

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of the Academy Board Annual Conference held at the School at 9.00am on Saturday 8th June 2024

Present:	Steve Miles Stephen Lawlor Andrew Bonwick, Richard Brown, Margaret Cousins, Niamh Dobson, Melanie Gulliver, Funmi Osilaja, Priya Rangaswamy, Svetlana Warhurst	Chair of Governors Headteacher
In Attendance:	Jo Cross Fiona Harrison Michael Palmer Melissa Mulgrew Wendy Newton	Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum) Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) Assistant Headteacher (Head of Sixth Form) Business Manager Clerk to Governors
Apologies:	Sarah De Souza-Ingle, Jason Oster, Aisha Sohail, Manish Unhale Adam Selby (Assistant Headteacher (T&L and CPD))	

INTRODUCTION

1. The Chair opened by thanking everyone for their attendance and advised that the focus of the Conference was the Sixth Form Development Strategy, including retention and recruitment. Trustees recognised that the Sixth Form was key to the School especially financially. The ideal for the School was for all students to remain for seven years, from Year 7 through to Year 13; however, as happens in state and independent girls' schools across the country, some girls do decide to join co-ed schools for their A levels. There were to be discussions at the Conference on both the retention of Year 11 students and the recruitment of new students for Year 12. There was also to be a session of safeguarding training for Trustees in the afternoon.

(Clerk's Note – All PowerPoint presentations are available on the Trustee Portal.)

SIXTH FORM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

CONTEXT

2. The Headteacher gave background information from other SSGS schools on the issue of student migration after Year 11 and advised it was a nationwide and long-established reality. It was reported that even when girls' schools allowed boys to enter their sixth forms, students were still leaving after Year 11 to join co-ed schools. Extracts from the current 2022-26 School Strategic Plan and the 2023-24 School Development Plan (SDP) were shown which highlighted the areas of focus relating to Sixth Form retention and recruitment. This topic would continue in the 2024-25 SDP. It was stated that CCHS is in a position of strength on all key measures: parent survey, public examination outcomes, the recent Ofsted inspection, etc.

3. Details were then received on national GCSE examination results and where CCHS was ranked in various different listings. It was noted that CCHS students needed to recognise how good they were academically and that they would achieve equally as good, or more likely better, results if they remained at CCHS for their A level studies. The Headteacher reminded Trustees of the School's aim to have at least 320 students in the Sixth Form, although 340+ was feasible, and that currently there were 315 students in the Sixth Form. Trustees were also reminded that, following the School expansion, Year 11 in September 2024 would be the first cohort of 180 students, reaching Year 12 in September 2025. It was noted that it would be interesting to see the effect of the larger cohort on the whole Sixth Form retention situation. The Sixth Form is significant in relation to reputation as parents look at A level results for school comparison purposes.

4. The Headteacher re-iterated that the situation of students leaving after Year 11 was found elsewhere and that the students held all the power in relation to changing schools. The various

ACTION

other sixth form options which attracted CCHS Year 11 students and the reasons they left were summarised. A question was raised relating to student demographics in future years and it was confirmed that Chelmsford was in an area of student growth. The Chair noted that the peak of Year 11 student losses followed the introduction of the IB but that numbers were now more consistent, and queried how the current losses were proportionally to the increasing student figures. It was suggested that it was much the same level, but that September 2025 would be a significant point for comparison. The Headteacher reported that a previous 2-year dip in weaker A level results had also hindered retention. It was stressed that the Admissions Code allows a student to leave and go to another school for sixth form studies and students were now aware of this fact. Some Year 11 CCHS students left after five years without even informing the School of their departure, and this was only confirmed when they did not appear in September for Year 12. It was stated that for most students it was better for them to stay at CCHS unless there was a significant reason such as family relocation or a subject choice. Information was received on 2015-2022 student numbers relating to the Year 11 to 12 transition point.

5. The Oxbridge context was briefly covered as it was recognised as being important to parents and students. The number of Oxbridge places achieved in recent years were received and noted as being erratic. The School was now doing more work in the Main School to identify students who may wish to proceed down the Oxbridge route in the Sixth Form. A SWOT analysis of the Sixth Form situation was received in conclusion.

FINANCIAL LANDSCAPE

6. The Business Manager advised that Sixth Form funding was complex and very hard to forecast. There were many inputs into the Sixth Form funding formula and information of the most important areas for CCHS were explained. Student numbers were multiplied by the funding rate and then additional factors came into play. The basic funding rate for most (99.67%) CCHS Sixth Form students was Band 5 and would be £4,843 in September 2024. A smaller number of students fell into Band 4 which would be £4,006 in September 2024. Programme Cost Weighting, Large Programme Funding, Advanced Maths Premium and High Value Course Premium were additional streams of funding which were added to the basic funding but was dependant on which courses were being taken. A new Core Maths Funding grant was to be introduced in September 2024. Details of the different funding rates and when they could be applied were explained.

7. Trustees discussed the various funding streams and noted the high proportion of the specialist grants against the basic funding. The additional grants have a significant impact on the overall budget. It was stressed that the grants were funded on a one-year basis and could be cut at any point. The funding allocations for 2023-24 and 2024-25 were noted. The Business Manager highlighted that in terms of the School's overall budget, Sixth Form funding amounted to just under £2million of the total CCHS income of £8million. Trustees noted the significance of the Sixth Form funding. It was confirmed that there were no other streams of additional funding that the School was not receiving, the only exception to this was D&T which the CCHS does not teach. It was noted how the CCHS students trend towards STEM subjects and that this assisted the overall financial situation. One selling point for the School was deemed to be how the students could usually be accommodated for the subject courses they wished to take; this was not always the case in other schools. Trustees asked how the information previously discussed was passed to parents as they may be able to influence their daughter's choice of Sixth Form. It was confirmed that information was published at events and through the School website and its social media.

SIXTH FORM ADMISSIONS PRACTICE

8. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) presented information on the huge number of activities undertaken by the School relating to the Sixth Form retention and recruitment process. The process started in the September of Year 11 with the launch of the Sixth Form prospectus. Other significant events during the year included: the Open Evening in October, the Oxbridge Evening and Insights Evening for new students in January, Year 11 to 12 Transition Meetings in February, Sixth Form Taster lessons in March, and the Sixth Form Induction Day in June. Details of the various events were received and discussed. The extensive outreach work undertaken throughout the year to interested external students was highlighted. Attendance statistics were received on

the number of Year 11 events undertaken and the conversion rate into firm admissions in Year 12. It was reported that 40% of external students attending the January 2023 Insights Evening converted into admissions in September 2023, and 32% of external students attending the March 2023 Taster lesson day converted into admissions in September 2023.

9. The Conference was advised that there had been a total of 213 applicants on results day in August 2023. As at the end of May 2024 there had been 390 external applicants to the Sixth Form – 212 for the 4 A level Pathway and 178 for the 3 A level Pathway. It was stressed that the bigger pool of applicants the better at this stage. These students were required to upload their GCSE results to CCHS in August and this became to final pool from which offers were made. Trustees were reminded of the applicants who changed their mind after enrolment day. It was stated that commitment of money on enrolment day, to such things as the uniform, would help identify those students who were serious about remaining at the school. It was hoped that the message that there were very high numbers of students wishing to join CCHS may show to the current Year 11 students that there was a need to commit to their Sixth Form place. It was noted that the uncertainty arising from current Year 11 to Year 12 places was detrimental in relation to potential new external students, and that the message should be passed to Year 11 students that they could end up losing their Sixth Form place. The Conference discussed the general issue of Sixth Form places and the issue of non-engagement by Year 11 students not intending to enter the Sixth Form in Year 12. It was reported that the concept of CCHS being an 11 to 18 years School was stressed to the students in the Main School and that all students were part of a whole school community. Trustees thanked the Headteacher and members of SLT for their continuing hard work in respect of Sixth Form retention and recruitment.

10.30am – 11.45am – The Conference adjourned for coffee and then split into three sub-committee groups to discuss the Sixth Form Development Strategy in relation to their own specific areas of interest.

FEEDBACK

10. Members of each sub-committee group fed back the discussions of their groups to the full Conference and their suggestions are collated in Annex A to these minutes.

12.30pm – 1.15pm – The Conference adjourned for lunch, and Richard Brown left the Conference.

SAFEGUARDING

11. After the lunch break, Fiona Harrison, Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) and Designated Safeguarding Lead, presented Level 2 Safeguarding and Prevent refresher training to the Trustees. Particular emphasis was placed on the Trustees' role in relation to safeguarding.

CONCLUSION

12. To conclude, the Chair of Trustees thanked everyone for attending the Conference and for the work of all the members of SLT.

The Conference concluded at 2.00pm.

Annex A – Summary of the Board Sub-Committee Discussions.

S Miles
Chair of Governors 5th July 2024

STRATEGIC PLAN – GOVERNOR CONFERENCE – CURRICULUM COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

Annex A – Summary of the Board Sub-Committee Discussions.

