

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the GOVERNING BODY held in the School at 8.00am on Friday 25th March 2022

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| Present: | Steve Miles Richard Vass Stephen Lawlor Andrew Bonwick, Richard Brown, Jenny Fowle, Chris Lamberti, Priya Rangaswamy, Lauren Smith | Chair of Governors Vice Chair of Governors Headteacher |
| Present via Zoom: | Mary Argent, Sarah Clements, Sarah de Souza-Ingle, Jason Oster | |
| In Attendance: | Melissa Mulgrew Wendy Newton | Business Manager Clerk to Governors |
| Apologies: | Funmi Osilaja, Aisha Sohail, Emma Ledwidge (Deputy Headteacher) | |

1. The Chair opened by thanking Governors for attending, noting that this was the first in-person meeting at the School since October 2019, and welcomed new Staff Governor, Chris Lamberti, to his first Full GB meeting.

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Funmi Osilaja, Aisha Sohail and the Deputy Headteacher, Emma Ledwidge.

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 15th October 2021 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

5. There were no matters arising from the minutes which needed any further discussion.

ITEM 5 – CHAIRS’ ACTION & EMAIL ACTION

6. Chairs’ Action. There had been no Chairs’ Action since the last meeting. The meeting was informed that Emma Ledwidge, Deputy Headteacher, was to leave the School in July to take up a position of headship, the Management Committee **agreed** to discuss the issue after the meeting.

7. DfE & ESFA Letters. No DfE or ESFA letters had been received since the last meeting.

8. School Management Accounts. Governors confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts from July 2021 to January 2022 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 meeting was advised that the Management Committee, in their role as Members of the Academy Trust, had recently offered Sarah de Souza-Ingle a Nominated Governor position and had offered Jason Oster a new term as a Nominated Governor, both with a 4-year term of office, both Governors had accepted the offers. There was now a vacant Parent Governor position and it was **agreed** that the Clerk would undertake a Parent Governor election in the Summer Term.

ACTION

Clerk

10. Item 6.2 – GB Structure. Details of the new Academy Structure were summarised for the meeting. Two people had agreed to act as new Members, Mr Jo Wincott and Miss Victoria Brignell, and agreement was awaited from ex-staff member Mrs Melanie Gulliver. Work was now to commence on preparing the new Articles of Association which would require DfE approval. It was hoped the new academy structure would be in place for September 2022.

11. Item 6.3 – Safeguarding Link Governor - Decision. The Staff & Student Matters Committee put forward new terms of reference for the Safeguarding Link Governor for Full GB approval. The Safeguarding Link Governor Terms of Reference were **approved** as presented.

ITEM 7 – HEADTEACHER’S REPORT TO GOVERNORS

12. The Headteacher’s Report dated March 2022 was received and the Headteacher gave a verbal update on current school situation. The School had recently experienced its highest level of staff absence due to Covid and this had presented operational challenges for the School. The Headteacher put on record his thanks to all the staff who had worked hard to ensure that the School remained open. There had been no severe cases of Covid-19 amongst students or staff, but some staff members were taking time to recover, and some had been infected for a second time. There had recently been high numbers of self-isolation within the Sixth Form. There was a continuing rise in safeguarding and pastoral issues amongst students, including anxiety and school refusers and the School was increasing its pastoral provision to address the problem. The Chair noted the SEN pastoral data given in the Headteacher’s Report and requested that the data was broadened to include the whole student body and show trends in order that Governors could track the size of the situation and changes, the Headteacher **agreed** to expand the pastoral data.

S Lawlor

13. The war in Ukraine had been unsettling for students and messaging from the School was always impartial and discussed from a humanitarian point of view. Student-led fundraising activities were now taking. Staff were mindful of issues arising for Russian-heritage students from national news coverage. Whilst public exams were due to run in the Summer, the School had followed Ofqual guidance and had a contingency plan in place involving a second set of mock examinations for Years 11 and 13. Two additional INSET days had been approved in order to give teachers time to mark the extra mocks. Students had reacted well to the second set of mocks and used it as additional practice for their summer exams. It was noted that Year 13 was the cohort which had not sat any GCSE examinations. Following TA2 assessments student progress meetings had been held referring to both academic and pastoral issues, and students requiring additional help had been identified and new interventions put in place. Governors queried the number of students requiring intervention and were advised that there were about a dozen students in each of the public examination year groups, Years 11 & 13. Additional help had also been introduced for parents of struggling students which had been well-received. A new weekly Homework Club had been started for SEN and PPG students. It was confirmed that home travel issues did not prevent any students using the Homework Club. Parent Governor Priya Rangaswamy passed on the thanks of a group of Year 13 parents who had praised the additional examination work undertaken by the staff. Governors suggested that most of the intervention work seemed to relate to the examination cohorts and asked if the interventions would be initiated earlier for the lower years, the Headteacher confirmed that interventions were taking place in all year groups but that it was most focussed on Year 11 and 13 due to the proximity of their public examinations.

14. In-person parent evenings had taken place since the start of the year, these had been very well attended and appreciated by the parents, very positive feedback had been received. Other in-person events included the Sixth Form Open Evening and Insights Evening. All events had been revised to take account of Covid measures. The School confirmed that the recent spike in Covid cases were not linked to the in-school events. The Year 9 options and Year 11 to 12 transition were underway. Governor Sarah de Souza-Ingle was thanked for her professional assistance in the Sixth Form recruitment process. There had been an increase in external Year 12 applications to 214 from 174 last year. Staff recruitment continued due to the increasing size of the School and larger pools of good calibre candidates were reported. The School was re-engaging with Fair Access work, which had been paused due to the Covid pandemic, including in-school enrichment days for primary students and CCHS student visits out to local primary schools. Investigations were being made into ways of going out to local communities to build stronger relationships.

Recent in-person extracurricular activities included the School Production, Dance Show and Spring Concerts, and student visits out of school had now restarted. The Chair thanked the Headteacher, SLT and all the staff for their ongoing efforts to return to more normal schooling.

15. Governors challenged the downward trend in the 2016-2019 SEN and Disadvantaged KS4 P8 data figures and the issue was discussed. CCHS students were achieving above the national average and the issue was not deemed a major concern as it related to a very small number of students and the data was historic. It was confirmed that the School could fully explain the situations behind each student and the interventions undertaken to assist them should this issue be raised by Ofsted. Further information was requested on the purpose of the student progress meetings, additional details were received and it was confirmed that the meetings looked at both the areas that required intervention as well as the impact that any interventions made.

ITEM 8 – SSEF, CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT & FINANCIAL UPDATE

16. The Business Manager advised that the DfE had recently visited the School to view the SSEF project and had been very impressed with what had been delivered. It was believed that the School had met all the DfE's close-out audit checklist. The final accounts for the project had not yet been formally closed as some items remained under discussion with the contractor. The reasons for the financial gap was due to project variations affecting the cost and the impact of material and labour cost increases due to the Covid pandemic. The next capital development project was the refurbishment of the Dining Hall at a cost of around £180,000 which was to be funded by Chartwells Catering. The work was to take place during Easter and should result in faster throughput with only a minimal loss of seating space. The Chair thanked the Business Manager, Site Team and other School staff for the very smooth rollout of the SSEF project. The large amount of additional work required by the project was noted. A naming ceremony for the SSEF buildings had taken place that week and the reason for the small event was explained, it was hoped that a larger event would be organised for the Summer Term.

17. **Decision.** The School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist submitted on 3rd March 2022, which evidenced appropriate controls and governance in place, was received and **approved**.

18. **'My Tutor' Contract.** The meeting was informed that the School had signed a £12,500 contract with the 'My Tutor' external tuition provider and details of the contract and the four funding streams being used to cover expenditure was received in a written report. The size of contract would normally require Governor approval however there had been a need to proceed quickly with the contract and the provision was governed by a strict Government framework. All the tuition providers had been previously approved by the Government. It was reported that MyTutor had been used by other SSGS schools. Governors discussed the funding and how it was to be used. It was confirmed that the School Led Tuition Grant and the 16-19 Tuition Fund had to be spent within this academic year. The meeting noted the reasons for not obtaining prior Governor approval for the size of the contract, **ratified** the approval action and **approved** the actions taken by the School.

ITEM 9 – AUDIT ACTIONS

19. The second Juniper Internal Scrutiny Report for 2021-22 dated March 2022 was received and discussed. The Business Manager advised that, thanks to the excellent work of the School's Finance Team, there were only two very minor findings from the audit. The findings were summarised and the meeting was advised that it was the intention of the School to push back on the second finding which stated that it was good practice for staff Mileage & Subsistence claims to be reimbursed through payroll rather than the School's system of direct repayment via BACS – as agreed in the CCHS Financial Regulations. The rationale for disagreeing with the finding was explained and discussed. Governors **agreed** that the School could continue paying Mileage & Subsistence claims via BACS and challenged the audit finding.

M Mulgrew

20. A second Juniper Cyber Security audit had also taken place but the formal report had not yet been received. The Business Manager reported that the audit had been useful and had raised nothing of concern but that there was still more that could be done to enhance the current cyber

security. It had been suggested that the Governing Body should have a Cyber Security Link Governor. The meeting was advised that recent ransomware attacks had been deleting IT system backups which would be a major problem, this was now being investigated by the School. It was noted that ransomware attacks were generally uninsurable nowadays.

ITEM 10 – GDPR

21. The Business Manager stated that there was nothing material to report on GDPR issues. There had been a few Freedom of Information requests relating to the School's waiting list, entrance examination scores, exclusions and managed moves. There was nothing to report from a GDPR perspective.

ITEM 11 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021-22

22. The Mid Term Review of the School Development Plan dated February 2022 was received and noted. The Headteacher advised that it had been possible to complete more items than had been done in the previous year and was happy with the progress made to date. It was reported that SLT were now working on the new 2022-26 Strategic Plan which would come to Governors in due course. It was suggested that a red-yellow-green progress colour coding would be useful for Governors. A query was raised whether there would be any red items, and it was suggested that there would be some amber items but no red items at the present time. Concern was raised about the number of PPG Year 7 entrants in relation to the SSEF-quoted targets and the issue was discussed. It was confirmed that PPG factors were not formally looked at for Sixth Form entry.

ITEM 12 – RISK REGISTER

23. **Decision**. The Full CCHS Risk Register was received and **approved** as presented.

ITEM 13 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – VISITS & TRIPS

24. A list of residential and overseas trips for 2021-22 and 2022-23 was received for approval. There were currently only two future residential Geography trips planned. The curtailment of language trips was noted, these were deemed very beneficial for students. It was noted that there were still major issues relating to Covid for both the cost of trip insurance and vaccination status.

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

ITEM 14 – CCHS TERM DATES 2023-24

26. **Decision**. The proposed term dates for academic year 2023-24 were received and **approved**.

ITEM 15 – GOVERNOR REPORTS

27. **Item 15.1 – Governor Visits - Decision**. No curriculum-based Governor visits had taken place since the last meeting; however, Link Governors had had contact with their associated School staff members and several Governors had attended extracurricular events at the School. The Chair stated that normal in-person visits should now be possible, and the Headteacher stressed the importance of Governor visits in relation to Ofsted inspections. Governors **agreed** to send available visit dates to the Clerk as soon as possible.

28. **Item 15.2 – Governor Training - Decision**. Lauren Smith, Training Link Governor, summarised that training undertaken by Governors since the last meeting. The cost of the current Juniper training package had been investigated against other options and it was suggested that changing to a Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) package plus the NGA online 'Learning Link' training package would be better value for money. The training issue was discussed and it was **agreed** that the Clerk would change from the Juniper full annual training package to the PAYG option plus the NGA Learning Link.

All**Clerk**

29. Item 15.3 – Safeguarding. Jenny Fowle, Safeguarding Governor, gave a summary of the current safeguarding situation. There had been two social care referrals and 14 students were on safety plans. There was an increase in pastoral issues within the School, including: attendance issues, anxiety and facial ticks, all were deemed to be Covid-related. The new Pastoral Hub was now being used a lot by students and the work of the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) and her pastoral team was highly commended. The level of support for the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) was currently deemed sufficient but it was noted that there would be a need for increased pastoral provision as the School grew in size.

30. Item 15.4 – Parents’ Association Matters. The Headteacher reported that the PA had a very dedicated and active committee and that they were now re-starting their in-school fund-raising activities. A PA Open Evening had not been well-attended, possibly due to Covid still, and it was reported that PAs in girls’ schools often struggled for parental support. The work of the PA Chair, Catherine Carby, was praised.

31. Item 15.5 – Better Buildings Committee. Jason Oster, Link Governor to the Better Building Committee, reminded the meeting that fund-raising had stopped during the Covid pandemic and that people’s finances had worsened due to the current cost-of-living situation. Fund-raising was now to follow two strands: applying for specific grants and starting a new fund-raising drive for one specific project which would benefit the whole School community, this was to be the swimming pool. A further update would be received at the next meeting. The Chair thanked the ongoing work of Jason Oster and the Business Manager, Melissa Mulgrew.

ITEM 16 – GB SUB-COMMITTEES

32. The minutes of the following GB sub-committee meetings were **approved** as presented:

- a. Management Committee – 3rd December 2021 & 4th March 2022.
- b. Facilities & Finance Committee – 17th October 2021 & 11th February 2022.
- c. Curriculum Committee – 20th October 2021 & 19th January 2022.
- d. Staff & Student Matters Committee – 30th November 2022.

No further input was received from the sub-committee chairs.

ITEM 17 – SENIOR SPEECH DAY

33. The Clerk summarised the administrative details for the Senior Speech Day event to be held in Chelmsford Cathedral on 20th April 2022. It was confirmed that the Guest Speaker was to be Bridget Kendall, ex-BBC correspondent and Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge.

ITEM 18 – BEHAVIOUR POLICY

34. **Decision**. With the recommendation of the Staff & student Matters Committee and with only minor terminology revisions, the Behaviour Policy was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 19 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

35. No other matters were raised.

ITEM 20 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

36. **Decision**. It was **agreed** that the next Full Governing Body meeting would be held in the School at 8.00am on Friday 8th July 2022.

All

The meeting closed at 10.05am.

S Miles, Chair of Governors 8th July 2022