

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 Friday 14th July 2023

Present: Steve Miles Chair of Governors
Richard Vass Vice Chair of Governors
Stephen Lawlor Headteacher
Sarah Clements, Niamh Dobson, Chris Lamberti, Funmi Osilaja, Priya Rangaswamy,
Lauren Smith, Aisha Sohail, Manish Unhale, Svetlana Warhurst.

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

Apologies: Andrew Bonwick, Richard Brown, Melissa Mulgrew (Business Manager).
Sarah de Souza-Ingle & Jason Oster (due to technical issues on the day)

1. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming two new Parent Governors, Niamh Dobson and Manish Unhale, to the Governing Body.

ACTION

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Andrew Bonwick, Richard Brown, and Melissa Mulgrew. Sarah de Souza-Ingle and Jason Oster attempted to join the meeting via Teams but were unable to due to technical difficulties.

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 had already received declarations from the new Governors and the School website updated.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2023 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

5. Item 8.1, Para 12 – Headteacher’s Report. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advised that 80 students from the CCHS partner primary schools had sat the Year 7 Entrance Test in September 2022. Moulsham Junior School had the highest number of entrants with 21 pupils, and that there had been a good spread across all the partner primary schools.

6. Item 8.1, Para 14 – Headteacher’s Report. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) reminded Governors that the Progress 8 figure for Disadvantaged students at CCHS was +0.4, higher than their peers nationally (+0.15) but lower than their peers at CCHS (+0.91). The skewing effect of a low sample size was explained. Details of how the School tracked student progress was displayed and the further information was received. For the benefit of the new Governors, the Chair summarised the actions taken by the School historically to increase the number of Pupil Premium (PP) students entering CCHS. The SEND Link Governor asked for additional insight into the difference in performance between students with SEND and their peers.

7. **Decision.** The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) **agreed** to meet the SEND Link Governor in the Autumn Term to review and discuss the SEND student progress data.

J Cross

ITEM 5 – CHAIRS’ ACTION & EMAIL ACTION

8. **Item 5.1 – Chairs’ Action.** A list of all Chairs’ actions taken since the last Full GB meeting to 4th July 2023 was received and the actions noted. The financial savings accrued by the previous fixed-term energy prices were commended.

9. **Item 5.2 – DfE & ESFA Letters.** Governors confirmed receipt by email of the ESFA letter to accounting officers dated 6th July 2023 and had noted its content.

10. **Item 5.3 – School Management Accounts.** Governors confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts from January to May 2023 and had noted their content. The latest figures received suggested that the School would end the year at break-even.

ITEM 6 – GOVERNING BODY MATTERS

11. **Item 6.1 – GB Membership - Decision.** Details of GB and sub-committee membership as at 4th July 2023 were reviewed. The meeting was reminded that Richard Vass was formally standing down as Vice Chair of Governors and Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee at the end of the current academic year but was to remain as a Governor until the end of his current term of office in October 2023. The Clerk advised that only single nominations had been received for the roles of Chair and Vice Chair of Governors for AY 2023-24; they had been for Steve Miles and Svetlana Warhurst respectively. No additional verbal nominations were received, and Steve Miles and Svetlana Warhurst had kindly agreed to take up the roles. The meeting unanimously **approved** both appointments for the AY 2023-24. The meeting was reminded that the proposed change of Company structure would affect GB sub-committee membership in the Autumn Term.

12. **Item 6.2 – GB Meeting Dates 2023-24 - Decision.** The proposed dates for Full GB and GB sub-committee meetings for AY 2023-24 were received and **approved** as presented.

13. **Item 6.3 – GB & Company Structure.** The Chair summarised the need to change to the new DfE model articles of association, which now included the DfE preference to have no school employees as trustees (Governors), with the exception of the Headteacher. The School had also been advised that the adoption of new articles necessitated adoption of the current ESFA funding agreement. Over the past year the Management Committee had been in discussion with the DfE in an attempt to keep employees as CCHS Governors (primarily in the role of Staff Governors) but this had been repeatedly refused. As a result, in their current role of Company Members, at their meeting on 24th May 2023 the Management Committee had agreed to adopt the current DfE model articles and remove any employees, except the Headteacher, as CCHS Governors, and also to adopt the current ESFA funding agreement. The general need to change the structure was discussed. It was noted that the issue was controversial but the School had been given no choice by DfE. The proposed new CCHS Articles of Association, which now matched the DfE model articles, were reviewed and the new trustee structure noted. The Clerk brought to the meeting’s attention Annex B of the Funding Agreement which related to the removal of selection at the School and summarised the background of the issue. A Governor query was raised about the benefit to CCHS being in a group with KEGS, as opposed to being a stand-alone school in relation to petitions and ballots for the removal of selection.

14. Decisions.

a. It was **agreed** that the Business Manager should be asked to undertake a risk analysis on the benefits of being in a removal of selection ballot group with KEGS.

b. The meeting noted the changes to the Company Articles of Association as presented and the adoption of the current model of the ESFA Funding Agreement. Subject to the findings of Paragraph 14a, the Full Governing Body **agreed** with the Management Committee’s, ie Members, decision to adopt the new Company Articles of Association and current ESFA Funding Agreement. It was hoped that the new documents would be effective from 1st September 2023, subject to DfE ratification.

ACTION

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M Mulgrew

ITEM 7 – HEADTEACHER’S REPORT

15. The Headteacher’s Report dated June 2023 was received for information. The Headteacher emphasized the CCHS Achievement Strategy which had been put in place to address the varying needs of the different student cohorts in relation to the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic. The document would be revised as required in future academic years. The meeting was informed of a change to the SLT structure which from September 2023 would have an all-through approach with the two Deputy Headteachers having responsibility for all year groups from Year 7 to 13. The Assistant Headteacher (Head of Sixth Form) was to have a reformed and wider role across the School. No questions were raised on the content of the report and the Headteacher was commended for the new structure of the report and its contributors thanked. The Headteacher voiced his thanks to the SLT and all School staff for their hard work and dedication throughout the past school year. The Chair asked for the thanks of the Governors to be passed on to School staff.

ITEM 8 –FINANCIAL MATTERS

16. Governors received the proposed School Budget for 2023-24 and 3-year forecast for approval, the figures had been previously reviewed by the Facilities & Finance Committee and were recommended for approval. In the absence of the Business Manager, the Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee went through the budget and the assumptions within the budget. It was stated that the main difficulty in putting the budget together had been the lack of information on School income. The forecast had been based on a detailed expenditure forecast which had been carried out by the Finance Team and conservative income stream assumptions. The proposed budget for 2023-24 showed an in-year deficit of £(76,047) and deficits of £(155,129) and £(296,468) were forecast for 2024-25 and 2025-26 respectively. Cumulatively, this could lead to a deficit of over £0.5million in three years but it was stated that additional funding was highly likely. The meeting was advised that, if necessary, any deficit would have to be made up from School Reserves. The effect of pupil numbers in the Sixth Form was noted as being critical to School income. The Headteacher stated that the assumed Sixth Form numbers were conservative and that a Year 12 entry of 165-170 was the current goal. The issues relating to Sixth Form numbers, including subject viability and student number achievability, were discussed. The increase to 180 for the Lower School cohort size was noted as being advantageous to increasing Sixth Form numbers.

17. The budget had been produced prior to the recent Government announcement on the teachers’ pay award. It was stated that the biggest expenditure for any school were staff costs and that this had a critical impact on the budget. The essential need for Government funding, or part-funding, towards the new pay increase was noted. It was suggested that the School should submit the current budget to ESFA as it stands, rather than submitting a budget indicating that the School was fine and didn’t need any extra money, as this would show that the School was doing its best to get to break even but that the School is forecasting deficits. A Governor query was raised as to whether the School Reserves could cover the predicted in-year deficits; this was confirmed as partially as some of the Reserves were ring-fenced for specific projects, eg the refurbishment of the astroturf pitch. The aim of the School Reserves was to address one-off issues rather than to use it for the day-to-day running of the school. Concerns were raised about submitting a deficit budget to the ESFA as previous experience in doing so had not been well-received. It was noted that the budget was caveated on the fact that the Funding Formula was still unknown for 2024-25 and that the budget presented had assumed a 5% unfunded Teachers’ Pay award. The Headteacher advised that the Business Manager had briefly recalculated the budget in light of the newly announced Teachers’ Pay award and that it had resulted in a deficit figure of around £(70,000), not excessively less than the figure presented. The meeting debated the need to re-forecast the 2023-24 budget and 3-year budget.

18. Decisions.

- a. It was **agreed** that, following the recent announcement on the Teachers’ Pay award, the Business Manager would re-draft the School Budget for 2023-24 and 3-year forecast to produce more accurate figures.
- b. The Governing Body **delegated** approval of the School budget for 2023-24 and 3-year forecast to the Management Committee following receipt of a revised budget as stated in Para

**M Mulgrew
Man Comm**

c. The Clerk agreed to send the revised budget to all Governors by email for information.

ITEM 9 – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

19. The Headteacher advised that the swimming pool complex was the area of most concern to the School and summarised the current problems. The meeting was advised that there were over 800 external users of the facility, second only to the Riverside complex in Chelmsford. The cost and viability of updating the pool had been under discussion for some time. The meeting was informed that Great Baddow School had recently undertaken their own pool refurbishment for a cost of £150,000, and CCHS was now looking into the possibility of doing something similar, but at a higher cost of around £250,000. The Build a Future for our Community Committee had very recently started a new fundraising campaign for the swimming pool and had raised £1,721 from 21 donations. The campaign would build more momentum in the Autumn Term and details of planned events were summarised. The use of the facility by the local community was noted but it was reported that the Local Authority had not been too helpful to date. Swim England had also been involved in discussions on how to address the swimming pool issue. Governors queried the option of putting in a CIF bid and were advised that such bids had not been successful to date. The Chair stressed that safety was always the main priority for the School and that there had been occasions when the pool had been required to close. The age and condition of the swimming pool complex now required increased maintenance work and extra checks, and the Site Team were commended for their innovative work in keeping the swimming pool safe and open for use.

ITEM 10 – AUDIT ACTIONS

20. A Pharos Response School Site Security Audit had been undertaken in March 2023 as part of the Juniper external audit package and their audit report was received for information. Overall, the auditors had been very impressed with the School's site security and had highly commended the excellent work undertaken by the Site Team. The report had raised a few minor recommendations which had already been undertaken. A query was raised concerning the School's lockdown procedure and the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) confirmed that practices were held with the students on an annual basis. A Juniper Financial Internal Scrutiny Audit had been undertaken in April 2023, the audit report had been clean with no adverse findings and only one minor point for consideration. The Governors commended the Finance Team on the clean report and the outstanding work of Fiona Gilmour, Senior Finance Officer, was noted. Both reports had previously been reviewed by the Facilities & Finance Committees in their capacity as Audit Committee.

ITEM 11 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

21. The Final Review of the School Development Plan 2022-23 and the draft School Development Plan for 2023-24 were received for information and noted. Governors queried if there were any areas of concerns for the School and the Headteacher advised that the PPG and SEND student groups were the main groups of interest at the current time. Additional information was requested on staff and student well-being initiatives, and it was suggested that the School could be aiming for a zero-carbon footprint alongside related sustainability projects in order to promote a positive image to the community. The suggestion was discussed and the current energy reduction actions undertaken by the School were noted. It was stated that the new buildings i.e. the Sports Hall and Bancroft Building, were overall carbon-neutral, but that the older school buildings were problematic due to their age and construction. The meeting was reminded that the Estate Management document covered many of the areas raised and that students were very interested in sustainability and had already introduced a School Eco Committee. It was stated that there was a culture of environmental awareness and sustainability within the School. Governor Manish Unhale offered to assist the School with his professional knowledge relating to sustainability initiatives. Additional input was also received on the UN sustainability goals and the School's Eco Conference.

22. **Decision**. The Headteacher agreed to amplify text on sustainability to the SDP 2023-24.

ITEM 12 – GDPR

23. The ECC Information Governance Service annual audit of GDPR had taken place on 25th April 2023 and their report was received for information and noted. It had been a very clean audit and

**Clerk
ACTION**

Head

stated that GDPR was very well managed at the School. There were three minor findings, all of which had been partially in place. It was reported that the School received very few Freedom of Information requests, mainly relating to the Entrance Test, and that there were very few from individual pupils.

ACTION

ITEM 13 – RISK REGISTER

24. **Decision**. The Full GB section of the CCHS Risk Register was received for termly review and **approved** as presented.

ITEM 14 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – RESIDENTIAL VISITS & OVERSEAS TRIPS

25. **Decision**. An updated list of residential and overseas trips for 2022-23 and 2023-24 was presented for approval. It was noted that School trips were returning to a more pre-pandemic situation. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) advised that the Year 13 Biology trip to Flatford Mill was to become a day trip next year as it would be less disruptive to their studies and that there was to be a focus on the KS4 trips in 2023-24. The willingness of School staff to organise and support school trips was commended by the Governors and it was suggested that the provision of overseas trips was a positive draw to attract new students, especially for the Sixth Form. Governors queried whether any parents had issues relating to costs and how the School addressed such situations. It was stated that the School aimed to be as inclusive as possible and was always mindful of the cost of School trips, details were received on how the School aided such situations. All PP student trips were paid for, and parents were encouraged to contact the School if they had financial concerns about any of the trips. The list of residential and overseas trips for 2022-23 and 2023-24 was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 15 – GOVERNOR REPORTS

26. **Item 15.1 – Governor Visits**. Other than Link Governor visits and School events, there had been no formal Governor visits since the last meeting. The Chair asked all Governors to undertake a visit as soon as possible in the Autumn Term and to contact the Clerk to arrange a suitable date.

All

27. **Item 15.2 – Governor Training**. Lauren Smith, Training Link Governor, reported that the GB had migrated to online training from the NGA Learning Link and The Key websites, and requested that the new Parent Governors undertake induction training. Governors were reminded that there were many useful online courses on these platforms which were useful for refresher purposes, such as 'Ofsted Readiness'. The Clerk requested that any certificates of course completion be forwarded to her in order to keep the Governor Training Log up-to-date. A letter from the Chief Regulator of Ofqual relating to the forthcoming Summer 2023 examinations results was brought to the attention of the meeting, its key message was that '*a lower results profile in 2023 does not indicate any change to the underlying performance of the school or college you help govern*'. The Clerk **agreed** to send the Ofqual letter out to all Governors by email for their information.

Clerk

28. **Item 15.3 – Safeguarding**. Aisha Sohail, Safeguarding Link Governor, advised that she had liaised with the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) in June and had noted the increasing demands on the School. Details of the School's safeguarding systems were summarised and it was reported that some concerns, such as domestic violence, were new to the School. Contact was continuing with outside agencies and had expanded to new organisations. Good connections had been made with families which greatly assisted the School. It was noted that the Pastoral Hub was being well used and student visits were closely monitored by staff. A new wellbeing programme was to begin in the Autumn Term. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) and all the Pastoral Team were thanked for their ongoing work in assisting students.

29. **Item 15.4 – SEND**. Svetlana Warhurst, SEND Link Governor, reported that she had visited in June and summarised her discussions with the SENCo, Katharine Adams. Full details of the current SEND situation were contained on Page 14 of the Headteacher's Report (Item 7). The support and transition plan for the new SENCo in September had been noted. It was reported that the SEND students were very well supported by the School. The Chair thanked Katharine Adams for her work and commitment to the SEND students during her time as SENCo.

10.00am – Funmi Osilaja left the meeting.

ACTION

30. Item 15.5 – Parents’ Association (PA) Matters. The Headteacher advised reported that the PA were an enthusiastic group who did great fundraising work for the School. The Chair of the PA had been asked to sit on the new Building a Future for our Community Committee in order to assist connections between the two fundraising groups. The PA had recently agreed to part-finance some audiovisual equipment for the Sports Hall in order for it could be used for additional School events, such as assemblies.

31. Item 15.6 – Building a Future for our Community Committee. A written report was received from Jason Oster, Link Governor and Chair to the newly re-named Building a Future for our Community Committee (formerly the Better Buildings Committee), and in his absence the Headteacher advised that, as reported in Item 9, the Committee had met recently to discuss future fundraising activities aimed at the refurbishment of the swimming pool.

ITEM 16 – GB SUB-COMMITTEES

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

- a. The Curriculum Committee meeting held on 10th May 2023,
- b. The Management Committee meeting held on 24th May 2023,
- c. The Facilities & Finance Committee meetings held on 25th April and 20th June 2023, and
- d. The Staff & Student Matters Committee meeting held on 27th March 2023.

33. Governors commended the School’s determination to appeal the June 2022 GCSE German results and asked the Deputy Headteacher (Academic) to relay their thanks to the relevant staff.

J Cross

ITEM 17 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

34. Year 7 Entrance Test. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advised that 1382 students had registered for the Year 7 Entrance Test in September 2023. This included 58 Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) students, up 10 from last year, 30 of whom had attended the recent CCHS Summer School. The Chair noted that the process of increasing PPG students had been detrimentally affected by the pandemic and commended the work of the Entrance Test team to address the issue. It was also reported that 13 PPG students were due to enter Year 7 in September 2023. The School confirmed that everything was in place for the new entrance test next term.

35. Vote of Thanks. The Chair of Governors thanked Lauren Smith, Chris Lamberti and Sarah Clements, the three employees who were departing the GB due to the change in Company Articles, for their participation and contribution to the GB during their time as Governors and presented them with small gifts of appreciation. The Chair also thanked the Headteacher and all the School staff for their hard work and dedication to the students over the past academic year. The Headteacher then thanked the Governors for their continuing support and encouragement.

ITEM 18 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

36. **Decision.** It was agreed that the next Full Governing Body meeting would be held at 8.00am on Friday 13th October 2023.

All

The meeting closed at 10.15am.

Steve Miles, Chair of Governors

13th October 2023