<p>What more can we do with our academic provision (curriculum offer and teaching & learning practice) to retain current students and recruit new students? <i>(Actions to include communications and PR points to ensure students and their parents understand our USP, strengths and ambitions)</i></p>			
Objectives	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Develop the GCSE-A level transition experience	<p>ED trip to Cambridge - return to KS3?</p> <p>Increase the marketing for the work we do for STEP and entrance tests, very unique. (Open evening). Large number of students to top universities. Capitalise on Arkwright scholarships etc - what else takes place?</p> <p>Publicise T&L extending beyond the curriculum</p> <p>Consider - what does success look like individually (some may be Oxbridge - other aspirations). Market what else we do - we have excellent academic records but it's the other things we do that make this experience unique.</p> <p>Broad range of universities on offer, great success in London universities. Apprenticeships.</p>		
Develop our curriculum offer, including reviewing and selecting the most appropriate specifications	<p>Core Maths.</p> <p>Forst year of A Level PE</p>		

STRATEGIC PLAN – GOVERNOR CONFERENCE – CURRICULUM COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

	<p>Languages offer in the Sixth Form – should we consider a GCSE, for example Italian. (no longer offer Italian or Russian). Can we harness our existing colleagues to teach other subjects.</p> <p>Could GCSE Music be an additional subject for the extra curricular option for those who didn't take it in the first instance?</p> <p>Do we understand the subjects that students would like to take but we don't offer, for example Sociology.</p>		
<p>Develop digital learning opportunities, including AI and academic honesty</p>	<p>Use of technology in admissions process indicates forward thinking, up to date.</p> <p>How can we resource students and teachers to enable a full digital learning strategy.</p> <p>Could this be an area for distinction for our Sixth Form? Digital Learning/ Cost etc. iPad scheme for the Sixth Form?</p> <p>Responsible AI.</p>		
<p>Develop teaching & learning practice, including adaptive teaching</p>	<p>Individual learning – MTT</p> <p>Levelling up with the London academies – does our technology match that seen in the newer institutions? How can this be financed?</p>		
<p>Develop assessment practice,</p>			

STRATEGIC PLAN – GOVERNOR CONFERENCE – CURRICULUM COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

including self-assessment, peer marking and formative assessment			
Other ideas			

STRATEGIC PLAN – GOVERNOR CONFERENCE – FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

How else can we develop and improve our campus and facilities for our Sixth Form students?

(Actions to include communications and PR points to ensure students and their parents understand our USP, strengths and ambitions)

Objectives	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Develop the JM Library	Limited opportunity to develop further.		
Improve study spaces	Artwork to soften environment		
Develop IT facilities and digital learning opportunities	Increased WiFi bandwidth ? AI driven learning platforms (e.g. Uplearn) USB sockets.		
Improve social spaces	More artwork to soften the environment. ? Open up old café area in SF house for more Year 12 social space.		
Develop food and refreshments offering	Continued engagement with SF Council to adapt offering (e.g. pot noodles introduced this year)		
Other ideas	More pictures of facilities – we have a lot to offer compared to other schools & need better PR on this. QR code for sixth form only spaces (library, common rooms, Costa, fitness suite, outdoor spaces (albeit not sixth form only), study centre, loft) SF council survey would help on all areas above.	Develop marketing and PR work by employing expert in house support to ensure nuanced and appropriate messages from and about CCHS reach multiple audiences.	

What else can we do with our pastoral provision, student enrichment and advancement opportunities (including UCAS) to retain current students and recruit new students?

(Actions to include communications and PR points to ensure students and their parents understand our USP, strengths and ambitions)

Objectives	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Develop pastoral provision	Team building event for new Year 12. Emphasise opportunity for new friendship groups and new opportunities. Explore communicating even further with parents and prospective students about nature of CCHS provision in terms of pastoral care as well as academic achievement at eg Insights Evening.		
Develop a wellbeing programme	Working to implement fully 'Wellbeing Award' work - SF students working with younger students and also learning about their own m/h needs.		
Develop academic enrichment, including lectures	Explore further opportunities for Careers work - eg engaging further with local employers. Ensure best use made of Alumnae network to build links and examples.	Alumnae networking event in London?	
Develop extra-curricular opportunities, including sport	Possibly publicise more about extra-curricular to parents on social media?		
Develop UCAS preparation and careers support	Work in train to develop prep for highly competitive courses throughout the school.		
Other ideas	Mentoring work; Year 12 supporting younger students		