THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 19 May 2025, 4.00pm – 6.30pm
The Crypt School, Room 25

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Lee Hill (Chair), Sheila Bradburn, Sonia Macleod, Virginia Crellin (attended online), Ciaran Hollywood (attended online), Dare Owatemi, Amit Ray (from item 3), Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Gordon Taylor, Kate Williams (Associate Trustees)
Attendees:	Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head) (from item 3), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk)
Apologies:	Ahmed Goga, Ray Fish
Absent:	Suzanne Aspden

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** Ahmed Goga and Ray Fish.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** As per the register of interests.	
3.	**Presentation: Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Inclusion Update** Amit Ray and Phil Stanlake joined the meeting. Gemma Hargraves (Deputy Head: Safeguarding, Inclusion and Wellbeing and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)) gave a presentation on recent developments on safeguarding, wellbeing and inclusion. These included: • Two new Deputy DSLs • Improved attendance (Y7-11 96.3% compared to 95.8% the previous year) • Three Section 19 referrals made for students not attending • Three applications made for Special Educational Needs (SEN) Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) made during 2024-25, one approved • A range of inclusion events, including Community Iftar, Culture Day and Neurodiversity Celebration Week • Wellbeing initiatives, including a new pastoral space, the reintroduction of crockery to the canteen to encourage students to sit down together to eat, and staff Mental Health First Aiders • A new Associate Senior Leadership Team (SLT) lead for Behaviour	

	• Upcoming increase in girls toilets. Trustee asked if all the s.19 referrals were related to mental health problems. GH said there were various factors and summarised the cases. She said she was seeking to strengthen links with the Cheltenham Brownhills healthy eating centre. The ImpactEd attendance survey was being repeated in June 2025 and would provide further information on attendance issues. Trustee welcomed the planned toilet improvements and said the boys toilets also needed attention. Trustee asked if additional toilets and proposals for a prayer room would mean the loss of other facilities; GH confirmed it would entail this. Trustee congratulated GH on the report and asked how Y13 attendance compared with the previous year. GH said that, when students turned 18, they had to be treated as adults with more independence. Some students stop prioritising school if they are not planning for university or an apprenticeship. The School's role included making school attractive and a positive space to be in, and setting strong expectations for students; parents also needed to be supportive. Trustee asked if there were "repeat offenders" and GH confirmed that a small number of persistent absentees did reduce the overall attendance figure. Trustees thanked GH.	
4.	**Agree minutes of meeting 24 March 2025 Pts 1 and 2** Approved without amendment and signed by the Chair.	
5.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** ● **Action table (paper 1a)** The Finance Director (JH) reported that the Staff CPD benchmark included only training expenditure. Last year included training of the new staff mental health first aiders and the School had also started its online training scheme; otherwise she didn't know why this School's expenditure would be higher than others. The proposed updates to the published Strategic Plan to reflect the Ofsted judgement would incur a cost; the Headmaster (HM) would provide a further update. Road safety for pupils: the Senior Deputy Head (PS) said this would be done in the next academic year. It would be difficult to resource because there was nothing suitable for the whole 11-18 age range; he would check what was already provided through the curriculum. The HM said the Religious Studies (RS) survey would go out after students had completed the RS exam that week. The HM said his meeting with the Denmark Road High School Head would take place in early June. The Chair had written to the Head of the local NHS Trust and said he would consider writing to other potential local partners.	

6.	**Headmaster's report:** **i) Educational performance (paper 2a)** The HM presented his report on the latest results and the impact of staffing changes. **ii) Other items (paper 2b)** The HM said that the curriculum for 2025-26 would be broadly the same but the School was not running Drama, (RS) Philosophy or Spanish for Y12 because of low numbers. He asked the Board's views on the importance of the EBacc measure Trustee asked about the decision to make History or Geography compulsory at GCSE; the HM said this had pushed up the EBacc rating. Ofsted had been pleased with the School's EBacc score during the last inspection and it fitted with being an academic grammar school, but it may not be as important in future. Trustee asked whether adding RS to the History and Geography choice bucket would reduce the School's EBacc score; the HM said this was possible, and the upcoming survey might provide more information on this. The Board **AGREED** to review this again in the autumn. Trustee asked about the rise in the number of external suspensions. The HM provided more details about the reasons for the suspensions issued and said that there was an issue with vaping in toilets. He said the School planned to modernise the boys' toilets to make them more open, but noted that this might simply push the problem away from school. Trustee asked if vape detectors were installed. The Senior Deputy Head confirmed this and said there were also movement detectors in the ceiling tiles (where objects might be hidden). Trustee asked if parents were aware of the School's policy on vaping. The HM said vaping was illegal under 18 and banned for all students on the school site, and agreed it might be worth reminding parents. Trustee asked if parents were made aware of a suspension. The HM said the School had to inform them in writing about a suspension and parents were required to supervise their children during an external suspension. Trustee asked about suspensions longer than 2 days. The HM said that after 5 days the parents had a right to request a Governor review that could overturn the suspension decision. In practice, the School would be looking at Alternative Provision schools as a possibility at that point, but this was very expensive and not always appropriate.	**Clerk**
7.	**Committee reports (papers 3-5):** The Committee Chairs reported on the main outcomes from their recent meetings. a. Resources, Staff and Pay: Trustee asked if the cost of the additional blinds for use in the event of a lockdown had been identified. The HM said the Operations Manager was waiting for a further report and would then prioritise the works for Trustees to consider. b. (*in confidential minutes*)	
8.	**Finance Director's report:** **Management Accounts to March 2025 (papers 6a, 6b and 7)** JH said the biggest change was SEND income; Gloucestershire County Council had overpaid by £17k since April 2024. Otherwise the projected outturn was in line with the budget. She would build the in extra staffing costs for Department moves over the summer in the next month's accounts.	

	JH said that, for next year's budget, she proposed to base the teachers' pay rise on 2.8%; if the agreement was as high as 4%, she hoped there would be Government funding towards this but if this was not the case, the School would be in deficit budget. The Y7 admissions test increase will push up costs for the school by about £9k. The proposed budget would not include £25k for the proposed fundraiser; this would have to be a commitment out of reserves. Trustees discussed the summer works programme (paper 6b). The HM said the proposed wall art was for the departments of maths (full wall), modern foreign languages and business and economics (half wall) (highest priority); and physics and the gym. He said if the work was broken into parts over multiple days, the supplier would charge more for installation. Trustee asked if the work could be done in-house. The HM said it could not, but the School had done the preparatory painting underneath. Trustees **AGREED** the highest priority wall art (maths, MFL and economics), with the other departments being reviewed in the light of further information on the costs of blinds. The HM said internal window blinds were the highest priority for lockdown improvements. Trustees **AGREED** the summer works programme with this change, subject to the funding for blinds being reviewed after prioritisation by the Operations Manager.	
9.	**Key Performance Indicators (paper 8)** Trustees noted the latest KPIs report.	

10.	**Resignation and appointment of Trustees** a) The Chair reported that Virginia Crellin and Ray Fish would be stepping down as Trustees on 9 July and 30 June 2025 respectively. *b) (In confidential minutes)* c) The Board discussed how to replace the financial and audit skills being lost through the resignations. The election for a new Parent Trustee would take place in the autumn term; the Board agreed to review the skills gap after the election and then hold a further recruitment exercise as needed, possibly with a direct approach to a local accountancy firm for candidates.	**Clerk**
11.	**School Improvement Plan:** **a. Progress Report on 2024-25 Plan (paper 9)** PS reported on progress against the targets in the School Improvement Plan, noting that there had been good progress overall. Next year the School planned to prioritise challenge in the curriculum, with incoming cohorts being academically stronger, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Trustee asked for more detail about the lack of progress on AI this year. PS said further work had been required on how to move forward - what package to use, what training and staff support was needed. Some staff were already embracing it; the issue was to develop a strategic approach to its use and consistency in application. Trustee suggested that AI should feature on future Board agendas (**ACTION).** Trustee asked whether challenge would feature as a target in lesson observations. PS said that this was already required as a comment in drop-in observations.	**Clerk**

	Trustee asked whether results were improving across the board alongside cohorts getting stronger academically. The HM said History and Geography were very strong; a small improvement in English results would have a significant impact on the School's P8 score. Trustee asked whether challenge sat equally across subjects. PS said that the School's P8 was very strong when students had greater freedom in subject choice at GCSE; narrowing subject choice as encouraged by the EBacc measure did risk reducing performance overall. **b. Draft priorities for 2025-26: update** The HM said that the priorities agreed at the March Board meeting were being further developed in consultation with staff. Trustee asked what happened when challenge was not being offered in an observed lesson. PS said that would be addressed through the performance management process; challenge should be demonstrated in books or the next observation.	
12.	**Draft Budget 2025/26 – 2027/28 (paper 10)** Trustees **APPROVED** the key assumptions and basis for drawing up the draft Budget for 2025-26-2027-28 set out in paper 10. Trustee asked if the pay increase was likely to be funded by Government. JH replied that there would be significant implications for the Budget if this were not the case.	
13.	*In confidential minutes*	
14.	**Outreach and community engagement programme: future arrangements (paper 12)** The HM reported that the School had appointed a new coordinator for the outreach programme with an allocation of 4 hours/week. The School could extend what it measured as outcomes of the programme, but it would have to be realistic about what could be achieved. Trustee asked if there was any feedback from parents on the programme. The HM said that last year's feedback was very positive and he would ask for views to be sought again this year. Trustees asked about future updates on the programme; the HM said he would arrange this **(ACTION).** The Board **AGREED** to continue the outreach programme for 2025-26 and then review it again.	
15.	**Action plan following Board self-evaluation (paper 13)** Trustees **AGREED** the recommended actions to implement the conclusions of the Board's annual self-evaluation at the March meeting.	
16.	*In confidential minutes*	
17.	**Policies for approval:** a) Governor/Trustee Expenses Policy (paper 15): approved; b) Pay Policy (paper 16): approved; c) Trustee/Governor Visits Policy (paper 17): approved. The Chair reminded Trustees to inform the Head when they were visiting the School.	
18.	**Ofsted Framework – update (paper 18)** The HM presented his paper on the changes to the Ofsted Inspection Framework, noting that the inspection would be broken down into more judgements, but they did not cover fundamentally different areas.	

	(Part in confidential minutes)	
19.	**Risk Register: Items 1.1, 1.2, 1.5 (paper 19)** Trustees reviewed the risk register as follows: 1.1 (lack of vision or strategic direction) - no change 1.2 (lack of adequate operational plans) - no change 1.5 (lack of relevant skills on Board) - likelihood increased to 2 owing to resignations, overall score 10; review again in December 2025 **(ACTION).**	**Clerk**
20.	**Policies reviewed and approved in Terms 4 & 5 (paper 20)** Trustees noted the policies approved under delegation.	
21.	**Any other business** Trustee asked whether the Anthony Iles Fund could provide more returns to the School. The HM said the Trust had reviewed its strategy this year to return more funds, but it was constrained to some extent by the terms of the deed, which limited the risk profile that could be adopted.	
22.	**Agree confidential items** Items 7 (part), 10 (part), 13, 16, 18 (part).	
23.	**Date of next meeting:** **Monday 30th June 2025, 4pm, The Crypt School**	

Signed:

Date: