THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 30 June 2025, 4.00pm – 6.15pm
The Crypt School, Room 25

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Lee Hill (Chair), Sheila Bradburn, Sonia Macleod, Suzanne Aspden, Ahmed Goga, Ciaran Hollywood, Lynsey Pollard, Amit Ray (from item 5), Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Gordon Taylor, Kate Williams (Associate Trustees)
Attendees:	Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk)
Apologies:	Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head)
Absent:	Virginia Crellin, Dare Owatemi

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** As above, approved by the Board. The Chair welcomed new Trustee Lynsey Pollard to the Board.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** As per the register. The Chair asked for notification of any changes to existing declarations; there were none.	
3.	**Agree minutes of meeting (19 May 2025) Pts 1 and 2** Agreed without amendment and signed by the Chair.	
4.	**Student Governors Report** The new Student Governors, Liam Page and Tianna Klaric, were unable to attend the meeting because it was their work experience week. Their written report would be circulated after the meeting **(ACTION)**.	**Clerk**
5.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** **a) Action table (paper 1a)** The Chair had met the new chair and committee of The Crypt School Parent Teacher Association, who had successfully taken over running of the association. Amit Ray joined the meeting. **b) Tables of actions from Governor visits and reviews of suspensions or complaints (paper 1b)** Trustees **APPROVED** the School's responses to the recommendations from the external suspension review. Trustee asked how The Crypt compared to	

	other grammar schools for external suspensions. The Headmaster (HM) said he didn't know, but would enquire; he suspected that the numbers were comparable. Another local state secondary school had recently had many more permanent exclusions **(ACTION)**. Trustee asked if data on gender comparability were available for suspensions and exclusions at other schools. The HM said this would be more complex to get, but should be held by the local authority, who are informed of all external suspensions and exclusions. Trustee review of Community Outreach - Trustees **APPROVED** the proposed actions. Trustee review of Student Scholarship: proposed actions would be reported at the next meeting **(ACTION)**. The HM said that Student Scholarship would be folded into the EDGE programme, so it would be clearer what the expectations were for the different aspects of enrichment.	**Head** **Head**
6. *(Part)*	**Headmaster's report:** **a) Educational performance (paper 2a)** The HM presented his report. The paper summarised the latest Y12 exam results; the HM said it was generally a strong year group. Of the students who had been asked to resit an end of year exam, the School was working with a small number of students to explore future options e.g. reduce to 2 A levels. Trustee noted that 6 students were leaving Y12 and asked if that was normal; the HM said it was. HM said the recent Y10 exam results were overall very positive, but the weaker Progress 8 score for boys than girls in Maths and particularly English was a concern and would be addressed. Trustee asked if the boys' underperformance compared to girls in Maths was a longer-term issue; the HM confirmed it was, and followed the national picture. Trustees asked for data on the correlation between GCSE maths grades and final A level outcomes **(ACTION).** The School Improvement Partner was expected to come in to look again at Maths, provisionally in October. The aim was to follow a 3-year cycle; this had fallen slightly behind, so lots of subjects were coming up for review. Trustee asked how many subjects could be covered in a review. The HM said that two was probably the maximum that could be covered in one day. He reminded the Board that Trustees appointed the School Improvement Partner and could select their areas of work. He also noted that the School had not undergone a mock Ofsted inspection (which typically took 2 days) since the actual inspection in March 2024, and invited the Board to consider whether they would like to commission this at a future meeting **(ACTION).** Trustee said they had recently met the English Department and it appeared to be in good shape; the key to improvement was more reading. Trustee asked if it was a long-term issue with boys dropping reading, or an issue with the appeal of the syllabus. The HM said it was probably a bit of both. From next year, Years 7 and 8 would have reading in tutor time, which would then roll up the school.	**Head** **Clerk, Board**

	Trustee asked how the Library was integrated with the English Department. The HM said they worked closely together and the Library was well-used. The Accelerated Reader programme may not have suited some students; the aim going forward was to find texts to appeal to both sexes that they will read with their tutor. Trustees discussed other proposals to help address the decline in reading, including student mentoring; reviewing the choice of prescribed texts; and asking the boys themselves about the reasons they read less. Trustee raised again their strong wish to see the School integrate the Cheltenham Literature Festival into the curriculum and make more active use of the opportunities it presents. Trustee suggested doing this collaboratively with other schools. Trustee noted that trips were challenging to organise. The HM said that trips were costly and, if a trip was linked to the curriculum, the School could only invite voluntary contributions from parents. He emphasised that the School was engaging with the Cheltenham Festivals in English and other subjects. Trustee asked for an update on the provision of reading and English support **(ACTION).** **b) Other items (paper 2b)** The HM invited questions on the report. **Buildings:** He said that the School was reviewing the way forward following failure of the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bid for fire and electrical safety works - potentially, another smaller CIF bid or a rolling programme of works. He had been assured that the School was safe, but there were improvements needed and £25k would be spent on fire safety over the summer holidays. **Fundraising:** over £25k had already been raised and more responses were pending. A strategic board, which would be chaired by Old Cryptian Steve Knibbs and have some 10-11 members, would offer advice, guidance and support to the development project team. The recruitment pack for the fundraising manager would go live at the end of July. *(remainder in Part 2 minutes)*	**Clerk**
7.	**Committee reports (papers 3-5):** Trustees noted the Committee reports. Referring to the Pupil Welfare Committee minutes, Trustee noted that SEND attendance was slightly lower than the whole school figure and asked why. The HM said that SEND students typically needed to attend more appointments or assessments outside lessons, which impacted attendance. For Audit, the Finance Director noted that all the internal scrutiny reviews had been completed and highlighted the review of the School's cybersecurity incident response plan, which had recommended only minor changes.	
8.	**Key Performance Indicators (paper 6)** The Clerk presented the KPIs update and highlighted the red rating for Y12 and Y13 absence and for external suspensions (already discussed under agenda item 6b). The HM said that Y13 absence was usually low because of study leave, university open days and other time out for, on the whole, legitimate reasons.	

	There was a small number of persistent absentees that affected the overall attendance figure. Trustees noted the report.	
9.	**Finance Director's report (papers 7&8)** The Finance Director presented the Management Accounts for the year to end May 25, which revised the forecast year end position to a surplus of £67.5k. However, the amount to be transferred to capital had now increased to £64.5k. She reported that the Sports Hall floor had been damaged by flooding; the resulting loss of lettings, expected to be some £2k, was not reflected in the accounts presented. She also said that the School had decided to take some students off trips for discipline and student safety reasons; the School had to bear the cost of this if there was no one else to take their place. Overall income would be down some £10k-11k, otherwise the figures were as reported in the papers. Trustees noted the report.	
10.	**School Budget 2025/26 – 2027/28 (papers 9a-c)** The Finance Director presented the proposed School Budget and highlighted the following changes since the version reviewed by the Resources, Staff & Pay Committee: - Sixth Form and post-16 National Insurance grants were higher than expected - The financial impact of loss of income and additional costs arising from the loss of use of the Sports Hall - Admissions costs were likely to increase significantly from 2026-27 She reminded the Board that the Budget submitted to the Department for Education would also include the Anthony Iles Fund. Overall, the position had greatly improved since a few months ago. Trustees **APPROVED** the School Budget for 2025/26 to 2027/28 and thanked the Finance Director for her excellent work on this.	
11.	**School Improvement Plan (paper 10)** The HM presented the School Improvement Plan (SIP) for 2025-26, noting that the structure had changed to reflect the new Ofsted framework, although the framework's implementation was delayed. He highlighted that the Plan included a development aim for Governors in SIP Aspect 1 (*Leading a Values-Based School*), and that the Continuing Professional Development programme for staff would be very focused on teaching and learning. Trustee asked why the proposed review of reading at Key Stage 3 was in Term 2; the HM said he would consider this with the Deputy Head (Academic) **(ACTION)**. Trustee asked if the SIP was outward facing. The HM said the draft was discussed with colleagues and the main headlines shared, but it was not on the website. He suggested this could be done in future and parents' views sought. He suggested that a one-sheet version, which was shared with all staff, could also be put on the website. He offered to send this version to the Clerk for onward circulation to Trustees to decide whether they were happy for it to be published **(ACTION)**. Trustees **APPROVED** the School Improvement Plan 2025-26.	**HM** **HM, Clerk**

12.	**Training: Trustees' Training Programme for 2025-26 (paper 11)** Trustees **APPROVED** the training programme for 2025-26. The Clerk was asked to check whether Sheila Bradburn and Lee Hill were due to refresh their safer recruitment training **(ACTION).**	**Clerk**
13.	**Trustees' Review Cycle for 2025-26 (paper 12)** Trustees **APPROVED** the review/visits programme for next year and appointed Trustees as follows to conduct the reviews: SLT and Governance culture and values: Ahmed Goga Teaching and Learning challenge: Suzanne Aspden Artificial Intelligence: Lynsey Pollard The Link Governor allocations would be reviewed in October 2025 **(ACTION)**.	**Clerk**
14.	**Policies for approval:** ● Local Government Pension Scheme Policy (paper 13) - **APPROVED** ● Special Educational Needs Policy (paper 14) - **APPROVED** ● Behaviour Policy (paper 15) - Trustee asked whether it was appropriate to have a requirement to thank the teacher at the end of the lesson, because this meant it was not a genuine response. The HM said this provision was part of integrating the School's values into its policies. Associate Trustee said they had received some very positive comments from students that were appreciated. Trustee noted the policy prevented the use of headphones in school but they were sometimes required for language listening tasks or music. The policy was **APPROVED** with an amendment to allow headphones for educational purposes **(ACTION)**. Trustee asked how they may ensure that a high standard of educational provision is made for SEND students, as set out in the policy. The HM said that regular Trustee reviews and examination of data had an impact in maintaining high standards. Trustees noted the policies approved by the Committees and HM (paper 16).	**Clerk**
15.	**Trustee appointments and elections (paper 17)** Following the resignation of Parent Trustee Ray Fish, Trustees **AGREED** the arrangements for a Parent Trustee election in autumn 2025 set out in paper 17. The Chair reported that Daniela Rodriguez had withdrawn her application to become a Trustee. It was proposed to start a new appointment process in Term 2 2025 following completion of the Parent Trustee election. Trustee suggested approaching organisations with which the School Careers team has links for potential candidates; it was **AGREED** that a letter should be sent to link organisations **(ACTION).**	**Clerk, Chair**
16.	**Committee structure** The Clerk reported that she would be reviewing the committee structure and meeting arrangements as a contribution to the Level 3 qualification for governance professionals. Several meetings this year had had low or insufficient attendance and she invited views on how this might be addressed. The Finance Director suggested that the Resources, Staff & Pay Committee should meet online	

	again to improve attendance. Trustee suggested having more members on each committee. The Clerk asked if other meeting times would be more convenient, e.g. early morning for short agenda meetings. Trustee said that meetings in the afternoon could clash with school pick-up. The Clerk invited further views to her or the Chair and said she would bring proposals to a future meeting **(ACTION)**.	**Trustees** **Clerk**
17.	**Committee appointment (paper 18):** Trustees **APPROVED** the following appointments: a) Audit & Risk Committee - Amit Ray (Chair), Dare Owatemi (member) b) Pupil Welfare Committee - Lynsey Pollard (member); remove Dare Owatemi as member c) Resources, Staff & Pay Committee - Dare Owatemi (member)	
18.	**Stakeholder surveys** The Chair reported that he had met a small group of students. Their feedback was generally positive and they felt the School was supportive. Toilets were an issue for the girls, and the group raised some concerns about knowing how reports to the bullying button were dealt with, social media effects inside and outside school, and raised canteen prices. The Finance Director said that while some prices had had to increase because of food price inflation, the price of a main meal had stayed the same, so that it was an attractive offer. Trustee asked about the School's position on halal meat. The HM confirmed that meat served in the canteen was halal. Trustee said it was important that the School could verify the supplier for halal or kosher meat. Trustee said they felt that serving halal meat was not consistent with the School's value of kindness and asked whether students realised how animals for halal meat were slaughtered. The HM said students had not raised this as a concern.	
19.	**Trustee report on safeguarding (paper 20)** Trustee presented the report of their safeguarding audit in June 2025. They said the site perimeter was generally very secure, although the audit identified some potential vulnerabilities. The HM had responded that these could be addressed if resources were allocated, although additional staffing was not possible at this time. The audit also looked at changing space for transgender students. Currently, an accessible toilet was used. The HM acknowledged that this solution was not ideal, although it had worked so far. Additional provision would require the allocation of resources, which was a decision for the Board. Trustee suggested that addressing this issue could be included as part of the plans to update the boys toilets provision. It was agreed that the Pupil Welfare Committee should look at the current provision as part of their site visit in Term 1 **(ACTION).**	**Clerk**
20.	**Safeguarding report from Designated Safeguarding Lead (paper 21)** Trustees noted the report.	
21.	**Annual reports:** ● **Educational Performance Report (paper 22)** ● **Careers Report (paper 23)** ● **Outreach programme (paper 24)** ● **Data Protection and Freedom of Information Report (paper 25)** ● **Student Parliament actions (papers 26 a-c)** Trustee congratulated Chris Germaine and the rest of the careers team on their work to support students with career development in what was an increasingly challenging apprenticeships market. They also highlighted the steep decline in the	

	availability of entry level jobs as these were replaced by Artificial Intelligence tools. The Y12 work experience was even more important in view of these developments, with a suggestion being to do more days (10) over a longer period. Trustee noted that the uptake of Maths at A level was increasing and asked if it would be useful to allow students to take AS Maths. The HM said that the Core Maths qualification (equivalent to AS level) was taught across three hours per fortnight in the student enrichment programme; if it were included in the option block, it might be possible to offer more. Trustee asked about offering students four A levels. The HM confirmed that students could study four; those that did typically added Further Maths. Quite a few students started four subjects and then dropped to three. The School could not offer much more without appointing another teacher. Trustee asked about AS level provision. The HM said it could be a different syllabus and was not offered in all subjects. Associate Trustee added that the AS exams are very early, which had to be factored into planning provision. Trustee asked about demand for Design & Technology. The HM said there was a good size Y12 set and two sets in Y10. The School remained committed to changing focus to graphic design and communication. Trustee asked about offering Chinese in the curriculum. The HM agreed this ought to be considered; the issues would be finding suitable staff and the investment needed to get it up and running. Trustee asked for a list of the schools participating in the outreach programme and the number of students from each **(ACTION).**	**Clerk**
22.	**Any other business** Trustee reported that they had met staff from the Physics Department, who had noted that some equipment needs refreshing. *(Remainder in Part 2 minutes)*	
23.	**Agree confidential items** Items 6 (part), 22 (part)	
24.	**Date of next meeting:** **Monday 13 October 2025, 3.30pm**, The Crypt School Ciaran Hollywood offered his apologies for the next meeting.	

Signed:

Date: