THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 14th October 2024, 4.00pm – 6.28pm, The Crypt School

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Lee Hill (Chair), Sheila Bradburn, Ray Fish, Sonia Macleod, Suzanne Aspden (from presentation), Ciaran Hollywood, Amit Ray, Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Gordon Taylor, Kate Williams (Associate Trustees)
Attendees:	Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk), Robert Biggs (Deputy Head – Academic); Elizabeth Twenaboa, Jack Mitten (Student Governors)
Apologies:	Ahmed Goga, Virginia Crellin
Absent:	None
Quorum:	Four

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** As above, approved by the Board.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** As per the register. Four Trustees present are parents of the School.	
3.	**Student Governors' Report** The Student Governors gave a short oral report. They reported that Y12 and Y7 had both settled in very well. House meetings between Y12 and Y13 and the forthcoming icebreaker were helping the years get to know each other. Student Governor felt that there had been better integration between the two Sixth Form years last year. Trustee asked how this could be improved this year; Student Governor said free periods and the afternoon enrichment sessions offered opportunities for more interaction. The Headmaster (HM) said that the School had stopped having joint year tutor groups since the Covid pandemic. Trustee asked about arrangements for the icebreaker social event and said that concerns had been raised last year about the late finish on a school night and allegations of sexual harassment. They questioned whether it was appropriate for the School to be connected to an event of this kind and felt that inside school social events would be preferable. Robert Biggs (previously Director of Sixth Form) and the HM responded that the sixth forms of many local schools were involved in similar events and that the icebreaker was helpful in promoting integration. There were reputational risks, but students were trusted to act responsibly and were made aware that they were representing the School. The Student Governors left the meeting.	

	PRESENTATION: Understanding the School's Exam and Performance Data Suzanne Aspden joined the meeting. RBi gave a presentation on the 2024 external exam results (hard copy circulated after the meeting). The GCSE results had been very strong (and better than expected) with a provisional Progress 8 score of +0.74; the A level results overall had an Alps score of 4 (very good), which was not as strong as the GCSE results, but still good. Value Added was currently -0.41 for the whole cohort, but was expected to be just positive once DfE data were included. Trustee asked how big the SEN cohort in school was; RBi said it was 13 students overall, a small number so individual students had a significant impact on the overall performance data. Trustee asked if there was a disparity between teachers' assessment of students and actual performance. The HM said that gut grades were probably usually either too optimistic or too pessimistic. However, that year's A level data were about right. RBi said UCAS predicted grades were generally higher than the School's own internal target grades used for tracking. Trustee asked if there was any case where a student didn't get their place because the grade disparity was too great. RBi said no, all students got their destination. Trustee asked whether students studying subjects with low entries could work with peers in other schools to help motivate them and given them a sense of their level. RBi said this had been done in the past with the Oxbridge group and Marling School, and with Philosophy and Ethics students. The HM agreed it was a good idea but it would have to be arranged outside curriculum time (e.g. lunchtime), and was difficult in terms of organisation and cost. He added it might be especially worth considering for Design, Art and Technology. RBi added that all schools were facing the same challenge that certain subjects (science, maths, economics) fill easily and others attracted only low numbers. Trustee asked about the extent of coaching being provided to underperforming staff; the HM said he would request further information (**action**). Trustee asked about other sorts of enrichment being offered for English Literature students. The Senior Deputy Head (PS) said that theatre trips and a visit to the Cheltenham Literature Festival were planned. There were also four acting clubs and two trips in Drama. RBi left the meeting.	**NCD**
4.	**Agree minutes of meeting (1 July 2024 Parts 1 and 2)** Approved without amendment and signed by the Chair.	
5.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** ● **Action table (paper 1)** The HM reported that the Blackbridge Project was moving on swiftly, but the School had not yet been given a cost figure for the School to use the facilities. Trustee asked who was leading on the School's behalf; the HM said that he was because of the financial implication. It was agreed that this should be brought back to a future meeting (**action**).	**Clerk**
6. (part)	**Headmaster's Report (paper 2)** **i) Educational performance** *(No report – covered in presentation)*	

	ii) Other items The HM presented his report. He suggested the Board send a letter of thanks to the Operations Manager and her team for their work overseeing the CIF project and other works in the summer holidays (**action**). He noted that the pressure in curriculum was Maths and Chemistry at A level. The School needed an extra classroom and an extra laboratory and would have to harvest existing rooms to provide this, so difficult decisions over the curriculum lay ahead. Trustees discussed the outreach programme. The HM reported that the programme had not translated into any students passing the test. The Admissions Committee had qualified down to 850 for Pupil Premium students, but this made no difference. Trustee asked if the outreach programme students were far off qualification; the HM said that they were. Some 300 more students had at the test this year and the qualifying standard had been set at 800. Trustee asked if there were more applicants from private schools; the HM said that this might have contributed. There had been a large number of out of county (but not Bristol or Swindon) entries. Even when extending down to rank 1000, there were only 32 Pupil Premium students across all seven grammar schools. The HM pointed to the other benefits of the outreach programme in re-establishing links with local primary schools, developing Sixth Formers as student mentors and attracting considerable support from both parents and the participants, who benefit academically and gain confidence. Trustees suggested that the desired outcomes of the programme could be extended in future years, and future sixth form entries monitored for participants. Trustee asked if the School had any data on the completion rate of former students going on to higher education. The HM replied that the School only had information if students got in touch, it was very difficult to collect otherwise. Trustee asked about the School's aims for co-education and whether the gender balance affected the popularity of particular subjects. The HM said the Board should consider the desired level of girls in School. The targeted marketing effort last year had attracted more girls and there could have been more girls in the Sixth Form, but it was full. Trustee asked for information about the gender balance of different subjects and the HM said he would provide this (**action**); he thought that the gender balance probably didn't affect subjects until the Sixth Form. Associate Trustee said that a class of 20 Maths students typically had 6-7 girls, but Psychology was the other way round. Trustee asked if there was capacity in terms of facilities to increase the numbers of girls. The HM said the School was hoping to build more girls toilets in the Sixth Form.	**Chair** **NCD, Clerk**
7.	**Safeguarding Report (paper 3)** Trustees noted the report.	
8.	**Committee reports (papers 4 and 5)** The Chair of Resources, Staff & Pay Committee reported that the Committee had authorised new expenditure on the Hall refurbishment for curtains and stage and hall lighting rigs. Trustees noted the reports.	
9.	**Finance Director's report: Management Accounts for 2024-25 (papers 6 and 7)** The Finance Director (JHi) presented her report. She said that results for the year overall were good; the only caveat, which had been discussed by the RSP	

	Committee, was that the School was becoming increasingly dependent on unrestricted income, which included bank interest that was projected to fall in the future (falling rates and reduced balances). The School would therefore have to be careful about any proposed increases to recurring revenue expenditure. Reserves were in a healthy position. The latest Academy Trust Handbook said that academy trusts should have a clear plan for managing their reserves; the School would have a significant sum (some £390k-£400k) after commitments, so would need to put a plan in place. Trustee asked if the DfE suggested an acceptable level of reserves. JHi said there was no specified maximum, but the School would need to identify plans for the reserves and why the money was being held back. Trustee asked whether some larger items of maintenance work could be set against the reserves balance. JHi said that would constitute regular expenditure, whereas the reserves had to be kept for one-off items. Trustee said that the Board would have to be careful in allocating the reserves because they were not being replenished at the rate that was achieved previously. Trustee asked if the School had solar panels. JHi said there were some on the Hall roof; it had not previously been worthwhile financially to have them on the main building, but it could be worth looking at again.	
10.	**Key Performance Indicators (paper 8)** Trustees noted the report and agreed the proposals for reporting on staff absence.	
11.	**Trustee attendance at school events 2024-25 (paper 9)** The Chair said that he would like to increase Board representation at school events. The feedback he had was that parents didn't know who Trustees were and what impact they had, so this presented an opportunity to demonstrate that the Board was approachable and to extend its reach. He asked all Trustees to review the list of upcoming events that year and indicate to the Chair or Clerk which they could attend, with the expectation that everyone should attend at least one event if possible (**<u>action</u>**). Trustee said that the Crypt School would welcome more contact with the Board and suggested arranging a tea together once a year around another event (**<u>action</u>**).	**All Trustees** **Clerk**
12.	**Board elections and appointments (paper 10)** The Chair confirmed that the parent Trustee-elect had withdrawn and so a new election would have to be held. The Board discussed how to attract more applicants. Trustee suggested that individual Trustees should each write a paragraph about the role and their experience of it to include in the newsletter, and that students could be invited to interview Trustees. **<u>Action:</u>** Clerk to arrange. Trustees approved the arrangements for the forthcoming parent Trustee election. The Board noted plans for appointing one or more new Trustees and requested an analysis of the Board's skills gaps for the next meeting (**<u>action</u>**). The Board unanimously agreed to recommend to Members the re-appointment of Lee Hill as a Trustee for four years from 11 January 2025 (**<u>action</u>**).	**Clerk** **Clerk** **Clerk**
13.	**Procedure for election of Chair/Vice-Chair (paper 11)** *To consider changes proposed by Trustee to the existing procedure* Trustee presented the proposals for change set out in paper 11. They felt that it was difficult and disruptive to have an annual election, and that annual renewal deterred the Board from suggesting a change (compared to a longer period of	

	appointment). They also suggested that a maximum term of office could be beneficial, as it was more disruptive to change after an incumbent had been in place for many years. The Clerk advised that the annual election was required in the School's Articles of Association and that a change would therefore require a change to the Articles, which would have to be approved by the Department for Education. The DfE's model Articles also included an annual election, so seeking a change would incur legal costs and might not be approved by the DfE. Trustees agreed to retain the existing arrangements for an annual election, but to reduce the nomination requirements in the procedure to the candidate plus one (**<u>action</u>**). Trustee also proposed a change to prevent a retiring incumbent Chair from participating in the vote for their successor, to restrict their potential to influence the vote. Trustees approved the proposed change to the procedure to provide that a retiring incumbent should be invited not to participate (**<u>action</u>**).	**Clerk** **Clerk**
14.	**Election of Vice-Chair of Trustees (papers 26a and b)** The two candidates left the room. The Board agreed that it would like to elect two Vice-Chairs and that both were excellent candidates. On the candidates' return to the room, the Board unanimously appointed Sonia Macleod and Sheila Bradburn as Vice-Chairs of the Board of Trustees for 2024-25.	
15.	**Elect committee chairs and members for 2024-25 (paper 12)** The Board approved the chairs and members of its committees for 2024-25 as follows: <u>Resources Staff and Pay</u> 1. Sonia Macleod (Chair) 2. Virginia Crellin 3. Nicholas Dyer 4. Lee Hill 5. Ciaran Hollywood 6. Amit Ray <u>Pupil Welfare</u> 1. Sheila Bradburn (Chair) 2. Suzanne Aspden 3. Ray Fish 4. Gordon Taylor (Associate Trustee: non-voting) 5. Kate Williams (Associate Trustee: non-voting) <u>Admissions</u> 1. Sheila Bradburn (Chair) 2. Nicholas Dyer 3. Ahmed Goga 4. Suzanne Aspden <u>Audit & Risk</u> 1. Virginia Crellin (Chair) 2. Ray Fish 3. Ciaran Hollywood 4. Amit Ray	

	Trustees noted the need for an additional member on each of the Pupil Welfare and Audit Committees, and agreed to review committee membership following the election or appointment of new Trustees (**<u>action</u>**). Trustee asked if external members could be appointed; the Finance Director confirmed that they could.	**Clerk**
16.	**Appointment of panel members for 2024-25 and training (paper 13)** The Board approved the appointments and arrangements for panel members and training set out in paper 13.	
17.	**Departmental Link Governors for 2024-25 (paper 14)** The following Link Governors/Trustees were appointed for 2024-25:	

Departmental Link Trustees:

TRUSTEE	Subject/Curriculum Link
Lee Hill	PE/Sports
Ciaran Hollywood	Biology, Chemistry
Suzanne Aspden	Music More Able MFL
Ray Fish	Business Studies & Economics History & Politics
Ahmed Goga	DART Computing/Engineering
Sonia Macleod	KS4 and KS5 (Sixth Form) Psychology and Sociology
Virginia Crellin	RE/PSHE/Citizenship Geography
Amit Ray	Physics Maths
Sheila Bradburn	KS3 English and Drama
Grant Stevens (Member)	GUS

Other Link Trustees:

Trustee	**Area**
Sheila Bradburn	Safeguarding Trustee
VACANT	Deputy Safeguarding Trustee
Ahmed Goga	Development & Careers
Sonia Macleod	Pupil Premium
Ciaran Hollywood	Staff Welfare
Sheila Bradburn	Initial Teacher Training (ITT)
Amit Ray	Special Educational Needs & Disability
Lee Hill, Suzanne Aspden, Sheila Bradburn	Departmental Review Trustees

It was agreed that the Board would seek to appoint the Deputy Safeguarding Trustee after the forthcoming Parent Trustee elections.

18.	**Agree committee terms of reference for 2024-25:** a. Audit (paper 15) – approved; b. Admissions (paper 16) – approved; c. Pupil Welfare (paper 17) – approved; d. Resources, Staff and Pay (paper 18) – approved.	**Clerk**
19.	**Approval of Scheme of Delegations 2024-25 (paper 19)** Approved (**<u>action</u>**).	**Clerk**
20.	**Policies for review:**	

(part)	• Safeguarding Policy (paper 20) - approved • Attendance Policy (paper 22) – approved. Policies approved under delegation in Term 1 (paper 23) were noted.	
21.	**Term dates 2025-26** Approved.	
22.	**Academy Trust Handbook 2024: key changes** The Finance Director reported the most important changes in the latest edition of the Handbook, highlighting requirements in relation to the qualifications of internal scrutiny reviewers and drawing up a reserves plan.	
23.	**Confidential items (*to agree items that should be recorded as confidential)*** Parts of item 6 (external relations) and item 20 (Behaviour Policy).	
24.	**Any other business** Trustee said that Sarah Parkin had done an outstanding job with early UCAS applications for Oxbridge/medical schools and it was agreed that the Chair should send her a note of thanks from the Board (**action**).	**Chair**
25.	Date of next meeting: **Monday 9 December 2024, 4pm**	