

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the GOVERNING BODY **held remotely via Zoom at 8.00am on Friday 15th October 2021**

Present: Richard Vass Vice Chair of Governors & Chair of the Meeting
Stephen Lawlor Headteacher
Mary Argent, Andrew Bonwick, Sarah Clements, Sarah de Souza-Ingle,
Jenny Fowle, Funmi Osilaja, Jason Oster, Priya Rangaswamy,
Mark Rowell, Lauren Smith, Aisha Sohail

In Attendance: Emma Ledwidge Deputy Headteacher
Melissa Mulgrew Business Manager
Wendy Newton Clerk to Governors

Apologies: Richard Brown, Steve Miles (Chair of Governors)

1. Richard Vass, Vice Chair of Governors, opened by advising that in the absence of the Chair of Governors he would be chairing the meeting. Before the meeting Governors had returned a list of approved agenda items and the Clerk would relay comments to the meeting at the appropriate item.

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Steve Miles and Richard Brown.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

3. There were no declarations of business interest further to those already stated on the Register of Business Interests for 2021-22, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2021 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

5. There were no matters needing any further discussion.

ITEM 5 – CHAIRS' ACTION & EMAIL ACTION

6. Chairs' Action. A summary of Chairs' actions since the last meeting was received and noted.

7. DfE & ESFA Letters. Governors confirmed receipt by email of one ESFA letter from Eileen Milner dated 14th July 2021 and had noted its content.

8. School Management Accounts. Governors confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts for May and June 2021 and had noted their content.

ITEM 6 – GOVERNING BODY MATTERS

9. Item 6.1 – GB Membership. Details of GB and sub-committee membership were received. The three Nominated Governor vacancies were noted, and the issue is to be discussed at the next Management Committee meeting. Decreased sub-committee membership was noted and Governors were reminded that they can be a member of more than one sub-committee and can also sit in on any governor meeting. It was noted that both Staff Governors came to the end of their term of office at the end of the Autumn Term and that a staff governor election would be initiated after the half term. It was suggested that virtual meetings may encourage parents living further away from the School to come forward for consideration as a Governor.

ACTION

10. **Item 6.2 - Associate Member - Decision.** The Chair proposed the re-election of Mary Argent as an Associate Member of the GB and this was unanimously supported by the Full GB. With her consent, Mary Argent was re-elected as an Associate Member of the GB for academic year 2021-22 and her ongoing support of the School was thanked and greatly appreciated.

11. **Item 6.3 – Headteacher’s Performance Review.** The Chair advised that the Headteacher’s Performance Review Panel last year had consisted of the Chair of Governors and himself and proposed that this remained the same. The meeting discussed the need for an external adviser and for a Performance Review Appeal Officer.

12. **Decision.** The meeting agreed that:

- a. The Chair and Vice Chair of Governors would act as the Headteacher’s Performance Review Panel for 2021, the use of an external adviser was not currently planned.
- b. Sarah de Souza-Ingle would act as the Performance Review Appeal Officer, if required.

**Chair
Vice Chair
S de Souza-
Ingle**

ITEM 7 – GB GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

13. The Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Full GB and each sub-committee, the GB Standing Orders, GB Scheme of Delegation and Governors’ Code of Conduct were presented for re-approval. The committees who had already met this term had reviewed and approved their TORs and the remainder would be reviewed at their first meeting. Re-phrasing had been proposed for one sentence in the Staff Disciplinary Appeals Committee and Governor Appeals Panel TORs and was discussed.

14. **Decisions.**

- a. The Clerk agreed to amend the TORs for the Staff Disciplinary Appeals and Governor Appeals Panel in line with the discussions of the meeting.
- b. With the agreed corrections, the TORs for the Full GB and GB sub-committees (Management, Curriculum, Facilities & Finance, Staff & Student Matters, Staff Pay, Staff Pay Appeal, Audit, Staff Disciplinary, Staff Disciplinary Appeal, Governor Panels and Governor Panel Appeals) were approved.
- c. The GB Standing Orders, GB Scheme of Delegation and Governor Code of Conduct were approved as presented.

Clerk

ITEM 8 – HEADTEACHER’S REPORT TO GOVERNORS

15. The Headteacher’s Report dated October 2021 was received and the Headteacher gave an update on current schooling situation. Reduced Covid restrictions had been in place since the start of term and, after a good start to the term, Covid cases were now increasing. Twenty-three students and one staff member were currently Covid-positive and isolating, this was low in comparison to other local schools. Remote schooling was in place for any isolating student who was well enough to work. The School was closely monitoring the situation. There had been five separate School events in school for parents since the start of term and all had been well attended. The Headteacher reported that the School had been Ofsted-ready for some time and expected a visit soon. Governors had previously received Ofsted training but it was suggested that new training would be beneficial for the new Governors. Recent student and parent surveys had both given good responses about the School.

16. Governors put forward questions about the Headteacher’s Report which were answered fully by the Headteacher and members of SLT. The decline of Covid testing numbers was deemed due to the lack of logging results rather than the lack of testing. Parents continued to be regularly reminded about the need for testing and logging. Over 60% of the student population had currently been vaccinated in School and this was welcomed. It was hoped that other students would use the community vaccination programme. Governors requested further information on the admissions process for Year 12. The Headteacher reported that the usual Sixth Form Open Evening had not happened last year and this had reduced contact with prospective students. Sixth Form recruitment is now very cut-throat with some students holding several offers, over 20 students who had been expected had not turned up on the first day of term. It was stressed that there is still great interest in the School from external students and following the recent Sixth Form Open Evening contact

would be continued throughout this academic year. The reason for 40 students leaving after Year 11 was queried and discussed; there was not always a known reason. It was stated that more information on exam results and direct subject comparisons with other establishments were now to be given to Year 11 students. A query was raised on the School's plans for Sixth Form recruitment for the next academic year and details of the School's plans to remain in contact with interested external students were summarised.

17. It was confirmed that Covid had directly impacted the School's primary outreach work and its Fair Access Plan and a new CCHS Primary Outreach Taskforce had been set up to address the issue. Details of work already done this term to encourage disadvantaged pupils to apply for the School were summarised by the Deputy Headteacher. It was also reported that whole School Enrichment Days programme had been stopped in favour of separate year group enrichment days which included a focus on primary liaison. Governors queried what the students would be losing from the previous enrichment day programme and further explanation was given on the new system. It was stated that students were not losing out on anything, events were just to be spread out across the academic year. A Parent Governor stated that they believed the inclusion of A level Computer Science had helped retention into the Sixth Form, and also thanked the School for the recent in-school vaccination programme. The Headteacher confirmed that Governor assistance was welcomed in relation to primary outreach work, in particular with liaising with primary school governors to advertise the outreach work of CCHS for disadvantaged students. The Chair thanked the Headteacher and SLT for the very thorough report.

ITEM 9 – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT & FINANCIAL UPDATE

18. The Chair started by formally recording his thanks to the Business Manager on behalf of the whole Governing Body for her work throughout the SSEF building project, the outcome of which was described as fabulous, only the Library element remained unfinished. The SSEF Project Status Dashboard dated 28th September 2021 was received and summarised by the Business Manager. The School was now in possession of the new SSEF buildings. Some minor defects had arisen and were being addressed and any new defects would be covered for the next 12 months. After some unavoidable delay the Library was also now in the School's possession and the final move was to take place over Half Term. The School was very pleased with the end result. The issues with the swimming pool building continued and discussions were ongoing with the insurers, it was suggested that this needed to be the next capital development focus.

19. The scope changes of the SSEF project were reviewed and the Business Manager explained the effect they would have on the plans to convert the old Gym changing rooms to additional dining space. The final SSEF accounts were yet to be received but it was unlikely that any excess funds would be available to go towards the changing room conversion work. A new GB strategy would be required to address this work. The increase in building material costs since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic was stated as having a major effect on the project.

ITEM 10 – FINANCIAL REGULATIONS & WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

20. The School Financial Regulations Manual and Scheme of Delegation 2021-22 was presented for approval with minor amendments. The Facilities & Finance Committee had previously reviewed the document and recommended it for approval. The School's Juniper HR-model Whistleblowing Policy was also presented with minor amendments for annual re-approval.

21. **Decision.** The School Financial Regulations Manual and Scheme of Delegation 2021-22 and the Whistleblowing Policy were approved as presented with an annual review.

ITEM 11 – AUDIT ACTIONS

22. **Internal Controls Auditor - Decision.** The meeting approved the continued use of Juniper as the School's external Internal Controls Evaluation auditor for 2021-22 and the Juniper two-day visit scope of work for Internal Controls Evaluation visits for 2021-22 as presented. This would include one non-financial control review option as required by the Academies Financial Handbook.

23. CCHS Capital Development Guarantee – (Raised at Item 20 – AOB) - Decision. The Chair requested that as has been done in previous years the School formally agrees to guarantee any CCHS Capital Development Ltd's liabilities to avoid the need for a statutory audit of its accounts. This would save the School additional audit expenditure. The Full GB unanimously agreed to guarantee CCHS Capital Development Ltd for the year ending 31st August 2021.

ACTION

ITEM 12 – CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

24. Decision. The Child Protection Policy dated September 2021, previously approved by Chair's Action to allow publication at the start of term, was received and approved as presented. It was noted that the policy made no reference to discrimination in the document. The Clerk agreed to pass this comment on the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead and to add a list of the School's linked policies to the end of the document.

Clerk

ITEM 13 – RISK REGISTER & SCHOOL CONTRACT LIST

25. Decision. The Full GB section of the CCHS Risk Register was received and approved as presented. It was agreed that the Management Committee would review the document in relation to the 'training' control procedure and being linked to the Full GB Standing Orders. The full list of external School contracts was received for annual review and contracts over £10,000 were noted.

ITEM 14 – GDPR

26. Decision. The Business Manager stated that there was nothing material to report on GDPR issues. Freedom of Information requests were expected after the School Entrance Test results were released. All other areas of GDPR were well-controlled and proceeding as normal. The Business Manager agreed to check the terms of the School's cyber insurance.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 15 – GB SUB-COMMITTEES

27. Item 15.1 – Management Committee – Decision. The minutes of the Management Committee meetings held on 24th September 2021 were received and approved; no specific questions were raised for further discussion.

28. Item 15.2 – Facilities & Finance Committee. The minutes of the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 6th October 2021 were received and approved; no specific questions were raised for further discussion.

ITEM 16 – SENIOR SPEECH DAY

29. The Headteacher reported that Senior Speech Day was currently planned to be held as normal in Chelmsford Cathedral on 20th April 2022. Bridget Kendall, BBC correspondent and Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, the guest speaker previously arranged for 2021, had yet to confirm her availability. (**Clerk's Note**: Acceptance has now been received.)

ITEM 17 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – VISITS & TRIPS

30. A list of residential and overseas trips for 2021-22 and 2022-23 was presented for approval. The Deputy Headteacher advised that the School had ECC approval to go ahead with overseas trips although there was still some concern about overseas travel and Covid-19. The School was keeping things under review and had not yet launched any overseas trips. The issue was to be reviewed again after the half term break. UK-based alternatives had been investigated by the School but had proved expensive, if available. It was confirmed that Covid-specific insurance was available at an additional cost but would have to be included in the price of the trip, the School's current insurance did not cover cancellation due to Covid-19 as standard. The meeting noted that certain year groups, particularly Year 9, had missed several significant school trips and details of alternative trips for this year were explained. Governors suggested that any possible trips would be appreciated by the parents, particularly in the lower year groups.

31. **Decision.** The list of residential and overseas trips for 2021-22 and 2022-23 was approved as presented.

ACTION

ITEM 18 – GOVERNOR REPORTS

32. **Item 18.1 – Governor Visits.** No formal Governor visits to the School had taken place since the last meeting, however Sarah de Souza-Ingle, SEN Link Governor, had met with the SENCO this term. The Headteacher confirmed that Governors were welcome to visit at any point. The meeting discussed the format of future Governor meetings as certain sub-committees had already decided to meet in person once again. Governors discussed the issue, noting the rising numbers of Covid-19 cases and the increased flexibility that Zoom meetings allow. The Management Committee were due to discuss the issue at their next meeting.

33. **Item 18.2 – Governor Training.** Lauren Smith, Training Link Governor, advised that she had attended a Juniper course on monitoring that week but had been disappointed as it was aimed at primary schools. The effectiveness of the annual Juniper Governor training package was currently being reviewed for cost-effectiveness and course content before the renewal date in March 2022. It was confirmed that the Governors with specific roles had undertaken the courses for their roles. The need for a Full GB development session and how it would be presented was discussed. Governors commended The Key website as a reference tool for governance issues and the Clerk advised that a new subscription to the National Governance Association had recently been started and that Governors would receive email invitations to register for the NGA website very shortly. The Training Link Governor confirmed that she was still collating the results of the Governor Skills Audit and School strategy priorities list.

