

Ashford School Association Committee Meeting Minutes

Saturday 26 March at 12:00, Ashford Prep School (and via Zoom)

Attendance:

In person: Julie Piper (ASA Chair, JP), Norma Smyth (Vice-President, NS), Hannah Pinney (ASA Secretary, HP), Nicky Brightling (ASA Treasurer, NB), Mike Hall (Headmaster, MH), Sarah Kershaw (SK), Alex Playford (AP), Tom Vafidis (TV)

Via Zoom: John Abadom (JA), Jenny Watson-Bore (ASA Archivist, JWB), Toby Harris (TH), Gary McCartan (GM)

1. Welcome & Apologies

JP welcomed all to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Apologies received from: Charlotte Martin (ASA Prefect), Helen Fairley, Callum Thomas, and Rose Berry

2. Approval of Minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on Monday 11 October were agreed as the correct record.

HP will add **JP**'s digital signature to the minutes as approved, and upload to the School website.

3. Matters Arising

All members were in favour of tying future Committee meetings into ASA events.

At the last meeting there was a discussion of specific committee roles and sub-groups. All agreed for this to be put on hold until after the AGM in the summer when Committee roles are up for re-election, including ASA Chair & ASA Secretary, as this would be an opportune moment to discuss initiatives such as this.

HP confirmed she would be stepping down as ASA Secretary at the AGM.

4. ASA Treasurer's Report

NB reported to the ASA Committee that:

- 12-month income and expenditure accounts had been prepared from 1 January 2021 – 31 December 2021.
 - o The ASA had planned expenditure in 2021 related to the Blue Plaque Project which came to just under £5100. The ASA also spent £627 framing whole School Photos now on display outside the Headmaster's study.
 - o £82 was received from Standing Orders. This has been donated to the Ashford School Foundation.

- **NB** confirmed that we have tried to contact these people several times over the past few years. **NB** proposed a reminder was put in the e-newsletter.
 - **HP** will put a call out in the ASA School Tie and e-newsletter with the names. This will be kept as a running piece, until we hear from them.
- Interest has reduced to 0.01%
- As at 31 December 2021, total reserves are £3680.95.
- **NB** noted that when the ASA Committee are thinking about spending the reserves to remember that they were built up by older members of the Association, and therefore should be used on projects that benefit the whole community.

The idea of charging a subscription fee was debated by the Committee, but it was decided to keep with the current model. However, the ASA Committee agreed they could look to fundraise for specific projects, such as more plaques, if they wanted to accrue more funds.

To help generate more funds, the A&D Office have introduced optional event donations on all event booking forms, as well as options to donate to the Ashford School Foundation.

It was noted by **SK** & **NB** that both The Ashford School Foundation and PFA are set up as a registered charity, and could be used to fundraise for bigger capital projects – which in turn the alumni could get involved in.

TV proposed putting together a pipeline of projects that the ASA Committee & the School would like to see realised.

SK reminded all that the 125 Year celebrations would be in 2023. **AP** suggested a celebration to mark 20 years since the merger, which would be in 2026.

5. Headmaster's Report

MH reported on the following:

Impact of Covid-19

- The health of the school community remains the top priority. The school has followed national trends in infection rates, but the most challenges have been faced in the Nurseries which have been affected by staff shortages.
- The School's International boarders are still affected by travel restrictions.
- Nationally, rates are rising again, and the school has seen this mirrored amongst staff infection rates.

Co-Curricular & Events

- There is however a real desire to return to events, and there have been several great occasions since the last meeting. The Christmas concert and Carols by Candlelight which were attended by some alumni. The Senior School production of Annie took place earlier in March, in which 20% of student population participated. The Prep School Spring concert took place earlier in the week for Y2-6, and was held in Brake Hall, and attended by around 300 people.
- Sport is also doing well, and there has been good regional success across different sports.
- There is a good strong positive attitude amongst the School community.

Academic

- MH has been determined to maintain academic progress, despite all the challenges faced during lockdown.
- There have been major curriculum changes in the Prep School, and new initiatives such as the Forest School, which sees the pupils go outside for a full day every 3 weeks, have been launched.
- At the Senior School, Tom Vafidis has been instrumental in leading the academic development.
- It has been challenging for exam year groups, as over the last 6 months, teachers have had to prepare students for two possible pathways for assessment, either Teacher Assessed Grades or Exams.

Wellbeing

- The School has worked hard to maintain pupil optimism. Many senior students are struggling to know what they want from their future, and the news (climate crisis, Ukraine Crisis, BLM, Global pandemic), which is so immediate, has had a huge impact on wellbeing.
- The School is continuing to invest in staff for health support, both mental and physical.

Russia/Ukraine Crisis

- The School currently has 10 Russian students and 2 Ukrainians.
- 4 of the Russian students went home immediately when the invasion started.
- Of the 2 Ukrainians, one had to escape from Ukraine with her mum. The second student was at Ashford School, but their parents were missing for several days. They have lost absolutely everything.
- The School is continuing to support these students and families both pastorally and financially – their education and safety is paramount.
- The School have encouraged its community to give to charities that are supporting the immediate need to Ukrainians.

Admissions

- SK and the Admissions team are doing a fantastic job, and there has been a net in-year growth of 100 pupils.
- There have been a lot of students coming from the local area as day pupils, rather than boarders. This is a function in part of how well the school has performed over the last couple of years.
- Boarding is starting to pick up very slowly, but it has not been easy.

Strategic Plan

- MH is currently working on new strategic plan, which is due to be shared in Autumn term, and will cover the next 2 years (to synchronise with financial planning and United Learning).
- Some aspects from last strategy will be continued across.
 - o 'One School' will continue, which promotes more affective alignment across co-curricular and academic across the Senior & Prep School.
 - o MH wants the School to be in a stronger position for future inspections.
 - o MH wants to continue to develop the co-curricular programme: to correlate it more effectively with the development of students' skills, and to be able to effectively measure and understand the impact it has on students.
 - o Partnerships and collaboration will continue to be a key pillar, as MH wants to connect with the community more, including our alumni.

- There are long-term plans for the school that are more radical and progressive, but MH cannot share any information about these. This next strategic plan will be a transition period.

6. Alumni Office Update

HP reported on the following:

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

- Engagement is continuing to grow across all areas
 - o Instagram followers have increased by 27% YoY
 - o LinkedIn connections have grown 15% as of this time last year, and group membership has increased by 21%
 - o Highest engagement to date on the ASA post about Mrs Lesley Donald's passing (former member of staff), which reached over 25,000 people, with over 9000 engagements. There were many lovely comments, and it goes to show the impact that our staff have on our school community.
- Hosted an assembly with Sixth Formers to tell them all about the ASA and the Ashford School Foundation. **HP** with the help of **CM** will be collecting the Year 13s contact information next term before they go on Study Leave.
- ASA School Tie was published in December, which was the biggest issue to date with 52 pages & over 150 alumni mentioned.
 - o First year featuring advertisements from alumni and parent businesses, which brought in over £1000 towards the productions costs.
 - o Please do share any feedback with HP.
 - o Over £1000 was saved by switching suppliers.
 - o All packaging is recyclable.
 - o Please do send news to HP for 2022 edition.
 - o Brian Stockwell will contribute the 'From the Archives' piece on the space experiment, as it's 30 years since the launch.

EVENTS

- Seen a combination of in-person and virtual events.
- **The London Drinks** took place in November. Around 70 booked, and over 50 attended, with leavers from the 1950s to 2021.
- **A Virtual Talk** with Brian Stockwell in January, over 100 booked, and over 70 attended. It has been uploaded to the YouTube channel. This talk highlighted the importance of having former staff involved.
- **ASA Summer Lunch** will be on Saturday 2 July.
 - o All Committee members to promote and encourage Ashford School alumni to attend.
 - o Brian Stockwell will be returning for the lunch, and is hoping to form a table of those who participated in the Space Experiment project.
 - o **AP** is organising a table of 10. There are at least another 2 alumni interested in organising tables.
 - o Please encourage people to book early so we can know demand.
 - o **HP** will be organising a guest speaker. There will be musical entertainment, and tours available after the lunch.

- Events in the pipeline include: London Networking events, ASA President's Lunch, ASA London Drinks.

CAREERS

- Since the last Committee meeting there have been 8 alumni careers talks, including one last week with Captain Enid Otun (Alfred, 1980), who was the first female Chief Pilot in West Africa. Enid will be writing a feature article for the School Tie.
- There are a further 6 confirmed in the diary for this academic year.
- These have been very valuable experiences for our students.

ARCHIVES

Whole School Photos

- **JP** has several whole year group photos she can contribute to the archives

JWB reported on the work of the archives:

- One of the current projects is to sort through the thousand of record cards from the Old Girls Association which go back to the 1920s. **JWB** & **AB** are organising and ordering by decade.
- **JWB** appealed to the Committee member to please keep sending in material.
- **JWB** appealed to the Committee for members from the alumni community to volunteer to help assist with archiving Friars material.
 - o **HP** has been sending out enquiry emails to former members of Friars staff who could look to help in the archives.
 - o **TV** volunteered to do some afternoons in the Summer Term, to help **JWB** in the archives.

HP thanked **JWB**, Angela & Sandy for all their hard work and support.

AP suggested plaques in the Prep School to tie into the School's One School strategy.

TOM WATTS TRAVEL AWARD

HP reported:

- 1 application has received so far, from Rowan in Year 13, and she is anticipating another 3 from current Year 13s.
- **HP** will promote again to alumni.
- **HP** will share all applications with everyone after the deadline in April, and Committee can feedback their thoughts before decisions are made.

ASA PREFECT

CM sends her apologies. **HP** reported she has been doing lots of exciting work as ASA Prefect, including

- Working with recent leavers at University to plan how we can connect them with the current Sixth Formers.

- Promoting the ASA Prefect Role to Year 12s
- Organising and executing a fundraising day for the ASF, to take place in May across the Prep & Senior School.
- Assisting HP with signing current Year 13s and other leavers up to the ASA before they leave School.
- Produced the feature on Prefects in the ASA School Tie, and has written school updates for social media.
- When **CM** leaves at the end of the Summer Term, she will automatically become a Committee member ensuring we keep a link with the 2022 cohort.

7. Development Office Update

Report from **SK**, delivered by **HP**:

- A telephone campaign will be running again this summer. 4 callers have already been recruited, 2 of whom returning from last summer.
- The Legacy Club Lunch was held last week in the Edwards Room, and a mailing of the Legacy Club Brochure was undertaken in January. Membership of this group is growing.
- The Ashford School Foundation is set up on Amazon Smile. This is an easy way to support the Foundation without costing you a penny. **HP** will send instructions out with the minutes.
- The demand Ashford School is seeing for bursaries is increasing, and the Foundation and School want to be able to support as many students as possible. This year the Foundation have awarded 6 new bursaries. To continue to do this, the Foundation will need the support of our whole School community, including our alumni.

8. AOB

Queen's Platinum Jubilee

- The ASA Committee discussed and agreed to buy a tree out of ASA Funds to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, to be planted at Ashford Prep School.
- **HP** to liaise with Nick Egan to organise this.

MH informed the ASA Committee that Sarah Kershaw would be leaving her position as Director of External Relations at Ashford School at the end of April. The Committee thanked **SK** for her support of the ASA and work on Alumni & Development and hoped that she might consider staying on the Committee.

JP congratulated **HP** on behalf of the Committee on her marriage earlier in the year. **HP** thanked all the members.

HP shared with the Committee the sad news that ASA President Carolyn Chamberlain has recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. It is Carolyn's wish that she remains as ASA President until either she is too unwell to continue, or her term of office comes to an end. The Committee fully supported this and sent Carolyn their best wishes. They hoped that they might be able to see her at the ASA Summer Lunch.

Minutes approved at 23 May 2022 meeting

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Julie P. P.", is located in the right-hand cell of the table.