

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held remotely via Zoom at 8.00am on Friday 5th March 2021

Present:	Steve Miles Stephen Lawlor Andrew Bonwick Ros Cornish Richard Vass	Chair of Governors Headteacher Chair of Curriculum Committee Chair of the Staff & Student Matters Committee Vice Chair of Governors & Chair of Facilities & Finance Committee
In Attendance:	Emma Ledwidge Melissa Mulgrew Wendy Newton	Deputy Headteacher Business Manager Clerk to Governors

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. There were no apologies for absence to receive, all members were present.

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 2020-21, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2020 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

4. Item 11, Para 15b – Admissions Policy 2022 Determination. The Clerk confirmed that the Admissions Policy 2022 had been approved by the Full GB by email and had now been published.

ITEM 5 – CHAIR’S ACTION

5. The meeting was advised that the Chair of Governors and Chair of the Staff & Student Matters Committee had recently approved an updated ECC ‘Child Protection During Covid Closure Policy’.

ITEM 6 – HEADTEACHER’S UPDATE

6. The Headteacher gave an update on the current School situation, advising that remote school continued and was going well. Rolling tutor periods had now been re-instated to give students and staff some screen-free time and the normal PHSE content would restart once students were back in School. Students continued to work well with good support from parents, and staff were working hard to support their needs. As directed by DfE, students would be making a phased return to School from 8th March and had been requested to undertake flow testing prior to entry into the School site. A plan for lateral flow testing had been prepared but did require a large amount of re-timetabling and significant SLT input. The details of how the flow testing and the phased return of students were being organised were summarised. The Headteacher advised that unfortunately there had been a small but significant number of parents objecting to flow tests and the extended use of masks, much of which could have been avoided if the detailed School communications had been read more closely. Student assemblies were to be held to explain the School’s Covid processes and it was hoped that once back in School objections would reduce. It was confirmed that disruption to lessons was being kept to a minimum during the return to schooling.

7. Governors put forward questions concerning the flow testing and result reporting system. The Headteacher advised that 80% of students had parental consent for flow testing, which was much

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higher than other schools, but that it was a significant concern for staff. Governors noted the permission figure with concern in relation to the health and welfare of both the staff and other students, particularly with untested asymptomatic students passing on the Covid virus. The Headteacher advised that flow tests were voluntary and mask-wearing only recommended, and that he had no authority to exclude students who refused the flow test or wear face masks. It was hoped that when the flow tests changed to home testing the take-up figure would be higher. The number of students refusing to wear face masks would be much smaller than the test-refusal figure. Governors queried whether remote schooling could continue for students who refused to undertake the Covid flow test but the Headteacher advised that this was not an acceptable route to take.

8. It was reported after the return to school that the focus would be on the examination situation. Whilst public examinations had been cancelled, there was much work to be done in order to produce meaningful Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs). DfE and Ofqual guidance had been received although some final details were still awaited, and it was confirmed that the grades would be fully decided by the School. Affected students had been kept informed of DfE decisions as they became known. Governors questioned the extra workload on teaching staff in producing CAGs and were advised that extra time would be released to teachers by reducing other School tasks and events. The Headteacher advised that formal teaching for Years 11 & 13 students was to be extended until 28th May 2021 in order to give the students the maximum opportunity of producing work for formal assessment as grade results had to be uploaded to Ofqual by 18th June. It was stressed that all student grades would be determined by the evidence of their academic work, both past and future.

8.30am – The Headteacher left the meeting to undertake student assemblies.

The following items were taken out of agenda order due to the absence of the Headteacher.

ITEM 8 – SSEF PROJECT & CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

9. The SSEF Project Status Dashboard as at 2nd February 2021 was received for information. The Business Manager reported that the SSEF project end dates had been delayed due to various Covid-related reasons and that completion could drop back to July (Teaching Block) and August (Sports Hall). The situation was being monitored on a weekly basis and contractors hoped to be able to make up some of the lost time and return to the pre-slippage completion dates of 24th May and 12th July 2021 respectively. There had been a change to Building Regulations which now required an enclosed fire escape, the change had been approved by ECC planning and the cost of the change awaited. The existing, insufficient soakaway on the playing field continued to cause hazardous conditions for the building team and the new soakaway would be a variation to the project but was as yet un-costed. The finances of the SSEF Project were still positive with minimal use of the contingency. The Business Manager was still working on the issue of unrecoverable VAT. The Committee also received the SSEF Project Progress Report No 12 for their general information. The Chair thanked the Business Manager for her continuing hard work on the project.

10. **Artificial Pitch - Decision.** Investigations into the need to replace the current artificial pitch had been made and the School informed that the pitch still had 2-3 years of usable life. Therefore, it was agreed to defer the replacement for a couple of years in order to avoid any unnecessary use of School reserves and also await the settling of School finances after the SSEF Project.

ITEM 9 – GDPR

11. It was reported that GDPR issues were ongoing. The introduction of remote learning packages necessitated undertaking a data privacy assessment which was time-consuming, during the past year only one piece of software had not been used due to data privacy. The Business Manager advised the School's external ECC Data Protection Officer had been very supportive.

ITEM 11 – GOVERNING BODY AGENDAS

12. **Decision.** The proposed agendas for the Spring Term Full GB meeting and Academy Trust AGM on 25th March 2021 were presented for consideration. The Committee reviewed the content of the agendas and noted that an additional item may be required, dependent on the later discussion

of Item 10. The Clerk agreed to amend the Full GB agenda in line with the discussions of the meeting and the AGM agenda was approved as presented.

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Clerk

ITEM 13 – RISK REGISTER

13. **Decision**. The Management Committee section of the CCHS Risk Register was presented for termly review and discussed. It was noted that the document was likely to need amendment if any changes were made to the structure of the Academy Trust. Governors approved the document as presented.

ITEM 14 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

14. **School Development Plan 2020-21**. The Mid Term Review of the School Development Plan (SDP) 2020-21 was received for information and the impact of Covid-19 noted. The Chair advised that SDPs had been a discussion point at the Juniper New Governor Induction Course undertaken by the new Parent Governors recently and that some CCHS-related questions had been raised. The Clerk agreed to forward the SDP discussion points to the Committee for their general information.

Clerk

15. The Deputy Headteacher summarised the major issues within the SDP and advised that some items could not be completed because of Covid. There had been a short delay on the Spring Term update on the Change Project but it would be available shortly and was due to be discussed at the next Staff & Student Matters Committee meeting. The new School Equality Policy was under review with the School's legal advisors and should be formally published in the near future. Activities relating to Fair Access had been curtailed by the Covid pandemic but alternative ways of accessing Year 5 students had been found through online resources and the School website. Staff wellbeing was reported as always high on the SLT agenda. The additional pressures for staff members who have had their own children at home during the lockdown was noted. It was reported that some staff members had been highly anxious during the Covid closure and that SLT members had taken individual responsibility for liaising with these colleagues. Governors queried whether there may be levels of staff absence which may be unsustainable as a result of anxiety, it was suggested there were likely to be staff absences but not unmanageable. Details of how the School managed teacher absences through new technology and by using cover supervisors were explained. It was confirmed that the School had the necessary IT hardware to support staff absences eg webcams etc and also could purchase more through Covid Catch Up funding if required.

9.00am – The Headteacher re-joined the meeting.

16. The concept of staff members needing extra support but being lost from sight was raised by Governors, it was stated that the School had a very strong line management system and that such a problem was unlikely to occur within either teaching or support staff. The methods of alleviating Covid concerns of staff were summarised for the Committee. It was confirmed that no member of staff had refused to come back to work because of Covid concerns. The Headteacher advised that the Inset Day on 25th March included a whole staff session with an accredited external speaker on mental health and wellbeing.

ITEM 7 – FACULTY STRUCTURE REFORM

17. The Headteacher presented a paper proposing the reform of the School faculty structure and summarised the reasons behind the proposal. The communication weaknesses of the current system were explained and a revised structure explained. It was suggested that the professional strengths of the present faculty leaders would be better utilised and reach more people if they were not tied to just their own faculty areas. Under the new structure current subject leaders would report directly to a specific member of SLT and the current five faculty leaders would become School Development Leaders, a group of specialist senior middle leaders working under the Assistant Headteacher (T&L) to support and assist identified teachers across the School. The Committee discussed the proposal and queried how it would be received by teaching staff. The Headteacher advised that the proposal was currently at SLT level only and had come to the Management Committee for their initial thoughts. The proposal would next need consultation and discussion with

teaching staff and the current faculty leaders, if acceptable to staff the change of faculty structure was proposed to start in September 2021.

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18. Governors queried the proposal in relation to the burden of additional performance management work for SLT, this issue had already been debated by SLT and agreed as acceptable. The meeting was advised that it was hoped the reform to the middle leadership tier would be seen as an additional career enhancement opportunity for teaching staff and give a boost to teaching & learning within the School. Governors suggested that the views of the teaching staff were critical and needed to be fully considered before any final decisions were made, particularly in light of the current Covid pressures when extra additional stress and change might not be welcomed. The Headteacher stressed that full consultation would take place and the views of staff fully considered before any formal change was undertaken.

19. **Decision.** It was agreed that the Headteacher should proceed with the staff consultation relating to reforming the faculty structure and keep the Committee informed.

Head

ITEM 12 – GOVERNORS’ CONFERENCE

20. The Committee were reminded that the Governors’ Conference planned for January had been cancelled and deferred until later in the Spring Term, in light of the return to schooling this timing was now impossible. The conference was discussed in light of future pressures and SLT workload. It was suggested that the only possible period for holding the Conference would be after the CAG data had been submitted on 18th June and before the end of term.

21. **Decision.** It was agreed that the Headteacher would to keep possible dates for a Governor Conference under review and that the concept would be discussed at the next meeting.

Clerk

ITEM 10 – GOVERNING BODY STRUCTURE

22. Following changes to DfE-preferred academy trust structure in October 2020, the Clerk presented a paper outlining the situation in relation to the CCHS Academy Trust. It was reported that the CCHS academy structure, which had been DfE-recommended in 2010 at the time of academy conversion, was no longer compliant with new DfE and ESFA documents. ESFA clarification had been sought by the Clerk who had been advised that whilst the GB could legally remain with its current structure a change to the new DfE structure was highly recommended. The three issues which needed to be addressed were debated at length: (1) having the Headteacher as a Member of the Academy Trust, (2) having the current Members of the Trust fully integrated within the GB – against the preferred structure of having an additional layer of Members above the GB, the majority of whom should be external to the GB, and (3) the DfE preference not to have employees as directors (ie governors).

23. The difference between members and directors (governors) and their roles were explained. The Committee discussed the structure of the CCHS academy trust against the new preferred DfE structure along with what changes would be need to be undertaken in order to comply with the DfE preferences. It was noted that changing to the new structure would require additional people taking on the role of academy members in addition to making changes to the Trust’s Articles of Association.

24. **Decisions.**

- a. In their capacity of Members of CCHS Academy Trust Ltd, the Management Committee agreed to the removal of the Headteacher as a Member of the Trust from 1st March 2021.
- b. The Clerk agreed to add governance structure to the agenda for the Full GB meeting on 25th March 2021.
- c. It was agreed that the Clerk would not begin any amendment action of the Company Articles until after the discussion of the Full GB meeting.
- d. The Headteacher and Committee was requested to consider possible candidates for new Members of the Academy Trust.

Clerk

Clerk

All

10.05am – The Deputy Headteacher and Business Manager left the meeting.

ITEM 15 – COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS

ACTION

25. As previously advised the Headteacher confirmed there had been complaints from parents concerning lateral flow testing and the wearing of face masks, but that it was only a vocal minority. Conversely, the School continued to receive a constant flow of compliments from other parents on: the quality of remote schooling, the communications going out to students and parents, the pastoral care of the School, as well as the actions of year leaders and teaching staff. In particular, the work of the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) and the IT staff in helping students receive IT devices to assist their studies at home was noted. Committee members reported that they had received very positive comments about the quality of education and the actions of CCHS when compared to other schools. The work of all the School staff was highly-praised and very much appreciated. The Chair stressed that maintaining the greatest possible level of normality and structure in these difficult times was down to the leadership of the Headteacher and good management of SLT.

ITEM 16 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

26. No other items of business were raised.

ITEM 15 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27. **Decision.** The date of the next meeting was agreed as 8.00am on Friday 11th June 2021.

All

The meeting closed at 10.15am.

S Miles, Chair

11th June 2021