

**Minutes of the meeting of the Welfare and Safeguarding Committee
of Cheltenham College Council
held on 15 October 2024**

Present: Canon K Wilkinson, Chair
Mrs K Dallimore*
Dr D Flower
Dr J Ropner
Mr D Stewart*
Mr W Straker-Nesbit
(* by videoconference)

In Attendance: Mrs N Huggett, Head
Mr T O'Sullivan, Prep School Head
Mr P Attwell, Bursar
Mrs A Cutts, Senior Deputy Head, Senior School
Mr O Jenkins, Deputy Head Pastoral, Prep School
Dr M Plint, Deputy Head, Learning and Wellbeing
Mrs M Lucas-Halliwell, Assistant Head, Welfare & Safeguarding
Mr J Hayden, Assistant Head Pastoral, Senior School
Mr J Avery, Housemaster, Prep School

Mr J Champion, Secretary to Council
Mrs S Hopkins, PA to the Bursar

1. Apologies – Mrs Hattersley, Mrs Willgoss and Mr Drake

Canon Wilkinson welcomed Mrs Lucas-Halliwell and Mr Hayden to their first meeting of the Committee.

2. Declarations of:

2.1 Conflicts of Interest – None.

2.2 Any Other Business – One item declared (Mr Straker-Nesbit).

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024 – Approved.

4. Matters arising not otherwise on the Agenda

4.1 Low Level Concerns – Mrs Cutts provided a brief update.

5. Boarding

5.1 Prep School – The report was taken as read. Mr Avery added/highlighted that:

- There had been 24 Y8 boarders leaving at the end of the last academic year.
- Academic staff numbers supporting the boarders had been increased now that there were more girl boarders.
- A new technology policy had been launched and was helping to keep pupils safe online.

Dr Ropner acknowledged that it was still early, but asked if there was any impact from the new Technology Policy. Mr Avery confirmed the policy had been well received by the parent body.

Dr Plint enquired about the main challenges with younger boarders. Mr Avery & Mr Jenkins said homesickness and anxiety, particularly amongst those joining from smaller schools, were the main issues. They commended the excellent work of the matrons in supporting affected children.

The Committee noted that although flexi boarding was available at the weekend, this was not something that parents generally took advantage of unless it happened to be convenient for them. Mrs Dallimore commented that the Prep was very accommodating, and suggested charging more if parents were putting their children into weekend boarding for their own convenience.

5.2 Senior School – The report was taken as read. Mr Hayden added /highlighted that:

- There had been behaviour issues with some 3F pupils joining from a particular feeder school. Interventions had been put in place which appeared to be resolving the issue.
- The U6 leavers had delivered pleasing results at A Level despite concerns about the cohort in the Spring term. This had resulted in part from good, coordinated work between academic and pastoral staff.
- Trying to keep boarders in at weekends was a challenge; College had tried to make things more flexible in terms of Chapel attendance. There had been more closed weekends this year and boarders were encouraged to remain in school for things like the Charity Weekend.

The Committee discussed the apparent prevalence and ramifications of ADHD. Mr Hayden reported that parents were increasingly aware they could obtain a diagnosis of ADHD privately. Dr Ropner described the ease with which individuals could set themselves up as private diagnostic specialists. Canon Wilkinson suggested that appointing a properly qualified person to work for College might be an option. Dr Plint advised that College was already looking to do this. Mrs Dallimore reported that her own school already had a clinical psychologist on staff, and not only did they support pupils but also provided specialist training for staff. She offered to ask if the psychologist knew of anyone in the Cheltenham area to help College with its search. Mrs Cutts was grateful for her assistance.

*Mrs Cutts and
Mrs Dallimore
to liaise.*

6. Deputy Head's Reports

6.1 Prep School -The report was taken as read.

The increased significance of attendance as part of the latest ISI Inspection Framework was noted and discussed. Justina Howard, the Informatics Manager, had built an attendance tracking system where any pupil below 95% could be tracked and absence details investigated.

Mr Jenkins noted that the Prep was seeing increased numbers of parents separating acrimoniously and was planning to put in place pro-active coaching with parents. As many as 35 sets of parents had already indicated a willingness to be involved.

6.2 Senior School – The report was taken as read.

Mrs Cutts highlighted that the pastoral restructure, involving Mrs Lucas-Halliwell and Mr Hayden had been a considerable success.

Mrs Lucas-Halliwell reported that there had been two serious incidents in terms of child protection. In the first, a female pupil had been suspended, and subsequently left College for supplying her ADHD medication to other pupils. In the second incident, there had been a serious case of bullying which would be reported to the GSCB Team.

The Committee noted that Mrs Lucas-Halliwell advised that she had now taken over as the DSL for the senior school.

It was noted that the Gloucestershire Healthy Living Survey had picked up some unexpected results comparing College against other schools in Gloucestershire. It was felt that the Welfare & Safeguarding survey would help in understanding these. Dr Plint added that the survey should have been an appendix to the report and would ensure that this was added to the pack.

*Dr Plint to
add W&S
Survey to
meeting pack.*

The Committee was told that the limit of 500 people in Chapel was having a real impact, and pupils were asking when the whole school could be back together again. Mrs Huggett expressed her concern that the necessary alterations might not be ready for the 2025 academic year.

7. Head's Comments

- 7.1 Prep School** – Mr O'Sullivan reported that there had been some allegations against a member of staff who already had some low-level concerns recorded. There had been a formal disciplinary process, and he had been dismissed; an appeal had been received, heard and the original decision upheld. He was now working again but not in the education sector and College had referred the details to TRA and DBS. The parent of the pupil concerned was happy with the way the Prep had dealt with the issue and was keen to move on.

Mr O'Sullivan noted that the roll stood at 433 so there had been some very good recruitment. However, numbers of Entrance@11 were not as strong as he would like, and the team was now focused on this.

- 7.2 Senior School** – Mrs Huggett reported that there were 738 pupils on roll.

Mrs Huggett provided an update on three historic issues:

- A former Hockey Coach, employed in 2005, had been charged with abuse of trust and sexual abuse of a female pupil at that time. He had pleaded not guilty of abuse of trust, and the case was now going to the

Crown Court in March 2025. Appropriate legal and PR advice was being taken by College.

- A pupil from College in the early 90's had claimed bullying by former pupils and the Housemaster. The LADO had to be informed as the Housemaster was a Governor at another school, but the allegations were found to be unsubstantiated. The former pupil had then been in touch asking for money, so the case had been forwarded to the College insurers.
- There had been contact from a former pupil from the late 90's with a veiled reference about mistreatment by the Head of the Prep and a teacher, both of whom were subsequently found guilty of crimes against children in other schools and after they had left Cheltenham College.

8. **Regular House Visits by Council Members** – Mr Champion reminded the Committee that Mr Monro had adopted the role of Boarding Governor and visited boarding houses, on behalf of the Committee. Since his retirement, these visits had not happened, and Dr Flower had been invited to take on the leadership of the visits in future. After discussion it was agreed that the next visits would likely take place in the Spring term and that Dr Flower would be accompanied by two Council colleagues. A brief for the visits and a reporting format would be drawn up and agreed – Mrs Cutts noted that it would be helpful for her to see the visit parameters.

*Visits brief to
be shared with
Mrs Cutts.*

9. **Any other Business**

- **Single Central Register** – Mr Straker-Nesbit reported that he had recently inspected the SCR and found everything in order.
- **Crisis Management** – Mr Attwell reported that there had been a worthwhile crisis management session at the beginning of the Autumn Term.

10. **Date of next meeting:** 6 February 2024