



GIRLS' LEARNING TRUST

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting Type Trust Board

Date: 8 December 2020 at 7.00pm

Venue: Meeting held via Zoom video conference call

Members: Hamza Aumeer (HA), Alex Clark (AC), Robert Etchell (RE), Sandy Gillett (SG, Chair), Marie Grant (MG), Malcolm Munro (MM), Nigel Pepper (NP), Jennifer Smith (JS) and Philip Taylor (PT, Vice-Chair)

Others present: Helen Latham (HL, Director of Finance and Operations) and Andrew Horrod (AH, Clerk)

* denotes member absent from meeting

Item	Item Description and Minute	Action
1	Apologies for absence and declarations of interest	
	Apologies for lateness were received from MG. There were no declarations of interest.	
2	Minutes of the previous meeting	
2.1	The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2020, for signing by the Chair.	AH
2.2	PT had a few points arising from the minutes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- whether the LGBs appoint their Vice-Chairs; it was confirmed that the Board appoints the LGB Vice-Chairs and this is mentioned within the Governance Handbook (pages 3 and 23).- PT said Laura Sutton had attended the recent HR Committee meeting but he queried whether Laura had actually been formally appointed to the Committee; AH would check. The Board agreed Laura's appointment if it had not already been recorded.- reference paragraph 6.1, PT said he was content with the amendment to paragraph 4.1 of the 24 August Trust Board minutes.	
3	Matters arising from the minutes	
	A matters arising sheet had been circulated and the Board noted that all items had been closed. Further to item 10.2 regarding BTEC results, JS had circulated a note about BTEC courses offered at CHSG and recent results. This information was welcomed and there were no questions from Board members.	

4	Trust Governance and ratification of any recent appointments	
4.1	<p>The GLT's Governance Handbook and Governance Structure document had been circulated.</p> <p><u>Governance Handbook</u></p>	
4.2	<p>The circulated Handbook picked up issues that had been discussed at the last meeting (minute 9 refers). JS took the Board through the highlighted items and other members provided input:</p> <p>Page 11 – JS said this page will be revised as admissions to CHSG now come under the remit of the Trust Admissions Committee; accordingly page 25 will also be amended.</p> <p>Page 13 – the Admissions Policy will now apply to all three schools as per the point above; in addition the SEND Policy is due for review.</p> <p>Page 14 – there were two HR issues here. Firstly, as the Trust now has a race equality steering group, the Equality and Diversity Policy will be referred to the steering group and then be brought back to the policy sub-group and the Board. Secondly, the HR Committee has recently approved pay awards for Trust support staff.</p> <p>Page 20 – regarding non-attendance at meetings, the Trust Governance Committee noted recently that there is provision within the GLT Articles of Association whereby a trustee can be disqualified if he/she has not attended a meeting for six months without good reason; the Board agreed that this should apply to all committees and be mentioned in the Handbook.</p> <p>Page 23 – this now reflected the fact that trustees chair the LGBs.</p> <p>Page 27 – one governor from each school sits on the Finance Committee; MM said he had nominated the new governor from CHSG but unfortunately she has had to resign so he will stay on the Committee for the time being.</p> <p>Page 38, third last bullet point – the monitoring of performance of trustees and governors had been discussed at Governance Committee. It was thought that what had been agreed there resolved the issue however a check would be made. The 'six month threshold' for non-attendance would also be included on page 38.</p>	
4.3	<p>PT asked whether there is a process for removing GLT Members as this did not appear in the Handbook. AH checked the Articles; this issue appeared to be well covered by Articles 15 and 16. JS reported that Angela Attah is due to be appointed as a GLT Member at the AGM immediately following this meeting and SG relayed Angela's background experience for the benefit of other Board members.</p> <p><u>Governance Structure document</u></p>	
4.4	<p>SG said this had been updated and some further revision will be necessary following a check to ensure the constitution of committees matches up with the Handbook and also when vacancies are filled, e.g. on Carshalton LGB. 'Selective schools' would be removed from the Admissions Committee heading on page 2.</p>	
4.5	<p>The Board noted the current position with the circulated documents.</p> <p><i>MG joined the meeting during discussion of this item</i></p>	
5	CEO's report	

5.1	JS introduced her report by saying that it had been an extraordinary school term. It had been dominated by three events: the Covid-19 pandemic, the aftermath of Summer public exams and the Black Lives Matter protests. Her executive summary outlined how staff and students had responded to these challenges. There had also been the selective eligibility tests, which had run smoothly, and admission of Year 7 bulge classes at Carshalton and Nonsuch. The new accommodation on these two sites was now being fully utilised.	
5.2	JS said that due to the pandemic there had been a deterioration in student attendance during the last couple of weeks. Yesterday's figures for students in school were: CHSG – 78%, NHSG – 78%, WHSG – 79%. As of today 111 CHSG students are out of school; at WHSG all of Years 11, 12 and some of Year 13 are out. She would need to check the figures for NHSG. 25 WHSG staff had not been in school today although currently none have got the virus. All this was a result of compliance with Public Health England guidance, which was clear: people need to self-isolate if they have been near a person who has tested positive - less than 2 metres away for 15 minutes or more; or less than 1 metre for any amount of time.	
5.3	JS said the Government had just announced that schools can designate 18 December as an INSET day, to prevent Headteachers having to check on virus Test and Trace at the very end of term. If the Trust Board agrees to this proposal for GLT schools then the lost day of teaching will need to be made up for later. The Board briefly discussed this matter including the potential reaction of parents and use of the Test and Trace mobile phone app in school. On this last point, whilst some employers may request their employees to turn off the app whilst at work, the unions' advice to schools was that for reasons of safety, Heads should not instruct their staff to turn off the app. The Board agreed the INSET day proposal.	
5.4	The report on academic performance began with a table showing numbers of students on roll at each school over the last three years. JS highlighted the rise in the number of English as Additional Language (EAL) students at Nonsuch in 2019/20. This was because of a change in how EAL was defined for the purposes of the question posed to schools. JS corrected the table's heading, the supplied information reflected a census from Autumn 2019 not 2020 and the figures therefore did not include the bulge classes admitted to CHSG and NHSG.	
5.5	Exam results from 2020 with comparative data from previous years were reported. A key point was confirmation from the DfE that the grades awarded in Summer 2020 would not be used to judge a school's performance. Information about CHSG BTEC results had been referred to earlier in the meeting, JS adding that she has agreed with Headteacher Moe Devenney a standard level of reporting so correlations with GCSE results are clearer. There was brief discussion of CHSG and signs of improvement, e.g. in addition to the student going to Oxford on a year's deferred entry, there is another student who has secured an interview for admission in 2021.	
5.6	Exam targets (key performance indicators) for 2021 were reported. NP asked about the WHSG A Level target of 50% A*/A grades, he thought a target of 60% was listed elsewhere. JS said she would follow this up with Headteacher Richard Booth. Information about university entry and the selective eligibility tests (SET) followed. PT asked that in future the	JS

	<p>report includes absolute numbers for university entry as well as percentages. JS agreed to this and provided the Board with an update on the SET, for 2021 admission: 2,261 girls had sat the first test at NHSG and WHSG, then 1,005 girls had been invited back for the second test. Figures for Pupil Premium students who had taken the test were reported. The second stage test papers were currently being marked.</p>	
5.7	<p>The Board noted that this year Nonsuch and Wallington had introduced a new software application called Admissions Plus to support the admissions process. It had been used for applications, enrolment and collating personal information and all of this had worked very successfully. It was pleasing to report that admissions to the Sixth Form across all three schools had increased this year.</p>	
5.8	<p>On attendance, JS said the use of an X in the report table related to Covid-19, when students are self-isolating and working from home, but she would make this clearer in future. The remote learning protocols for each of the three schools were appended to her report. JS said the higher than usual number of fixed term exclusions at CHSG shown in the student welfare table was due to a new behaviour system introduced this year. Feedback from CHSG parents on this was positive.</p>	
5.9	<p>The Board discussed the information shown in the safeguarding table and how safeguarding operated at a time of Covid-19 restriction. JS said that regular contact with vulnerable students continued. Regarding the five cases of allegations against staff, all had been reviewed by the local authority and none had been upheld. It was important to note that if a case does not meet the local authority threshold for action, it does not mean that there cannot be a disciplinary case heard in school.</p>	
5.10	<p>The HR section of the report covered a number of issues. It was pleasing to note that fewer staff had left CHSG in 2019/20 than in 2018/19. MG asked whether exit interviews are carried out, PT replying that they are but recently no member of staff at any of the schools has requested an interview, therefore the HR Committee has asked for further encouragement that they be taken up. The Committee regularly reviews completed exit questionnaires. The Board noted JS's report commentary on the race equality steering group and the appendix regarding diversity and inclusion work going on at Nonsuch. PT agreed to JS's suggestion that the staff ethnicity information in her report also be submitted to HR Committee.</p>	JS
5.11	<p>The final sections of JS's report concerned catch-up funding and the current position with exams 2021 and resumption of Ofsted visits to schools. The Board discussed catch-up funding and some of the linked initiatives being introduced by the GLT's schools. JS acknowledged that there were differences between the schools in terms of these initiatives (e.g. the National Tutoring Programme at CHSG) but there was regular discussion and exchange of ideas at Executive Team. Evaluation of measures went on all the time. HA acknowledged this point, suggesting that the LGBs should receive updates.</p>	
5.12	<p>SG thanked JS for her report.</p>	
6	<p>Feedback from Admissions Committee</p>	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November had been circulated. NP relayed the following main points:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a significant increase in the number of external applicants to NHSG's Sixth Form and the school now has a waiting list. • Nonsuch loses several of its high performing students to the independent sector at Sixth Form level. • It will be interesting to see whether recent events at NHSG affect retention to the Sixth Form next year. NP took PT's point about possible inclusion of this issue in the Risk Register; if so it would sit with the Admissions Committee. • WHSG has admitted a record 255 students into Year 12 and so the Trust may need to review whether additional support is required at some point. 	
7	Feedback from Finance Committee	
7.1	<p>NP said there had been three meetings so far this term. The minutes of the 29 September and 3 November meetings had been circulated. Key points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum departments had not spent all of their Pupil Premium allocations this year; replying to a question from PT, NP said the money is not lost but carried forward to the next year. • There have been some adjustments to the GLT's budget as a result of Covid-19, e.g. an increase in the cleaning budget and a £50k increase for purchase of consumables. Committee members had acknowledged at their most recent meeting on 2 December that funding may need to be set aside for the deployment of more cover supervisors. • Paul Smith from auditors Baxter & Co had attended the December meeting to report on the annual accounts for 2019/20. In financial terms the Trust has been given a clean bill of health and has a good level of reserves. 	
7.2	<p>NP thanked HL and Hamish Lungany, Head of Finance, for their work on the accounts which had been circulated for approval by the Board. The accounts included amendments agreed by the Finance Committee on 2 December. There were two small changes to note: correction of the published admission number to 4,300 and amendment of the start dates for HA and RE as trustees including on page 17 HA's start date as a co-opted trustee, to 2019.</p>	
7.3	<p>Resolved: To approve the revised Trustees' Report and Financial Statements (accounts) for the year ended 31 August 2020, for signing by SG and JS, and to note that the GLT Members will receive the accounts at their meeting immediately following this one.</p>	
8	Feedback from HR Committee	
	<p>PT reported key points from the meeting held on 23 November:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay awards for teaching and support staff had been agreed, the Committee noting the moderation that had been carried out in respect of performance related pay. • Committee members had considered three GLT policies and received an update on staff wellbeing. 	
9	Feedback from the LGBs	

9.1	<p><u>Carshalton</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October had been circulated. MM relayed key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a session on Pupil Premium yesterday which the three governors attending had found very informative. • One to one interventions for students in English, Maths and Science are ongoing. • Safety measures planned for outside the school are on hold due to Covid-19, so this will be revisited in 2021. • CHSG's behaviour policy is having an impact, generally there is more calm around the school. 	
9.2	<p><u>Nonsuch</u></p> <p>Key points from MG:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes of the scheduled meeting on 1 October have been circulated and the LGB held an extra meeting in November to discuss the student protest and its aftermath. • The LGB has a full link governor regime in place. • The ground floor of the new building (classrooms/Sixth Form accommodation) has opened. 	
9.3	<p><u>Wallington</u></p> <p>The minutes of the 10 October meeting had been circulated. Key points from HA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reopening of school in September had gone well. • The LGB has a new Appointed Governor, Imran Ahmad. 	
10	Risk Register	
	<p>The latest version of the Risk Register had been circulated. Apart from the point noted earlier by NP and PT (minute 6), there were no issues to highlight.</p>	
11	Any other business and date of next meeting	
11.1	<p>MM referred to the Scottish Government's decision to cancel Higher exams in 2021, which led to brief discussion of the situation in England. JS said that essentially schools do not know what will happen next year but the Trust will be prepared to run exams as required.</p>	
11.2	<p>SG thanked everyone for their contributions to this evening's meeting and wished them all the best for the festive season. The next Board meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 21 April 2021 at 7pm.</p>	

The meeting ended at 8.40pm

Signed:

Dated:

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