

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE held at the School and via Teams at 8.00am on Friday 27th September 2024

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------|---|
| Present: | Steve Miles | Chair of Trustees (T) |
| | Svetlana Warhurst | Vice Chair of Trustees |
| | Sarah de Souza-Ingle | Chair of Staff & Student Matters Committee |
| | Stephen Lawlor | Headteacher |
| | Andrew Bonwick | Chair of Curriculum Committee |
| | Richard Brown | Chair of Facilities & Finance Committee (T) |
| In Attendance: | Jo Cross | Deputy Headteacher (Academic) |
| | Fiona Harrison | Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) |
| | Melissa Mulgrew | Business Manager |
| | Wendy Newton | Clerk to Trustees |

(T = via Teams)

1. Having joined the meeting, technical difficulties prevented the Chair and Richard Brown from participating during the first seven items. During the absence of the Chair, Svetlana Warhurst, Vice Chair of Trustees, chaired the meeting.

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. There were no apologies for absence, all committee members were present. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advised that she must leave the meeting at 9.10am in order to teach.

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 2024-25, or conflicts of interest or receipts of gifts or hospitality reported.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2024 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

5. Item 6, Para 10a, 10b & 10c – Financial Update. The Business Manager confirmed that: the School insurance had been renewed, the closure of the Old Girls' bank account would be completed this term, and that the School's old ride-on lawn mower had now been sold and would be removed from the School's Fixed Asset Register.

ITEM 5 – CHAIR'S ACTION

6. A summary of chairs' actions taken since the last Academy Board meeting held on 5th July 2024 was reviewed and the actions noted.

ITEM 6 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

7. The terms of reference for the Management Committee were received for annual review and **approved** as presented.

ITEM 8 – NEW YEAR 7 PARENTS' WELCOME EVENING (Item taken out of order)

8. The New Year 7 Parents' Welcome Evening had taken place the previous evening and the Headteacher summarised details of the event. The event had been well-attended and very well-received by the parents. Other recent School events had included the Year 8 and Year 12 Meet the Tutor Evenings.

ACTION

ITEM 6 – FINANCIAL & CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

9. The School's Financial Management Reports to July 2024 had been received by all Trustees and the end of year balance was trending towards break even. The Finance Team was now working on the end-of-year accounts. The Business Manager advised that following the confirmation of core budget grant funding for 2024-25, the ESFA had requested all schools to re-forecast their 2024-25 budget in August. The updated 3-year budget report for 2024-2027 was received and discussed. The re-forecasting had resulted in a small negative variation of £3000 from the original budget and an end-of-year In Year deficit of £(182,990) was predicted. The Committee noted the variation and **approved** the new budget. The Business Manager advised that details of the 16-19 funding were due in October and further budget adjustments were likely.

10. Trustees raised questions on the budget and the actions planned to balance the budget from 2025-26 onwards. It was confirmed that Core Maths was now running in Year 12 with x13 students in its first year. This was lower numbers than hoped but it was stressed that the pool of students available to take Core Maths was quite small as many Sixth Form students already chose to study A level Mathematics. The uptake was likely to increase in future years. It was also confirmed that the Pupil Teacher Ratio KPI had been based on a Year 12 entry of 165 students. The Business Manager advised that SLT planned to re-visit the possible actions identified to balance the budget from 2025 onwards in light of the increased Sixth Form numbers to ascertain if they were still required. It was noted that the budget figures for future years would now change because of higher student numbers. The Headteacher stressed that the actions planned to reduce expenditure were not purely based on financial drivers but also had sound curriculum reasons. Benchmarking had taken place with similar schools. The Committee received additional clarification on the use of the TLR3 allowance for teachers.

11. The Business Manager proposed the continued use of the Juniper Education Internal Scrutiny Service for 2024-25 and the available audit options were presented for consideration. It was suggested that the best two audit options were the Register of Business Interests audit (Financial) and the Statutory Information, Policies & Website audit (Non-financial). There had been no complaints with the Juniper Education audit service. The Committee **approved** the continued use of Juniper Education and the two audit options recommended by the Business Manager.

