

MINUTES FOR ORDINARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING
 Tuesday 12 December 2022 at 6 pm held online

Board Members	Attendance 2022/23	Present at this meeting
Dr Helen Corkill (HC) Co-opted Trustee – Chair		Present
Mr John Turney (JT) Trustee – Vice-Chair		Present
Mr Philip Addison (PA) Parent Trustee		
Mr Neil Broughton (NB) Parent Trustee		
Mrs Kirsty Harvey (KH) Parent Trustee	Apologies	Notified apologies
Mr David Hutchison (DH) Trustee		Present
Mrs Hazel Jones (HJ) Co-opted Trustee		Present
Mr Phil Laws (PL) Trustee		
Mr Steven Marlow (SM) Trustee		
MS Jen McCall	Apologies	Notified apologies
Mr Fergal Moane (FM) Headteacher		Present
Mrs Janet Radley (JR) Co-opted Trustee		Present
Miss Kathryn Rainbow (KR) Co- opted Trustee		Present
Mr Chris Schanschieff (CS) Trustee		Present
Mr Bhagwant Singh (BS) Co- Opted Trustee		Present
Liz Taplin (LT) C-opted Trustee		Present
Mr Michael Taylor (MT) – Trustee		Present
Cllr Richard Thake (RT) Trustee		Present
Mrs Jo Weston (JW) Parent Trustee		Present
Ms Vicki Whent (VW) Co-opted Trustee		Present
Mr Kris Whitmore (KW) Trustee		Present

Also, in attendance for agenda item 13, was Michael Mitchell, Chair of the Parents' Society

	This meeting was conducted remotely using Teams due to the adverse weather conditions. The meeting was quorate.	
1	Welcome and Introductions.	

	<p>The Chair apologised for the need to move the meeting online. This decision had been taken in response to the snowy weather conditions.</p> <p>The Chair notified the Board that Bob Goldsmith, Clerk to the Board, was unwell and this was why he was not in attendance. She was pleased to report that the Doctors were expecting him to make a good recovery and best wishes had been conveyed to him on behalf of both the school and the Board.</p>	
2	<p>To receive apologies and approve absences</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Jen McCall and Kirsty Harvey.</p> <p>Fergal Moane had notified the Chair that he was going to be late due to heavy traffic and difficult driving conditions due to the snow. Note: Fergal Moane joined the meeting during consideration of Matters Arising from the minutes of the last Board meeting.</p>	
3	<p>To declare any Conflict of interest that may arise during the meeting and any changes in declarations of interest.</p> <p>It was noted that none were received.</p>	
4	<p>To receive notification of any other business.</p> <p>During the meeting, the Chair agreed to accept three further items: Golf Event, Update from the Headteacher on the School Closure on 19 December 2022 due to adverse weather and Festive Good Wishes.</p>	
5	<p>Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 October 2022</p> <p>It was noted that these minutes had not been finalised and would therefore be submitted to the next Board meeting for formal approval.</p> <p>If there were any matters needing immediate attention these would be dealt with under the arrangements for urgent action and the any details would be circulated to the Governor Trustees.</p> <p>The Chair went through the minutes in provide updates on the following matters arising:</p> <p>Item 6 – Membership of the Board</p> <p>It was noted that Vicki Whent’s membership as a Co-opted member had been confirmed on Governorhub as a CO-opted Trustee and designated as the SEND Lead Trustee.</p> <p>Item 8a Sports Centre Staff: Uplift in Pay for Level One to Level Four</p> <p>The Chair advised that the proposed Chair’s action had not been done as this had not been required.</p> <p>Item 8b: Invitation to the Parents’ Society to meet with the Board of Trustees</p>	

	<p>This had been done and the Chair of the Parents’ Society was joining the Board under the relevant agenda item later in the meeting.</p> <p>Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting held on 26 September 2022. It was noted that these minutes had been finalised with the relevant correction.</p> <p>Item 9d To Consider Arrangements for Link Trustees’ Visits The Chair advised that agreement had been reached on the frequency of future Link Visits and this was to be two per year. One of these would be a group visit with all Governor Trustees being invited to attend.</p> <p>Item 9g) Options for External Scrutiny of Governance Arrangements The Chair advised that this had been progressed and Alison Saunders had agreed to undertake the governance review in either the Spring or summer of 2023.</p> <p>Item 10: Pay Award for School Staff 2022-23, a Teachers Pay Award The Chair reported that the approval of incremental pay progression for both the teachers and Senior Leadership Team had been completed by the Pay & Performance Committee.</p> <p>Item 12, Headteacher’s Report: a) Survey of Parents The Chair advised that this had been done and the Parental survey results were being considered at this meeting under the Kirkland Rowell Survey results which was later on the agenda.</p> <p>Item 12 b) Specialist Support for Students with Special Educational Needs The Chair stated that the reference to the Pastoral Committee on support for Special Educational Needs had been held over. She proposed that she and the Chair of the Pastoral Committee should meet to discuss how best to progress this matter.</p> <p>Item 13: Looked After Children – Annual Report The Chair confirmed that this report had been rescheduled and was going to be discussed later at today’s meeting under item 10.</p> <p>Item 14a: Safeguarding: a) Safeguarding Annual report The Chair confirmed that the minor correction to the Safeguarding Annual report had been completed.</p>	
6	<p>To receive the report on the Findings of the Stakeholder Survey of Students, Parents and Staff Conducted by Kirkland Rowell.</p> <p>The Board of Trustees received the three survey reports which had been produced by Kirkland Rowell. Each report focused on the responses from one of the three stakeholder groups: Students, Parents and Staff.</p> <p>The Headteacher provided the Board with a summary of the themes and main findings from all the surveys. The reports were all very positive with improvement being evidenced across every measure. For him one of the key responses was whether or not the stakeholder</p>	

would recommend the school to others: with 80% of parents and 79% of students saying they would do this.

One of the main advantages of using Kirkland Rowell for this work was that this organisation was able to provide comparative data on our school's performance in relation to similar schools.

The reports used the following colour coding with gold denoting "outstanding" results and green showing "good" ones.

The Headteacher was pleased to report that there were very few negative outcomes. Generally, responses were either in the good or very good category. Furthermore, the data provided helpful evidence that the school was moving in the right direction.

It was noted that the overall responses were predominately outstanding with two good outcomes.

The Headteacher was pleased to report that there was very little requiring immediate attention. The survey evidence suggested that the school should continue doing what it was already doing, with the focus being further improvement.

One of the key areas of difference between the surveys were the areas of concern that had been raised by the different stakeholder groups. Although it should be noted there were not very many of these and none could be considered as matters for significant concern.

Parents were bothered about healthy food options and wanted more sport, more trips and more to be done to prepare the boys for the world of work. All of these concerns had been carefully considered and the school was responding in either doing more to manage expectations or look at what could be done in relation to working more closely with the relevant provider. The School had also reached out to establish links with the local Chamber of Commerce.

The Headteacher had been especially pleased with the finding that most staff believed their workload had reduced resulting in a better work-life balance. This was something that he and the Senior Management Team had been working on to improve. However, he had found some of the responses surprising as they did not correlate with other information sources.

On school culture some staff had asked for a stronger voice on wellbeing issues. A few staff considered that behaviour had worsened but this was not reflected in the behaviour consequences or the

experience reported by students. A small number of staff had asked for more training and support. All these matters were being considered and action was being planned on the most appropriate response.

The students wanted better food and toilets, as well as being allowed into town in Year 11. All of these matters had been discussed with the students and the School Council.

Q What significance should be placed on the staff response rate of 55%?

The Headteacher agreed that he would have liked this to be higher but stressed that involvement in the survey was voluntary and reminders had been sent out to staff to complete the survey.

CS advised that the school that he worked for had done a similar survey which had produced some similar results. His school had also found some of the responses had not reflected management's view or the reported experience of the school based upon their data. But he stressed the impressive positive outcomes, and this reflected well on Hitchin Boys School.

The Headteacher had noticed that the staff room was not as widely used as it might be. Ideally it would be the hub for social and professional engagement. He had considered installing a coffee machine to provide a natural focus and place for congregation; but lacked the funds to do this when there were so many other demands on the school budget.

HC thought this might be something which the Parents Society might be willing to fund and undertook to raise this outside of the Board meeting with Michael Mitchell, Chair of the Parents' Society.

RT stated that he would be willing to explore grant funding to see if this could provide a contribution towards any costs.

Q What is meant by the happiness of the child and what this would mean for the school if it has better responses than other schools?

The Headteacher explained that Kirkland Rowell did not share how they mapped the survey responses. But intuitively he would be surprised if Covid and the post Covid environment had not influenced responses on mental health and well-being. But he did feel there was merit in having a discussion as to what specifically might make the students feel happier, especially with Year 10. He undertook to bring the outcome of any feedback to the Board in the spring.

7	<p>Evaluation of the School</p> <p>a) HFL Education School Effectiveness Advisor’s Report, Autumn 2022</p> <p>This was a report which had been commissioned in order to provide a different source of external scrutiny. This was usually offered on an annual basis and usually looked at key areas such as safeguarding and Special Educational Needs.</p> <p>The Headteacher was pleased to report that the School Effectiveness Advisor had found nothing which had caused them any concern.</p> <p>b) School Self-Evaluation Submission</p> <p>The Headteacher presented this report to the Board and advised that evaluation was an activity which was undertaken on an ongoing basis. However, this report provided an opportunity to update the Board on this evaluation on an annual basis.</p> <p>c) FFT Governor Dashboard</p> <p>This was an information “dashboard” which had been specifically designed to present key educational performance data in a user-friendly manner to help Governors assess their particular school.</p> <p>The Headteacher stressed that whilst comparative data had been presented for the last three years, care needed to be taken when looking across these years as the assessment regimes were very different making direct comparison difficult to do in a fair way.</p> <p>The Headteacher highlighted the positive nature of the Fisher Trust data, with the entire report showing green results for the school.</p> <p>He also explained that the reason the report only talked about GCSE data was that the A level data had not yet been produced.</p>	
8	<p>Financial matters</p> <p>a) Audited Accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31 August 2022</p> <p>b) The Annual Report for the Financial Year ended 31 August 2022</p>	

The Audited accounts and Annual report for the financial year ending on 31 August 2022 were presented together to the Board for formal approval.

It was noted that these financial reports had already been considered separately by the Audit, Risk and Resources Committee and by the Member Governors. Furthermore, no material deficiency had been identified.

The Board was reminded that it had previously agreed a reserve of 4% for GAG income and this target had been achieved in the presented accounts.

The Chair proposed to the Board that the Accounts and Annual Report be approved as set out and these were unanimously approved.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the audited accounts for the year ended on 31 August 2022 be approved as set out;
- b) the annual report for the Financial Year Ended on 31 August 2022 be approved as set out;
- c) the Chair of the Board of Trustees and the School's Accounting Officer be authorised to sign the Accounts on behalf of the Board;
- d) the Letters of Representation be approved, and the Chair of the Board of Trustees be authorised to sign these on behalf of the Board;
- e) The signed versions of the Annual Report and the Accounts for the Financial Year Ending on 31 August 2022 be sent to the Education and Skills Funding Agency and Companies House, as required.

c) Updated Financial Management Accounts 2022-2023

This report was formally presented to the Board.

It was noted that whilst the accounts were currently showing a healthy balance, Trustees needed to be aware that there were outstanding items which could not yet be shown here but were likely to bring the budget into balance at a later time.

Attention was also drawn to the fact that the current accounts were not yet showing the relevant pay agreements as these had not yet been enacted and would only feature in the accounts from December onwards.

	<p>It was recognised that this budget was going to be extremely tight, but it was feasible that the revised budget would be achieved, providing there were no further unexpected financial costs. It was recognised that this position was not surprising given the current national financial circumstances and a better one than many other schools were facing.</p> <p>Trustees expressed their appreciation of the school’s success in negotiating down the proposed development costs for the J block from the initial £450k to £160K, leaving the school in a much better financial position.</p> <p>d) Sports Centre and Canteen Income It was noted that the Board did not need to consider these as they had already been approved by the Audit, Risk and Resources Committee.</p> <p>e) Final Payment to Evers</p> <p>It was noted that the last two outstanding payments to Evers had been signed off.</p> <p>RESOLVED – that the two final payments to Evers be formally approved.</p>	
9	<p>Minutes of the Audit, Risk and Resources Committee, 2 November 2022</p> <p>It was noted that these were not currently available and consideration of these would be deferred to a later meeting.</p>	
10	<p>Looked After Children Annual Report</p> <p>The Headteacher presented this report to the Board. He advised that this was a standard report and common to all state schools.</p> <p>Trustees needed to be aware of recent changes which had broadened the scope of this report. It was now relevant to look at not just children who were actually in the care system but also those who had been assigned a social worker. This did not have huge implications for this school, as although it did increase the numbers of students needed to be assessed under this category the actual numbers were still relatively small.</p> <p>The Headteacher assured the Board that this was being done and the relevant member of staff was doing this alongside our Pupil Premium duties.</p>	

	<p>The Headteacher reported that two students were currently being educated by the ESC. Furthermore, the school was working with partners to achieve a special school place for one particular student. The Chair noted that it was helpful to receive this report on an annual basis.</p>	
11	<p>Governance matters</p> <p>a) Proposals for an External Survey of Governance Arrangements</p> <p>There was a requirement for all school bodies to have their activities looked at externally. The school has approached a local Head Teacher to undertake this assessment and they have agreed. Terms of reference are currently being discussed and agreed. The intention is for this report to be ready by early summer.</p> <p>b) Changes to the Membership of Committees</p> <p>The Chair proposed that in future the staff representatives on the Board should no longer serve as Co-opted Trustees but instead as Specialist Advisors to a specific Committee. This would enable the Board to continue to benefit from their experience and input.</p> <p>This was unanimously agreed by the Board.</p> <p>RESOLVED that the following staff representatives be appointed to the Board as Specialist Advisors as set out below:</p> <p>(i) Liz Taplin be approved as a Specialist Advisor to the Health & Safety and Premises Committee;</p> <p>(ii) Katherine Rainbow as a Specialist Advisor to the Teaching Learning committee and;</p> <p>(iii) Jen McCall as Specialist Advisor to the Pastoral Committee.</p> <p>c) Link Trustees' Reports</p> <p>d) Re-Appointment of Janet Radley and Bhagwant Singh as Trustees</p> <p>AGREED: that Bhagwant Singh and Janet Radley be re-appointed as Trustees for a further four-year term.</p>	
12	<p>School Policies</p> <p>a) Allegations of abuse against staff Policies and Procedures</p> <p>b) Covering Absent Teachers Policy</p> <p>c) Debt Recovery Policy</p> <p>d) Directed Time Policy</p> <p>e) E-Safety Policy</p> <p>f) Induction Policy</p> <p>g) Minibus Policy</p>	

	<p>h) Staff Health and Attendance Policy i) Whistleblowing Policy j) Admissions Policy</p> <p>It was noted that the last policy was admitted in order to comply with Hertfordshire County Council deadlines and there were no substantive changes. The only actual change was to alter the relevant time frame.</p> <p>AGREED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) it was agreed that the policies be agreed as set out in the agenda; (ii) The Admissions Policy be approved as before with the only change being that this policy should relate to 2024-25. 	
13	<p>Presentation by the Chair of the Parents’ Society, Michael Mitchell</p> <p>The Chair formally welcomed the Chair of the Parents’ Society to this meeting and invited him to share with the Board its current and future plans.</p> <p>Michael Mitchell thanked the Board for its invitation and looked forward to the Society forging closer links with the Board. He explained that the last three years had been challenging for the Society due to Covid. This had significantly curtailed contact with parents and had greatly restricted fund-raising activities. The Society was looking at how it could revitalise itself and rebuild its fund-raising activities. It was working hard at re-establishing links with parents and guardians.</p> <p>It had also reviewed its own composition, recognising there was a need to fill key positions such as Treasurer and Secretary. There was also a succession plan in place to replace the Chair as Michael’s son was in his last year at Hitchin Boys.</p> <p>The Society was also looking to reach out to the wider community and rebuild links with local businesses, charities and Hitchin Girls.</p> <p>Michael stressed the mutual benefit for the Board and Society to have closer ties and appreciated this opportunity to update the Board on the Parents’ Society’s activities. It was important for these two groups to work in collaboration for the mutual benefit of the students.</p> <p>He was pleased to say that the Society had established a healthy balance and had therefore been in a position to receive funding requests from the school. At its last meeting, the Parents Society had been able to support a number of funding requests for items which</p>	

the school would not have been able to fund itself. These included new audio equipment for creative arts and bringing back to life an under-utilised garden area.

The Headteacher thanked both Michael and the Society for its work which were greatly appreciated by the School. The Society was able to support initiatives that the school did not have the funds to do but were important for enrichment and widening what the school could otherwise offer. He was fully aware at how difficult things had been and thanked all involved for their efforts and success in turning things around and growing their membership. In particular he noted the recent success of the Year 7 and Year 8 BBQ.

Michael thanked the School for all their support in return and in particular the help provided by Alison Lawrence and Anne Marie Hetherington.

RT joined the Headteacher in expressing his thanks to the Society for all their hard work and support for the school. He also asked if they would be willing to fund an additional coffee machine for the staff room. This piece of equipment would be greatly valued by the staff and would contribute to building greater cohesion. Michael responded by saying that he would be more than happy for this request to be considered as the Society's funding account had not been fully utilised.

Michael advised the Board that the Society would be sharing with parents where their financial support was going at the Christmas Fayre on 15 December 2022. At this event, the Society would be handing over cheques to the school for specific activities.

The Headteacher advised that the school had recently signed up to become a member of the local Chamber of Commerce. The Chair responded by saying that this was a good step forward and hoped it could give rise to wider benefits in relation to career expertise and work experience.

Michael endorsed the aim to achieve greater career and work experience opportunities for students. He was willing to promote the school in this aspect and was more than happy to work with the relevant Board member in achieving stronger links for the school.

It was agreed that the Chair would send Michael the relevant Link Governor for Careers so they could work together on building stronger connections between the school and local businesses.

	<p>Discussion also turned to how links could be strengthened between the school and the Former Students Society. It was recognised that the Board would benefit from reaching out to this group to re-establish links.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Michael for his time and continued support. She recognised that there was continuing work to be done in re-establishing links with not only with the Parents Society but more broadly with former students and the local business community. She thanked Michael for his support in doing this.</p>	
14	<p>AOB Golf Event at **, 24 March 2023</p> <p>The Chair brought this event to the attention of the Board and asked everyone for their support. She explained that this event had been arranged to raise financial support for a specific piece of sporting equipment for the school's new sports facility. She asked everyone to support his event. In particular, if anyone had any items which they could donate as prizes, these would be gratefully received. Any such items to be communicated to her as soon as possible.</p> <p>School Closure on 19 December 2022</p> <p>The Headteacher brought to the attention of the Board the recent closure of the school due to heavy snow. The decision to close the school had not been taken lightly and had been taken after consultation with local Heads and the Chair of Governors. He advised that the school had been closed but work had been set for the students to complete on online.</p> <p>Festive Good Wishes</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Board for their time and support. Furthermore, she wished them much happiness over the festive period and looked forward to seeing everyone in the new year.</p> <p>She undertook to invite the current Clerk to a future meeting where the Board could mark his forthcoming retirement and formally recognise his contribution and support to the school. This would need to be at a suitable time and only when he felt well enough to do this.</p>	
15	<p>It was noted that the next Board meeting was due to take place on 21 March 2023.</p>	
	<p>The meeting closed at 7.33 pm.</p>	

Chair's Signature

Date