris Lamberti, Funmi Osilaja, Priya Rangaswamy, Richard Vass

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Chris Lamberti, Funmi Osilaja, Priya Rangaswamy and Richard Vass (received post-meeting).

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 2022-23, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality. The Clerk confirmed that all Governors had returned their annual declarations for 2022-23.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3. With one date correction, the minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2022 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

4. There were no matters arising, it was confirmed that all actions had been completed.

ITEM 5 – MINUTES OF THE GOVERNOR CONFERENCE & COMPANY AGM

5. The minutes of the Governor Conference and Company AGM held on 28th January 2023 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

ITEM 6 – CHAIRS' ACTION & EMAIL ACTION

6. Item 6.1 – Chairs' Action. A list of Chairs' actions taken since the last meeting was received and noted.

7. Item 6.2 – DfE & ESFA Letters. No ESFA or DfE letters requiring Governor attention had been sent to the School since the last meeting.

8. Item 6.3 – School Management Accounts. Governors confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts for October to December 2022 and had noted the content.

ITEM 7 – GOVERNING BODY MATTERS

9. Item 7.1 – GB Membership. Details of GB and sub-committee membership were reviewed. The Chair reported that Richard Vass (Nominated Governor) had indicated that he was likely to be

ACTION

standing down at the end of his current term of office in October 2023 due to relocation from the area. Jenny Fowle (Parent Governor) was also standing down at the end of the current School term. The Chair thanked Jenny for her hard work and support during her time as a Governor and presented her with flowers as a token of the GB's appreciation. The meeting was advised that the Management Committee had offered Aisha Sohail (Parent Governor) a position as a Nominated Governor and she had accepted. An election for two Parent Governor vacancies would be initiated after the Easter holiday. Aisha Sohail had recently taken on the role of Safeguarding Governor and was to move to the Staff & Student Matters Committee. It was reported that Lauren Smith (Nominated Governor) was to become a contracted part-time staff member of CCHS at the start of the Summer Term. This did not present an issue under the Trust's current Articles of Association but would need to be taken into account if the new DfE model articles were put in place.

ACTION

10. Item 7.2 – Company Structure. The Chair advised that no additional assistance had been forthcoming from the DfE on the consequences of changing to a new funding agreement which would be required if the new DfE model articles were to be adopted. Enquiries had gone out to other SSGS schools and nothing adverse had been reported. The Management Committee now considered that the new DfE articles would have to be adopted as published and that the formal category of Staff Governor would be removed from the GB structure. An alternative means of obtaining staff views would now to be sought. The Clerk **agreed** to draft the new funding agreement and new articles for future consideration.

Clerk

11. Item 7.3 – MAT Update. The Headteacher advised that the Schools Bill relating to MATs had been halted and that the next key point for any future possible school change would be the general election in 2024-25. There was to be no immediate forward movement by the School on becoming part of a MAT but the issue would be kept under constant review. The requirement to become a MAT in the future could not be ruled out. The Headteacher stressed that the School did not work in isolation and had a lot of external links and natural networks, such as the local primary schools, MESH, SSGS and IGCS schools, which would continue as usual.

ITEM 8 – HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

12. The Headteacher highlighted the new CCHS Achievement Strategy which summarised the School's actions, both academically and pastorally, in aiding students after the Covid pandemic and in particular this year's public examination cohorts for whom there were no examination modifications. It was stated that extra support would need to continue for the next 5 or possibly 10 years. The Headteacher's Report dated March 2023 was received and discussed. A data error was noted in graphics relating to the Year 7 Entrance Test and the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) School **agreed** to investigate the issue. It was reported that the number of candidates with PPG status registering to sit the Year 7 test was rising and that around 13 places had been allocated to PPG students for entry in Year 7 in September 2023. This was the first time the Year 7 PPG entry figure would be in double figures and was to be commended.

F Harrison

13. The 'lost' students situation arising from the pandemic was raised, and whilst CCHS attendance was high at 93.74%, Governors noted that this was less than the 95% School target and queried the issue. The need to record students on study leave as being absent was highlighted and information on the actions taken over student absence was received. The Progress 8 gap between Disadvantaged students and the whole cohort was also queried (+0.4 to +0.91 respectively). The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) acknowledged there was a Progress 8 gap, but CCHS Disadvantaged students outperform those nationally (+0.15) and the CCHS trajectory was now upward. These figures were significantly affected by the low number of students in the Disadvantaged category. It was stressed that the Disadvantaged Progress 8 figure of +0.4 indicated that the CCHS Disadvantaged students perform over one third of a grade better than similar ability students nationally. The School was aware of the Progress 8 gap and staff continued to work hard to reduce it. The Staff Governor confirmed the continual monitoring of all students and the additional work undertaken to close the attainment gap. The Chair requested additional confirmation of the specific progress made by disadvantaged students whilst at the School.

14. Decision. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) **agreed** to prepare additional data to show the specific progress of Disadvantaged students for receipt next term.

J Cross

15. There was further discussion on the assessment and progress of students during their time at the School. It was noted that with more disadvantaged students entering the School with a lower entry point in the future, it was possible that the disadvantaged data figure would be affected. Governors queried the impact of lower ability students entering the School and how it may impact staff. It was stated that all the School community were very committed to the work of the School in assisting disadvantaged students, and that the needs of the staff were continually addressed and would be revised as necessary. The need to increase pastoral staffing within the School was queried and it was confirmed that it was currently satisfactory but may need expanding in the future. Governors noted that an overall Progress 8 score of +0.9 was exceptional and should be celebrated and recorded their thanks to the staff for achieving the 2022 GCSE results.

9.05am – Sarah de Souza-Ingle left the meeting.

At this point in the meeting there was an IT connectivity issue which lasted about 5 minutes and prevented the Governors attending the meeting via Teams from hearing the meeting discussions.

16. A Governor query was raised on the increase of SEND students since the last meeting. The SEND Link Governor advised that the total number of students on the SEND Register was correct at 34 students; however, the increase in number should have read '*up from 28*' rather than '*up from 12*'. This was confirmed by the Clerk post-meeting. The Headteacher advised that the earlier detection of SEND issues within the student population and larger student cohorts were increasing the SEND student numbers and that staff resources were always under review. The Headteacher also **agreed** that the Ethnicity breakdown figures stated in the report would be checked.

F Harrison

ITEM 9 – SSEF, CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT & FINANCIAL UPDATE

17. The Business Manager advised that the final accounts for the SSEF project had now been agreed but were not settled as one remediation was outstanding. The project was £67,000 over budget, this was only 1% of the £6.6million total project cost and £2000 above the project overspend limit authorised by Governors. The extra project funding had come from School reserves and in-year surplus, however £2000 of the overspend may yet be reclaimed back from VAT. There had been a lot of variations during the project and the scope had been required to change, mainly because of the Covid pandemic. The School had challenged a lot of the project variation costs put to them. The final accounts closure had now been submitted to the ESFA.

18. The area of most concern for the School was currently the swimming pool. Recent issues had identified the need for a new boiler (£16,000 to be paid for by CCHS Capital Development) but engineers had now also identified the additional need for new gas pipework requiring a further £16,000. The repairs had temporarily been put on hold. There were also significant problems maintaining the pool temperature and chemical balance. The swimming pool plant was now deemed to be end-of-life and the pool building structure issues continued. It was stated that an overall strategy was required for the swimming pool before any further expenditure was made as it may be a waste of money. The Business Manager had investigated many avenues to find expertise on swimming pools but to date had not been successful. It was hoped Swim England may be of assistance in the next couple of weeks. A costed replacement plan was required before any fundraising could begin. Governors queried if the pool was still operational and safe, and the Business Manager confirmed that daily Health & Safety checks were undertaken. If any issues arose with the pool it was always closed immediately, irrespective of the negative effect on lettings income. The pool was still operating at a surplus financially but could physically fail at any point. The meeting debated the issue and how to proceed. It was suggested that a possible source of emergency funding could be by using School reserves. A ring-fenced fund of £300,000 existed for the replacement of the astroturf pitch however ongoing maintenance of the pitch may extended the life of the pitch for another 4-5 years. This fund could be used for the swimming pool now and the astroturf fund replenished in future years.

19. **Decision.** The 2023 DfE School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist was reviewed and **approved** as presented. There were no adverse issues to report. It was stated that the School's biggest financial concerns were the unfunded staff pay rises, the swimming pool and the ongoing cost of maintenance for the School buildings.

20. The Business Manager advised that the School Financial Management Reports for January 2023 gave a more accurate end-of-year forecast and would be sent to Governors shortly. Governors queried the effect of the energy price increases and were reminded that the School's primary electricity contract was fixed until September 2023 and gas contract fixed until September 2024. It was estimated that energy costs were likely to be £100,000 higher next year. The meeting discussed the efficacy of the School's current energy efficiency strategies which were deemed to be more cost-avoidance rather than savings.

ITEM 10 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN & STRATEGIC PLAN

21. **Decision.** The School Development Plan 2022-23 Mid-Term Review was received for information and noted. The draft CCHS Strategic Plan 2022-26 had been received by the GB in July 2022 and performance target figures had now been added. Governors raised queries on specific points and clarification was received. The Strategic Plan was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 11 – GDPR

22. The Business Manager advised that there were no GDPR issues to report.

ITEM 12 – RISK REGISTER

23. **Decision.** The full CCHS Risk Register was received for annual review. Attention was brought to the Curriculum Committee section of the Register which contained an updated appendix relating to post-pandemic risks. The content of a risk relating to staff retention was discussed but remained unamended. The CCHS Risk Register was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 13 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – RESIDENTIAL VISITS & OVERSEAS TRIPS

24. **Decision.** An updated list of residential and overseas trips for 2022-23 and 2023-24 was presented for approval. The cost of a Year 12 Geography field trip in June 2023 had previously been approved in principle whilst awaiting cost details, these had now been confirmed. The list of residential and overseas trips for 2022-23 and 2023-24 was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 14 – GOVERNOR REPORTS

25. **Item 14.1 – Governor Visits.** A Governor Visit Report was received from Jenny Fowle for a visit undertaken in November 2022 and noted. Svetlana Warhurst reported that she had met with the SENDCo and her Assistant in January 2023 just after she had taken on the role of SEND Link Governor and summarised the findings of their meeting. There had been 28 students on the SEND Register at the time of the meeting (now 34) and it was stated that there was no difference in the attendance of SEND and non-SEND students apart from one School Refuser. The meeting was reported to be very productive and informative. It had been suggested that a Sixth Form curriculum review, and possible adjustment, may be beneficial for Sixth Form SEND students. The work of the SENDCo and her Assistant was highly commended.

26. **Item 14.2 – Governor Training.** Lauren Smith, Training Link Governor, reported that all Governors had completed safeguarding training, either online via the NGA Learning Link or in person at the Governor Conference held in January 2023. It was stated that it was necessary to commence Governors' safeguarding training earlier in 2023-24. The meeting was advised that a new NGA Governor skills audit was to be sent out before the start of the Easter break. It would hopefully identify areas for additional training for current Governors and also find missing areas of expertise which could be advertised in the forthcoming Parent Governor election. All Governors were encouraged to undertake the training available through The Key and the NGA Learning Link.

27. **Item 14.3 – Safeguarding.** Jenny Fowle, the outgoing Safeguarding Governor, re-iterated the need for all new governors to undertake the School's own safeguarding training immediately upon appointment. It was stated that this would now be part of the New Governor Induction Session. The meeting was informed that Aisha Sohail had kindly agreed to take on the role of Safeguarding Governor from the start of next term. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) gave an update on

School safeguarding issues, highlighting the increase in mental health problems. The Pastoral Hub was being well used and all student visits were monitored and recorded. It was stated that access to external mental health services continued to be difficult and required frequent chasing. There had been an increase in multi-agency meetings and the School currently had its first School refuser. The increase in attachment issues was deemed to relate to the pandemic. The School confirmed that it had all the necessary resources at present.

28. Item 14.4 – Parents’ Association Matters. The Business Manager reported that the PA continued to do exceptional work and were on track to exceed pre-pandemic fundraising amounts. The sum of £18,200 had been raised by January and this was likely to exceed £20,000 by the end of the current term. To date the PA had spent over £24,000 on School items and had committed a further £10,000 towards a swimming pool cover and sound system for the Sports Hall. There was a small, dedicated team of PA helpers who were highly committed to helping the School.

29. Item 14.5 – Better Buildings Committee. Jason Oster, Link Governor to the Better Building Committee, advised the focus of all fundraising activity was to be towards the swimming pool. The need for firm costs was re-iterated but would hopefully be overcome soon. A small working party, which included two senior prefects, had been set up and was to meet soon build an action plan. The Business Manager thanked Jason Oster and Sarah de Souza-Ingle for their support in the swimming pool investigations and finding new income streams.

ITEM 15 – GB SUB-COMMITTEES

30. Decision. The minutes of the following GB sub-committee meetings were received and **approved** as presented:

- a. The Curriculum Committee meetings held on 2nd November 2022 & 22nd February 2023,
- b. The Facilities & Finance Committee meetings held on 16th November 2022 & 8th February 2023,
- c. The Staff & Student Matters Committee meeting held on 23rd November 2022, and
- d. The Management Committee meeting held on 2nd December 2022.

ITEM 16 – SENIOR SPEECH DAY

31. The Headteacher summarised details of Senior Speech Day taking place in Chelmsford Cathedral on 19th April 2023 and Governors were asked to ensure that they had sent confirmation of their availability for the event.

ITEM 17 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

32. Decision - Legionella Management Scheme. The Business Manager presented a new statutory Legionella Management Scheme for approval. The document was reviewed and a query raised on the content of one checklist. The Business Manager **agreed** to get the checklist revised. The CCHS Legionella Management Scheme was then **approved**.

M Mulgrew

33. School Nurse. The meeting was advised that following the Chair of the Staff & Student Matters Committee’s letter to Vicky Ford MP concerning the lack of a School Nurse, a new School Nurse had been allocated to CCHS for one visit per month (it had been a weekly visit) or if a specific request was raised by the School. Sarah was thanked for her assistance in this issue.

ITEM 18 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

34. Decision. It was **agreed** that the next Full Governing Body meeting would be held at 8.00am on Friday 7th July 2023. (Changed post meeting to be 14th July 2023)

All

The meeting closed at 10.00am.

Steve Miles, Chair of Governors

14th July 2023