12. The Business Manager advised that the project to have full LED lighting in the School was almost complete, this project was part of the School's de-carbonisation strategy. A funded route, with a small annual fee but no capital requirement, had been chosen for the lighting project but would be cost neutral overall. Since February 2024 fluorescent lighting was no longer available to buy. The current CIF project to replace the windows in the Art Block had become very challenging as unexpected areas of asbestos had been found during window removal. This had triggered a significant increase in the projected cost and a delayed end time. Details of the issue were received, and it was confirmed that all asbestos had now been removed from the project area. The Business Manager advised that there was a possible increase in the project cost of £70,000 although areas of possible challenge on sub-contractors costs were now being investigated. A CIF Scope Change Request was to be sent to the DfE alongside a new Campus Estate Strategy and an associated Urgent Capital Support Request to see if any additional grant money could be obtained. An appeal had been put in against the rejection of a second CIF bid for boiler replacement about 5 months ago, but nothing had been heard to date, possibly due to the change of Government.

13. The Business Manager advised that information was to be submitted to the DfE that day to highlight the significant increase in project costs, stressing the fact that the project could not be stopped. In the anticipated worst-case scenario, the School would be required to fund an additional £70,000 if no additional funds were forthcoming from DfE through the Scope Change Request. The School's minimum contribution to the project had previously been agreed as 30%, totalling £74,000. The new estimated end cost of the project could increase this figure to be up to £91,000, therefore an additional amount of slightly less than £20,000 may have to be funded by the School if the DfE is willing to accept the scope change, otherwise School will be liable for the full incremental cost. This was the worst case, and it was hoped that the School could remain at its original commitment. It

was confirmed that the window replacement project would be finished by the end of the Autumn Term half term. The Business Manager **agreed** to keep the Committee informed of all progress relating to this issue.

ITEM 9 – PUBLIC EXAMINATION REVIEW 2024

14. The Headteacher advised that the CCHS Achievement Strategy had been revised to reflect the current academic year and identified the school positions of each year group when Covid started in March 2022. The current Year 13 students had been in Year 7 at the start of the pandemic and the current Year 7 had been in Year 2. CCHS received students from over 70 different primary schools, therefore the students had had varied educational provision during Covid. CCHS had inherited the learning deficits from this period. The Achievement Strategy identified what could be done, pastorally and educationally, outside the normal academic provision, for students to attain their full potential. Different examples of this provision were highlighted.

15. The Public Examinations Review 2024 and summaries of A level and GCSE grade breakdowns were received. The Headteacher stressed that headline figures were very good with 84.64% A*-B at A level and 85.48% Grade 7-9 at GCSE. Comparison data from similar schools was noted and discussed. Trustees raised questions on specific results which were answered by the Headteacher. It was reported that not all schools published their examination results which made direct comparison with more difficult. The difference in the data between the TA2 predictions and actual examination results was queried as figures varied over past years, and additional explanation was received from the Deputy Headteacher (Academic). The effect of small cohorts and subjective marking was noted. It was reported that the School's Department Self-Evaluation (DSEF) process looked at all the examination results and any anomalies from TA figures in particular.

9.05am – The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) left the meeting to teach.

16. There was further discussion on specific subject results and information was received on examination board re-marking variances, one of which had resulted in a result going up by two grades. The results of A level Chemistry were questioned, and it was confirmed that there was still an issue with this particular subject. The matter had been addressed over recent years and the continuing fall in their results was very disappointing. Stringent action was to be taken, and a Department Improvement Plan was to be put in place. New staff had recently been appointed who it was hoped would improve the situation. Trustees noted the importance of having good results in A level Chemistry in relation to university entrance criteria. A query was also raised on the variation between TA2 data and actual results for SEND students and additional explanation was received from the Deputy Headteacher (Academic); it was stated that individual circumstances had a big effect on outcomes for this very small cohort of students.

