

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 1st March 2024

Present: Steve Miles Chair of Trustees
Svetlana Warhurst Vice Chair of Trustees
Stephen Lawlor Headteacher
Andrew Bonwick Chair of Curriculum Committee
Richard Brown Chair of Facilities & Finance Committee (T)
Sarah de Souza-Ingle Chair of Staff & Student Matters 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)

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. There were no apologies for absence, all committee members were present.

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 MEETING

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2023 were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

4. There were no matters arising from the previous meeting not covered in the meeting.

ITEM 5 – CHAIR'S ACTION

5. There had been no Chair's Actions since the last meeting.

ITEM 6 – OFSTED

6. The Ofsted report for the inspection on 23rd & 24th January was received. It was confirmed that there was no reference to previous inspections as they had occurred prior to CCHS becoming an Academy. The Headteacher advised that since the inspection SLT had prepared a reflections document where notes on the visit were being kept as reference for future inspections. Lessons had been learnt about general visit logistics and needing additional support for SLT during the visit. A new approach for School evidence documentation is being worked on. The inspection process had been very technical, and questioning had been very closely linked to the Ofsted grade criteria. Trustees queried if any areas had arisen which needed more consideration by the School. It was stated that the Careers provision was one area for ongoing development. Ofsted had recognised that the context of the School was such that most students continue into higher education and this affected what careers provision was appropriate for the CCHS students. The Committee discussed the Careers support currently given.

7. It was noted that the Ofsted inspection team had personal experience of selective education which was considered beneficial. The knowledge and attitude of the Ofsted team was commended, and it was confirmed that there had been no negative experiences during the inspection. Trustees commended the outcome of the Ofsted inspection and confirmed the report was a true reflection of the School, its staff and students. The hard work and commitment required by the SLT to attain the 'Outstanding' Ofsted grading was recognised the Committee and was to be celebrated.

ACTION

ITEM 7 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

ACTION

8. The Business Manager reported that finances continued to be tight but were trending towards break even at the end of the financial year. Work had started on the budget for 2024-25 and it was stressed that funding had not kept pace with inflation, therefore finances would continue to be tight. Actual figures had not yet been received for the 2024-25 Sixth Form funding or the grant for the April 2024 Teachers' Pensions increase. A recent DfE suggestion for a 1.2% maximum pay increase for teachers in September 2024 was considered to be sustainable from the budget, if it occurred. The Headteacher advised that the proposed teachers' pay increase was very likely to lead to more industrial action by the NEU in the Autumn Term.

9. Minibus Lease – Decision. The Business Manager advised that a final one-year extension had been arranged for the current School minibus lease to July 2025 but that a new lease would be required at that point. Financial details of possible lease agreements were received and discussed. A large increase in price was reported from the current lease cost of £395 per month to £715 per month in July 2025. It was **agreed** that the Business Manager could place a Ford minibus order with PHVC for July 2025 at the price quoted.

M Mulgrew

10. School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool Checklist (SRMST) – Decision. The proposed 2024 SRMST submission was reviewed and the answers noted. There was only one non-compliant item which related to the Trust's postponed AGM. The School's planned remedial action was, however, within acceptable DfE and Companies House guidelines. A question on SLT benchmarking was queried and it was confirmed that benchmarking was undertaken, but that it was difficult to compare schools due to the differences in staffing structures and individual school contexts. The Headteacher advised that the SSGS group was currently undertaking an SLT benchmarking exercise, the results of which would be presented once received. The Committee **approved** the upload of the 2024 SRMST to DfE as presented by the Business Manager.

M Mulgrew

11. Water Contract – Decision. The School's water contract was up for renewal in April 2024 and details of new Zenergi quotes were reviewed and discussed. The Committee **agreed** to remain with the School's current water provider, Water2Business, who were the lowest quote.

M Mulgrew

12. Art Lift Repair- Decision. The quotes received for the repair of the Art lift, which had ranged from £22,000 - £70,000, had been revisited by Business Manager and the Site Manager. It was now proposed to undertake a refurbishment of the current lift at a cost of £22,000 rather than buying a new replacement lift in order to fulfil the original DDA requirements and was the most cost-effective solution. The Committee **approved** expenditure of £22,000 for the repair of the Art lift.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 8 – CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

13. The outcome of the 2023-24 CIF bids was still awaited. It was thought that the bid for the replacement of the School boilers was unlikely to succeed but that a second bid for the replacement of the Art Block windows had a better chance. The CIF bid outcome was due in April 2024 at the earliest. The Business Manager advised that the School was required to have a climate action plan decarbonisation strategy in place by next year, and this had led to seeing if the use of photovoltaic (PV) panels and air source heat pumps might be possible for the swimming pool which could be more cost effective than gas. It was reported that the gas contract for the pool was due for renewal in September 2024 and was expected to triple in price from £9000 to £30,000 per year which would be unsustainable. Investigations into alternative energy strategies were currently underway by the School and were discussed by the Committee including additional PV panels, battery storage of excess solar energy and dual tariffs. It was reported that the School community was not engaging with the current swimming pool fund-raising initiative and it was hoped that a campaign focused on a green solution may be better received.

ITEM 9 – EXAMINATIONS

14. The Deputy Headteacher (Academic) reported that Year 10 School examinations were currently underway with the first cohort of 180 students, which was good preparation for public examinations in Summer 2025. The remodelled Old Hall was providing a vital space for examination purposes.

The Curriculum Committee had recently reviewed the Year 11 and 13 mock examination outcomes which were within an acceptable level of tolerance but very slightly lower than in 2023. A large intervention process had been put in place, linked to the School's Achievement Strategy, for students identified as needing extra support and additional Year 11 and Year 13 mock assessments were to be held.

15. An update on the public examinations JCQ appeals process from last Summer was received. Two paper-based appeals for History had been successful but panel appeals for English and Music had not. The whole process was deemed a beneficial CPD experience, and much was learnt from the process. The Committee were reminded of the School's Achievement Strategy's varying approaches for each year group based on their different Covid experiences. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) gave an update on student wellbeing in relation to examinations. Despite a few individually challenged students in Year 10, the cohort was coping well. Deadlines and mock examinations put additional pressures on all examination cohorts and added to student anxiety. The School had put extra support in place to assist with mental health issues during examinations.

ITEM 10 – GOVERNING BODY MATTERS

16. **Change of Title – Decision.** The need to formally change the title of 'Governor' to 'Trustee' was raised in order to match DfE terminology. The Committee **agreed** that the change of title would be with immediate effect and that any references to governor in current CCHS documentation would be read to mean trustee until documents were next formally reviewed and amended.

Clerk

17. **Item 10.1 – Board Membership – Decision.** The terms of office and committee membership of the Trust Board as at 1st February 2024 were reviewed and discussed. The Clerk highlighted that both Steve Miles and Andrew Bonwick had terms of office ending in the Summer Term. The issue was discussed and both Trustees advised they were happy to continue. The Chair advised that whilst he was happy to continue as a trustee in the short-term the Academy Board should begin to think about succession planning. It was noted that with the new Academy structure, the new Members would be required to offer new terms of office for trustees rather than the Management Committee as had happened previously. The Clerk **agreed** to raise the issue of trustee re-appointments with the Members. It was also **agreed** that the Clerk would include details of the Members in the Trust Board membership document. It was reported that there were currently three vacant Trustee positions which resulted in two sub-committees currently being one member short. It was confirmed that the smaller sub-committee membership was not causing any adverse issues. The Committee discussed that vacancy situation and the need to have more externally-connected trustees. It was noted that a number of Link Trustee roles also needed to be filled: Wellbeing, H&S, EDI and Careers. It was suggested that new external trustees with experience in these areas might be beneficial and should be investigated before the roles are allocated to current Trustees. SLT and Committee members agreed to give the matter of external trustees some consideration.

Clerk
Clerk

18. **Item 10.2 – Academy Structure.** The Committee reviewed new terms of reference for the new Academy Members which were to be presented at the next Full GB meeting. The Clerk advised that there may be an issue relating to Members undertaking the performance management of the Headteacher but further investigations were being made and would report back in due course.

ITEM 11 – GOVERNING BODY MEETING

19. The proposed agendas for the AGM and Full GB meetings to be held on Friday 22nd March 2024 were reviewed and **approved** as presented. It was reported that one additional item on benchmarking may still be added to the Full GB agenda, if it is available in time.

ITEM 12 – GOVERNOR CONFERENCE

20. **Decision.** A new date for the previously postponed annual Governor Conference was still under investigation. The School had been unable to accommodate any Saturdays during the first half of the Summer Term. The Clerk **agreed** to canvass the Committee for possible dates in the second half of the Summer Term. (**Clerk's Note:** The Governor Conference has since been agreed as Saturday 8th June.)

Clerk

ITEM 13 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

21. Production of the Mid-Year Review of the School Development Plan 2023-24 had been delayed by the recent Ofsted inspection and would be received at the Full GB meeting on 22nd March.

ITEM 14 – POLICIES

22. Item 14.1 – GDPR Retention Schedule - Decision. The GDPR Retention Schedule, an ECC model policy, was presented for review and **approved** as presented with a 2-year review.

23. Item 14.2 – Freedom of Information Publication Scheme - Decision. The School's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme had been updated and was presented for review. The Clerk **agreed** to change references to Governors to say Trustees and, with those amendments, the Freedom of Information Scheme was **approved** with a 4-year review.

ITEM 15 – GDPR

24. The Business Manager reported that GDPR issues had been quiet. There had been two recent Freedom of Information requests, one relating to primary schools and the Year 7 Entrance Test, and the other request related to prejudicial incidents. More enquiries were expected in the near future following the allocation of Year 7 places in September 2024.

ITEM 16 – RISK REGISTER

25. Decision. The Management Committee section of the CCHS Risk Register was reviewed. It was noted that following the change of Academy Trust structure some of the risks were now the responsibility of Academy Members. The terminology relating to 'Governors' also needed to be revised to say 'Trustees'. The Clerk **agreed** to review the document and send it to the Chair for further review prior to receipt at the next Full GB meeting.

ITEM 17 – PARENTAL FEEDBACK

26. The Headteacher reminded Trustees that recent parental feedback was now uploaded onto the School's website for public viewing. Recent parent comments had related to the Ofsted inspection. The results of the annual parent survey had also been put onto the website. Ofsted had noted 98% agreement for high standards of behaviour in the School from parent feedback during the Ofsted inspection. This was considered an unusually high engagement figure for parent feedback for an Ofsted survey.

27. The Headteacher reported that there had been nothing of concern to report to the Committee since the last meeting, any minor parental issues were handled by relevant members of the SLT. Post-pandemic family issues occasionally gave the School cause for concern and required intervention by the School's pastoral team. There was increasing concern about parental attitudes towards student attendance, requesting long periods of time off school for family trips. Details were received on how such requests were handled. Some requests were refused and would lead to fines. It was confirmed that any fine money went to the local authority. The Chair requested that the School keeps track of all requests and to report trends to the Trustees. A Trustee query was raised on the recent DfE guidance on the use of mobile phones in schools and the issue was discussed. It was reported that mobile phones generally did not give the School cause for concern and that adverse issues tended to arise outside the school day. The School is undertaking some work with staff about the use of such devices as learning tools in the classroom.

ITEM 18 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

28. Ofsted Report. It was confirmed to Trustees that the recent Ofsted report was being sent out to any prospective Sixth Form students and publicised whenever possible. The Committee noted the positive messages within the report which should encourage external students.

ACTION

Clerk

**Clerk
Chair**

29. Year 7 Offers. The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) advised that it was National Year 7 Offer Day and that there were 18 successful Pupil Premium students who had put CCHS as their first choice of school for September 2024. The Committee commended the School on this success.

ACTION

ITEM 19 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

30. Decision. The date of the next meeting was agreed as 8.00am on Friday 7th June 2024.

All

The meeting closed at 9.35am.

S Miles, Chair

7th June 2024