THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 23 March 2026, 4.00pm – 6.30pm, The Crypt School and online

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Sonia Macleod (Acting Chair), Suzanne Aspden (from item 4), Sheila Bradburn, Ruth Burchell, Ahmed Goga, Dare Owatemi, Lynsey Pollard, Amit Ray, Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Gordon Taylor, (Associate Trustee)
Attendees:	Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk), Sarah Veal (to item 6)
Apologies:	Lee Hill
Absent:	Kate Williams (Associate Trustee)

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** – as above, approved by the Board. Vice-Chair Sonia Macleod was chairing the meeting because Lee Hill was supporting the School's participation in an external event.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** – as per the register of interests. Five Trustees present are parents of the School.	
3.	**Agree minutes of meeting held on 9.2.2026 (parts 1 and 2)** Part 1: amended to record that Lynsey Pollard had rejoined the meeting and then approved. Part 2: approved without amendment.	
4.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** ● Action table (paper 1) The Headmaster (HM) reported that the G7 Group of Gloucestershire Grammar Schools had awarded the next 3-year contract for admissions testing to Future Stories Community Enterprise (Reading School). They had offered a positive narrative around the inclusion agenda, with the test being based on what is taught in school in Years 4 and 5, and G7 could work with them to shape the test. This test would be in place for admission of children currently in Year 4. The change would be combined with moving the test to July, which it was hoped would reduce pressure on students (who would no longer feel the need to prepare over the summer holidays) and support inclusion. These changes would be made public in a joint announcement of the G7 Schools after the Easter holidays. Suzanne Aspden joined the meeting.	

5.	**Finance Director's report:** **a) Management Accounts to February 2026 (papers 2a&b)** The Finance Director presented her report. She said the management accounts at that time showed a deficit of around £14k. There could still be fluctuations in expenditure. Maintenance costs were high and were being reviewed by the Operations Manager. The School had also had to use a recruitment agency twice in the current year, at a cost of some £14k, and this category expenditure may need to be included in the budget in future years. Trustee asked which posts had been filled in this way; JH replied that an agency had been used for the Food Tech post and Maths maternity cover. JH said that the School's energy costs were fixed until October and she was exploring whether to use the Department for Education (DfE) bulk purchase framework in future. Trustees asked: • When would the Sports Hall floor be repaired? JH said that the repairs had been delayed because the insurance claim was not yet resolved, but the Operations Manager was investigating the feasibility of completing the work without the claim outcome because of the negative impact on income from lettings. • Why were agency costs so high? JH said they were hard to predict and varied considerably. Some of the costs would be offset by trips income. Some schools took out insurance to cover this cost, but The Crypt did not because it was extremely expensive. The Senior Deputy Head added that some staff had been signed off sick, with some on phased returns, although overall absence was not as high as in some previous years. Having the cover supervisors helped enormously to reduce the need for supply staff.	
6. (part)	**Presentation by Sarah Veal, Development Manager, on The Crypt School's fundraising programme** Sarah Veal introduced herself, saying she had started in November 2025, working three days a week. Her priority was raising funds for the proposed Creative and Performing Arts Centre (CPAC), working with the volunteers supporting and guiding the School on the CPAC Development Committee. She was putting in place the primary building blocks of a fundraising programme, looking at the School's stakeholders: • Parents – a new parent giving programme would be launched in September 2026. She also felt there was scope to build more knowledge of parents' careers and employment experience to use in School. • Local and national businesses and employers – she would engage with them and demonstrate the benefits of working with The Crypt before seeking support. She was working Chris Germaine, Head of Careers, on employer engagement. • Alumni: she was gathering information on the School's alumni and working with the Old Cryptians Association to ensure that messaging was consistent. The School had recently appointed an archiving firm to make available the School's magazine online to its alumni via a website portal.	

	• The local community, who would be able to use the CPAC. The School needed to build community support as part of the overall CPAC project. She said the Development Committee had been very proactive and supportive. They had shaped the vision for the CPAC to reduce the overall cost to the current target of £3.5m. Four parties were due to submit design proposals for the Centre for review by the Committee on 5 May, with the CPAC formal launch taking place on 19 June. She asked to share the CPAC vision with the Board for its feedback by the next Board meeting on 18 May (ACTION). Trustee welcomed the positive progress made to date and the work with the School's Careers staff. They said there needed to be a shift of culture to make fundraising a clear part of the School's strategic plan, and communication with parents about the change. Communications about fundraising needed to avoid the perception that The Crypt is a wealthy school with wealthy donors (and therefore "not for us"). Trustee emphasised the need to generate parental engagement with the activities supported by their donations, for example by sending individual letters and showing what their donations had funded. Trustee said that parents already received multiple requests for money when their child joined the School, and this should be more openly acknowledged in messaging to parents. Trustees thanked Sarah Veal, who left the meeting.	**SV, Clerk**
7.	**Overview of White Paper "Every Child Achieving and Thriving" (papers 3a&b)** Trustees had received information on the Government's education plans set out in the White Paper published in February 2026. The HM highlighted in particular the proposed reforms of provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the expectation that every school should be part of a trust with other schools to access the benefits of collaboration. Trustee asked what additional resources would be needed by these plans. The HM said this was hard to measure at present, but the school would probably need a larger pastoral space. He encouraged Trustees to keep a watching brief on the development of these proposals.	
8.	**Preparing for Ofsted (paper 4):** **a) Strengthening inclusion** b) **Understanding and responding to our context** The HM introduced paper 4, which set out the school's preparation for the revised Ofsted inspection framework. He said The Crypt was well-placed across a range of indicators compared to the national picture, but needed to identify its own challenges and priorities that reflected the School's context. The ambition was to achieve the "exceptional" grading in all Ofsted areas under the new framework, but this would be extremely challenging. He reminded the Board to familiarise themselves with the new inspection framework and, in particular, the expectations for leadership and governance. Recent national policy developments all placed a strong emphasis on closing the disadvantage gap, improving outcomes for SEND pupils and ensuring equitable access to opportunities. Inclusion was central to the School's vision for pupils "to	

	flourish" and the proposal was to strengthen this focus by adopting a new strategic aim to further develop an inclusive classroom and wider school experience, which should headline the next School Strategic Plan. The paper also included some ways in which admissions arrangements could be adjusted with the aim of promoting inclusion, including allocated places for widening access or creative and performing arts aptitude, and the recent decision to adopt a new entrance test provider to increase fairness. Trustee asked if it was possible to think more creatively about how to provide for differing educational needs. The HM agreed but said it would need additional resources. There would be increasing numbers of SEND pupils and the biggest priority was having the right spaces and staffing to support them. The School had recently appointed Matthew Bevan as Assistant Head Teacher (Behaviour), which would free up Gemma Hargraves to focus more on this area. The SENCo and Deputy SENCo's time had also been increased, but there would be more to do over the next 3-5 years. Trustee asked how the success of the inclusion strategy would be measured and would this reflect improved overall experience, not just exam outcomes. The HM said this would include student surveys and, probably, shifting SLT reviews to be more thematic. Trustee asked how the School would monitor widening access and increasing diversity without compromising academic standards. The HM said this would involve monitoring the cohort's progress through school. Individuals were not currently monitored, although tracking arrangements could be adjusted next year. The change of test provider was expected to improve fairness, but students' performance would become more dependent on the quality of their primary school. Trustee asked about the impact on access of allocating places for creative and performing arts. The HM said that the curriculum had tilted strongly to STEM subjects and this could offer some balance. Trustee said that the proposal might support an equal gender balance in admissions but would probably not improve access for economically disadvantaged students. Trustees AGREED that the new strategic aim "To further develop an inclusive classroom and wider school experience that enables every pupil to flourish and thrive in their school and later adult lives" should be included in the next Strategic Plan.	
9.	**Review of the outreach programme outcomes (paper 5)** The HM introduced paper 5, which set out data on participation in the community outreach programme by primary schools and students, and the entrance test rankings achieved by outreach programme students who sat the test in September 2025. He reminded the Board that all the G7 grammar schools ran a similar programme, with Pates Grammar School (GS) having the largest. Primary schools and students wanted to be involved in the programme; but it was clear that, to change the composition of the School's cohort, the admissions policy would have to be changed. Pates GS now filled 12 places each year by postcode	

	for deprived local areas and with a lower pass mark. They had commissioned an independent study to help inform this change in policy, which required many changes, including in teaching and learning practice. If the Board wished to change The Crypt's admissions policy, they would need to consult on the proposed changes in November. Trustees asked for clarification of the intended aims of the programme and how its success should be measured. The HM said that the aims were to: • increase admissions from the School's local area • enhance engagement with the local community and encourage a feeling among local children of belonging at Crypt • build participants' confidence in their abilities and skills • offer an enrichment experience for Crypt's own students who helped support the programme. Trustee said that, if the School wanted to continue the programme, it should be resourced properly, but this would need clarity on what form the programme needed to take in order to achieve its agreed purpose. Trustees agreed to revisit the community outreach programme in the context of future Budget discussions (ACTION). Ahmed Goga left the meeting.	**Clerk**
10.	**Strategic Plan 2024-29:** **a) Confirm vision, values and mission** Trustees confirmed the vision, values and mission as set out in the current Strategic Plan (paper 6). **b) Review of strategic priorities: progress and areas for change (papers 6&7)** The HM said he would re-draft the current Strategic Plan to include the new strategic aim agreed under item 8 and how it would inform ongoing priorities. This would be brought back to the May meeting for approval. He invited Trustees to send views or comments on the proposals set out in paper 6 to the Clerk (ACTION). Trustee said that the recent Y7 parents evening had been very well received, with parents generally benefitting from the opportunity for feedback. It was obvious that teachers had taken the time to get to know their students. The HM thanked the Trustee for the feedback. He acknowledged that there was a problem with the availability of slots, which the School was looking at. Trustee referred to the parent survey results that had been recently circulated to the Board and said there seemed to be a significant number of parents stating that their child had been bullied, but that there were also positive responses about the effectiveness of the School's response. The HM said that, in recent focus groups with students, a number had reported that they had not personally experienced bullying, but believed that it had been dealt with quickly for others who had. Trustee asked if parents knew how to raise concerns outside the survey. The Senior Deputy Head said that the School received a lot of parental contact outside the survey. The HM added that the School had followed up on all named feedback provided through the survey.	**Trustees**

11.	**Self-evaluation: feedback on responses** The Clerk said that no responses had been received to the feedback form circulated earlier that month. Several Trustees said they had not seen the form, so it was AGREED that it should be recirculated and the feedback discussed at the next meeting (ACTION). The Finance Director reminded Trustees that they must undertake an evaluation exercise each year for reporting in the Annual Report & Accounts.	**Clerk**
12.	**Skills Audit (no paper)** The Clerk said she had now received most skills audit responses, but this was not in time for reporting to the meeting, so she would prepare the summary for discussion in May (ACTION).	**Clerk**
13.	**Succession Planning** The Clerk reported that the vacancy for a Trustee with accountancy skills or experience had been advertised, including to the School's careers contacts.	
14.	**Any other business** None.	
15.	**Agree confidential items** Item 6 (part).	
16.	**Date of next meeting**: **18 May 2026, 4-6.30pm** Meeting closed at 6.18pm.	

Signed:

Date: