THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 20th May 2024, 4.00pm – 6.43pm, The Crypt School

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Richard James (Chair), Suzanne Aspden, Sheila Bradburn, Virginia Crellin, Ray Fish, Lee Hill, Sonia Macleod, Amit Ray (from item 7ii), Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Gordon Taylor, Kate Williams (Associate Trustees)
Attendees:	Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk); Paulina De La Fuente (Director of Outreach and Scholarship) (item 4), Gemma Hargraves (Deputy Head, Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Inclusion) (item 3)
Apologies:	Ahmed Goga, Ciaran Hollywood
Absent:	None
Quorum:	Four

	Item	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** As above. Amit Ray would be joining the meeting late.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** As per the register. Six Trustees present are parents/carers of the School.	
4.	**Community outreach** Paulina De La Fuente (PDLF) gave a presentation on the programme to work with local primary schools through a range of activities, including curriculum support and 11 Plus tutoring for Pupil Premium (PP) students. The tutoring programme was supporting 25 students from six primaries and was provided with the help of Y12 student mentors, as part of their Leadership development programme. Trustee asked if it would be known how many tutored students are successful in the 11 Plus admissions test. PDLF said this would be possible. Last year's programme, which comprised only a summer school, did not enhance the intake. This year, parents of tutored students were being invited in to help them register their children for the test and taster days were running later in June, so she expected all the students to sign up for the test. Trustee asked how many would have registered without the programme; PDLF said she would ask the parents (**action**). She added that all the grammar schools had worked with some students out of the total group of 250, based on proximity, and the data from the whole group would be even more useful. Trustee said it would also be useful to know the scores achieved in the test and how much adjustment was required for Pupil Premium students.	PDLF

	Trustee asked about the views of the participating primary schools. PDLF said most but not all schools had accepted the invitation to join the programme in some form. Trustee asked whether non-Pupil Premium students could receive tutoring. PDLF said Grange Primary had requested tutoring for some "just about managing" students, and this had been offered where requested. Trustee asked if students were tested at the start of the programme; PDLF said that they were, but students were taken onto the programme based on the primary school's recommendation. One student had left the programme, some other grammars had had a larger drop-out rate. Trustees congratulated everyone involved in the programme and strongly welcomed the involvement of Crypt students in making it a success.	
3.	**<u>Safeguarding, inclusion and equality</u>** Gemma Hargraves (GH) gave a presentation on progress in school and future plans for safeguarding, inclusion (including attendance and Special Educational Needs) and equality (including celebrating diversity and tackling misogyny). Trustee asked about the impact of allowing Sixth Form students to leave school early on certain days on attendance. GH said that, while that did have an impact, the figure of 89% attendance for Y13 students also reflected that there were a few students with low attendance. Trustee asked how the School would support students with difficulties over the summer holidays. GH said that the School was only that and could not offer a 24/7 service; it was important to protect the wellbeing of pastoral staff as well as students. The School would signpost other sources of support and she would be able to respond to emergencies. Trustee asked about the impact on GH's workload as the School's intake of disadvantaged children rose as expected in future years. GH said it was important not to assume a correlation between disadvantage and attendance or other problems. Some of the Attendance Officer's salary was supported from PP funding; if the School did admit more PP students, the additional funding could fund additional support. PP students' attendance was currently slightly lower, but this did not significantly impact overall attendance figures. The Board thanked GH.	
5.	**<u>Agree minutes of meeting 15.04.2024 (Parts 1 and 2)</u>** Approved without amendment.	
6.	**<u>Matters arising from previous minutes (papers 1a & b):</u>** ● Action table: the Headmaster confirmed that the School Improvement Partner had been appointed. ● Progress on items from Governor visits and reviews: Trustees approved the plans for ongoing monitoring set out in Table 1b.	
7.	**<u>Headmaster's report</u>** **i) Educational performance (paper 2a)** The Headmaster said that the educational performance element of his report had been separated out for explicit consideration by the Board, as recommended by the external review of governance, and invited feedback on the format.	

		Trustee asked if the School was more confident about the Y11 performance after the March assessments. The Headmaster said that there had been progress since the mock exams, but the overall picture was not as strong as he would like. He added that there was a small number of school refusers in Y11 that would pull down results overall. Associate Trustee said that having full mocks in December had provided an opportunity for students to gain a realistic picture of their progress and pick up effort for the next assessments in March, which was helpful. They were concerned about Y13 performance, but very optimistic about future outcomes for the current Y12. The Headmaster reminded the Board that there would be no Progress 8 measure for the next two years, because those year groups had not taken Key Stage 2 SATs. **ii) Other items (paper 2b)** The Headmaster presented part 2 of his report, which included recommendations to increase the Y7 PAN to 160 (published admissions number) and to grow the Sixth Form to 350 students, with accompanying investment in existing facilities (agenda item 12). The Headmaster said the increase to a Y7 PAN of 160 students would provide additional income and could be linked to Pupil Premium students or specified postcodes. Trustee supported this and said that adopting a higher PAN would enable the School to make firmer financial plans on the basis of higher income. Trustee asked what would happen to appeals if the PAN were increased. The Headmaster said that there had to be provision for appeals, and appeal decisions rested entirely with the Appeals Panel. The School's case that it could not accommodate additional students would be strengthened by having a PAN of 155 or 160 (and therefore closer to the previous highest numbers admitted after appeals). The Panel was obliged to take the School's case into account and balance that against the potential benefits for and impact on the child. In practice, some children drop out after the initial allocation, which should leave some room to accommodate appeals even with a higher PAN. Amit Ray joined the meeting. Trustee asked about the potential impact on student recruitment of broader demographic changes. The Headmaster said that Leckhampton High School had created additional provision locally at Y7, and that there was a falling student roll across the county in coming years. Trustee asked if a failure to admit the full PAN would have a negative reputational effect. The Headmaster said he did not believe so; however, if the School were unable to grow to 350 students in the Sixth Form, the School would have to make budget cuts. After consideration, **the Board decided that the Y7 PAN should be raised to 155**, which would leave room for some students to be admitted on appeal without exceeding the current physical and staffing capacity. It was agreed that the Headmaster should seek legal advice on options for amending the admissions policy to prioritise Pupil Premium and/or students from a particular geographical area, for a certain number of places (**action**). The	**Head**

	Board also **agreed** that the current plan to increase the Sixth Form to 350 students should be retained, recognising that this would require some additional investment in facilities; options for investment would require further consideration. Trustee asked if this year's suspensions included any SEND students; the Headmaster confirmed that they did and said that this was tracked.	
8.	<u>**Committee reports (papers 3-5)**</u> Trustees noted the Committee reports. Trustee asked how much of the School's data storage was on the Cloud. Gordon Taylor said that most was now on the Cloud; local storage was declining further as the year groups on the old systems moved through the School.	
9.	<u>**Finance Director's report: Management Accounts to March 2024 (papers 6, 7)**</u> The Finance Director presented her report, which included a breakdown of the impact of this year's deficit on distributable reserves. After covering off forecast budget deficits, there would be some £277k available for spending on new projects. She reported that the Resources, Staff and Pay Committee had approved the summer works programme at its recent meeting. Trustee commented that, in practice, forecast deficits for years 2 and 3 of the budget did not materialise and asked whether there was scope to plan expenditure from the reserves in a way that took this into account. The Finance Director said this would only be possible if DfE would provide three-year funding allocations. Trustees noted the report.	
10.	<u>**Key Performance Indicators (paper 8)**</u> Trustees noted the KPIs report. Trustee asked what underlay the unusually high staff absence figures. The Senior Deputy Headmaster (PS) said that there was a small number of staff signed off for long periods and some individuals with a high level of absence; he was meeting some individuals to discuss their absence. Trustee asked if absent staff were ever able to teach online; PS said that this still required a member of staff in the classroom, so was of limited help. Trustee asked why staff absence was not presented as a percentage, as for students. The Clerk said that absence for teachers was recorded as missed sessions or days requiring cover, and it would be time-consuming to calculate percentage absence because some staff were part-time.	
11.	<u>**School Improvement Plan: Progress Report (no paper) (part)**</u> PS said there had been generally good progress on the SIP for this year, with some ongoing work with departments. The impact had been demonstrated in the School's recent Ofsted success; Student Voice was also used to assess impact. It was important for School not to stand still following that judgement, but to continue to improve, with a narrower focus in future SIPs to concentrate effort and maximise impact. He commented that the School Improvement Partner had been extremely helpful during preparations for the Ofsted inspection and had focused staff's attention on the right issues. Trustee asked how the School might drive that ongoing improvement. PS said that it would be important to value staff opinion on how to improve within a clear vision from the top of the organisation. He noted that the Ofsted report had already had an impact, with Y12 taster days proving very popular this year.	

12.	**<u>Proposed changes to admissions PAN</u>** Taken under item 7.	
13.	**<u>Draft Budget 2024-25 – 2026-27 (papers 11a-c)</u>** The Board reviewed in turn the assumptions underpinning the draft budget, which were set out in paper 11b. 2.2.1 School Budget Share: Trustee asked if there were any particular risk to the School's funding because it was a grammar school; the Finance Director said there was not, the School was funded in the same way as any academy. 2.4.4 investment income: Trustee asked whether some funds should be moved to a fixed-rated investment. The Finance Director said that the School's current account paid 0.5% below base rate and allowed ready access to the funds. She would investigate whether another product would offer a higher rate and still allow instant access (**<u>action</u>**). Trustees <u>agreed</u> all the assumptions underpinning the draft budget without amendment and noted that capital plans would be reviewed in more detail with the presentation of the full budget at the July meeting.	**Finance Director**
14.	**<u>Election/appointment of Trustees:</u>** **a) <u>To approve arrangements for election of a new Parent Trustee (paper 12)</u>** Trustees approved the proposed arrangements for holding an election before the end of the school year to fill the Parent Trustee vacancy (**<u>action</u>**). b) **<u>To approve recommendation to Members for re-appointment of Trustee</u>** Trustees agreed to recommend to Members the re-appointment of Ahmed Goga for four years at the end of his current term; and agreed that this would be on the basis that Mr Goga would not serve on any committees, but would attend Full Board meetings (**<u>action</u>**).	**Clerk** **Clerk**
15.	**<u>Policies for approval</u>:** a) Governor/Trustee Expenses Policy (paper 13): <u>approved</u> b) Code of Conduct for Governors/Trustees of The Crypt School (paper 14): <u>approved</u> c) Pay Policy 2024-25 (paper 15): <u>approved with correction of dates</u> in section 8 d) Teachers Performance Development Policy (paper 16): <u>approved</u>.	
17.	**<u>Risk Register (paper 18)</u>** Item 1.5 (Trustees lack relevant skills): no change.	
18.	**<u>Operations Manager report (no paper)</u>** Item not taken.	
19.	**<u>Policies reviewed and approved in Term 4&5 (paper 20)</u>** Trustees noted the policies approved under delegation.	
20.	**<u>Any other business</u>** The Chair had previously circulated a proposal for additional day's leave for staff and students as a reward for the hard work leading to the recent outstanding Ofsted judgement. PS said the proposed date was Friday 5 July. Trustee asked about arrangements for staff who do not work that day; PS said that they would be able to agree an alternative date. Trustees approved the proposal and date (**<u>action</u>**).	PS
21.	**<u>Agree confidential items</u>** Item 11 (part).	

16.	**<u>Election of Chair of Trustees from 13 July 2024 (papers 17a & b)</u>** The Company Secretary took the chair. She reminded the Board of the procedure to be followed (which had been agreed at the April meeting) and confirmed that she had received written votes from Ahmed Goga and Ciaran Hollywood. The Headmaster and outgoing Chair both said that they did not intend to vote in the election. Trustee asked if the Chair would leave the meeting for the Board's discussion on the two candidates; he said he was happy to do so. The two candidates gave their presentations to the Board and then left the room with the Chair. After a short discussion, Trustees submitted their votes in a secret ballot; votes were counted by the Company Secretary and the count was verified by the Clerk. The candidates and Chair returned to the room. The Company Secretary announced that Lee Hill had been elected as Chair of the Board of Trustees from 13 July 2024 (**<u>action</u>**). She reported that, during their discussion, Trustees had asked if the unsuccessful candidate would stay on as Vice-Chair. The Chair replied that he very much hoped that they would stay on and that the preference would be to still have two Vice-Chairs. The next Vice-Chair elections would be held in July or October.	**Clerk**
22.	**<u>Date of next meeting:</u>** Monday 1 July 2024, 4pm, The Crypt School Meeting closed at 6.43pm	

Signed by the Chair:

Date: