

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 8.00am on Friday 5th July 2024

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

(T) = Attendance via Teams

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Trustees Andrew Bonwick, Jason Oster and Priya Rangaswamy, and Jo Cross, Deputy Headteacher (Academic). The Clerk advised that the previous evening Jason Oster had unexpectedly put in his resignation as a Trustee with immediate effect due to work commitments.

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 MEETINGS

3. The minutes of the Board meeting held on 22nd March 2024 and the Trustee Conference held on 8th June 2024 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

4. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

ITEM 5 – CHAIRS' ACTION & EMAIL ACTION

5. 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.

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

7. Item 5.3 – School Management Accounts. Trustees confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts for December 2023 to March 2024 and had noted their content.

ITEM 6 – ACADEMY TRUST MATTERS

8. Item 6.1 – Academy Board Membership. Academy Trust and sub-committee membership was reviewed. It was reported that Priya Rangaswamy was coming to the end of her 4-year term of office at the end of Autumn Term and would be required to re-stand at a Parent Governor election if she wished to continue as a trustee. With Jason Oster's resignation, there were now four vacant

ACTION

trustee positions. Jason's now vacant fundraising role was also noted. It had previously been suggested that a new trustee with professional knowledge of Health & Safety would be beneficial for the Board. Trustees were **asked** to think about possible new trustees and advise the Chair accordingly. The Headteacher reminded the meeting of a possible new Trustee, Mr Adam Wood, President of the Chelmsford Science & Engineering Society (CSES), who had assisted the School in the past with STEM activities, resources, opportunities and competitions. It was suggested that Mr Wood would be a very suitable candidate. The Clerk reminded the meeting that it was now the Academy Members who appoint new Trustees.

ACTION

All

9. **Decision.** The Clerk **agreed** to:

Clerk

- a. Contact Mr Adam Wood to ascertain if he would be interested in becoming a Trustee.
- b. Liaise with Priya Rangaswamy to ascertain if she intended to re-stand as a Parent Trustee at the end of her current term of office.

10. **Item 6.2 – Link Trustee Roles.** A summary of the current link trustee roles was received for information. The following new link roles had recently been agreed by the Management Committee: Mel Gulliver – Wellbeing, Niamh Dobson - Sustainability, and Priya Rangaswamy – Careers. With Jason Oster's departure, the Attendance Link Governor role was now vacant along with the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) and the Health & Safety (H&S) Link Trustee roles. The meeting noted that the H&S Link Trustee role required someone with specialist knowledge. Aisha Sohail **volunteered** to take on the role of Attendance Link Trustee in tandem with her Safeguarding Link Governor role, at least as an interim measure, and was thanked for volunteering.

A Sohail

11. **Item 6.3 – Academy Board Meeting Dates 2024-25.** The list of proposed dates for Board and sub-committee meeting dates for 2024-25 was received and **approved** as presented. It was noted that the dates were subject to change during the year. The Clerk **agreed** to add the dates of Member meetings would be added once agreed by the Members.

Clerk

ITEM 7 – HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

12. The Headteacher advised of an INSET day the previous day, which had focussed on being a girls' school and girls' education, and summarised details of the event. All staff had participated in the morning session and workshops run by School staff had taken place in the afternoon. It was deemed a good opportunity to think about the School and its strengths, and place in the County, particularly after the Ofsted visit. The CCHS Achievement Strategy was brought to the attention of Trustees and noted as being a key document for the School. It was stated that the document was revised every year to take into account the specific needs of each year group post-pandemic and the third edition of the document would be received by Trustees next term. The document guided all the work undertaken by the School and covered the pastoral, academic, safeguarding, enrichment and extracurricular fields. It was stated that all the fields were considered separately for each individual year group. It was confirmed for the Chair that the document would continue even when the students who were in Year 7 during Covid had left CCHS as the School was now seeing issues caused by the pandemic in the students who had been in primary school during the pandemic, including social and communication matters. The effect of the pandemic was discussed in relation to its impact on students and future years. The work undertaken by the School was highly commended by the Trustees.

13. Within the Headteacher's Report, the changes in staffing for the next academic year were queried by Trustees. The Headteacher confirmed that the School was fully staffed for September 2024 and that the recent new staff induction day had been very successful. Notification had just been received of a fifth maternity absence starting in November and the position had been part recruited. A query was raised on the Primary Partnership data in the Headteacher's Report concerning the varied conversion rate between the schools and the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) gave additional clarification on the issue. It was suggested that the new Year 7 entrance test was based on the KS2 curriculum, and the entrance test success rates may relate to the quality of teaching in the different schools. A query was also raised on the national Progress 8 score which had changed from a negative score in previous years to a positive score in 2023, and the issue was discussed; no specific reason has been publicised nationally for the change.

14. The large number of students (25%) in Year 10 who were recorded as having English as an Additional Language (EAL) was noted and queried in relation to the year group having significantly more pastoral needs. It was suggested that there was no specific link but that more families were now declaring EAL. The Headteacher advised that data had shown that EAL students were often the strongest in the School. Information was received on the new Sixth Form Twin Pathways programme, it was reported that of the 391 external applications to the Sixth Form in September 2024, 213 students had opted for the 4 A level Plus Pathway and 187 had opted for the 3 A level Plus Pathway. It was hoped that the new Pathway system would add a new level of stability to the Sixth Form learning process with more content students. It was expected that there would be far less curriculum change at the end of Year 12. The Headteacher suggested that the higher number of external applicants to the Sixth Form may be the result of the new Twin Pathway programme.

ITEM 8 – FINANCIAL MATTERS

15. The Business Manager advised that the current year's finances were trending towards break even and expenditure was being very closely managed. The next 3-year forecast was unknown and may be affected by the recent change of Government. The proposed School Budget for 2024-25 was presented for discussion and approval. The Facilities & Finance Committee had previously reviewed an earlier draft budget and changes had been made. It was reported that 2024-25 would be a significant challenge financially and it was hoped that In Year funding may be forthcoming. The 2024-25 CCHS Budget showed an In Year deficit of £(179,605) which would need to be covered from School reserves in order to submit a balanced budget to the DfE as was required. There was no information on the teachers' pay increase for September 2024 or full information on 16-19 funding. Cost savings had been included in the figures for future years, including utility costs and teaching hours, and details were received. The Chair stated that the School could not continue to rely on its reserves which was why, post the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting, future savings had been included into the figures for future years. Details of possible future cost reductions were discussed.

16. The issue of the swimming pool and the cost of running it was raised. It was reported that the facility still remained at about breakeven, or a very small surplus, however utility costs were beginning to come down again and this had a major effect on the financial situation. The general issue of the swimming pool was discussed, and it was recognised as being a great asset for the community. The Business Manager reported that there had not been a great uptake of fundraising donations from the current parents. It was also confirmed that none of the renovation costs required by the swimming pool complex were covered, this would need to come from fundraising or School reserves. The benefit of the swimming pool as an income generator was raised, and it was suggested that if the pool was totally sorted, it ran at around a £20,000 surplus per year.

17. The Business Manager advised that the assumption for Sixth Form student figures in Year 12 in September 2024 had been increased to a target of 165, this was deemed achievable with the current Year 11 figure of 151 students. The Year 12 target for future years was 170 students. It was also reported that the pupil funding rates in the budget document had been assumed at the lowest percentage uplift for the past 10 years. The Chair thanked the Business Manager and her team for keeping such close control of the School's finances and for their hard work in producing a credible budget plan.

18. **Decision**. The School Budget for 2024-25 was **approved** as presented for upload to the DfE by the Business Manager.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 9 – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

19. The meeting was reminded that the CIF bid had been successful for the replacement of the facia and windows of the Art Block and the associated asbestos removal. Work was to commence this summer and would hopefully be finished by the Autumn Half Term. It was stated that the work would make the building look significantly better and would also improve the heat integrity of the building and hopefully lower heating costs. The Business Manager advised that a second project was in hand to complete the roll out of the LED lighting and auto-turn off sensors. A proposal was currently being compiled and would be sent to the Management Committee for approval by email

shortly in order to get the work completed during the summer holiday. The outlay was anticipated to be around £50,000 but would not need capital as the work would be fully financed. It was anticipated that the work would save the School around £3,000 per year in energy costs. The meeting was advised that it was no longer possible to replace some of the School's current fluorescent lighting as the production of fluorescent tubes had been banned in February 2024. A proposal for additional solar energy for the Main School building was currently being investigated and would be received in due course. This would be fundamental to the School's decarbonisation strategy but would also further reduce energy costs. It was confirmed that solar panels were already on the Bancroft and Chapman buildings which generated about half of the electricity for those buildings. It was hoped that the generation of solar energy may then lead to decarbonisation of the swimming pool in the long-term.

ACTION

20. **Decision**. The Business Manager **agreed** to send the LED lighting proposal to the Management Committee by email for approval.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 10 – AUDIT ACTIONS

21. The second external audit by Juniper Education had taken place in June 2024 and had covered HR policy compliance. The audit had been undertaken remotely and the Juniper audit report was received for information. The Business Manager stated that there had been a few minor findings but that there was nothing materially wrong. It was stressed that any policy requiring immediate revision due to legal changes was presented for approval by Chair's Action between sub-committee meetings. Trustees noted the report.

ITEM 11 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

22. The Final Review of the School Development Plan 2023-24 and the draft version of the School Development Plan 2024-25 were received for information and the progress made during the 2023-24 academic year was noted by Trustees. A query was raised on the issue of AI and if there was best practice guidance for the School. The meeting was advised that work on AI had begun two years ago by the School's Teaching & Learning group and that information from authorities was very light. Examination Boards were beginning to address the issue of AI and further details were received on the issue. It was confirmed that School staff were going on courses about AI to pick up as much information as possible. Work was also being undertaken with the SSGS. It was suggested that the change of Government may lead to new guidance. The Headteacher stated that there was a positive side to AI to support learning and through time-saving for teachers, such as making resources and schemes of work. The possible benefit of AI in assessment was stressed in relation to marking, saving time for teachers and reducing workload. The general issue of using AI in school was discussed and the negative side of AI, i.e. misuse and plagiarism, was noted.

23. **Decision**. The Headteacher **agreed** to identify any new items that may be added to the draft document when it is finalised at the start of the new term.

Head

ITEM 12 – GDPR

24. The ECC Information Governance Service annual audit of GDPR had taken place on 25th April 2024 and their report was received for information and noted. It was a clean audit and there were no particular issues to report. There had been an increase in Freedom of Information requests since the last meeting, mostly relating to the Year 7 Entrance Test and the lack of movement in the waiting list.

ITEM 13 – RISK REGISTER

25. The Board section of the CCHS Risk Register was received for termly review and **approved** as presented.

ITEM 14 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – RESIDENTIAL VISITS & OVERSEAS TRIPS

26. An updated list of residential and overseas trips for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 was presented for approval. The Headteacher advised that the School had been successful in applying for a Turing Grant Programme for a grant towards the Operation Wallasea trip to Mexico in July 2025. A grant of just over £35,000 had been received and may allow more students to participate. As terms of the grant, it was reported that the School would have to prioritise disadvantaged and SEND students. If the grant was applied evenly, it would bring the cost of the trip down from £3,200 to around £2,000 per student. Additional details were also received on a new Year 8 STEM trip to the Euro Space Centre in Belgium in January 2026.

27. **Decision.** The list of residential and overseas trips for 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 15 – TRUSTEE REPORTS

28. **Item 15.1 – Trustee Visits.** Two Trustees – Priya Rangaswamy and Steve Miles - had made formal visits to the School since the last meeting and the content of their reports were noted.

29. **Item 15.2 – Trustee Training.** It was reported that since the last meeting, Svetlana Warhurst had undertaken NGA SEND and safeguarding training courses. All 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.

30. **Item 15.3 – Safeguarding.** A written report was received from Aisha Sohail, Safeguarding Link Trustee, of her termly meeting with Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) on 22nd May 2024. The report had been discussed at the recent Staff & Student Matters Committee the previous week.

31. **Item 15.4 – SEND.** Svetlana Warhurst, the SEND Link Trustee, presented meeting notes from her visit with the SENCO on 16th June 2024. The development of the SEND Hub was commended. There were now 48 students on the SEND Register, up one from the last meeting, and 72 students on the Normal Ways of Working register, up from 65. Details of main issues discussed at the meeting were summarised. The work of the new SENDCo was congratulated.

32. **Item 15.5 – Parents' Association (PA) Matters.** The Business Manager reported that the PA had had another successful fundraising year and were hoping to raise over £30,000 by the end of the academic year. The PA had been very supportive in funding a number of items requested by the School including £5,000 worth of modern foreign languages textbooks as the curriculum was changing next year, this had greatly helped the School budget.

33. **Item 15.6 – Building a Future for our Community Committee (BFCC).** The Business Manager advised that the BFCC had not met recently but that their focus continued to be the swimming pool. A recent student Swimathon had raised over £6,000 towards the pool fund. The Chair noted that interest had to be maintained in the swimming pool project.

ITEM 16 – ACADEMY BOARD SUB-COMMITTEES

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

- a. The Curriculum Committee meetings held on 15th May 2024,
- b. The Facilities & Finance Committee meetings held on 24th April & 19th June 2024,
- c. The Staff & Student Matters Committee meeting held on 13th March 2024, and
- d. The Management Committee meeting held on 7th June 2024.

ITEM 17 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

ACTION

35. Associate Member Farewell. The Clerk advised that a formal farewell for Mary Argent, former Associate Member, was to be incorporated into the Junior Speech Day for Year 10 on the afternoon of Wednesday 16th July. Trustees were encouraged to attend and were requested to **advise** the Clerk if they would be at the event.

All

ITEM 18 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

36. Decision. It was **agreed** that the next Board of Trustees meeting would be held at 8.00am on Friday 18th October 2024.

All

The meeting closed at 9.45am.

Steve Miles, Chair of Trustees

18th October 2024