Minutes of School Council Meeting on Wednesday 17th July at 6.30 pm
in the Language Room in Greenwood

Council members in attendance: Juliet Crittenden (JC) (Chair & Safeguarding Trustee), Joshua Malkin (JM), Annie Tempest (AT) (Trustee for Teaching and Learning), Christopher Cooper (CC) (Trustee for Health & Safety)
By invitation: School Leadership Team (SLT): Jeff van Zyl (JvZ), Julie Thomas (JT); Trustee in recruitment process: Ed Maclaren (EM)

Apologies: SLT: Tom Parker; Trustees in recruitment process: Nicola Edgecombe, Ben Whateley

1. Opening verse, Welcome, Declaration of conflicts of interest: no new conflicts of interest.

2. Approval of minutes: postponed until next meeting.

3. Correspondence (for noting) - the following documents have been received and circulated between last meeting and this meeting: minutes of all SLT and College meetings, bank balances, email from Ruth Mostert showing strong interest in applying to become Safeguarding Trustee within a year. Report from AT (Trustee for Teaching & Learning) on meeting with JvZ re Staff Appraisals.

4. Round Robin decisions since meeting on 17th June 2019: It was proposed and agreed by round robin that Ed Maclaren, Ben Whateley and Nicola Edgecombe should now be invited to formally apply to become trustees. ACTION: JC to send application forms and Job Description.

5. Policies for approval (circulated prior to meeting): Safer Recruitment Policy for Host Families recommended by JC, Attendance Policy for Early Years recommended by AT.

6. Risk Assessments for Class Trips (see list circulated with Agenda): JC and CC approved risk assessments for 5 class trips since 17th June 2019 after detailed questioning and challenges to the teachers concerned - bearing the safety of the students in mind. It was acknowledged this is important work by trustees to ensure a high standard of Safeguarding and Health and Safety on these often ambitious class trips. The aim is to keep the children safe and should any incident arise, that it can be safely held. All these trips came back safely.
7. **Safeguarding Report (see DSL’s written report circulated with Agenda):** Gaby (DSL) will report in person at the next Council meeting. JC (SG Trustee), JvZ and JT were present at the Safeguarding Group meeting on 5th July. JC asked JT about SCR: is it ready to audit yet? **ACTION:** JC to meet with JT to audit SCR when the new system is on line by early September 2019. JT says all is in hand vis-a-vis SCR. JC raises a concern held by the DSL: the need in her view to strengthen the security fence in certain places. It was noted that Ofsted were satisfied with our present arrangement. JT: vigilant monitoring of the playground by teachers is also important. **(ACTION: JT & JC to look at fence)**. JC raised the question of attendance and wanted to know about progress? CPOMS is now up and running.

**Boarding report (see report by Karola Hassell (KH), Boarding Manager, circulated with Agenda):** JvZ (Chair of SLT) reports that all the Boarding Manager’s tasks have been completed. JC (SG Trustee) raised the question of out of hours on call? An interim solution is that four people share this, namely Karola, Jeff, Julie and Gaby (DSL). JC raised the question of supervision for the Boarding Manager? JC is aware that this term KH had supervision from the Boarding Manager at Michael Hall Steiner School (JC has read KH’s comprehensive report of this telephone conversation and deemed it a useful session where much was learnt). However, the Michael Hall Boarding Manager is going on maternity leave next term. JC asked what is being done about this? For the immediate future, until a new supervisor is found with experience in boarding, JvZ will supervise KH. JT line manages KH. JC has ascertained that there are no other Steiner Schools with anything like the number of Visiting Students/Boarders that we have, so we are still searching for a mid term solution until the Michael Hall Boarding Manager returns. The question was raised about online safety of foreign students - this needs attention in the autumn term. Feedback from one visiting student is that they have too much free study time, not enough teaching. **ACTION: KH will look into this.** KH wonders if we could offer more EFL trips like Michael Hall do?

8. **SLT report (JvZ - SLT Chair and Education Manager) (see SLT Report circulated with Agenda):** key updates: the **3 evening meetings offered to parents** by the School Council and SLT on i) Leadership & Management, Governance and Safeguarding, ii) Teaching & Learning, iii) Parent Involvement were very successful. No further follow-ups are planned in the immediate future, though these meetings are deemed worthwhile. Focussed questions were asked - we have a better, more transparent relationship with parents as a result. It was observed that those present were largely a select group of willing, involved parents. How to engage the others is a question we are left with? We will pick up parents’ offers of help and any useful ideas - the question is how to do the former without jeopardizing accountability? This is a question for SLT and College. Also, how best to induct parents into the school? How best to manage expectations? Regular on-going informal Trustee Sessions in the Parents’ Room to be timetabled for next term in an effort to make the School Council of Trustees more accessible going into the future. **Class 8:** a significant proportion of the students in Class 8 chose to leave the school this year. The reasons for leaving were carefully analyzed in the meeting. We were appraised of the exact numbers going into Class 9. JvZ was asked what he had in place to ensure more students stayed for the Upper School in future. JvZ appraised us of plans to engage Lower School students (Classes 6, 7 & 8) with Upper School much earlier to form a ‘bridge’ into the Upper School - these Class teachers are already in conversation with US teachers CC and PW developing plans for cross fertilization between LS and US to be implemented over the coming year. With this in place students are less likely to leave. **Class 12** - next
steps for the students are all in place. JM (Trustee with portfolio for Marketing) asked if we had any videos or interviews with these 7 young people - of their presentations and their play - that could be used for marketing? Not at present, but we must address this in future. It was suggested the students could do this themselves?

**Quality of Teaching & Assessment and Tracking Pupil Progress:** They have done a lot of teacher training and development this term. JvZ reports that our teachers are now both united and aligned with what needs to be done, feeling much more empowered and committed to the learning journey and the associated appraisals and assessments and are ready to engage with this challenge. JvZ has created new roles (with Job Description), namely organizational support to enable the development and management of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. He has appointed 5 new coordinators to start in Sept and work with the teachers to ensure shared practice: by organizing book looks, learning walks and getting into each other's classrooms - peer reviews, and organizing support in order to develop. To appraise JvZ of any persistent performance issue. Using a supportive collegiate model, JvZ has also developed a Performance Appraisal system which will be rolled out in September. JvZ is in charge of performance management. AT (Trustee for Teaching & Learning) fully backs this approach (see AT’s report on JvZ & AT’s meeting). This is a big culture change for the school. JvZ informed us of key risks to the School: i) capacity, competence and accountability - underlying these is a lack of resource and an inability to pay competitive salaries ii) lack of marketing - how do we communicate this new positivity and spread the word: ‘build our story’? iii) Still no replacement for the SLT assistant (maternity leave). Concerns about workloads, especially in Upper School, vacancies that need filling. Jeff has a plan to use peripatetic teachers where necessary. The Performance Appraisal system will be in place by Sept. **New School Base IT system** for billing parents ready by Christmas and Safeguarding has begun to use CPOMS. **Action Plan** almost complete (which ensures all ISS are met), but we need a new School Development Plan (Vision 2020 - to be completed in autumn term). **ACTION:** strategic planning session needed (Council/SLT/College): by Christmas, vision must be ready - for implementation in 2020. What that school is, what we need to get there, how we fund it? **Marketing:** needs to be fully implemented by Easter for parents to enroll for 2020 (ACTION: form marketing group early next term).

9. **School Business Manager’s report:** overall attendance figure is 89% - should be 95%. We must improve. Julie will report regularly in Autumn term on progress made. Suggestion: JT could publish attendance figures (colour thermometer!) weekly in the Friday Flyer, in reception and on the main noticeboards. **Finance:** concern voiced that the finance report was not detailed enough. It was acknowledged we haven’t fully replaced Tara (TD) - she did however leave an excellent manual. JT is using it to learn to navigate the finances herself. Tara, unlike Sophie Goodwin (SG) was Finance Manager and was part of extended SLT and is missed. SG has info, but JT needs to be able to collate it and make it accessible to the rest of us. We end this summer term with a £20,000 deficit. A greater deficit was predicted. Some savings (eg not fully replacing Tara or Kaycee (SLT assistant) helped us in keeping the figure quite low. It was a saving because we haven’t been able to fully fill their posts. Figures for next year are looking more positive: potential £7,000 - £10,000 deficit. We won’t have any clear figures until Sept. Parent agreement forms must come in earlier than they are doing at present. The consensus of the meeting was to ring-fence the pay increase of 3% for teachers from Sept. JT assured us the worst case scenario would be that £15,000 would be taken from reserves in the autumn term. This will be monitored (ACTION JT). Caution was voiced about using the reserves. An alternative would be
to make more cuts. Clear consensus not to cut teaching staff: it was felt that to make cuts at this point could prove to be counter-productive - it could jeopardize our impending PMI (Progress monitoring inspection) and possibly affect parents’ confidence in the school at this critical point. On questioning it was made clear that this investment would keep the ship afloat rather than increase sales. The school has a capacity for 300+ students. Marketing is needed. It was decided to use the reserves as a stepping stone, not as a long term solution: **Trustees took a vote on the proposal to allow SLT to use a maximum of £15,000 from the reserves between now and the end of November.** 4 voted for the proposal. None against. It was agreed to review the financial situation at the end of November and have a Plan B that we can bring into effect if the situation dictates. JC reported before this discussion that before the meeting tonight JT, JvZ and JC met with Mark Drewell (MD), our advisor on Finances, about the current financial picture going into next year. He discussed the figures with JT and was satisfied with the situation going forwards. He pointed out that £15,000 is a small sum relative to our budget. JT agreed that it would be helpful to have an advisory finance committee to support her in her role going forwards with the finances: MD has been invited to be involved and has agreed to be a member of this group. JvZ complimented JT on her progress in making big steps in her ‘Business Manager’ role. H/S Advisor coming on 17th Sept for an external audit of the site.

10. **Trustee and other regulatory matters**

i) **Memorandum and Articles of Association:** We need to update our Memorandum and Articles of Association, which were written according to the 1976 Companies Act and were not updated when the 2006 Companies Act came into force. It is proposed that we use Michael Hall Steiner School’s new Memorandum and Articles of Association (circulated with Agenda along with our own) as a basis for our new Memorandum and Articles. As preparation for this meeting, MD scrutinized these first along with ML and then with JC and they made some amendments. It was proposed we adopt these amendments. JvZ suggested further amendments, which we agreed and which were noted in detail. The new Memorandum and Articles of Association are considerably different to our present documents. We believe our reasons for change are compelling. **ACTION:** JC will inform MD of JvZ’s amendments. A solicitor contact has offered to have an informal look at these new Memorandum and Articles and give us his thoughts. Advice will be sought as to whether to subsequently involve Mitchelmores, the School’s solicitors. Eventually the new Memorandum & Articles will come as a proposal to an AGM or EGM of the School Association.

ii) **JM brought the Governance document,** again adopted from Michael Hall Steiner School and we unanimously agreed to adopt MD’s amendments to this document (see MD’s email of 17th July 2019) as well as the document itself. Ofsted (ISS) standards apply to some portfolios, which are already held by existing trustees. The decision was to adopt a portfolio system in full. 

iii) **recruitment of new trustees:** it was agreed to set in motion the formal process of recruitment for all three prospective trustees: send out job descriptions, application forms and arrange interviews. It was agreed that JC and JT would formally interview Ed Maclaren on Monday 22nd July at 11 am.

iv) **Julie’s review at the end of her period of probation:** There were 13 people who gave feedback - 4 Council members and 9 others from amongst her colleagues on SLT and the Admin staff and certain teachers that have had particular dealings with JT. JC and CC were mandated to hold this process. AT was present at the interview because of her interest in staff appraisals, but also because she has agreed to step into the role of ‘on-boarding and off-boarding’, now that CC is about to step down from Council. Taking all the feedback into account and having identified together areas (eg. finance) where JT may need
some support in her development going forwards, JC, CC and AT wholeheartedly recommend that Julie moves out of probation into a permanent post. This was agreed by all trustees. **ACTION** JC will write a formal letter to JT. v) **AGM:** notification sent out before the end of this term for two consecutive weeks in the Friday Flier for the AGM on 5th September. AGM agenda discussed. JT and JC are ensuring official procedures are followed and that documents are on School web-site for School Association members to read before the AGM. EE to be asked to help with refreshments. vi) We await Charlotte's outcomes from her research. It was suggested she comes to the SLT meeting on 4th Sept at 1.30 pm where trustees will be present a) Charlotte’s report b) final preparation for AGM. vii) Council Secretary: It was agreed that JT, our Company Secretary and JC our School Council Chair need additional secretarial assistance with writing up minutes and reports and it was agreed we would pay someone a small fee to do this. **Next School Council meeting** on Wednesday 25th September at 6.30 pm.