

THURSDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

By virtue of paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

13. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

Governors received the non-public minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2021.

A Governor asked whether progress had been made in relation to item 24 of the non-public minutes:

“There was further debate over how accessible financial information was to the School from the Chamberlain’s Department – a long-standing issue. The two Departments needed to work together to find a solution that worked for both.”

Governors heard that the intention is to forward monthly reports to the Chair (and other relevant parties) as of October 2021 so that subsequent Board of Governor meetings could be informed by recently published financial information.

RESOLVED, that the non-public minutes of the meeting held on Friday 11 June 2021 be approved as an accurate record, with the single amendment of the insertion of a finishing time.

14. NON-PUBLIC REPORT OF THE HEADMASTER

Governors received a non-public report of the Headmaster.

Governors heard that since the report was written, the newly-qualified teacher who started in 2020 had now qualified - the third teacher to enter the teaching profession following a career change.

Governors heard that issues had arisen around the behaviour of two IT staff. One IT staff member was informed on 23 September 2021 that an investigation was to be launched, and an update on the issue raised in respect of the second staff is pending, having only come to light within the last two days.

Governors heard that teaching staff morale is low among some members of staff owing partly to covid-related concerns and disruption, and partly to reactions in response to changes that need to be made in the school. Some disenfranchised staff appeared to be unwilling to progress in line with expectations.

A Governor asked for clarification on the reasons for the departure of the Head of English, and on Bursar recruitment. Governors heard that a range of options

had been discussed with the outgoing Head of English - there were concerns around that staff member's engagement, and seven excellent candidates had been identified (including an existing staff member). Governors heard that the Bursar who had signed the contract to begin at the school in early September 2021 had withdrawn from the position at short notice for family reasons. An interim Bursar has been recommended and discussions are ongoing. The school was concerned about its credibility if a Bursar vacancy was to be advertised for a third time within a year, notwithstanding the good reasons why two appointments did not result in the position being filled.

A Governor asked whether point 17 of the Headmaster's non-public report around the restrictions of data anonymisation was applicable in a non-public setting. Governors heard that a senior member of the Town Clerk's Department at the City of London Corporation had advised the school that names should not be used because of GDPR requirements.

Governors heard that consistency around stating names was important, and that the issue would be considered outside the confines of the meeting. A Governor stated that Governors needed to know names in order to exercise proper governance.

A Governor noted the school's remarkably good A level results and compared it to a highly-regarded local selective state grammar school, and asked whether Freeman's results accurately reflected pupils' achievements compared to a highly selective school in the same part of the country. Concern was expressed that Freeman's might see a cliff-edge in their results in future years as exams were re-introduced. Governors heard that results had improved since 2015, attributable partly to the recruitment of a strong senior management team. Governors also noted that the local selective state grammar school was a boys' school, and that girls tended to achieve better results. There was an expectation that more normal grade boundaries would be reinstated in all schools, and there was confidence that Freeman's would not experience an abrupt drop in grades given that pupils were always awarded the grades they deserved.

A Governor pointed out that the school would need to manage expectations around downgraded results in the light of possible Government policy.

A Governor pointed out that pupils at the school are far more likely to have strong parental support than pupils at state grammar schools, which would contribute to better grades.

A Governor asked whether there were any particular difficulties with recruiting pupils. Governors heard that there is more competition at the 11+ entry stage than there was a decade ago, and that the school is pressing on with its strategic development.

Governors agreed that the timing of meetings might need to be reviewed for the 2022/23 academic year to better manage the flow of information.

A Governor asked whether St Christopher's school in Epsom, as the main feeder, represented an opportunity for the school to develop an even closer relationship (including acquisition) with the school given that a senior leadership position had arisen there.

Governors congratulated the Headmaster and his team, as well as the Corporation, on the outstanding work in completing the Main House (paragraph 18 of the report).

Governors expressed the hope that the Head of Chemistry's health would improve.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

15. **HEADMASTER'S SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

Governors received the safeguarding report of the Headmaster.

Governors heard that four new safeguarding files had been opened.

One had been deemed to require no further assessment though the pupil will continue to have a safeguarding file.

One required ongoing counselling but the situation appeared to have been successfully managed.

One had a safety plan and was engaging with the internal and external support being offered.

One had received psychiatric support and may need further support.

At the last full Board meeting 10 pupils were deemed to be high-risk, and that figure remains unchanged.

A Governor asked what support was provided to such pupils after they left the school, and Governors heard that information was passed on to other bodies where appropriate, with appropriate safeguards around confidentiality.

A Governor suggested that the pupils be referred to as Pupil A, B, C etc for the purposes of consistency.

Governors expressed the view that social media was responsible for some bullying in school settings. Governors heard that mobile device use was limited in the school though it was difficult to control mobile device use in the home. Communication to parents emphasised the importance of restrictions around the use of mobile devices. Governors heard that an investigation has been launched recently around the use of virtual private networks.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

16. **BURSAR'S REPORT**

Governors received the Bursar's report.

A Governor pointed out (referencing paragraph 2 of the report) that the next stages of the Freeman's Estate Development Plan was being paused until the debt to the City has been paid off, rather than because of the pandemic as suggested in the report.

RESOLVED, that the Bursar's report be noted.

17. **FINANCIAL DASHBOARD SEP 2021**

Governors received the joint report of The Chamberlain and the Bursar on the school's Financial Information Dashboard.

Governors heard that the rates revaluation is being challenged with the support of the City Corporation.

Governors noted the assumptions on which the forecasts were based.

Governors noted that monthly accounts were to be presented as of October 2021.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

18. **FUNDING MODEL - ALLOCATION TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

Governors received the report 'Allocation of Three Independent Schools Funding within the Schools Funding Model'.

A Governor sought clarification around recommendation 1, specifically the comment that allocations "are also subject to agreement by the City of the individual schools' bursary guidelines". Governors heard that each school had guidelines for bursary allocations, and the City wanted to ensure that bursary funding was properly allocated.

A Governor asked whether it was appropriate to award partnership funding on an annualised basis when a student might be attending the school for longer than that, and that it was an error for the three independent schools to be competing against each other for funding, and asked for that concern to be passed on to RASC.

At 13:00 the Board agreed to extend the meeting beyond 2 hours.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

19. **NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE BOARD**

There were no questions.

20. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE BOARD AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED**

21. **TARGET OPERATING MODEL (TOM) ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN**

Governors received the report of the Headmaster 'Target Operating Model Organisational Design'.

A Governor expressed support for the Headmaster's focus on differentiating a school from a business, and that the school is already working within the principles set out in the TOM. The Governor commented that the paper seemed defensive in its tone, and that it might be worth including information on what collaboration with the other independent schools has or has not been considered, taking into account the geographical distance from the City, and that it might also be worth including the undertaking a review to ensure that the administration support and staffing structure was fit for purpose.

Governors heard that a number of reports of this kind have been written, and that the principles of the TOM in the context of a school had the potential to be extremely divisive in relation to considering teaching and non-teaching separately.

RESOLVED, that the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 1.15 pm

Chairman

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