THE CRYPT SCHOOL
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Monday, 9 December 2024, 4.00pm – 6.30pm
The Crypt School, Room 24

MINUTES: Part 1

Present: Lee Hill (Chair), Sheila Bradburn, Ray Fish, Sonia Macleod, Ahmed Goga, Virginia Crellin, Amit Ray (from item 7), Nicholas Dyer (Headmaster);
Attendees: Phil Stanlake (Senior Deputy Head), Joanne Hitchings (Finance Director & Company Secretary), Nicola Donlon (Clerk); Elizabeth Twenaboa, Jack Mitten (Student Governors)
Apologies: Suzanne Aspden, Ciaran Hollywood; Gordon Taylor, Kate Williams (Associate Trustees)

Absent: None
Quorum: Four

MINUTES (DRAFT)

	Item	ACTION
1.	**Apologies** – as above, approved by the Board	
2.	**Declarations of interest** As per the register. Three Trustees present are parents of the School. The Clerk also said that all staff present would potentially be affected if the School became a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) and therefore had an interest.	
3.	**Agree minutes of meeting 14.10.24 (Parts 1 and 2)** Agreed without amendment and signed by the Chair.	
4.	**Matters arising from previous minutes:** ● **Action table (paper 1a-c)** Trustees noted the update on actions.	
5.	**Student Governors' report** The Student Governors presented their oral report. Feedback from the student parliaments included: • Further notice of exam dates would be welcome • Homework is sometimes checked for completion but not reflected on; • Students would like more indoor social space and study space for Y11; • The range of clubs is welcomed but it was suggested that some could be open to younger year groups too (e.g. the LGBTQ+ group). The Student Executive was appointing new prefects and was looking at expanding the types of role available. The microwave and heating in the JJCC common room	

	needed sorting out; the Senior Deputy Head said that the microwave was provided on the basis that students kept it clean themselves. Trustee asked how the common room was used. Student Governors said that more work was being done in free periods compared with last year. Some students felt that this created more continuous pressure and the Student Governors said that a balance was needed to allow time for a break as well as intense study. Trustee asked how this could be achieved; Student Governor said that productive work did not necessarily have to be study, e.g. it could include task management, interview preparation. Trustee asked if students could work collaboratively and the Student Governors confirmed that they could. Student Governors left the meeting. Trustee asked if the Board should be concerned at the suggestion of excessive pressure on students. The Headmaster (HM) said that the students' views probably reflected that they had just completed an intense period leading up to mock exams. Students had freedom to complete different activities as had been suggested, and overall the learning culture was much improved.	
6.	**Headmaster's report:** ***In confidential minutes*** Amit Ray joined the meeting.	
7.	**Committee reports (papers 3a&b, 4, 5):** The Board noted the reports from Committees and the Audit & Risk Committee's Report of internal scrutiny 2023-24 for submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency.	
8.	**Finance Director's report: Management Accounts to Oct 2024 (papers 6 & 7)** The Finance Director presented her report. The School had received some extra income from grants for pay rises so RSP had approved some appointments (new assistant caretaker, administrative role and attendance officer hours). The revised pay figures would be included in the next set of accounts.	
9.	**Key Performance Indicators (paper 8)** The Clerk presented the KPIs report. She said a new report method for staff absence was not consistent with the October figures and she would issue an update after the meeting **(action)**. The Board welcomed the lower staff absence and improved attendance. Trustee said that the attendance target was rarely achieved in practice and asked whether the target should be changed. The HM said that Y13 attendance was affected by the availability of home study and authorised absence to attend university open days etc. The Board asked to see adjusted attendance figures for Y13 taking these factors into account **(action)**. Trustee asked whether the number of lesson observations causing concern was expected to rise. The Senior Deputy Head (PS) said this was unlikely, because teachers had notice of the observations. He and the HM did conduct unannounced visits but could only give generalised feedback. Trustee asked if the observations were effective in identifying under-performance. PS said that effectiveness was impacted by giving notice, but removing this requirement would be a union issue. He also noted that the KPI figures did not include Early Career Teachers. Trustee asked how the School tracked progress and improved performance beyond observations. PS said there were departmental meetings to share good practice and individual staff meetings with Heads of Department to	**Clerk** **Clerk**

	discuss progress. Trustee asked if coaching or mentoring arrangements had been considered; PS said that these were being discussed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) that week.	
10.	**Local MAT developments** ***In confidential minutes***	
11.	**Parent Trustee election (paper 9)** The Board welcomed the strong field of candidates in the ongoing Parent Trustee election. The Chair introduced the draft guidance for Trustees who are also parents/carers of students at the School, saying that it was intended to help Trustees and staff understand and navigate the challenges of being both Trustee and parent. He would meet the newly elected Parent Trustee to ensure they understood the requirement for a clear separation of roles. The Board **approved** the draft guidance without amendment.	

12.	**Approval of the audited accounts (papers 10a-e)** The Finance Director presented the audited accounts and associated papers. She drew attention to the only item raised in the management letter, which was that the Designated Officer for Looked After Children needed to be identified on the school website; this had now been corrected. 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 2024.	
13.	**School Improvement Plan: progress update (paper 11)** PS presented the progress report. He said the most significant impact had been the change in mobile phone use policy, which had dramatically cut down use. Trustees noted the report.	
14.	**Capital plans (paper 12)** The HM presented the Ten Year Estates Development Plan, emphasising that it was still very draft. Trustee asked how confident the School was in achieving its Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids. The HM said he was not confident because of the cost (approximately £1m each for fire safety and electrical improvements). Trustee asked how the work would be funded in that case; the HM said the projects would be implemented incrementally and would not replace the proposed Dining Room and Sixth Form projects, which he hoped would be	

	completed in 2025. The Anthony Iles Fund was considering a contribution of up to £100k to the Sixth Form project. Trustee asked about the proposed new performing arts building, noting that pupil numbers were falling in those subjects. The HM said the project would create a multi-purpose space for drama, lectures, debates, music and other performances, which continued to form an essential part of the extra-curricular offer as well as the curriculum. Trustee said that drama skills are fundamental to business (presentation, project management, team-building, etc). Ahmed Goga offered to share the name of the CEO of Cheltenham Literature Festival as a contact for the new project **(action).**	
15.	**Appointment of additional Trustees (paper 13)** The Board discussed plans to appoint additional Trustees in 2025 to supplement its skills and experience and increase capacity. It was **agreed** that two additional Trustees, with skills/experience covering secondary education and buildings/estates, should be sought and delegated the recruitment process to a panel comprising the Chair and Vice-Chairs, HM and Ahmed Goga **(action).** ***Part in confidential minutes***	**Clerk**
16.	**Behaviour Policy (paper 14)** The HM reported that there had been 166 negative behaviour events in Y13, with no or poor homework being the most common. He concluded that there was still a need in Y13 for guardrails for some individuals to steer them towards a successful outcome in their final exams. Trustees were surprised at the level of negative behaviour and questioned whether detentions were effective. PS said that, although the overall number seemed high, it represented only some 2 negative events a day across the whole of Year 13, which had 168 students. The HM said it was probably the case that some students had developed a habit of completing homework in detention. Three or more detentions attracted an internal suspension and these were not common. Trustees all agreed that the policy could not require students aged 18 or over to undertake after-school detention because this was against the law and could not be enforced. However, there was no simple alternative that could be universally applied; some students had already had home study removed, and there was insufficient capacity to impose lunchtime detentions (which are shorter) instead. Trustees therefore **agreed** that after-school detentions should be optional for over-18s, with an alternative sanction being agreed by a member of SLT. The Board asked the HM to provide an alternative draft to give effect to this policy and delegated final approval of the Behaviour Policy to the Chair and co-Vice-Chairs **(action**).	**HM**
17.	**Policies for approval:** Trustees **approved** the following policies: a. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy (paper 15). Trustee asked whether students had the ability to understand what the policy required. PS said the School had run assemblies to explain the requirements to students. b. Careers Education Information and Guidance Policy (paper 16) c. Provider Access Policy (paper 17) d. Equality Duty Statement (paper 18) e. Health and Safety Policy (paper 19) f. Admissions Policy (paper 20) – final approval after consultation delegated to Sheila Bradburn	

	g. Anti-harassment (including sexual) and Bullying Policy (paper 25) h. Charging and Remissions Policy (paper 26). Trustees noted the policies reviewed and approved under delegation in Term 2 (paper 21).	
18.	**Risk Register (paper 22)** Trustees reviewed and made changes to the risk register as follows: 1.9: change to likelihood 2, impact 3 1.10: no change 2.3: no change 3.1: no change 3.5: no change 5.4: no change 5.8: additional site team member approved so remove.	
19.	**Safeguarding update (paper 23)** Trustee said they were surprised that the suspensions and key attendance issues reported all concerned male students. The HM said that one individual in Y11 accounted for most of the suspensions; at present, none of the long-term attendance problems concerned girls. Trustees noted the update.	
20.	**Governor reviews:** **i) Safeguarding autumn review (paper 24a)** **ii) Update on plans** Trustees noted the reports.	
21.	**Any other business** The Chair reminded Trustees to complete the events attendance form and notify the Clerk if they were no longer able to attend.	
22.	**Confidential items** (*to agree items that should be recorded as confidential)* Items 6, 10 and 15 (part).	
23.	**Date of next meeting:** **Annual General Meeting Monday 10th February 2025, 4pm, The Crypt School,** followed by **Full Board Meeting (no later than 4.30pm start)**	

Signed:

Date: