THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 8 December 2025, 4.00pm – 6.30pm
The Crypt School, Room 24

MINUTES: Part 1

Present:	Lee Hill (Chair), Suzanne Aspden (online, from item 7), Ruth Burchell, Sheila Bradburn, Sonia Macleod, Dare Owatemi (online), Lynsey Pollard, Amit Ray, Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster); Gordon Taylor, Kate Williams (Associate Trustees)
Attendees:	Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head) (to item 17), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk), Liam Page (Head Boy & Student Governor): items 1-3.
Apologies:	Ahmed Goga
Absent:	None

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** As above, approved by the Board. The Chair welcomed the recently elected Parent Trustee, Ruth Burchell, and Head Boy, Liam Page, to the meeting. The Chair explained that the agenda and papers would from this meeting onwards be presented separately for Part 1 and Part 2 (confidential items) to reflect best practice and help protect staff associate trustees from conflicts of interest.	
2.	**Declarations of interest** As per the register.	
3.	**Student Governors' report** The Student Governor Liam Page presented the report from the Student Executive, including: ● Social media - the Student Exec team instagram account had been made public and shifted the focus to school events, which had noticeably improved reach and engagement ● Diversity and inclusion - the exec team had supported and participated in diversity-themed assemblies and engaged with prospective sixth formers from Severn Vale school ● Fundraising - significant donations to the Severn Area Rescue Association and support for men's mental health and cancer awareness ● Prefects - the team had run the prefect recruitment process and supported the Sixth Form open evening ● Support for the three student parliaments.	

	He also reported: ● Issues in some prefect applications, including poor grammar and artificial intelligence use ● Concerns about soap availability in girls' toilets ● Request for new microwave for the Sixth Form common room ● Suggestion to insulate water pipes so that external water fountains didn't have to be closed during cold weather. Trustee asked whether prefect applicants had been told beforehand not to use AI; Liam confirmed that they had. The Headmaster (HM) and Senior Deputy Head (PS) noted the other concerns and the Board thanked Liam, who then left the meeting.	
4.	**Agree minutes of meeting 13.10.25 (Part 1)** Approved without amendment.	
5.	***Training Presentation:* Understanding the School's financial and planning cycle (paper 1a)** Trustees noted the information presented in paper 1a on the stages and timing of the curriculum and wider planning and financial cycle.	
6.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** ● **Action table (paper 1b)** The Chair highlighted: ● Ruth Burchell would now be joining the Audit & Risk Committee, as agreed at the October meeting. ● Artificial Intelligence should be added to the next meeting agenda (ACTION). ● Information on behaviour sanctions by ethnicity had not yet been circulated - Clerk to circulate (ACTION) ● Careers education links would be drawn upon in the forthcoming recruitment exercise (ACTION).	 **Clerk** **Clerk**
10.	**Appointment of Trustees** The Chair said that, as previously agreed, with the Parent Trustee election completed the Board would start in early 2026 a recruitment exercise to fill skills gaps on the Board, notably accountancy/audit skills. The Board AGREED that the recruitment panel should comprise the Chair, the two Vice-Chairs and the Headmaster.	
7.	**Headmaster's report:** **i) Educational performance (paper 2a)** The HM presented his report. He referred the Board to the educational performance data now published by the Department for Education via the Compare School Performance service, which had been given to the Board previously. Suzanne Aspden joined the meeting. The School Improvement Partner (SIP) had recently visited the School to carry out a review of English. Their report was not yet available, but the HM summarised its clear recommendations about where action could be taken to improve the School's outcomes in English. These included structural changes to the sequencing of the curriculum, and changes to teaching and learning practice. He said an action plan had been agreed with the Department to implement the report's findings.	

	Trustees discussed the findings and asked if there were specific elements that pupils found particularly challenging. The HM said that pupils found it hard to answer longer questions and bring together the elements practised separately. Trustee asked if it would be helpful to seek peer learning from other schools. The HM said that visits had already been undertaken or booked to local selective and non-selective schools. **ii) Other items (paper 2b)** The HM presented updated figures for Year 7 admissions in 2026 (report updated on Governor Hub). Final preferences were 743 (652 excluding Swindon), of which 589 were qualified for entry; there were more boys (341 qualified) than girls (248 qualified). Accordingly, the School would be full for the coming Y7 with a waiting list. The G7 group of Gloucestershire grammar schools had one more year of testing run by GL Assessment and would shortly go out to tender for the next contract. The HM invited Trustees to notify him of their main priorities for the next contract (ACTION). The School was submitting a Condition Improvement Fund bid for fire safety (c.£200k) and would do more work on a further, larger bid for electrical upgrades. The new Development Manager had made a positive start and some KPIs had been set; he suggested inviting her to give a presentation to the Board at the next meeting (ACTION). Overall behaviour in school was positive, with no external suspensions to date. He noted the positive developments reported in the careers education programme, including the recent mock interviews for Y13 and the upcoming Apprenticeship Mock Assessment Centre. Trustees noted the report.	**Trustees** **Clerk**
8.	**Finance Director's report: Management Accounts to Oct 25 (paper 3)** The Finance Director (JH) said that income was close to budget; forecast expenditure on staffing had increased owing to some changes previously agreed by the Resources, Staff and Pay Committee. Capital commitments were itemised in the report. The Gloucester Union of Schools had kindly offered to give the School £60k again in 2025-26. Trustees noted the report.	
9.	**Key Performance Indicators (paper 4)** Trustees noted the latest KPI data. Trustee asked why there had been significantly fewer lesson observations this year than at the same point in the previous year. The Senior Deputy Head (PS) said that this was because observations now took place in Term 2 rather than Term 1. Trustee asked if the observations causing concern related to different departments. PS said he would check and inform Trustees (ACTION). Trustee said that the number of accidents seemed low and asked if the School was confident that they were being properly reported; PS responded that it was.	**Senior Deputy Head**

11.	**Approval of the audited accounts 2024-25 (papers 5a-e)** The Board reviewed the audited accounts and associated papers. JH said that the current reserves policy was to hold free reserves equivalent to 3 per cent of revenue. The auditors had advised that it was normal to hold 5 per cent and the plan was for the School to change to this figure going forward. Trustees confirmed the reserves policy set out in the accounts. Trustees confirmed that they were satisfied with the current process of risk management. Trustees confirmed that there were no changes to accounting policies. Trustees confirmed their view that the Academy is a going concern for 12 months from the date of approval of the accounts. Trustees confirmed that: · there were no post-balance sheet events that gave rise to additional disclosures in the accounts · capital commitments were disclosed as required in the financial statements · they were not aware of any fraud or mis-statements that required disclosing. Trustees APPROVED the Letters of Representation, the Management Letter and the School's response; and APPROVED the annual report and accounts for The Crypt School for the year ended 31 August 2025.	
12.	**School Improvement Plan: progress update (paper 6)** PS presented the update. He reminded the Board that the Plan included a narrower set of priorities and highlighted: · Standardised Continuing Professional Development path, with the School up to date on mandatory training and Prevent training to follow shortly · Strong independent work in the Sixth Form · Positive feedback from Y7 Student Voice on the new practice of reading at tutor time · Changes to the senior leadership team's practice, being more visible and introduction of more strategic briefing on inclusion, teaching and learning, AI and SEND, rather than just events · Overall, there was a good atmosphere around the school. Trustees noted the report.	
13.	**Admissions Policy (paper 7)** The Board discussed the proposed increase to a threshold of 62 points from the best eight GCSE results for students wishing to study 4 A levels in the Sixth Form. The HM said that some 50 students had started 4 A levels this year (many taking further maths), which reduced the space for students in popular subjects such as maths, chemistry and economics. The drop-out from taking 4 A levels was high and most universities made offers on 3 A levels only, so the aim was to retain the 4 A level pathway but reduce access to it. Trustee noted that some universities did make offers on 4 A levels, so it was important to retain this option. Trustees APPROVED the Admissions Policy for 2027 entry.	

14.	**Other policies for approval (papers 8-12)** The Board reviewed policies as follows: a) Artificial Intelligence Policy - the Chair said that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the School would be on the agenda of the next Board meeting. Trustee said that there was growing evidence of some risk incidents arising from the use of AI in corporate processes and that it was crucial for the Board to consider the School's approach to using AI. The Chair invited the Trustee to share some examples (ACTION). The HM said that AI had huge potential for marking work and linking to specifications, thereby reducing teachers' workload. The School could not stop students using it and it was important for them to learn how to use AI appropriately. Checks were done on students' coursework and students were informed in assemblies and exam preparations about the consequences of using AI for cheating or plagiarism. Trustee said that AI was being used in higher education in a positive way to enhance students' careers pathways, and different approaches to assessment could help in overcoming some of the risks. Trustee said it was important to be aware of the impact on cognitive processing abilities of an over-reliance on AI. AI also had an enormous environmental impact. Trustees approved the policy and agreed to look further at the School's use of AI at the next meeting (ACTION). b) Careers Education & Guidance Policy - document not available, postponed to next meeting c) Provider Access Policy - approved d) Equality Duty Statement - approved e) Policies reviewed and approved in Term 2: - noted.	**Trustee** **Clerk**
15.	**New committees:** **a) Approval of terms of reference and membership (paper 13)** **b) Approval of revised Scheme of Delegation (paper 14)** The Board APPROVED the new terms of reference for the Resources, Staff & Pay Committee and the new Pupil Education & Outcomes Committee (PEO) and the dissolution of the Pupil Welfare Committee. They approved membership of the PEO as follows: Committee Chair: Sheila Bradburn Members: Suzanne Aspden, Lynsey Pollard In attendance: Kate Williams (Associate Trustee – Teachers), Gordon Taylor (Associate Trustee – Support Staff) Clerk: Nicola Donlon (Clerk to Trustees) The Board also APPROVED the revised Scheme of Delegation including new delegations to the PEO and RSP (paper 14).	

16.	**Committee reports (papers 15-18)** **a) Resources, Staff & Pay**: the Chair had sent letters of thanks to JH and her team for their hard work in supporting a successful external audit. b) **Admissions:** the Committee had thanked Sue Wales, who was stepping down as Admissions Officer in February 2026. It was agreed that the Chair should also send a letter of thanks (ACTION). c) **Audit:** The Board APPROVED the report of internal scrutiny in 2024-25. JH noted that the external auditors had recommended including a check of credit card transactions in the internal scrutiny programme, which the Audit Committee could action as part of this year's programme (ACTION).	**Chair** **Finance Director**
17.	**Risk Register (items 1.5, 1.9, 2.3, 5.4) (paper 19)** The Board reviewed items on the risk register as follows: 1.5 (Trustees lack relevant skills): no change, recruitment planned in 2026 1.9 (public profile is damaged by actions of staff or Trustee): Trustees asked if the impact of this risk was scored high enough, and whether the impact on students and staff was included in the assessment. The HM agreed that the impact on those groups was significant. Safer recruitment procedures and online checks were fully implemented for the appointment of staff and Trustees. Trustees AGREED not to change the assessed level of risk. Phil Stanlake left the meeting. 2.3 (conflict of interest). JH said the school had an up to date register of interests and did not allow related party transactions. No change. 5.4 (natural disaster/terrorist attack etc): no change.	
18.	**Safeguarding report (paper 20)** Trustees noted the update on safeguarding, inclusion, wellbeing, behaviour and attendance.	
19.	**Governor visits:** **a) Careers Link Trustee (paper 21)** Trustees discussed the report from the Careers Link Trustee on their latest meeting with careers staff to discuss progress. The Chair reminded Trustees to support the School by making LinkedIn connections. He had helped with the recent programme of mock interviews for Y13 students and reported that the standard was very good, with students being more prepared now than in the past. He was keen to see the School explore how connections with employers could be made on the back of these interviews. **b) Careers Convention visit (paper 22)** Trustee reported on his visits to the School's Careers Convention and 6th Form open evening. He said the careers event was very well organised and there had been good engagement from employers/universities and students.	
20.	**Francis Curriculum and Assessment Review (paper 23)** The HM summarised the recommendations of the recent review, saying that the changes represented an evolution of the current arrangements to improve equity, inclusion and relevance. The School was very well placed on many of the areas recommended for change; however, the plans for Computing in Key Stage 4 would have significant implications. The EBacc performance measure was to be removed to allow broader student choice, but the EBacc "bucket" would be retained in the	

	Progress 8 measure, renamed as "Academic Breadth". The timescale for implementation was 2028. Trustee suggested that the School Improvement Partner could be asked to examine inclusion and equity in their programme for next year; the HM agreed this could be useful.	
21.	**Ofsted Inspection: new framework and information (paper 24)** The HM introduced his paper. He said that many of the themes covered in the new approach to inspection fall in the remit of Deputy Head (Safeguarding, Inclusion and Wellbeing), so possible structural changes were being considered. He highlighted that governance was explicitly included in an evaluation area, with governors/trustees being expected to know their roles, how they contribute to enhancing the school's effectiveness, and the school's strengths and different groups. He reminded the Board to watch the ASCL's recent seminars (at least 1 and 5) and look at the new inspection toolkit and criteria in each evaluation area (ACTION). Trustee asked about the meaning of having a "transformational impact" on other groups of students who may face barriers to their learning or wellbeing. The HM said this would be evaluated in the grammar school context; for example, there might be challenges for really able students e.g. in personal development. Lynsey Pollard, Gordon Taylor and Kate Williams left the meeting. Trustee suggested that kinship care children might be another group to track, but they could be hard to identify. Trustee voiced concern that specific groups of children should not be under additional pressure because they will need to be monitored. The HM confirmed that most monitoring is already in place as a matter of course. The HM suggested that the School Improvement Partner could undertake a mock inspection and invited Trustees to draw up proposals at the next Resources, Staff & Pay Committee meeting for the Board's final decision (ACTION).	**TRUSTEES** **RSP, HM**
	Items 22-24: in Part 2 (Confidential) Minutes	
25.	**Date of next meeting** Annual General Meeting Monday 9th February 2026, 4pm, The Crypt School, followed by Full Board Meeting (no later than 4.30pm start)	

Signed:

Date: