



THE CRYPT SCHOOL

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 26th February 2024, 4.20pm – 6.40pm, The Crypt School

MINUTES: Part 1

Present: Richard James (Chair), Sheila Bradburn, Ahmed Goga, Ray Fish, Ciaran Hollywood, Sonia Macleod, Amit Ray, Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Gordon Taylor, Kate Williams (Associate Governors); Genevieve Chukwuonye, Sam Powell (Student Governors)

Attendees: Grant Stevens (Member), Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk)

Apologies: Lee Hill, Colin Davies, Suzanne Aspden

Absent: Virginia Crellin

Quorum: Four

	Item	ACTION
1.	<u>Apologies</u> As above.	
2.	<u>Declarations of interest</u> As per the register. Four Trustees present are parents/carers of the School.	
3.	<u>Agree minutes of meeting 11.12.2023 (Parts 1 and 2)</u> Approved.	
4.	<u>Matters arising from previous minutes (papers 1a and 1b) (part):</u> <u>Table of actions arising from Governor visits and reviews:</u> the Chair asked that outstanding actions be completed by the end of this academic year.	PS
5.	<u>Student Governors' report</u> The Student Governors presented their report on events taking place in school. Student Governor said that Y13 students across the year group were now working hard for their final exams. They had received lots of useful careers advice from Mr Germaine and Ms Michaluk as they prepared to move on from the school. They felt that the standards cards introduced this year had worked well, with behaviour generally being good. Student Governor also said that the enrichment experience provided in the Sixth Form had been extremely beneficial to them and the School should keep encouraging students to get involved. Applications for the next Student Executive were now under way. There was a good turnout for prefect duties, and this was being monitored by the Student Executive. The Student Governors felt that Bromcom was now working well and that students had become used to it. Trustee asked for examples of enrichment activities. The Student Governors said that the current year 12 did a sports/activity-based enrichment on Wednesday afternoon and a more academic choice on Thursday afternoon, e.g. core maths AS	

	<p>level, EPQ. The School was also running subject-based Olympiads that encouraged students to use their curriculum-based knowledge.</p> <p>Trustee asked why some prefects were not fulfilling their duties. The Student Governors said that there was now stricter enforcement, with prefect status being removed from persistent offenders; and that they had been encouraged by the Head of Sixth Form to be more rigorous in selecting as prefects those students who were applying for the right reasons. The Senior Deputy Head confirmed that there had been very good attendance on duties this year.</p>	
6.	<p><u>Headmaster's report (paper 2)</u></p> <p>The Headmaster thanked the Students Governors for all their work and presented his report. He added that, while costings were still being developed, the likely cost of a dining room extension was some £250-260k.</p> <p>Trustee asked if geographical data was available for the new Y7 intake. The Headmaster said that this would go to the Admissions Committee.</p> <p>Trustee asked about the report of lost registers on Bromcom in the Pupil Welfare Committee minutes. The Senior Deputy Head confirmed that registers were still taken in hard copy and data was not missing.</p> <p>Trustee welcomed the recent girls survey and said it should be repeated consistently on a regular basis to allow trends to be identified. The Headmaster agreed and suggested it could be undertaken in October, February and May each year (action). Trustee asked the Student Governors about their awareness of sexual harassment in school. Student Governor said they were not aware of any cases; they said it was important to keep reinforcing the messages that it's unacceptable behaviour and that victims should feel confident to report any incidents. Trustee asked if the message that this behaviour won't be tolerated was getting through to students; Student Governor said the message was being delivered, but some students didn't listen. The Senior Deputy Head (PS) said that, where a sanction for such behaviour was issued, there was also an educational element to ensure that the perpetrator understood why it was wrong. Trustee asked if there was an increasing problem of sexual harassment or if it was now being noticed more. The Senior Deputy Head said that both were probably true – there was more reporting as awareness grew, and students were also testing boundaries. Trustee asked how widespread the problem was. PS said that it was not widespread and any instances were dealt with. Trustee asked the Student Governors where it was taking place; Student Governor said that it was probably mostly online. The Headmaster said that the School was reviewing the Behaviour Policy and School values for the coming year; as part of this, the behaviours that students were expected to demonstrate would be set out more clearly.</p> <p>Trustee asked if there was a suggested financial target for the new fundraising project; the Headmaster said he had suggested £1m, but this would take time (perhaps 5 years).</p> <p>The Headmaster reported on proposals, which were being costed, to provide an additional 6-8 girls' toilets in school by converting some changing room showers and developing an additional facility in the DT area. This would take the School above the recommended provision for the number of female students; PS</p>	Headmaster

	confirmed that this would remain the case even with the additional girls entering Y7 in September.	
7.	<p><u>Committee reports (papers 3a-c, 4, 5)</u></p> <p>Trustee noted that girls had not performed as well as boys in Maths P8, but nationally this picture is reversed. Kate Williams (Head of Maths Department) said that the Y11 girls were less confident in maths than the boys. In Y13 the girls had higher absences than the boys, which was affecting their performance, but this was not the case in Y12. Trustee asked if that pattern affected all subjects. The Headmaster said that there were some significant attendance issues in Y13 but these were a relatively small number of students; this would affect their grades and some 25-30 students might sit AS rather than A level exams. Student Governor asked if was the case that sitting AS exams cost more. The Headmaster said that late entries were more expensive, rather than the AS qualification, but cost was not the primary factor in deciding the best route for each student.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Finance Director's report (papers 6 & 7)</u></p> <p>The Finance Director (JH) presented her report. She said that agency staffing costs were much higher than expected for both teaching and support staff, so she was not expecting a surplus this year. Trustee asked why administrative staff overtime was high; JH said that there had been two bereavements this year. She reported that the School would be consulting staff on reducing overtime rates to the level typically paid by other schools.</p> <p>Trustee asked what the picture was expected to be at the end of the year and going forward. JH said this would depend on the School's ability to control its supply costs, as well as the cost of increments; she expected to have a better idea in about six weeks' time. The Headmaster said that the upcoming increase in grade requirements for Sixth Form entry might reduce the Y12 intake in September, and suggested that the Board consider consulting on increasing the PAN to 32 students per tutor group from 2026, thereby increasing the PAN by 50 overall as the change worked through. Trustee said that additional students would increase operational costs and pressure on facilities, which would need to be balanced against the additional income. Trustee asked about the contribution of appeals to increasing the number of students above 150, the current PAN. The Headmaster said that appeals varied year to year and were not consistent in delivering extra students; increasing the PAN would provide more of a guarantee. He said that the new Y7 intake included around 25 students from Avon, 11 from Stroud, a significant number from Swindon but a reduction in students from Cheltenham. Trustee asked if this resulted from a fall in applications from Cheltenham or reflected differences in ability; the Headmaster said he didn't yet know. It was agreed that admissions should be added to the agenda of a future meeting this year (<u>action</u>).</p>	Clerk
9.	<u>Key Performance Indicators (paper 8) (in confidential minutes)</u>	
10.	<p><u>School Improvement Plan: Progress Report (paper 9)</u></p> <p>PS presented the report. He said that the School nurse was not well used at present and that this may in part reflect problems with access - the room was at one end of the school. The School was working to raise awareness e.g. through Assembly. The counselling service was generally full. Trustee asked if the School knew what the nurse was used for; PS said he would ask. The nurse would pass on any concerns to the School while respecting the confidentiality of students. Trustee asked if safeguarding concerns overrode confidentiality; PS confirmed this was the case.</p>	

	<p>Trustee asked the Student Governors if they were made aware of the alternatives to university available to them beyond Y13. Student Governors confirmed this and said they had been given an impartial presentation in Y12 setting out the various options. Trustee asked if students were given time to complete UCAS applications; Student Governor confirmed this and said support for degree apprenticeship applications was more individual. Trustee noted that degree apprenticeship applications were typically underway at this time of year; they suggested that a change of culture would be needed to reflect this in the school programme and that the top degree apprenticeships should be seen as the same gold standard as Oxbridge. PS said the School was proud of all its students and aimed to help them achieve whatever was best for them.</p> <p>Trustee asked that the report on progress use specific figures where possible (action).</p>	PS
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11.	<p><u>Procedure and timing for election of chair and vice chair; future appointments to the Board – timing (paper 10)</u></p> <p>Trustees agreed that the next Chair should be elected with effect from the end of Term 6 this year. Trustee asked whether it was possible to bring in an outside candidate for the role; the Clerk confirmed this and said they would have to become a Trustee and would still have to be elected by the Board. The Headmaster said his preference would be for someone with prior knowledge of the Board. Trustee asked if the Headmaster would have a vote. The Clerk said that, as the Head was automatically a Trustee under the Articles of Association, they would have a vote. The Headmaster said he would reflect on this, but was thinking that he would step back from voting and offer support to all candidates.</p> <p>Trustees agreed the following changes to the election procedure in paper 10:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● extend notice of election to three weeks; ● clarify that candidates standing for election still have a vote; ● provide that Trustees unable to attend the election can submit their vote in writing to the Company Secretary in advance of the election. <p>The Chair invited Trustees to notify the Clerk of any other changes proposed to the procedure, which would be confirmed at the next meeting. It was also agreed that the Clerk should circulate contact details (school email accounts and phone) of all Trustees to all of the Board to facilitate communication before an election (action).</p>	Clerk
12.	<p><u>Sixth Form growth and development (paper 11)</u></p> <p>Sonia Macleod presented the report of her visit to review Sixth Form growth and development. Trustee asked how many external applications were expected not to meet the increased entry standard for 2024. The Headmaster said the School had previously turned away quite a few students who had not made the grades, but there was then pressure in popular subjects. Trustees noted the report's recommendations.</p>	11
13.	<p><u>School Resource Management Self-Assessment Dashboard 2022-23 (papers 12a&b)</u></p> <p>Trustees approved the checklist for submission to DfE with one amendment (Member attendance at AGM 100%).</p>	

14.	<u>External review of governance (paper 13)</u> The Chair invited Trustees to send any comments on the report to the Clerk, who would then produce an action table for consideration at the next meeting in April. The report should also be sent to the Members for information (action).	Trustees Clerk
15.	<u>Update on English Department (paper 14)</u> The Chair welcomed the report from the Head of Department, which he felt was very comprehensive, clear and open. The Headmaster said that there was positive momentum and greater cohesion in the Department. He had undertaken observations of the larger GCSE classes and they were going well, with the additional students well integrated. Trustee commented that a possible change to studying Chaucer might not be compatible with tailoring study to support lower ability students.	
16.	<u>Policies for approval: Behaviour Policy (minor change) (paper 15)</u> Trustees approved the revised policy. The Headmaster said that a comprehensive review of the policy was underway for implementation from September 2024.	
17.	<u>Safeguarding report (paper 16)</u> The Chair welcomed this report and the revised style of reporting. Trustee asked about the finding that SEND students are being disproportionately sanctioned for being disruptive in class, and noted that this is also a national pattern. The Headmaster said the School was investigating the reasons behind this and what additional training might be useful. Trustee asked if the same pattern existed for external suspensions; the Headmaster said it did not. Trustee asked about the problem of graffiti mentioned in the report. The Headmaster said that the toilets were being monitored more regularly to address this. PS added that it appeared to be a small minority of students; a few potential culprits had been identified by CCTV but it was hard to prove who was doing it. Ahmed Goga left the meeting.	
18.	<u>Operations Manager report (paper 17) (in confidential minutes)</u>	
19.	<u>Policies reviewed and approved in Term 3 (paper 18)</u> Trustees noted the report.	
20.	<u>Any other business</u> This was the Student Governors' last meeting and the Chair thanked them enormously for their helpful contributions.	
21.	<u>Date of next meeting</u> Full Board Meeting (Evaluation and Strategy) 4.00pm 15 April 2024, The Crypt School	

Signature:

Date: