



Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Board held at  
The Tiffin Girls' School on Tuesday 8 December 2020

**MEETING HELD REMOTELY DUE TO PANDEMIC**

The meeting opened at 6.30pm. Governors present:

Sarah Beeching	Fazl-E Hasnain (Chair)	Ikra Khan
Kate Bevan	Claire Haynes	Carol Perry
Lucy Boiling	Adrian Howe	Alison Shakespeare
Shelley Frost	Ian Keary (Head)	Hamish Stewart
		Matt Toolan
Rosemary Jubraj (Clerk)		

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Ikra Khan to her first meeting since her election to the Governing Board as a parent governor on 9 November 2020.

- 1. Declarations of any business or pecuniary interests** – none declared.
- 2. Apologies for Absence** - Alexandra Buckle. The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.
- 3. Non-governor Participants and Observers** - Emma Kilburn (Deputy Head), Sarah Strutton (Finance Manager)

**4. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 3 November 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 were considered by governors. Claire Haynes proposed, Adrian Howe seconded and those governors who had been present at the November meeting agreed the minutes as a true record.

**5. Matters Arising**

- The Chair advised that, regarding paragraphs 17 and 18, the policies have been uploaded to the portal and circulated to all staff.
- The Clerk advised that, regarding paragraph 8.3, the safeguarding annual report has been amended with data from the previous two years regarding the reasons why students require Early Help, Child in Need or Child Protection status; the amended version is on the portal.
- Governors asked for an update on Level 3 DSL training and the Head confirmed that all training is up to date as there is an extension to the timeframe as a result of the pandemic.

**6. Chair's Report**

The Chair gave governors the following updates:

- All governors have agreed to hold governance related meetings and multiple-governor visits remotely in the spring term. Individual governor visits can take place in person if both the governor and the SLT member concerned agree to this option.
- Monitoring of complaints is delegated to the Pay and Personnel Committee (PPC) and, as per paragraph 86 of Complaints Policy, the PPC governors received a report summarising complaints received by the school between 1 September 2019 and 31 August 2020 at their November meeting. Three complaints were formally investigated under Stage 2 – one by SLT and two by governors. All three complaints were rejected and none progressed to Stage 3 of the process. The Head has confirmed that the school will implement recommendations made by investigators.
- Heads of Department curriculum presentations to governors were suspended in March due to the pandemic and will be re-started with the Head of Economics presenting at the January 2021 GB meeting.
- Performance reviews for the SLT and Head were completed in November.
- Sarah Beeching's term of office as an appointed governor will conclude in March 2021; the recruitment process will begin in January.
- DfE has published new guidance on Headteachers' Standards that builds on Teachers' Standards. The link to this guidance has been uploaded to the portal.

## 7. Head's Report

The Head gave governors an update on key headlines since the last Governing Board meeting. This included information on:

- Autumn public exams finished
- Stage 2 admissions test ran smoothly
- Successful remote Year 8 parents' evening
- Eco week and Anti Bullying week events have taken place
- Operations Director and Chemistry Acting Head of Department appointed
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working party set up by the Deputy Head – 21 staff involved
- Facilitating teaching and learning network across RBK secondary schools
- Year 9 mental health ambassadors training
- Student 'drop in' space reopened (three lunchtimes a week)
- Student survey in progress
- ESFA funding audit complete
- Year 13 interview workshop conducted
- Year 11 and 13 mocks planned for January
- Reports being sent home for all year groups

The Head provided governors with a COVID-19 update that included information on the number of positive cases in the school community and the number of staff who have needed to self-isolate. Adaptations have been made to remote learning such that self-isolating students are able to listen to lessons from home. This provision is not available to students who are not in school for any other reason.

The Head informed governors that the DfE have issued guidance today advising schools that Friday 18 December can be allocated to an INSET day as this will mean the 6-day track and trace period will expire on December 23, ensuring that school leaders won't be doing any track and trace from 24 December onwards. The Head therefore requested that governors approve the allocation of Friday 18 December as an INSET day. Governors expressed their thanks to the Head and members of the SLT who have spent many hours at weekends this term responding to positive cases within the school community and ensuring the appropriate students and staff are informed of the need to self-isolate.

**Decision:** The Chair proposed that Friday 18 December is allocated as an INSET day. This was seconded by Matt Toolan and governors voted unanimously in favour.

## STRATEGIC FOCI FOR THIS GB

### 8. Annual Accounts 2019-20

#### 8.1 Financial Summary

The Chair referred governors to annex 2 previously circulated and noted this document provides a high level summary of the important financial and audit issues that governors should be aware of when approving the annual accounts.

#### 8.2 Draft Audited Accounts

The Chair referred governors to annex 3 previously circulated and noted that the financial review section of the governors' report shows the school has an accumulated deficit of £415,000 in the restricted income or GAG funds at 31 August 2020 (£136,000 lower than the amount (£551,000) at 31 August 2019). However, the school remains solvent as the surplus of £818,000 in the unrestricted income funds is greater, which gives a net surplus of £403,000. The auditors, Moore (South), have confirmed that they will issue an unqualified opinion on the 2019-20 accounts.

**Decision:** Adrian Howe proposed the Governing Board approves the draft audited accounts 2019-20. This was seconded by Sarah Beeching and governors voted unanimously in favour.

**Action:** The Clerk to arrange for the accounts to be signed by the auditors, submitted to the ESFA by 31 December 2020, approved by Members at the 19 January 2021 AGM and submitted to Companies House by 31 January 2021.

The Chair thanked the Finance Manager for her excellent work on the accounts, especially as much of the audit work was completed remotely. The Chair thanked the Clerk for her work on the annual report and also thanked the Head, Adrian Howe, Danielle Griffin and her team from Moore (South) for their collective work on ensuring the accounts were finalised on time.

## 9. Tiffin Girls' School representation letters to Moore (South):

### 9.1 Regarding the Accounts

The Chair referred governors to annex 4 previously circulated and advised this letter is a formal confirmation to the auditors that the school has not withheld any information during the audit. This is issued at the end of each audit and before the auditors sign the statutory accounts. It is a standard letter but the following points are specific to the school:

- Paragraph 7 - GAG funds are in deficit (£415k) and the school is able to continue as a going concern
- Paragraph 21 – governors have no control over the Support Tiffin Girls' School Company

Regarding paragraph 2 and the final four paragraphs on page 4 of the letter, at the recent Audit Group meeting the Finance Manager and Head confirmed that they have provided all the information requested by auditors and the auditors have also confirmed that they have had unrestricted access to information, documents and staff during the audit.

The Chair advised that he will be signing this letter on behalf of the Governing Board. Therefore, by approving this letter, governors are confirming that they are not aware of any matters (such as any pending or threatened litigation or claim against the school), which need to be disclosed in the accounts or to the auditors (paragraph 23). The Chair gave all governors present the opportunity to raise any other finance-related matters that should be disclosed in the accounts or to the auditors. There were no comments from the governors.

**Decision:** The Chair proposed the Governing Board approve the representation letter as set out in annex 4 for signature. This was seconded by Matt Toolan and governors voted unanimously in favour.

### 9.2 Regarding Regularity and Assurance

The Chair referred governors to annex 5 previously circulated and noted this letter must be signed by the Accounting Officer before the auditors sign the accounts. The letter is for governor information only.

**Action:** The Clerk to arrange for both representation letters to be signed and forwarded to the auditors.

## 10. Moore (South) management letter

The Chair referred governors to annex 6 previously circulated and noted this letter will be submitted to the ESFA with the accounts. The letter sets out any accounting matters that the school should address and the school's responses to the matter raised are included in the final document. One new recommendation plus one previous recommendation have been made this year; neither are significant. The school will implement these recommendations during 2020-21.

The Chair informed governors that the school's response to the new recommendation will be amended to 'Recommendation will be implemented. However, the amount (£27,808) is not material.'

## 11. Moore (South) letter to Accounting Officer

The Chair referred governors to annex 7 previously circulated and noted this letter contains a minor point from the auditors regarding the volume of errors and issues in the payroll information provided by the current payroll provider.

Governors asked for an update on the payroll provider tender process. The Finance Manager advised that tenders are due in by 21 December and interviews are scheduled for 8 January.

## 12. Internal Scrutiny Annual Report

The Chair referred governors to annex 8 previously circulated and noted:

- This is the first year of this report as a transition arrangement was in place for 2018-19. Although the internal scrutiny report from Moore (South) which relates to financial matters would have been sufficient for the ESFA, the Audit and Risk Group governors also wanted to summarise the management of non-financial risks.
- Weaknesses listed in the Moore (South) internal scrutiny report are not significant and the recommendations have already been implemented by the school.
- All ten points listed under 'emerging issues' on pages 3 and 4 in the report from Moore (South) have already been implemented by the school.

Governors asked for clarification regarding the ESFA requirement for governors to "challenge pupil number estimates and review these termly". Adrian Howe, Finance and Contracts Committee (FCC) Chair advised it is to flag to the ESFA any schools with a reducing roll as this is likely to result in financial difficulties given funding is based on pupil numbers. The Chair advised that the FCC are undertaking this scrutiny on behalf of the Governing Board.

**Decision:** The Chair proposed the Governing Board approve the internal scrutiny annual report as set out in annex 8. This was seconded by Hamish Stewart and governors voted unanimously in favour.

**Action:** The Finance Manager to submit this report to the ESFA by 31 December 2020.

## 13. Audit Group Report

### 13.1 Minutes of November meeting

The Chair referred governors to annex 9 previously circulated and noted the focus of the meeting was to finalise the draft accounts and review the representation letter, management letter and internal audit report.

### 13.2 Internal audit report June 2020

The Chair referred governors to annex 10 previously circulated and noted that the internal audit staff of Moore (South) made two separate visits to test controls and procedures. The first visit report was discussed at the June GB meeting. Annex 10 relates to the second visit in June 2020, which was focused on furlough claims and general controls.

Neither internal audit reports identified any significant weakness in the internal control system and procedures in use at the school. The main recommendations are included in the Internal Scrutiny Annual Report (see agenda item 12 above).

The Finance Manager reported there are no concerns about any of the matters raised by the internal auditors.

## 14. COVID-19 Catch-up Funding Report

The Chair referred governors to annex 11 previously circulated and noted this report from the Head provides a summary of how the school plans to spend the COVID-19 catch up funding from the government in 2020-21. Although the school has flexibility on how the money is spent, DfE guidance requires governors to scrutinise the school's plan and use of catch-up funding. Therefore, FCC governors will receive reports at their termly meetings and a final report on the use of funds will be included in the July 2021 GB meeting.

The Head reported that since fully reopening the school in September, each department has eased the students back into learning and is closely monitoring their progress. Attendance remains high and students are fully engaged and motivated to learn.

The school plans to use the catch-up funding within the three key areas of teaching and whole school strategies, targeted approaches, and wider strategies. Annex 11 sets out what the school wants to achieve and how it will do that with the funding provided, e.g. deliver the best mental health support possible by purchasing more

Educational Psychologist time via the local authority, increasing the hours for Learning Support Assistants and supporting the placement for a clinical psychologist.

The Head confirmed that a COVID-19 catch up funding report must be published on the school website.

Governors asked if there are any year groups needing more support than others? The Head commented that the main focus is for Y11 and Y13 students preparing for examinations, as well as for Y10 and Y12. The Deputy Head added that whilst some of the other year groups are not at the level they would ordinarily be in some subjects, there is plenty of time to make adjustments to the curriculum before they reach examination classes.

Governors asked about the decision to use catch-up funds to employ an additional cover supervisor. The Head advised of the importance of ensuring teachers' planning and marking time is protected to support high quality teaching and learning, rather than being used to cover lessons.

#### 15. Sports Hall Update

The Head showed governors the designs for the sports hall that have been submitted for planning permission and provided the following update :

- Planning application submitted 1 December
- Plans and information now live on the school website
- Communication to local residents and local councillors has been made
- Design work for refurbishment of current gyms and changing rooms underway

Governor asked about the timeline for the project. The Head reported:

- Waiting to hear from RBK whether the planning permission process will take 8 weeks or 13 weeks
- Aiming to make final submission to DfE end of March
- Anticipate DfE final decision end of April
- Would plan to start building works when public examinations are complete summer 2021

#### 16. Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) Bid

The Head informed governors that the school plans to resubmit a CIF bid for boiler replacement, taking note of the feedback from the unsuccessful bid of last year. Submission is due by 14 January 2021.

#### 17. Curriculum Update

The Chair informed governors this agenda item will be discussed in the confidential section of the meeting.

#### 18. Careers Development Plan

**SDP: Character** – develop a new careers strategy for Years 7-13 based on the enhanced staffing capacity, specifically linking to the Gatsby benchmarks

The Chair referred governors to Annex 13 previously circulated and noted this document has been reviewed and updated by Kathy Kilpatrick (Assistant Head) and Lizzie Gall (Careers Adviser).

Sarah Beeching, Careers Governor, advised that a remote visit with the Assistant Head and Careers Adviser has been arranged for January.

#### 19. Careers and Work Experience Policy

The Chair referred governors to annex 14 and noted the proposed revisions are highlighted as tracked changes.

**Decision:** Sarah Beeching proposed the Governing Board approve the revised Careers and Work Experience Policy. This was seconded by Alison Shakespeare and governors voted unanimously in favour.

#### 20. Addendum to Exclusion Policy

The Chair referred governors to annex 14 and noted this document has been significantly revised as per the current DfE guidance for exclusions up to 24 March 2021.

**Decision:** Shelley Frost proposed the Governing Board approve the revised Addendum to the Exclusion Policy. This was seconded by Kate Bevan and governors voted unanimously in favour.

**Action:** the Clerk to arrange for these revised policies to be uploaded to the governor portal, school website and circulated to all staff.

**21. Any urgent business – none**

**22. Dates of next meetings and visits**

The Chair drew attention to the dates of the meetings for the spring term as set out on the agenda.

#### **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

The Chair closed the meeting by noting the immense challenges the staff have had to contend with during the pandemic, highlighting the increased workload for teachers as this term they have been providing lessons both in the classroom as well as online for those students who are self-isolating. Particular thanks should go to the Head and Deputy Head for their exceptional effort during this difficult period.

Governors agreed that their thanks and appreciation should be communicated to all staff.

The meeting ended at 8pm