

## **CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the GOVERNING BODY held in the School and remotely via Microsoft Teams at 8.00am on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

Present: Steve Miles Chair of Governors  
Richard Vass Vice Chair of Governors  
Stephen Lawlor Headteacher  
Mary Argent, Andrew Bonwick, Sarah de Souza-Ingle, Jenny Fowle,  
Chris Lamberti, Funmi Osilaja, Lauren Smith, Svetlana Warhurst

In Attendance: Jo Cross Deputy Headteacher (Academic)  
Fiona Harrison Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)  
Melissa Mulgrew Business Manager  
Wendy Newton Clerk to Governors

Apologies: Richard Brown, Sarah Clements, Jason Oster, Priya Rangaswamy, Aisha Sohail

1. The Chair of Governors opened the meeting by welcoming Governors to the first in-person Full GB meeting since October 2019 due to the Covid pandemic.

#### **ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Richard Brown, Sarah Clements, Jason Oster, Priya Rangaswamy and Aisha Sohail.

#### **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 2022-23, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality. The Clerk confirmed that all Governors had returned their annual declarations for 2022-23.

#### **ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022 were agreed as a true record.

#### **ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING**

5. Item 19, Para 21 – SEND Link Governor. Svetlana Warhurst confirmed that she had now taken over as SEND Link Governor and had undertaken SEND training on the NGA Learning Link.

#### **ITEM 5 – CHAIRS' ACTION & EMAIL ACTION**

6. Item 5.1 – Chairs' Action. A list of Chairs' actions since the last meeting was received and noted. A query was raised concerning teacher strike action and the teachers' pay award, and the Headteacher gave an update on the viewpoint for the different teacher' unions.

**8.10am – Lauren Smith joined the meeting.**

7. Item 5.2 – DfE & ESFA Letters. No ESFA or DfE letters requiring Governor attention had been sent to the School since the last meeting.

8. Item 5.3 – School Management Accounts. Governors confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts for May/June 2022 and had noted the content.

#### **ITEM 6 – GOVERNING BODY MATTERS**

9. Item 6.1 – GB Membership. Details of GB and sub-committee membership were reviewed. Two Nominated Governor positions remained vacant. It was noted that Richard Brown and Jenny

**ACTION**

Fowle were approaching the end of their terms of office in January and March 2023 respectively. The Clerk **agreed** to ascertain if they would be open to additional service at the end of their term, and the issue would be considered by the Management Committee, in their capacity of Company Members, at their meeting in December. Sarah de Souza-Ingle advised that, as parent of a Year 11 student, she may have a conflict of interest next year relating to her role as Chair of the Year 12 Admissions Appeal Committee. The situation was noted and would be addressed, if necessary.

**ACTION**  
**Clerk**

10. **Item 6.2 - Associate Member - Decision**. With Mary Argent's consent, the Chair proposed the re-election of Mary Argent as Associate Member of the GB for 2022-23 and this was unanimously **approved** by the Full GB. Mary's continuing support of the School was greatly appreciated.

11. **Item 6.3 – Headteacher's Performance Review – Decision**. The Chair advised that the Headteacher's Performance Review Panel was currently himself and the Vice Chair of Governors and proposed that this remained for 2022-23. The meeting discussed the need for an external adviser and for a Performance Review Appeal Officer. The meeting **agreed** that the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors would continue to act as the Headteacher's Performance Review Panel for 2022-23 and that an external adviser was not required. Andrew Bonwick **agreed** to act as the Headteacher's Performance Review Appeal Officer, if required.

**Chair**  
**Vice Chair**  
**A Bonwick**

12. **Item 6.4 – Company Structure**. It was reported that the DfE had rejected some parts of the proposed new Articles of Association for the Company. A major issue was the GB wish to retain Staff Governors which was not recommended by the DfE and not in their new model articles. The Clerk had requested that the DfE contact to telephone her to discuss the issue, but he had not yet been in touch. The DfE had also advised that if the School changed to the new model articles it would also be required to change to the current funding agreement; the Business Manager was currently investigating what impact this may have on the School financially. Governors noted that there was no requirement to take up the new DfE-preferred academy structure or the new articles, things could remain as they were; however, the consequences of doing so were unknown. The meeting discussed the general situation and alternative ways how staff members could still be part of the GB. The positive effect of having staff on the GB was highlighted. The Clerk **agreed** to update the proposed new Company Members of the delay situation.

**Clerk**

13. **Item 6.5 – MAT Update**. The Headteacher advised that there had been recent indications that the proposed Government plan for all schools to be in a MAT by 2030 may be shelved or delayed. The Headteacher had continued to have casual discussions with other girls' grammar school headteachers and other MESH headteachers. General contact would continue until further information was received from the Government, but it was suggested that there was less pressure on the MAT issue. The Chair thanked the Headteacher for his work on the issue to date.

## **ITEM 7 – GB GOVERNANCE DOCUMENTS**

14. The Terms of Reference (TORs) for the Full GB and each sub-committee were presented for annual re-approval with some minor amendments relating to SLT role changes. Committees who had already met this term had reviewed and approved their TORs and the remainder would be reviewed at their first meeting later this term. The GB Standing Orders, GB Scheme of Delegation and Governors' Code of Conduct were also presented for re-approval. The Scheme of Delegation followed the Juniper Governance model and some additional items of delegation had been added. The new content was debated by the meeting.

### **15. Decisions.**

- a. 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** as presented.
- b. The GB Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and Code of Conduct were **approved** as presented. All Governors **agreed** to comply with the Governors' Code of Conduct.

**All**

## ITEM 8 – HEADTEACHER’S REPORT TO GOVERNORS

## ACTION

16. The Headteacher’s Report dated October 2022 was received and a corrected table of information relating to PPG data was tabled. Details of the Summer 2022 public examination results had been included in the report. The Headteacher reported that DfE performance table data had been produced for the first time since 2019. Key headline figures included:

- The GCSE Progress 8 figure for 2022 is +0.91 (2019 - +0.8; 2018 - +0.84; 2017 - +0.76) ie CCHS students achieve nearly one grade higher than similar students around the country.
- The GCSE Disadvantaged Progress 8 figure (relating to 5 students) was +0.4, lower than the rest of the cohort but nearly ½ grade higher than similar students nationally. The Headteacher confirmed the School could explain to Ofsted the reasons behind the lower progress.
- The 2022 A level Level 3 Value Added score was 0 (2019 – +0.0) ie the students achieved as expected from KS4 to KS5.
- The 2022 A level Average Point Score (APS) was Grade A (2019 – A-; 2018 – B+; 2017 – B).
- The A level Disadvantaged APS (relating to 8 students) was B+, which could also be justified to OFSTED if required.

Full details will be available on the DfE website in due course.

17. The Headteacher advised that the CCHS GCSE results were exceptional and the highest of any Essex grammar school, and that the A level results were strong and thought to be third highest amongst Essex grammar schools. The meeting commended the examination results.

**8.55am - The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) left the meeting.**

## ITEM 9 – FINANCIAL MATTERS

18. Item 9.1 – Revised School Budget 2022-23. Following the confirmation of the teachers’ pay awards, the Business Manager presented revised annual School budgets for 2022-25. The recent teachers’ pay awards ranged from 5%-8.9%, higher than the 3%-4% budgeted for in July 2022, and the excess was currently unfunded by DfE. The teaching unions were currently asking for 12%. The higher salary rates had a £(200,000) impact on staff costs. The re-forecast budget showed a 2022-23 end of year deficit of around £105,000, however this figure did include a £40,000 general contingency and a £60,000 utility bill contingency in case a change of utility provider was required. The School was mainly on fixed term electricity contracts until September 2023 and gas contracts until September 2024, which was noted as being particularly fortunate for the School in the current utility climate. Governors noted the utility situation and commended the Business Manager for her market awareness. It was expected that the remainder of the deficit would be covered from other savings made before the end of the financial year.

19. It was stated that whilst the School had comfortable reserves, the School was required to plan a balanced budget. The School would be expected to use its reserves in the event of a deficit at the end of the year. The Business Manager reported that 2023-24 was likely to end close to break even and 2024-25 was likely to end in a surplus but this was fully dependent on future Government funding. The financial problems of past years were summarised by the Chair, and it was noted that the School had been very frugal in order to keep in a sound financial position. The Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee stressed that this year’s increase in Sixth Form numbers would have a very positive effect on School finances, and the meeting discussed the issue of student numbers. The GB commended the Business Manager and Finance Team for keeping strict control of School finances and for maintaining a balanced budget.

20. Item 9.2 – CCHS Financial Regulations 2022-23 - Decision. The CCHS Financial Regulations Manual and Scheme of Delegation 2022-23, which included the Governors’ Allowances Policy and Best Value Statement, was presented for annual approval with only date revision and was **approved** as presented.

21. Item 9.3 – Whistleblowing Policy - Decision. The Whistleblowing Policy was presented for annual approval with one minor amendment from Juniper HR. The meeting debated the phraseology of the new sentence and suggested a revised phrase. The Clerk **agreed** to amend the policy as agreed and, with the amendment, the Whistleblowing Policy was **approved**.

**Clerk**

## **ITEM 10 – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT & SSEF UPDATE**

## **ACTION**

22. The Business Manager informed Governors that the final accounts for the SSEF project had still not been finalised. A full and final offer had been made but it had not yet been accepted. Most defects had been fixed but the project was now outside its one-year defect period. The Business Manager hoped to close the situation imminently and would keep the GB informed. The School was in the middle of a significant roofing project costing £314,000 which was going smoothly. Some de-scoping had occurred within the project in order to address significant roof leaks at the front of the school; downpipes were to be unblocked and additional drainage points installed.

23. The School had recently undergone an energy audit, the recommendations of which were being studied by the Business Manager. Having discuss the audit with PCH, the SSEF project managers, they had advised that there had been changes to the Conditions Improvement Fund (CIF) which now allowed for more energy saving projects. They also advised that the new Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund was not financially well-structured and had poor pay-off rates. The School was now looking into putting in a CIF bid to replace the swimming pool and Main School boilers. Decarbonisation options had been investigated but the current technology was not sufficient and would need boosting by conventional energy, increasing the School's energy bills. Like-for-like boilers would be investigated for the CIF bid and the School would look at how technology improves in the future. There were some low and no-cost energy audit recommendations which the School would look to incorporate. In relation to capital development and increasing student numbers, a Governor query was raised relating to student-reported long lunchtime queues in the canteen. This suggestion was refuted by the Business Manager and the current situation explained. Governors were invited to come in and see the lunch process. However, the need for Dining Hall expansion in the future was recognized. The Business Manager also confirmed for Governors that the School had solar panels on the new SSEF buildings and the Dining Hall extension. The option to put additional solar panels on the Main Building roof was being investigated but was unlikely to provide much energy in relation to the School's total usage. The School currently pays around £12,000 per month on energy bills.

## **ITEM 11 – AUDIT ACTIONS**

24. The Business Manager advised that the School's 2021-22 External Scrutiny Programme had been a Financial Internal Controls audit and a Cyber Security audit, details of which had been received by Governors last year and were summarised by the Business Manager. The cyber security audit was deemed particularly useful, and the School had been commended for having multifactor authorisation in place for both staff and students. The meeting was informed that the Management Committee had recently chosen a Financial Internal Controls audit plus a Site Security audit for the 2022-23 External Scrutiny Programme. The latter was considered prudent following some site security issues during the summer holiday. The meeting noted the 2022-23 audit choices and **agreed** with the recommendation to continue with Juniper as the School's internal audit provider.

## **ITEM 12 – POLICIES**

25. Item 12.1 – Child Protection Policy - Decision. The Child Protection Policy dated September 2022, previously approved by Chair's Action to allow publication at the start of term, was received and **approved** as presented.

## **ITEM 13 – RISK REGISTER**

26. Decision. The Full GB section of the CCHS Risk Register was received and **approved** as presented.

## **ITEM 14 – GDPR**

27. The Business Manager stated that GDPR was reasonably quiet with no breaches to report. There had been two Freedom of Information requests which had been addressed by the School, one related to the admissions issues and the other to reinforced aerated concrete. It was

confirmed that the School had no reinforced aerated concrete in the School. Further Fol admissions queries were expected later in the year.

**ACTION**

### **ITEM 15 – GB SUB-COMMITTEES**

28. **Decision**. The minutes of the following GB sub-committee meetings were received and approved:

- a. The Staff & Student Matters Committee meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022,
- b. The Management Committee meetings held on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2022, and
- c. The Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

29. The Chair of the Staff & Student Matters Committee reported that Svetlana Warhurst had taken over as SEND Link Governor at the start of the term and had already undertaken training for the role. It was hoped that the student representatives would be available for the next Staff & Student Matters meeting. The Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee highlighted the receipt of £60,000-worth of IT equipment from 'Every Child Online', a charity which re-purposes IT equipment from industry. Governors were pleased to note the arrival of the extra WiFi access point equipment ordered in January 2022 and due for delivery in March 2022. The Business Manager advised that there was also major disruption in the paper industry as supplies came from Russia.

### **ITEM 16 – SENIOR SPEECH DAY**

30. The Clerk reported that Senior Speech Day was to be held in Chelmsford Cathedral on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and that Dr Melissa Uchida, a CCHS Alumna and lecturer in High Energy Physics at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, had agreed to act as guest speaker.

### **ITEM 17 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – VISITS & TRIPS**

31. A list of residential and overseas trips for 2022-23 was presented for approval. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) advised that overseas and residential trips were now being re-instated and a Year 12 Geography field trip was being proposed. Governors were informed that the Year 10 trip to Nice in June 2023 had been split into two separate trips for this year only as there had been so much demand and this cohort had missed out on many school trips due to the Covid pandemic. Governors noted that several trips had already been undertaken for cohorts who had missed out on trips in previous school years and had been really appreciated by the students. The work of School staff to allow the trips to run was highly commended, and Governors asked the Deputy Headteacher (Academic) to pass on their thanks to all involved.

**J Cross**

32. **Decision**. The list of residential and overseas trips for 2022-23 was **approved** as presented. The additional Year 12 Geography field trip in June 2023 was **approved in principle** whilst awaiting full cost details.

### **ITEM 18 – GOVERNOR REPORTS**

33. **Item 18.1 – Governor Visits**. No formal Governor visits had yet taken place since the last meeting, although Jenny Fowle was due to visit in November. The Chair stressed the importance of school visits for Governors. Any requests for a visit should be sent via the Clerk.

**All**

34. **Item 18.2 – Governor Training**. Lauren Smith, Training Link Governor, advised that she had undertaken the Safeguarding module of the new NGA Learning Link and that Svetlana Warhurst had also undertaken their SEND training. The mandatory need for Governor Safeguarding training was stressed and the Learning Link process was summarised. The meeting was reminded that all the NGA training modules were free, and Governors were encouraged to undertake any courses that might interest them.

**9.50am – The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) re-joined the meeting.**

35. **Decision**. It was **agreed** that all Governors were to undertake the NGA Learning Link Safeguarding module and send their certificates of completion to Lauren Smith and the Clerk for

**All**

recording on the Record of Governor Training. The Clerk **agreed** to send out an email link to the NGA Learning Link Safeguarding course.

36. Item 18.3 – Safeguarding. Fiona Harrison, Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) and the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), advised that the start of term had been very busy in relation to safeguarding. Students had been addressed in assemblies and also parents at Meet the Tutor Evenings. There had a variety of safeguarding concerns including online behaviour, suicide and self-harm. All issues had been dealt with and were receiving ongoing support. Contact had been made with outside agencies when appropriate but there were long delays in referrals to outside counselling agencies. The School is still without a School Nurse, all issues had to be reported to a central service which was not ideal.

37. Item 18.4 – Parents' Association Matters. The Business Manager reported that the Years 7 & 8 Disco had been held with over 250 students and had raised more than £2,000. The PA Winter Fayre was currently being organised. The Headteacher advised that the PA AGM had been held the previous night and due to a lack of volunteers, the current Chair of the PA, Mrs Catherine Carby, having planned to step down, had agreed to remain in post. There had however been good general support and all the other PA Committee posts had been filled. The PA was deemed to be in a healthy position.

38. Item 18.5 – Better Buildings Committee. In the absence of Jason Oster, Link Governor to the Better Building Committee, the Business Manager reported that the main focus of the Better Buildings Committee was now the swimming pool. Some insurance money had been received and the insurers was also talking about remedial work, the scope of which needed to be investigated. The liner of the pool needed repair, but the most urgent issue was the replacement of the boiler equipment which was deemed end-of-life, replacement parts were now unavailable. It was stated that a small project covering the boiler replacement was most likely to get support from the community and that a small working party would be put together to address the issue.

**10.00am – Andrew Bonwick left the meeting.**

**ITEM 8 – HEADTEACHER'S REPORT TO GOVERNORS** (Continued)

39. The meeting returned the Headteacher's Report and commended the exam achievements following two turbulent academic years. A query was raised on the FSMQ Additional Maths results data which looked erroneous. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) **agreed** to investigate the issue. **Clerk's Post Meeting Note:** The correct information is as follows:

**J Cross**

| No of students | A  | A %  | A-B | A-B % | A-C | A-C % |
|----------------|----|------|-----|-------|-----|-------|
| 17             | 11 | 64.7 | 14  | 82    | 17  | 100   |

40. The trend and differences between the SEND and Whole School KS4 Progress 8 figures were queried and Governors asked if there was anything more the School could be doing to narrow the attainment gap. The Headteacher gave additional information on SEND staffing and the School SEND support system. It was confirmed that the national structure for SEND was followed, and that bespoke support was put in place for every student identified as having additional needs. The School was always open to new ways of helping students and looked for ways to improve its practices within the classroom or by curriculum adjustments.

41. The information presented on FSM pupils was queried and the School agreed to revise the format in future reports. The need to increase the entry figures for Year 7 FSM students was highlighted and the meeting was advised that the September 2023 figures looked positive. In light of the current economic situation, Governors queried whether the School had provision to help students who were just outside FSM or PPG, and it was confirmed that such students were identified and closely monitored by the School. The Business Manager reported that the School had increased the income threshold for the Sixth Form Bursary from £21,000 to £30,000pa. The Headteacher stated that during the pandemic there had been a moral imperative to assist FSM students and the School had received financial assistance from the PA to extend the scheme, this still continued. The School increases the FSM allowance from the Government's £2.40 to £3.40 to ensure students receiving the allowance obtain a substantial lunchtime meal.

## **ITEM 12 – POLICIES** (Continued)

## **ACTION**

42. Item 12.2 – Admissions Policy. The Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) had received a complaint about the CCHS Admissions Policy for September 2023 and the OSA had upheld part of the complaint requiring the School to amend and re-publish the policy within two months. Details of the OSA findings were explained and the meeting discussed the policy. It was stated that several of the changes were administrative and accepted by the School, the policy was currently being revised. The Clerk reminded the meeting that the agenda item related to the September 2024 Admissions Policy. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advised that the meeting that the current Year 7 entrance test provider (CEM) had now withdrawn its services and that a new entrance test would be required for the test taken in September 2023 for Year 7 entry in September 2024. The School had investigated three other tests, details of which were summarised, but a preferred test had not yet been agreed. The Admissions Policy 2024 still need to be prepared, taking into account the revised 2023 policy and the new test. It was stated that public consultation of the Admission Policy 2024 was not required for a change of test, although one of the OSA's findings might require one. Governors queried whether the parents of children sitting the September 2023 Year 7 entrance test were aware of the change of test. The School stated that those parents were aware of the change and that it was common knowledge on social media. Standard confirmation was sent to any parents who made enquiries, the School stated that it was not required to confirm information about the test until March 2023.

### 43. **Decisions**.

a. It was **agreed** that the School would produce an analysis paper outlining the findings of the new entrance test investigations to be emailed to all Governors which would then be agreed either by email or at an additional meeting.

F Harrison

b. It was **agreed** that the Admissions Policy for entry in September 2024 would be presented at the Governor Conference in January 2023, assuming no public consultation was required.

F Harrison

## **ITEM 19 – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

44. Item 19.1 – School Development Plan 2022-23. The School Development Plan 2022-23 was received for information. The Headteacher advised that some developments items had been carried forward to this year. The next review would be presented in February 2023.

45. Item 19.2 – School Self-Evaluation. The School Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) 2021-22 undertaken last year had been reviewed by the Headteacher and a few updates made. The document had been re-titled as SEF 2021-23 and was received for information. The background details of the SEF was queried and the Headteacher gave further clarification.

46. Item 19.3 – Public Examination Review 2022. The Public Examination Review 2022 was received for information. It was noted that the 2022 results had been entirely examination-based, the first time since 2019.

## **ITEM 20 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

47. Governor Email Addresses. The Clerk advised that GDPR required the School to introduce School email addresses for Governors and that further information would be sent shortly.

## **ITEM 21 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

48. **Decision**. It was **agreed** that the next Full Governing Body meeting would be held at 8.00am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023. The meeting was also reminded that the Governors' Conference was currently expected to take place on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

All

The meeting closed at 10.36am.

Steve Miles, Chair of Governors

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023