

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Trustees held in the School and remotely via Microsoft Teams at 8.15am on Friday 22nd March 2024

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| Trustees Present: | Steve Miles Svetlana Warhurst Stephen Lawlor | Chair of Trustees Vice Chair of Trustees Headteacher |
| : | Andrew Bonwick (T), Richard Brown, Margaret Cousins, Sarah De Souza-Ingle (T), Niamh Dobson, Melanie Gulliver, Jason Oster (T), Priya Rangaswamy, Aisha Sohail, Manish Unhale (T) | |
| In Attendance: | Victoria Brignell Richard Vass Jo Cross Fiona Harrison Melissa Mulgrew Wendy Newton | Member (T) (until 8.55am) Member (from 8.30am) Deputy Headteacher (Academic) Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) Business Manager Clerk to Trustees |
| Apologies: | Funmi Osilaja, Mary Argent | |

(T) = Attendance via Teams

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Funmi Osilaja and Mary Argent.

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 2023-24, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality reported.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2023 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

4. Item 9.3, Para 18 – Whistleblowing Policy - Decision. Two reference changes were required in the Whistleblowing Policy which had been approved at the last meeting. As the changes were not material, it was **agreed** that the Clerk could revise the policy without presentation.
5. Item 19.1, Para 29 – Trustee Role. The concept of trusteeship for Catherine Carby, former Chair of the CCHS PA, had not been pursued as she was now working out of the country for eight months and would not be available. No further action was to be taken at this point.
6. Item 19.3, Para 31 – Safeguarding - Decision. The Trustee Conference, where annual safeguarding training was received, had been postponed from January 2024 to June 2024, and the urgent need for Trustees and Members to undertake the NGA online safeguarding training course was stressed. The Clerk **agreed** to send out an email reminder of the training and Trustees were requested to **send** their certificates of completion to the Clerk.

8.30am – Richard Vass, Member, joined the meeting following unavoidable delay by traffic.

ITEM 5 – CHAIRS' ACTION & EMAIL ACTION

7. Item 5.1 – Chairs' Action. A list of all Chairs' actions taken since the last meeting was received. The requirement for each action was explained and noted by the Board.
8. Item 5.2 – DfE & ESFA Letters. No ESFA or DfE letters requiring Trustees' attention had been sent to the School since the last meeting.

ACTION

Clerk

Clerk
All

9. Item 5.3 – School Management Accounts. Trustees confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts for September to November 2023 and had noted the content.

ITEM 6 – ACADEMY TRUST MATTERS

10. Item 6.1 – Academy Structure. The change of Academy Trust structure had come into effect on 1st January 2024 and the Chair summarised the new structure and the responsibilities of Members and Trustees. The high-level, independent oversight undertaken by the Members was stressed. It was noted that there would be very little change at Board and sub-committee level.

11. Item 6.2 – Academy Board Membership. Academy Trust membership, which now included Members, was reviewed. It was noted that Margaret Cousins, a former staff member, had become a Trustee on 1st February 2024 and had joined the Facilities & Finance Committee. There were three vacant Trustee positions which were currently under consideration by the Management Committee and SLT. It was hoped that these positions could be filled by external people with specialist knowledge that could assist the Board and the School.

12. Item 6.3 – Link Trustee Roles. A number of new link trustee roles had been recommended by DfE in recent months: Sustainability, Wellbeing & Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. In addition, the Board was needing to refill the Careers and the Health & Safety Link Trustee roles. The Clerk reported that a number of Trustees had volunteered for the roles. The Chair advised that the Management Committee was waiting to see if the Trust could find people with specialist knowledge to fill the three Trustee vacancies before formally allocating the link roles. This issue would hopefully be finalised before the end of the Summer Term.

ITEM 7 – ACADEMY TRUST GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS

13. Item 7.1 – Members’ Terms of Reference. Terms of reference had been produced for the new Member role and had recently been reviewed and approved by the Members. The document outlined the Members’ roles and duties and were noted by the Board. These duties had formerly been undertaken by the Management Committee under the previous Articles of Association.

14. Item 7.2 – Academy Standing Orders - Decision. The Academy Trust Standing Orders had been revised to reflect the new changes in Trust terminology and were **approved** as presented.

15. Item 7.3 – Academy Scheme of Delegation. The Academy Trust Scheme of Delegation had been revised to include a new level for Members. There had also been some revision following suggestions made during the Ofsted inspection. A reference to the term ‘Governor’ was noticed in the document and the Clerk **agreed** to re-check the document for any other instances. With that check, the Academy Trust Scheme of Delegation was **approved** as presented.

Clerk

ITEM 8 – HEADTEACHER’S REPORT

16. The Headteacher commenced by referring to the CCHS Achievement Strategy and stating that the document shaped the School’s work post-pandemic. The document covers pastoral actions as well as specific academic actions for student’s requiring additional support. It was reported that the Easter revision school started last year was to be undertaken again this year and that the programme had been expanded. Trustee questions on the report were then received. It was confirmed that applications to the Sixth Form in September 2024 from external students was much higher than last year with 375 to date; against 243 on results day in 2023. Of the current external applications, 205 had opted for the 4 A level pathway and 170 had opted for 3 A levels. It was stated that more of the internal Year 11 applications would opt for the 4 A level pathway. A query was raised on the data for Year 7 entry in September 2024 and it was confirmed that there had been a drop in successful candidates from independent schools and a very positive trend towards successful candidates from state primary schools. It was also reported that the 2024 Year 7 entry included 18 PPG candidates, 10% of the cohort. Additional details were received on the work undertaken with local primary schools to attract more PPG students. The Board commended the admissions team and staff more widely on the work undertaken to increase the number of PPG students applying and taking the entrance test. The breakdown of students from within and from

outside the catchment area was raised and it was confirmed that the Admissions' Policy ratio remained the same with 80%/20% respectively. The issue of a student's home address in relation to participation in extracurricular activities was queried. It was confirmed that distance could affect participation in extracurricular activities after school, primarily sport, but that many clubs and societies were held during lunchtime to address this issue.

8.55am – Victoria Brignell, Member, left the meeting for work reasons and thanked the Board for her attendance.

17. Trustees queried the recent Enrichment Day activities. It was reported that the School had returned to the pre-pandemic model of three Enrichment Days per year. Each year group undertook a separate activity mainly on-site, examples of which were received. Year 11 had undertaken a Maths Masterclass at Anglia Ruskin University receiving lecture-style presentations to support their GCSEs before returning to CCHS for work on individual areas of Maths development. It had been a very positive day and had been well-received by the students. Discussions returned to Year 7 admissions; there had been 669 applications (55%) from candidates living outside the priority area against 549 (45%) from within it, and Trustees queried if this was unusually high. It was confirmed that it was not, there was a lot of pressure on obtaining a place at CCHS, sometimes resulting in fraudulent applications from families living outside the priority area. The issue of having a priority area in relation to getting more disadvantaged students into the School was discussed. It was confirmed that once the initial 80% priority places had been allocated, the remaining 20% would always end up being offered to students living outside the priority area. A Trustee requested clarification on a slight drop in the 2023 KS4 Attainment 8 (A8) figure (82.4) from the previous year. The Headteacher explained that in AY2021-22 there had been modified public examinations when certain things had been removed from the examination syllabus, and this was why the A8 figure had been higher. The most recent examinations of AY2022-23 had been unmodified in England and therefore more comparable to pre-Covid results. The KS4 Progress 8 figure of the past five years was consistent and highly impressive (+0.9 in 2023). The Board commended the excellent scores.

ITEM 9 – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT, FINANCIAL & AUDIT MATTERS

18. The 2024 DfE School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist was received and explained for new Trustees. The document is a check that the Academy was undertaking its due diligence and governance correctly. There was only one adverse issue which related to the AGM not being held within the last 12 months. This had been due to the cancelled Trustee Conference and AGM in January 2024. The AGM had been re-scheduled for today's date which was within the 15 months permissible by both the Trust's DfE-model Articles of Association and Companies House. The Business Manager also reported that the School did not use the DfE-approved frameworks as they tended either not to be available or not value for money, and the School undertook its own comparisons with directly sourced suppliers.

19. **Decision.** The School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist 2024 was **approved** as presented for upload to the DfE by the Business Manager.

M Mulgrew

20. Juniper Education had undertaken an internal controls evaluation of the School's banking processes in February 2024 and their Internal Scrutiny Report was received for information. It was reported that the School's systems were so clean that the auditors chose not to visit the school in person as they could assess everything from the documentation sent to them electronically by the School. There were no findings in the audit report. As the auditor was known to be very rigorous and thorough, the clean report was deemed to be a testament to the Senior Finance Officer and her financial team who were to be congratulated for their continuing excellent work. The second element of this year's internal controls would cover HR policies and was yet to be scheduled.

ITEM 10 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

21. The Mid-Term Review of the School Development Plan 2023-24 was received for information and the February update comments noted. The Headteacher reminded the Board that the document was framed around the language of the mission of the School. Trustees commended the thoroughness of the document, the development within the areas listed and noted that several actions had already been completed.

ITEM 11 – GDPR

ACTION

22. The Business Manager advised that there had been one minor GDPR breach since the last meeting but that it had had no adverse impact on the School. There had only been one Freedom of Information request received following the recent Year 7 Offer Day, far less than expected. There was nothing else to report. The School's annual ECC GDPR audit was due to take place straight after the start Easter break. The Chair queried the number of cyber-attacks and was informed that the School's IT system was subjected to hundreds of unsuccessful cyber-attacks every day. Preventative procedures, including the use of multi-factor authentication and App Locker, were in place to address cyber-attacks. Additional steps were being put in place to reduce risks further, these included a plan to move things to the cloud to reduce dependency on physical servers. It was stated that being a single academy trust it was easier to secure IT systems. The Business Manager advised that staff were very diligent about phishing attacks and that user logs were checked regularly to ensure that log ins were legitimate.

ITEM 12 – RISK REGISTER

23. The full CCHS Risk Register was received for annual approval. A new section had been produced to cover Members' risks. Members had recently agreed to review the document against their own areas of responsibility. The Board reviewed the document and the new separation of duties. The Clerk advised that there were a few risks which fell under both the Members and the Board's responsibility. A query was raised on Risk MB5/M5 concerning the capacity of the Sixth Form in relation to the increase in the Main School cohort size. The issue was discussed and explained. It was confirmed that when the time came there would be capacity for all 180 Year 11 students to enter the Sixth Form, subject to them attaining the required grades. The Headteacher stated that the Sixth Form was always oversubscribed but the issue of non-attendance on the first day of the Autumn Term or moving schools in the first few weeks was a very significant problem.

24. **Decision.** The CCHS Risk Register was **approved** as presented and would be passed to the Members for additional review and approval.

ITEM 13 – POLICIES

25. **Decision.** An updated CCHS Freedom of Information Publication Scheme was reviewed and **approved** as presented.

ITEM 14 – TRUSTEE REPORTS

26. **Item 14.1 – Trustee Visits.** Four Trustees - Andrew Bonwick, Funmi Osilaja, Sarah de Souza-Ingle and Svetlana Warhurst - had made formal visits to the School since the last meeting. Written Trustee Visit Reports had been received by the Board and each Trustee gave a verbal report summarising their visit. School staff were thanked for arranging the visits. The Chair stressed the need for all Trustees to undertake formal visits. A new roster had been produced by the Clerk and Trustees would be approached as and when necessary.

27. **Item 14.2 – Trustee Training.** The Clerk advised that very limited training had been undertaken in recent months. Trustees were encouraged to undertake the online training modules available through The Key and the NGA Learning Link and to send the Clerk any certificates of completion.

28. **Item 14.3 – Safeguarding.** Aisha Sohail, Safeguarding Link Trustee, advised that she had met with the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) a few weeks previously, and reported that the number and severity of cases was increasing. The Safeguarding Team were working well and all resources were in place. Trustees queried whether the situation was getting worse due to awareness, it was suggested that it was a more societal thing and that external services could not cope, pushing issues back onto the School. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) gave information on the current system and summarised actions taken by the School. The meeting discussed the general situation and the whole Safeguarding Team was thanked for their work.

All

29. Item 14.4 – SEND. Svetlana Warhurst, the SEND Link Trustee, presented meeting notes from her visit with the SENCO on 2nd February 2024 and summarised the main issues. There were now 47 students on the SEN Register, including 3 students with an EHCP, and 65 students had Normal Ways of Working arrangements in place. The new SENDCo was congratulated for her input during the Ofsted visit in January and thanked for her ongoing SEND work.

30. Item 14.5 – Parents' Association (PA) Matters. The Business Manager reported that the PA continued to do amazing work and details of what their fundraising activity had financed were summarised. An Interim Chair was now in place as the previous Chair had stood down due to work commitments. New members were beginning to join the Committee which was appreciated.

31. Item 14.6 – Building a Future for our Community Committee (BFCC). Jason Oster, Chair of the BFCC, advised that due to Christmas, the Ofsted inspection and a recent switch in concept for the swimming pool project, progress had been slow. A new plan had recently been agreed to re-invigorate fundraising including going back out to parents, targeting CCHS Alumnae and approaching local businesses for financial support. The Business Manager advised that following a change in project concept from replacing the old swimming pool boilers to looking at more sustainable greener solutions, companies had visited the School to assess the situation. The concept change had temporarily paused the fundraising programme until a final plan and associated costs were known. It was possible that a grant may be available from the Government's Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund which was due to re-open for bids shortly. The meeting was advised that the swimming pool complex was just about managing on a daily basis.

ITEM 15 – ACADEMY BOARD SUB-COMMITTEES

32. **Decision**. The minutes of the following Academy Board sub-committee meetings were received and **approved** as presented:

- a. The Curriculum Committee meetings held on 1st November 2023 & 28th February 2024,
- b. The Facilities & Finance Committee meetings held on 15th November 2023 & 7th February 2024,
- c. The Staff & Student Matters Committee meeting held on 22nd November 2023, and
- d. The Management Committee meeting held on 4th December 2023 & 13th March 2024.

ITEM 16 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – RESIDENTIAL VISITS & OVERSEAS TRIPS

33. An updated list of residential and overseas trips for 2023-24 and 2024-25 was presented for approval. Due to the high cost of the proposed trip to Mexico in 2025, the Chair of Trustees had requested additional information and a detailed report had been received. The meeting was advised that a bid had been submitted with the Turing Scheme to support financing the trip. If successful, the cost of the trip would be greatly reduced and may also allow additional students to participate. Trustees questioned whether PPG help was available but as the trip was for Year 12 students this was not possible. It was reported that 5 SEN and 2 Disadvantaged students were amongst the students who were confirmed for the trip. The Board was also advised that curriculum-related trips would always be funded by the School.

34. **Decision**. The list of residential and overseas trips for 2023-24 and 2024-25 was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 17 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

35. Item 17.1 – Senior Speech Day. The Senior Speech Day event was taking place at Chelmsford Cathedral on Wednesday 17th April 2024. Trustees were advised of administrative details relating to the event.

ITEM 18 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

36. School Email Addresses. The Clerk advised that the School would be introducing the use of School email addresses for Members and Trustees in the very near future. Further details would be sent out in due course.

ITEM 19 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

37. **Decision**. It was **agreed** that the next Board of Trustees meeting would be held at 8.00am on Friday 5th July 2024. It was highlighted that the postponed Academy Board Conference was now taking place on Saturday 8th June 2024.

All

The meeting closed at 10.00am.

Steve Miles, Chair of Trustees

5th July 2024

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