ITEM 10 – YEAR 12 ADMISSIONS (Initially discussed within Item 9)

17. A Year 12 Admissions summary was received; 31 students had left CCHS at the end of Year 11, 22 had chosen to leave and 9 had not achieved the Sixth Form entry criteria. This was a reduction from 39 in 2023. The Headteacher highlighted the extensive work undertaken by the Deputy Headteacher (Academic) in publicising the benefits of the CCHS Sixth Form to both Year 11 CCHS students and to external students. It was noted that the new A Level Pathways had had a very positive effect on the number of external applicants this year, double that of previous years. Trustees queried the academic levels of the new students. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) advised that the Sixth Form average grade entry criteria was 6.625 and the score of the lowest new student had been 7.5, which is higher than the lowest of our returning students. The Headteacher noted that the Average Point Score for the new students was 7.9 and 8.1 for returning Year 11 CCHS students, a negligible difference.

18. The School had set 165 as a target figure for Year 12 students in September 2024 and it was reported that Year 12 had 191 students at the start of term and had now settled at 187 students. All previous Year 11 students had turned up on the first day of term, possibly aided by the introduction of a new Year 12 enrolment day the previous week. It was suggested that the message that the CCHS Sixth Form was the best place to be for CCHS girls was now beginning to filter down the

School. It was confirmed that no SEND or PPG students had left the School after Year 11 as part of the appeal process. Sixty-seven new students had joined Year 12 from 36 different secondary schools. The Headteacher highlighted the fact that students came from a wide range of schools with small numbers from each, thus reducing the impact on their former schools. The number of students moving from single sex schools was noted.

ITEM 11 – STAFF PAY INCREASES & PAY POLICY 2024

19. The proposed CCHS Leadership and Teachers Pay Scales for September 2024 were presented for approval in principle. The Teachers' Pay Review Board had recommended a 5.5% increase to all leadership and teacher spine points and TLRs. The pay award had yet to be put before Parliament and the pay award would be passed on to CCHS teaching staff as soon as possible after formal Government approval. The Business Manager confirmed that Government funding would not cover the full cost of the staff pay increase, 3% had been assumed in the budget figures. The remaining 2.5% was funded on a per capita basis by student which did not cover the increased costs due to the high numbers of UPS3 teachers. The Headteacher advised that the largest teaching union, the NEU, had recommended the pay award to their membership and therefore no industrial action was expected from teaching staff this year. The Clerk advised that there had been no progress on the Support Staff pay award due in April 2024. The Juniper Education model CCHS Pay Policy 2024 had been revised to reflect the expected pay scale changes and was presented for approval in principle, it would not be adopted until formal Government approval of the pay scales was received. It was highlighted that all references to performance-related pay had been removed. It was confirmed to Trustees that teachers would naturally move through the pay scales and that there was still a robust performance review process within the School.

20. **Decisions**.

- a. The Committee **approved in principle** the CCHS Teachers and Leadership Pay Scales for September 2024 as presented and **agreed** that the School could implement and backdate the pay award to 1st September 2024 once formal Government approval was received in the form of the School Teachers Pay & Conditions Document (STPCD) 2024. Back pay would then be processed by the School in the first available pay run.
- b. The CCHS Pay Policy for September 2024 was **approved in principle** as presented, subject to publication of the STPCD 2024.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 12 – ACADEMY BOARD MATTERS

21. **Item 12.1 – Academy Board Meeting Agenda - Decision**. The proposed agenda for the Academy Board meeting on Friday 18th October 2024 was reviewed and **approved** as presented. The Clerk informed the meeting that she had been given authorised absence from School from mid-October to mid-November. She would therefore not be at the next Academy Board meeting but alternative clerking provision had been arranged. The Clerk suggested that specific items on the agenda could be distributed to Trustees early for electronic approval in advance of the Board meeting in order to simplify the meeting process. The concept was discussed and **approved**.

Clerk

22. **Item 12.2 - Academy Board & Sub-Committee Membership**. Details of the terms of office and committee membership of the Trust Board as at 16th September 2024 were reviewed. The Clerk advised that the CCHS Academy Trust Members had met the previous week and had appointed Svetlana Warhurst and Priya Rangaswamy as Trustees (from their current role as Parent Trustees) with a new 4-year term of office. This would leave two vacant Parent Trustee positions which would be filled by a Parent Trustee election later in the Autumn Term. There were also two vacant Trustee positions. As tasked at the last meeting, the Clerk advised that contact had been made with Mr Adam Wood, a prospective new Trustee. He had been receptive to the idea of becoming a Trustee but his formal acceptance had not yet been received. It was stated that the Company Members had received details about Mr Wood and had agreed in principle to his appointment subject to his formal acceptance. It was noted that the role of Health & Safety Link Trustee remained vacant and that the Parent Trustee election could be used to find someone with experience in this field.

ITEM 13 – POLICIES

20. **Item 13.1 – GDPR Policies - Decision.** Six GDPR policies were presented for re-approval as follows: (1) Acceptable Use Policy, (2) Data Breach Policy, (3) Non-Disclosure Agreement, (4) Records Management Policy, (5) SIRO Role Profile and (6) Statutory Requests for Information Policy. The Business Manager confirmed they were all ECC IGS-model policies with no material changes. All the policies were **approved** with a 2-year review.

21. **Item 13.2 – GDPR Policies - Decision.** The ECC IGS-model Information Governance Strategy was presented for re-approval with no material changes. A new ECC IGS Generative Artificial Intelligence Policy was also presented for initial review and its content discussed. The Headteacher reported that there was a teacher focus group currently working on AI which was currently liaising with other schools on this issue. Both policies were **approved** with a 1-year review.

22. **Item 13.3 – Whistleblowing Policy - Decision.** The Juniper-model Whistleblowing Policy was presented for annual review with one revision and **approved** for presentation to the Academy Board for formal approval in October.

23. **Item 13.4 – School Admissions Policy 2026- Decision.** The School Admissions Policy for entry in September 2026 was presented for annual review with date-related revisions and **approved** for presentation to the Academy Board for formal approval in October.

ITEM 14 - SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

24. The School Development Plan (SDP) 2024-25 was received for information and noted.

ITEM 15 – GDPR

25. The Business Manager advised there was nothing major to report. Freedom of Information requests relating to the Year 7 Entrance Test were expected likely this term, and there had been no data breaches or Subject Access Requests this term.

ITEM 16 – RISK REGISTER

26. **Decision.** The Management Committee section of the CCHS Risk Register was reviewed and **approved** as presented. A query was raised on the proposed Government change to the National Curriculum and further details were received from the Headteacher. It was suggested that changes were not likely to cause any problem to CCHS.

ITEM 17 – PARENTAL FEEDBACK

27. The Headteacher reminded the meeting that any compliments received by the School were placed (anonymised) onto the School website. Positive feedback had been received by staff members at the recent Year 8 and Year 12 Meet the Tutor Evenings and the New Year 7 Parents' Welcome Evening. It was reported that there was one ongoing issue with a parent who had arrived late for the Year 7 Entrance Test and that the situation may escalate further. CCHS and KEGS had received a formal joint complaint from the residents from Swiss Avenue concerning the behaviour of parents parking inappropriately at the start and end of the school day and on entrance test days. The School had great sympathy for the situation and there was a regular item in the School weekly newsletter concerning the issue. The Headteacher and Business Manager had met with two representatives of the group and had a very productive discussion. A number of strategies had been produced by the School to address the problem and there were to be regular meetings with the group from Swiss Avenue. It was suggested that a challenging situation had turned out to be quite positive overall.

28. The Headteacher advised that the School continued to challenge parents over unauthorised school absences and put forward recommendations to ECC to fine such parents. Seventeen recommendations had been put forward to ECC in 2023-24 for parents who had breached good

practice in relation to attendance. Issues related to in-term holidays and erroneous claims of family emergencies. One penalty notice had already been issued in the first four weeks of term. Trustees discussed the situation, and it was reported that the Government had increased penalty fines but not by a significant amount. There was now quick escalation to court action and that tended to have a greater effect on parents. Attendance was now required to be monitored more broadly, and study leave has to be undertaken within school, given instruction nationally from the DfE.

ACTION

ITEM 18 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

29. No other items of business were raised.

ITEM 19 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

30. **Decision.** The date of the next meeting was **agreed** as 8.00am on Tuesday 3rd December 2024. This would be a CCHS Capital Development Ltd Board Meeting and AGM, followed by the Management Committee meeting.

All

The meeting closed at 10.07am.

S Miles, Chair 3rd December 2024

DRAFT