34. **Decision.** The Clerk agreed to send out a list of the current Juniper courses for Governors

Clerk

35. **Item 18.3 – Safeguarding.** Jenny Fowle, Safeguarding Governor, advised that she had met with Fiona Harrison, the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and had had a very useful and productive meeting. The Pastoral Team had been very busy post-lockdown with a variety of matters, some of which had been referred on to external agencies. All safeguarding-related issues were reported onto My Concern with follow-up action logged. The activities of the DSL and her team were summarised for the Committee and highly commended.

36. **Item 18.4 – Parents' Association Matters.** The Deputy Headteacher reported that the PA funds balance was £34,512 as at the 7th September and £26,580 had already been committed to the School. Their current net balance was £13,637 compared to £23,272 in 2018 and 2019, the £10,000 drop in funds was due to the lack of fundraising events during the Covid-19 pandemic. The amount of money actually raised was significant and commended in the difficult circumstances. Forthcoming PA fundraising activities were summarised and it was reported that the PA were working hard to boost the lost revenue of the previous two years. The Chair praised the work of the PA and asked for the thanks of the Governors to be passed on to the PA.

Dep Head

37. **Item 18.5 – Better Buildings Committee.** Jason Oster, Link Governor to the Better Building Committee, reminded the meeting that Better Building activities had been paused during the Covid-19 pandemic. The parent ring-round route was still deemed inappropriate and so the Better Building Committee were intending to go down the corporate funding route for fundraising. The School had received £30,000 from Sports England to equip the new Fitness Suite and another grant for science equipment was coming from the Ann Jones Educational Foundation. Additional sponsor routes were to be investigated and a specific fundraising campaign targeted at the parents would commence later in the academic year. It was reported that all schools were struggling to raise money from parents at the current time. It was noted that the new parents of Years 7 and 8 needed to be made aware that the School would welcome donations to assist with the purchase of additional items; this was to happen with the new campaign next year. The Chair thanked Jason Oster for his continuing fundraising work for the School.

10.20am – Funmi Osilaja left the meeting.

ITEM 19 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACTION

38. Item 19.1 – School Development Plan 2021-22. The School Development Plan 2021-22 was received for information. The Headteacher advised that due to the disruption of the last academic year some developments items had been carried forward to this year and that the structure of the SDP had been revised. SLT review the progress of SDP action items at the end of each term and ensure departments are on track through their line management meetings during the year.

39. Item 19.2 – School Self-Evaluation. A new School Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) 2021-22 was received for information. The Headteacher explained the background of the document and how it had been produced and stated that it followed the Ofsted framework. The findings of the SEF fed into the SDP and the SEF review will now continue to be undertaken annually. It was confirmed that the School can choose to present the SEF document to Ofsted as evidence of School processes.

40. Item 19.3 – Examination Review 2021. The Public Examination Review 2021 was received for information. The Summer 2021 results were Teacher Assessed Grades based on school assessment and the meeting was advised that a very robust assessment process had been followed by the School. It was reported that the Government intended for public examinations to run next Summer but that no further details were expected until February 2022 which was deemed too late. It was also stated that the Government intended to rein back the grade inflation of the past two years and that lower grades could be expected in the future. Governors noted that the current Year 13 students would be taking public examinations for the first time. The Headteacher advised that Year 10 examinations were deliberately run in a very formal way to act as a practice for future public examinations but that it was hoped some examination adjustment would be made for this cohort.

10.30am – Andrew Bonwick left the meeting.

ITEM 20 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

41. Surveys. Governors queried when the results of the student and parent surveys would be received and were advised that they were to be presented at the next Management Committee meeting and would then be passed to the Full GB. There had only been a 25% response rate from parents with a 94% positive plus result rate, and a 70% response rate from students with the same 93% positive plus result rate. It was noted that the surveys had not been anonymous and Governors queried whether an anonymous survey may have produced more responses.

42. Return to School. The Headteacher complimented the brilliant work of all the staff since their return in September in getting the School back to running as normally as possible.

ITEM 21 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

43. Decision. It was agreed that the next Full Governing Body meeting would be held at 8.00am on Friday 25th March 2022. The meeting was also reminded that the Governors' Conference was currently due to take place on Saturday 22nd January 2022.

All

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the Headteacher and all the staff for their continuing hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting closed at 10.42am.

R Vass, Vice Chair of Governors

25th March 2022