THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 1 July 2024, 4.00pm – 6.00pm, The Crypt School

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Richard James (Chair), Sheila Bradburn, Virginia Crellin, Ray Fish (from item 5), Lee Hill, Sonia Macleod, Ahmed Goga, 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)
Apologies:	Suzanne Aspden
Absent:	None
Quorum:	Four

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** As above, approved by the Board.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** As per the register. Six Trustees present are parents/carers of the School. Sonia Macleod reported that she was starting a new job with the Stillbirth and Neonatal Deaths charity (Sands) in two weeks' time and would provide details to the Clerk.	SM
3.	**Agree minutes of meeting (20 May 2024) Pts 1 and 2** Agreed without amendment and signed by the Chair.	
4.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** ● **Action table (paper 1a)** The Senior Deputy Head (PS) reported that he was attending a meeting with the Blackbridge developers shortly at which site drainage would be discussed. The Headmaster (HM) said that the School planned to repeat the girls' survey annually.	
5.	**Headmaster's report:** **i) Educational performance (paper 2a)** Ray Fish joined the meeting. The HM said that, from next year, the current arrangement whereby Y12 students who get 2 U grades in Easter exams must resit the exams after 4 weeks will be extended to students with 2 E grades. Students getting another U grade will then drop that subject at A level; if an E grade is obtained, the best way forward will be considered with the student. Experience had shown that students found it hard to improve from consistent U grades by the end of Y13. The Board noted this change. **ii) Other items (paper 2b)** *(Part in Part 2 Confidential Minutes)*	

	<u>Admissions</u>: The Board **<u>agreed</u>** that the PAN should be increased to 155 at Y7 from 2025 entry, but there should be no changes to the Admissions Policy proposed for 2026 entry. **<u>Capital:</u>** The HM said that, if the Anthony Iles Fund were able to provide £75k-£90k for capital development, this would enable both development of the JJCC (Sixth Form) at a cost of up to £100k, and the dining room extension, to go ahead. The AI Fund had made only one contribution to the School so far; if this proposal were accepted, it would mean that no further donations would be available for the next three years. The Board **<u>agreed</u>** that the HM should ask the AI Fund to provide support on this basis and **<u>approved</u>** the funding allocation for the Sixth Form development.	NCD
6.	**Committee reports:** **a. RSP (met 8 May & 17 June) (papers 3a and b)** RSP had requested further information to assess proposed expenditure of £105k from reserves on the School's network. Gordon Taylor (Network Manager) said that the funding was required to upgrade the wired network infrastructure (core switches and routers) because the outdated equipment, which had not been updated for over a decade, posed increasing cybersecurity risks. The proposal was to use the same company that had provided the more recent wireless network upgrades to a cloud-managed system, so the network could all be managed centrally from one cloud service. That company had been the cheapest for that project and offered better service. GT had tested the equipment pricing and found that the cost was comparable to its public sector price in the USA. Trustee asked if the price was based on a central negotiation by DfE. GT said it was not; the equipment was offered at an educational sector price that was approximately half its recommended retail price. Trustee asked how much of the total cost related to equipment. GT said the kit was approximately £50k, with the remainder being support and some one-off costs including set-up, some of which GT hoped to do himself. Trustee asked how long the work would take and if there was a difference in cost if the work was done in one go or phased. GT said the company would prefer to do the project all at once, but phasing shouldn't cost more and should be less disruptive, and could enable the cost to spread over the year. Trustee asked about the requirement to tender the work, given its cost. The Finance Director (JH) said that the Board could override this requirement if it chose. This company had already completed a survey of the work required some 2 years ago. If the work was put out to tender, other companies would use different equipment and the network survey would have to be repeated at a cost of some £3k. GT had also price-checked the equipment cost to ensure value for money. Overall, she felt that any savings obtained through tendering were likely to be offset by the increased cost of re-survey. GT said he could also price-check the engineering day cost; the Board agreed this should be done. Trustee also asked that GT press the company for any efficiencies in equipment cost since the initial survey 2 years ago. Trustee asked if the same equipment could be purchased from a DfE approved supplier. GT said it could, but this would split the work from the company that conducted the survey. JH said she would check that a decision not to tender would not breach new procurement legislation.	GT JH JH

	The Board **approved** the proposed project expenditure and supplier, and the reasons for not tendering the project, subject to checking legal compliance and the engineering day cost. b. **Audit (met 24 June) (paper 6)** Trustees discussed the report of the Trustee meeting with a representative of the Staff Welfare Committee. Trustee said that the committee had asked if it should be reporting to Governors. Trustee asked whether it would be useful to have a Governor on the committee. The HM said that this was an operational, not strategic, issue and it was not appropriate for the committee to report directly to Governors. He would consider whether a Governor might attend some meetings. He was meeting committee representatives shortly to discuss focusing the committee's work more sharply on significant staff welfare issues. Trustees noted the Committee reports.	
7.	**Key Performance Indicators (paper 7)** The Clerk presented the report on KPI data and drew attention to the high level of staff absence. Trustee asked for further information on how many individuals were long-term absent and whether absence management procedures were being applied. PS said that there was a large number of individuals with high levels of absence. Absence management policies were in place; not all stages were applied in all cases, but all absences were noted for HR records. The Board asked that future KPI reports should include a breakdown of how many individuals were at the various stages of absence management (**action**). Trustee asked if persistent absence in Y7-11 was concentrated in a specific year group. Trustee said that the Pupil Welfare Committee had received data that showed that it was across several year groups.	PS, Clerk
8.	**Finance Director's report: Management Accounts to May 24 (papers 8a and b)** The Finance Director reported that she was now expecting there to be a small surplus. Trustees noted the report.	
9.	**School Budget 2024/25 – 2026/27 (papers 9a and b)** Trustees reviewed the proposed final Budget. The Finance Director said that there was less flexibility in the Budget than in previous years and that it would need close monitoring. She asked the Board to confirm its decision to proceed with the Sixth Form refurbishment, as this would need to be included in the final Budget reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency as expenditure from reserves. Based on one quote so far, the expected cost for the new Dining Room area was some £240k-£250k. The Board **agreed** that the Budget should therefore include plans for capital investment of £350k for buildings and £105k for IT (over 3 years). The Board **approved** the final Budget for 2024/25-2026/27 on this basis.	JHi
10.	**School Improvement Plan (paper 10)** The Board reviewed and **approved** the updated School Improvement Plan and priorities 2024-25.	
11.	**Trustees' Training Programme for 2024-25 (paper 11)** The Board reviewed and **approved** the Trustees Training Programme for 2024-25.	Clerk
12.	**Trustees' Review Cycle for 2024-25 (paper 12)** The Board **approved** the proposed review cycle and appointed lead reviewers as follows: • Student Scholarship – Sonia Macleod • Community outreach – Ray Fish • Staff welfare and workload – Ciaran Hollywood	

	• Estate Strategic Plan – Lee Hill	Clerk
13.	**Policies for approval:** • Local Government Pension Scheme Policy (paper 13) – approved (with spelling correction Part B item 6) • Special Educational Needs Policy (paper 14) - approved • Equal Opportunities Policy (paper 15) - approved • Disciplinary & Appeals Policy & Procedure (paper 16) - approved Trustees noted the policies reviewed and approved under delegation in Term 6.	
14.	**Risk Register (items 1.1, 1.2) (paper 18)** Trustees **agreed** to reduce the likelihood of risks 1.1 (lack of vision or strategic direction) and 1.2 (lack of adequate operational plans to implement the vision) to 1, based on: • Strong pupil numbers • Recent Ofsted outstanding judgement • Balanced budget. Trustee asked whether the register should include the risk arising from the impact of a new government. Trustee said the register should avoid including risks that the School itself cannot control.	JHi
15.	**Appointment of Member** The Chair reported that Members had been invited to appoint Anthony Gilbert, an Old Cryptian, as a Member of the Academy Trust, subject to successful completion of safeguarding and other checks. Clerk to circulate his biography to the Board (**action**).	Clerk
16.	**Vice-Chair position (paper 24)** The Board **approved** the proposed role description for Vice-Chair. The Chair said that, in line with the findings of the external review of governance and this role description, it was proposed that Sonia Macleod (Vice-Chair) become chair of the Resources, Staff & Pay Committee and Lee Hill would remain a member of the Committee. As discussed at the May meeting, there was a strong wish to appoint a new co-Vice-Chair; any Trustees interested in the role should put themselves forward at the next election in October. Philip Stanlake left the meeting.	
17.	**Appointment of Associate Trustee and new Student Governors** The Board **approved** the re-appointment of Kate Williams, Head of Maths, as Associate Trustee for 4 years from 1 September 2024. The Chair reported that Jack Mitten and Elizabeth Twenaboa had been appointed as the new Head Boy and Head Girl and would serve as Student Governors in 2024-25.	
18.	**Outcome of Parent Trustee election** *(In Part 2 Confidential Minutes)*	
19.	**Committee appointments from 13 July 2024:** a) Resources, Staff and Pay Committee: the Board **appointed** Sonia Macleod as chair and Amit Ray as a member b) Pupil Welfare Committee: the Board **appointed** Sheila Bradburn as chair. The Board reviewed whether the Admissions Committee had sufficient members, in light of recent changes. Ahmed Goga said he was happy to remain a member; the Committee would therefore have four members and no further appointments were needed.	

20.	**Trustee report on safeguarding (paper 19**) Sheila Bradburn presented her annual safeguarding report as Safeguarding Trustee. Trustee asked if any support was provided to the students who were known to be young carers; SB said this question should be referred to the Head of Safeguarding. Trustee asked why the DSL was relinquishing some responsibility for behaviour. The HM said the change was to reduce the DSL's workload. She would retain responsibility for the overall behaviour strategy, but the Senior Deputy Head would deal with day-to-day issues and larger cases. Trustee suggested considering lower level First Aid training for some current First Aiders, and testing the rationale for who is being trained – some staff may not actually be delivering First Aid but were trained because of their role. The HM replied that the aim was to cover high risk areas and he would not want to move away from that by reducing the overall number, but agreed that the level of training could be considered (**action**).	Ops Manager
21.	**Trustee report on inclusion (paper 20)** Sheila Bradburn presented the report of her visit to look at inclusion in school. She noted that notifying a student's religion to school was currently voluntary and suggested having a religious festivals calendar alongside the main school calendar. Trustees noted the report.	
22.	**Annual reports:** ● Educational Performance Report (paper 21): Trustee asked if the interventions to support the Y11 and Y13 exam groups had been effective and how much additional work they represented. The Associate Trustee said that there had been improvement. The Maths Department had been able to split out the sessions between staff, but it was harder on small departments. The HM added that alternative ways of providing intervention support were being considered for next year. ● Careers Report (paper 22): the Careers Link Trustee said that Chris Germaine as Careers Lead had done an excellent job in promoting careers education and awareness throughout school, which had been acknowledged in the recent Ofsted report and the achievement of the Careers Mark. The Board thanked CG for his outstanding contribution. ● Data Protection and Freedom of Information Report (paper 23) – noted.	
23.	**Any other business** None.	
24.	**Agree confidential items** Items 5 (part) and 18.	
25.	**Date of next meeting: Monday 14 October 2024, 3.30pm**, The Crypt School As it was his last meeting, Richard James thanked the Board for their support and wished them every success in guiding the School's future development. The HM thanked the Chair and looked forward to saying more at an event to mark Mr James' departure later that week.	

Signed by the Chair:

Date: