THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 18 May 2026, 4.00pm – 6.30pm, The Crypt School

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Lee Hill (Chair), Sonia Macleod, Suzanne Aspden (from item 4), Ruth Burchell, Lynsey Pollard, Amit Ray (from item 3), Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Kate Williams (Associate Trustee); Ella Crowley and Oliver Beaumont (Student Governors) (to item 3)
Attendees:	Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk), Gemma Hargraves (Deputy Head (Safeguarding, Inclusion and Wellbeing)) (to item 4)
Apologies:	Ahmed Goga, Dare Owatemi, Sheila Bradburn, Gordon Taylor (Associate Trustee)
Absent:	None

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	**Apologies –** as above, approved by the Board.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** – as per the register of interests. Four Trustees present are parents of the School.	
3.	**New Student Governors: introduction** The Chair welcomed Ella Crowley and Oliver Beaumont, the new Head Girl and Head Boy, who would serve as Student Governors for the coming year. The Student Governors introduced themselves and spoke about the positive changes that they hoped to make alongside their colleagues on the Student Executive. Fundraising work would provide support for the proposed Creative and Performing Arts Centre (CPAC). They also wanted to use boys' sport to provide positive messages about men's mental health. They felt that they had seen signs around school of changes in society related to "toxic masculinity"; and that boys in school should feel more able to speak about any negative mental health issues that they were experiencing. Trustee asked if this issue had been raised by students and what further actions might be considered. Student Governor suggested using external speakers; students had enjoyed and reacted positively to a recent speaker who had talked about the manosphere. Student Governor said that some peers were discussing their mental health concerns with them; boys could be further encouraged to use pastoral support (which girls were more comfortable about accessing) and students could be helped to support their peers in such conversations.	

	The Chair thanked the Student Governors and said he would set up a meeting with the Student Executive in September. The Student Governors left the meeting.	
4.	***Presentation:* Safeguarding, Equality and Inclusion update, Gemma Hargraves (Deputy Head, Safeguarding, Inclusion and Wellbeing)** Suzanne Aspden joined the meeting. Gemma Hargraves (GH) said that the upcoming meeting of the Pupil Education and Outcomes Committee would focus on wellbeing, so her presentation to this meeting would cover safeguarding, equality and inclusion, but she would be happy to answer questions on wellbeing. She highlighted: • Currently, the School had four students with Child in Need Plans, one looked after child (Y13) and one joining in September, several students with Family Support Workers and several open to Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services (CAMHS) • She had recently written out to parents about the impact of generative AI, so that they were able to make informed decisions about consent for the School to share students' images • Attendance Y7-11 was 96.6%, an improvement on last year. There remained some attendance challenges in Y13 • Student Governors had already referred to the external speaker Matt Pinkett, whose session on masculinity and misogyny had been followed by an assembly on feminism • Culture Week was a success, but continuing work was needed to embed these messages tackling racism and classism • The plan to seek Young Carers accreditation was important in sending a message that they matter. The School had about 10 young carers • More work was planned to support staff returning from maternity/paternity leave, in light of recent departures. • Seven students had EHCPs and a further 90 students received SEND support. One EHCP student with significant physical disability was joining in Y7, and another new Y7 student had an EHCP application under way. Student Support Plans (SSPs) had been fully implemented; areas for development included improving consistency in implementation of strategies on SSPs and teacher feedback for SSP reviews. Trustee asked about the concerns on boys' mental health that had been raised by the Student Governors. GH said there had been two recent incidents involving students that were linked to issues of masculinity and expectations of boys, which the Student Governors would be aware of. Staff were working to encourage boys to seek pastoral support if they were experiencing problems. Trustee asked about male representation on the pastoral team. GH said no pastoral support workers were male, but several Heads of Year and the new Assistant Head (Pastoral) were male. Trustee asked about diversity representation in the school leadership. GH said representation was better on neurodiversity, sexuality and class than race; the School did not receive applications from a strong racial diversity, which might reflect a concern about belonging; the School needed to continue to address this.	

	Trustee asked if parents could be more involved in promoting cultural diversity. GH said the School was trying to do this through the Inclusion Lead; for example, parents gave the recent Diwali assembly. Trustee asked about the impact of generative AI and whether the School had encountered any AI psychosis. GH confirmed that it had. Students were explicitly taught about this in Year 8, but the School needed to keep reviewing and updating lesson content. Some apps had been created to support pastoral work, but the impact of generic AI apps was more concerning. Trustee asked if the 24/7 Surf Protect filtering was only available currently to Y7. GH said it was; there had been some technical issues, once these were resolved it would be rolled out to Y8. Extension to Y9-Y11 would be more complicated, as the software would need to be added retrospectively to their iPads, but those devices were fully owned by the students following completion of the repayment plan. Surf Protect still operated in School for those students. Trustee commented that having iPads for students had been invaluable during the Covid pandemic in enabling a smooth transition to online learning. Trustee asked if the School had considered introducing more student volunteering, as this could boost mental health. GH agreed that promoting greater student involvement across school in supporting the community would be welcome. Trustee asked if medical misogyny was covered in the curriculum. GH confirmed that it was included in Personal and Social Education. The Chair thanked GH, who left the meeting.	
5.	**Agree minutes of meeting 23 March 2026, Parts 1 and 2** Approved without amendment.	
6.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** ● **Action table (paper 1a)** Trustees noted the update. The Clerk confirmed that the next set of data on the distribution of sanctions by ethnicity would be circulated before the July meeting (ACTION).	**Clerk**
7.	**Headmaster's report:** The Headmaster presented his report and answered questions as follows: **i) Educational performance (paper 2a)** • Results of the Y13 mocks showed around 60% students achieving A*-B grades; the target was 70%. Trustee asked if the mock score was usually lower, and by that amount? The HM said it was, and the gap varied by cohort. The gut grades were coming in at 73.95%, although these were usually optimistic. Overall, he expected a better performance than the previous year and that they would be close to achieving 70%. • Trustee asked if reliable data for Y10 mocks would be available, as most subjects used last year's GCSEs papers for those exams, but the papers were publicly available online? School staff said they were aware of the issue. The previous year's papers were not made freely available by the exam boards, but they could in practice be accessed now through paid, unofficial sites. Associate Trustee said that the Maths Department was using its own papers for key groups (Y12 and Y13 mocks).	

	ii) Other items (paper 2b) • The School had withdrawn some subjects for next year's Y12 owing to budgetary pressures. • EBacc numbers for the current Y9 were 53%. • The Y7 admissions appeals panel was admitting 10 students. The School was guaranteed 155 students in each year group from now on. • Early discussions with the DfE about a new selective school MAT in the South West region had been positive. The Board agreed that the HM should attend future meetings, obtain more details on the nature of collaboration proposed and report back to the Board in October 2026 (ACTION). Trustee asked for a full discussion at a future meeting on the pros and cons of being part of a MAT, especially if it were geographically dispersed. The HM agreed and also referred Trustees to earlier papers and discussions on previous MAT proposals (ACTION). • Ofsted: the HM said he was keen to anchor the Trustee review programme in the Ofsted framework and focus on a few strategic priorities in future. The Chair added that he had been examining how to build Ofsted's governance expectations into the Board's work and had drawn up a paper to summarise the proposed approach. The paper was available on Governor Hub (paper 25); he invited Trustees to read it and provide feedback and said the Board would return to this at a future meeting (ACTION). • The HM reminded Trustees about attending the CPAC launch on 19 June. Their role would be to represent the School and demonstrate the Board's support.	**HM** **Clerk** **Trustees**
8.	**Key Performance Indicators (paper 3)** The Clerk said that the only red-rated indicator (Y13 attendance) had been discussed under item 4. Trustees noted the report.	
9.	**Finance Director's report: Management Accounts to March 2026 (papers 4&5)** The Finance Director (FD) presented her report. She said that the current end-year projection was a deficit of £10k, but she hoped to achieve break even. The Chair thanked the FD for the hard work she had done recently on the Budget proposals, which would be discussed later in the meeting. Trustee asked about the drop in parental donations and whether this was due to rising costs of living. The FD said that the amount requested had been changed this year to two instalments of £50, which was potentially challenging for some families, especially in the context of the current cost of living crisis. This arrangement was being reviewed for next year. In the draft Budget, she had forecast a return to previous levels based on additional work now being done by the Development Manager. Trustee asked if parents were sent an annual letter of thanks. The FD agreed that this should be done in future, highlighting how funds had been spent. The intention was to send a personalised letter to each parent and improve follow-through on donations received.	
10.	**a) Trustee recruitment update** The Chair said that a new recruitment exercise would be launched in the early autumn. Staff were also looking at updating the School's Articles of Association, which would enable individuals to be co-opted into specific roles or committees.	

	b) Re-appointment of Trustee The Chair said that he would update the Board after further discussions with the Trustee concerned (Sheila Bradburn) about her wishes. **c) Creative and Performing Arts Centre launch** – discussed under item 7.	
11.	**School Strategy and School Improvement Plan:** **a. Update on Strategic Plan and draft priorities for 2026-2027 (paper 8)** The HM presented the draft Strategic Plan and invited any feedback to be sent to him or the Clerk by 31 May (ACTION). He noted that he had removed the explicit reference to promoting community outreach through the primary schools programme, which had been suspended for next year because of budgetary pressures, but added that this decision would need to be reviewed in the next year. The draft text would also be sent to the designers to create a website version. **b. Progress Report on 2025-26 School Improvement Plan (paper 9)** Trustees noted the report. The Senior Deputy Headteacher said that next year's plan would focus priorities still further and ensure alignment with the Ofsted inspection framework.	**Trustees**
12.	**Skills Audit and Self-Evaluation exercise (paper 10)** Trustees discussed their training requirements in light of the skills audit and self-evaluation. Trustee noted the NGA's courses for new Trustees. Trustee asked for a specific training session on Ofsted inspection and the HM offered to find an external speaker (ACTION). He invited Trustees to send in any specific questions before the session (ACTION). He also said that the School would prepare a written brief for Trustees to support their participation in the next inspection (ACTION).	**HM, Clerk** **Trustees** **HM, Clerk**
13.	**Policies for approval:** a) Pay Policy (paper 11): approved b) Equal Opportunities Policy (paper 12) - approved c) Trustee/Governor Expenses Policy (paper 13) – approved d) Trustee/Governor Code of Conduct (paper 14) - approved e) Trustee/Governor Visits Policy (paper 15) – approved. The HM emphasised that it was important for Trustees on visits not to stray into the work of management and pedagogy. Trustees' reviews should not duplicate the Senior Leadership Team's departmental reviews, but should instead focus on strategic priorities. Trustee asked if they could see an exemplar review report to help illustrate this approach and the HM agreed this would be useful (ACTION).	**HM, Clerk**
14.	**Committee reports:** **a. RSP (met 27/4/26) (paper 18)** **b. Admissions (met 27/2/26) (paper 19)** c. **Audit (met 20/4/26) (paper 20)** The Board noted the Committee reports. Trustee asked if an evacuation plan had been prepared for an incoming Y7 student and the Finance Director confirmed that this was in hand.	
15.	**Risk Register (paper 21)** Item 1.1 (lack of vision or strategic direction) Item 1.2 (lack of adequate operational plans to implement the vision/strategic direction) The Board AGREED no change to the risk rating for these items as the strategic plans had just been reviewed.	

16.	**Stakeholder surveys report** **(Parents – circulated 13 March 2026; Staff SLT Culture Survey; Staff Welfare survey results) (papers 22, 23a&b)** Trustee asked how the results compared with previous surveys. The HM said that this was only the second SLT Culture survey; the latest survey showed improvements, but there were still areas to work on. The Staff Welfare survey showed that there were recognition challenges for both teaching and support staff. The Senior Deputy Head that, on workload, SLT had stripped back requirements as much as possible and made lots of changes to support staff welfare, such as flexitime. Trustee asked if there was a policy on email communications, especially from students to staff. The Senior Deputy Head said staff had been informed that there was no expectation to respond immediately and it was up to them to decide when to reply. Trustee suggested sharing the message with students that they should respect teacher workload; the Senior Deputy Head agreed that this would be worthwhile, alongside reinforcing email expectations with staff. The communications on this issue to date had reduced email traffic significantly.	
17.	**Policies reviewed and approved in Term 4&5 (paper 24)** Trustees noted the policies approved under delegation.	
18.	**Any other business** In confidential minutes.	
19.	**Date of next meeting:** Trustees were reminded that the next meeting had been moved to **WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2026, 4pm, The Crypt School.**	

Signed:

Date: