

MEETING OF THE LOCAL ACADEMY COMMITTEE

Monday 29 January 2024, 6:02pm – 8:02pm

MINUTES

Constitution and Attendance:

Headteacher (1)	LAC Members (10)
Christian Kingsley Headteacher	Judi Dumont-Barter Chair
	Jo Davies Incoming Co-Vice Chair
	Jacques Szemalikowski Incoming Co-Vice Chair
	Mo Asif LAC member
	Alex Dixey LAC member
	Sarah Guerra LAC member (<i>arrived 6:14pm</i>)
	Lucinda Merritt LAC member (staff)
	Danielle Morley LAC member (elected parent)
	Emma Oliver LAC member
	Conrad Withey LAC member

Apologies:

Alex Dixey
Emma Oliver
Conrad Withey

Also in attendance:

Louise Hake	Governance Professional
Richard Cheesebrough	Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum)
Violeta Fabiani	Deputy Headteacher (Professional Development)
Duncan Holding	Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)
James Wildman	Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding)

Papers issued for review:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minutes of the previous meeting & status of actions ● Vice-Chair nomination statements ● School Improvement Plan (SIP) ● CGA Self-evaluation Form (SEF) ● CGA LAC Development Priorities ● Link Inspector Report Nov 23 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Info Report to Chair's Group ● GMR: Attendance Levels at CGA ● GMR: Stakeholder Voice ● GMR: Safeguarding AU23 ● Report: The Influence of Headteachers on their Schools |
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BUSINESS		ACTION
1.	COMMITTEE BUSINESS	
i.	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting of the Chestnut Grove Local Academy Committee.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received in advance and accepted at the meeting, as outlined above.</p>	
ii.	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>When asked by the Chair, all LAC members confirmed there were no conflicts of interest related to the meeting.</p>	
iii.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held 13 November 2023 were agreed by the Academy Committee as a true and accurate reflection of discussion and were signed by the Chair.</p> <p>The Chair talked through the status of actions, and the following was noted as not covered in this meeting agenda:</p> <p>Action 3a from the previous minutes regarding a breakdown of pupils taking part in Duke of Edinburgh (in particular the cohort from black ethnic minority backgrounds and Disadvantaged groups): the Headteacher revealed that 15% of those Y9 students taking part in the scheme were recipients of free school meals. There were 89 participating students in total. For reference, 23% of the whole school are FSM pupils. It was acknowledged that financial constraints had contributed to pupils' decisions not to sign up. The LAC link role member for Stakeholders took an <u>ACTION: to garner student voice from FSM pupils with regard to inclusion, their sense of 'belonging', and levels of engagement with the school community.</u></p> <p>Action 3b from the previous minutes regarding updating the Governance section of the CGA website: the Governance Professional reported that the CGA website team was uploading the new governance biographies. The Chair took an <u>ACTION: to write a document that outlines the LAC's achievements and aims to include on the CGA website.</u></p> <p>Action 3d from the previous minutes regarding an update on Arbor installation and efficacy: the Headteacher took an <u>ACTION: to invite the Deputy Headteacher for Operations to the next LAC meeting.</u></p> <p>Action 7 from the previous minutes regarding investigating onboarding new staff and probationary procedures for CGA: the link role member for Stakeholders took an <u>ACTION: to organise a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral).</u></p>	<p>JD</p> <p>JDB</p> <p>CK</p> <p>JD/DH</p>
iv.	<p>Appointments, vacancies, and succession planning</p> <p>Nomination statements for two Co-Vice Chairs had been reported to the Trust Nominations Committee. LAC members approved the nominations for Jo Davies and</p>	

	<p>Jacques Szemalikowski and they were duly appointed to the role. LAC members welcomed their enthusiasm and commitment.</p> <p>v. Governance training</p> <p>The Governance Professional reminded LAC members to make full use of the training resources available on the NGA website. All members who had not attended the Trust-wide Safeguarding training on Teams or completed the NGA e-Learning module took an <u>ACTION: to undertake this Safeguarding training as a matter of urgency.</u></p> <p>vi. Governance monitoring visits schedule</p> <p>The Governance Professional pointed out that she had included a list of upcoming link meetings so that the link members could schedule their school visits accordingly.</p> <p>The deputy link member for Safeguarding took an <u>ACTION: to meet with the member for Safeguarding to ascertain what their focus would be for the term ahead.</u></p> <p>The link role holder for SEND revealed that whilst she was cognisant with the process of testing for SEND needs and the provisions offered by CGA, she wanted to explore pupil voice more, and she took an <u>ACTION: to speak to some pupils about how they felt on a day-to-day basis regarding the help and resources they received.</u></p>	<p>All</p> <p>MA/CW</p> <p>SG</p>
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2.	ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	
i.	<p>Review of strategic priorities</p> <p><u>Pupil Progress: Y11 mock exam results</u></p> <p>The Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum) began his presentation with an examination of this year's cohort, which had fewer high prior attainers and low prior attainers, as compared with last year. This translated into a large middle attainers group, where teaching energies were concentrated on the 4/5/6 grades. He also reported that attendance for this Year 11 group was 76%, and this was being addressed in progress meetings for individual pupils.</p> <p>The DHT revealed that these mock exam results were used for grade predictions, and thus the grades could be measured against school targets. For example, 64% of pupils were predicted to achieve grade 5+ in English and Maths, which was below the 70% target. Teachers could therefore effectively plan to raise the standard, with targeted interventions and support, especially for the underachieving SEND/Disadvantaged middle attainers. This was being accomplished with use of the National Tutoring Programme and in tutor time.</p> <p>Looking at the mock exam results graph, the DHT pointed out the high outcomes in French and Art, which was deemed as particularly pleasing considering CGA was "A Creative Learning Community".</p> <p>Strategies being employed to improve outcomes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising standards meetings with Heads of Departments and teachers to discuss individual pupils and the different levels of intervention needed. (Exam 	



withdrawals are a possibility, but the DHT reported that this had not improved the outcomes in other subjects in the past.)

- Positive letters being sent to pupils who achieved 7+ in 5 subjects or more.
- Pastoral support with tutors, to ensure that no child is left 'under the radar', but can reach their full potential.
- A whole year assembly, to create a positive team feeling and increase motivation.
- The use of Arbor to aid with tracking pupils' attendance and progress, and communicating effectively with parents.

Questions were tabled from committee members as follows:

Q: We have seen the fantastic grades achieved in Art, but how can grades be boosted in the other creative subjects – namely Drama and Music? *A (DHT): The small cohorts in these subjects make results look poor – but there are actually only three drama students and two music students who need interventions. It must be remembered that these small cohorts include a wide range of abilities.*

Q: Can this detailed data from Arbor be used to help the current Y9 pupils make GCSE choices that will set them up for success? *A (DHT): Yes, we are working to change how pupils make their choices. We are having individual conversations with pupils to look at them holistically to ensure that they are making correct choices. We are underlining that Art and DT are not 'easy' options and we are changing the timetable to accommodate as many choices as possible.*

Q: Although the French results were excellent, you reported that uptake of modern languages was low – how can you address this low language uptake? *A (DHT): Although the uptake does seem low, I can report that the uptake at CGA is higher than the national average uptake.*

The Chair thanked the DHT for his insightful presentation.

Staff Wellbeing: Survey feedback

The Deputy Headteacher (Professional Development) reported that the Staff Wellbeing Survey results could not be directly compared with the results from last year because the questionnaire was different. However, she was pleased to report that the results were more positive than the national picture.

Concerns included:

- 38% of staff agreed that 'I am able to contribute my thoughts and ideas for improvements openly with school/team's senior leaders': if staff did not feel that they had a voice, this would not contribute to their positive wellbeing.
- 33% agreed that 'The workload required assessing and marking pupil's work is manageable': teachers often found marking to be a cumbersome burden that did not directly affect student outcome.



Positives included:

- 77% agreed that 'I am proud to be a member of staff of this school/team'.
- 81% agreed that 'I am able to approach my line manager for support when needed'.
- 88% agreed that 'The school challenges all pupils to make at least good progress'.

Responding to the data from the survey, the DHT shared CGA's action plan. She reported that much had already been put in place to reduce staff workload and to increase general wellbeing. The working parties mobilised to directly respond to issues raised in the survey had already met – and had suggested ways to dilute marking 'hot spots' in the academic calendar. It was intended to involve a mental health specialist in these discussions.

Regarding the online staff questionnaire, a member tabled a question, **Q: Did you ask for any solution-focused responses (e.g. 'what would make a difference?')** A (DHT): *Yes, after each section in the survey, there was a free text box in which further comments/suggestions could be made. But we don't want staff to feel that they have to make a suggestion for improvement – they are only part of the solution. We also need input from senior leaders and other industry professionals.*

Another LAC member questioned, **Q: Can staff workload be measured?** A (DHT): *Although we know how many hours a staff member is teaching and attending meetings, it is difficult to know when workload is causing stress because this issue is subjective for each individual. It is important that staff feel able to seek help and that support is provided where needed. For instance, CGA has recently employed a retired teacher to mark some A-level geography papers when the teacher felt the workload was too heavy. It is much easier for the senior leaders to address issues when a staff member proposes what help they need.*

More queries from LAC members were tabled as follows:

Q: What proportion of staff responded to the survey and how are the results being fed back to staff? A (DHT): *Roughly, out of 110 staff, 70 responded. The staff are seeing the same breakdown that you now have. (But the SLT see more detail.)*

Q: How did the staff perceive the Trust in the survey? A (HT): *In a more positive light than last year, but there is still a sense of distance. We have more work to do here.*

Q: Do comments made by staff in their exit interviews match with these results? A (HT): *Generally, yes they do – especially as regards workload complaints.*

Q: How have digital solutions helped with easing administration tasks? A (DHT): *For example, Arbor has introduced an automated behaviour system. All messages to parents are sent automatically, which has saved time (as compared to manually writing and sending emails).* A follow-up question was tabled, **Q: How many hours has this saved?** A (HT): *We don't know, although it would be interesting to find out.*



The presentation was concluded with a general comment from members that new wellbeing initiatives (such as yoga and fitness classes, and end-of-year parties) soon become the norm for staff, and that the SLT will need to keep improving the offer.

The Chair thanked the DHT for her enlightening presentation.

Pupil Voice: Safeguarding meetings

The Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding) disclosed that he had gathered some Student Voice relating to Safeguarding at CGA. It was a small-scale exercise, although the AHT confirmed that he had selected students from different year groups and with different needs (e.g. SEND/Disadvantaged). The AHT shared that the feedback was positive, and that the vast majority of students felt safe at school and knew how to seek help. He felt that raising awareness of key issues would dispel any uncertainties reported.

The AHT explained that this exercise had not been carried out before, so no comparisons could be made, but that he intended to carry out the exercise again next term, perhaps with a larger group of students.

A LAC member wanted some clarification on school policy and questioned, **Q: If a pupil is worried about an issue outside of school, what should they do?** A (AHT): *When I asked the pupils this question, it was apparent that they were not sure. For contextual safeguarding, the school needs to know about issues outside of school. We need to make this clear to pupils, and to promote a transparent and open community so that pupils feel comfortable to do this. For serious issues, we will hear from the police or social services.* A LAC member suggested that some anonymous routes could be made available to pupils, and the AHT confirmed that this was already in place, although perhaps it was not well-known amongst pupils. He resolved to promote the anonymous web form more widely within the school community.

The Chair thanked the AHT for his important work and commented that engaging with the student voice was valuable and should occur as frequently as possible.

Interviews with ECTs

The Chair disclosed that she intended to **(ACTION:) carry out these interviews late in the summer term, after exams had finished and workloads were eased.** (The aim is to hold interviews with the (approx.) 15 ECTs (early career teachers) in order to track their development in the role, and their views on classroom behaviour, workload, and wellbeing. What support have they received and what challenges have they faced?)

JDB

ii. Key line of enquiry from an external advisor: SEND peer review

As background, the Headteacher declared that Ofsted had brought a sharp focus to the area of SEND in schools. This review involved key senior leaders from across the Trust, and an external expert, whose report was very positive. The expert commented that pupils at CGA demonstrated calm behaviour, that the curriculum was strong, that clear systems were in place, and that the environment felt inclusive. The Headteacher disclosed that he believed that his leadership team was robust and, consequently, that the SEND department had been transformed in the last few years.



The Headteacher listed some areas that could be developed, including consistency in marking, using deliberate strategies to engage SEND pupils, embedding the five 'non-negotiables', and effective use of LSAs. Next steps therefore included fully integrating SEND into all teaching and curriculum planning, consistency in delivering a challenging curriculum, and prioritising SEND pupils in progress meetings. He reported that the inclusion of the SEND lead as an Assistant Headteacher in the SLT meant that the SEND voice was represented at the highest level.

A LAC member wanted to probe the role of the LSAs, and queried **Q: Will the LSAs need extra help or guidance to effectively carry out their role with SEND pupils?**

A (HT): Yes: engaging SEND pupils in a challenging curriculum is difficult even for experienced teachers – they will be helped. But the bottom line is that the LSAs really need to know the pupils individually.

Another LAC member queried the role of parents, **Q: How can parents help to support their SEND children?** *A (HT): We ask the parents to help their children to come to school ready to learn, with the correct equipment for the day. Each SEND pupil is assigned a key worker, and they will have a weekly phone conversation with parents in order to catch-up and discuss any further ways to help and support.*

3. REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION

i. Chairs Group Summary Report

The Chair declared that the Information Report to the Chairs Group, shared prior to this meeting with the LAC Committee, contained much useful information. In particular, the Chair wanted to comment upon:

- *Complaints:* the Information Report contained a link to the tracker that monitors key themes and outcomes of complaints. It was intended that this information would be useful to inform recommendations for an annual report. The Headteacher disclosed that parent complaints at CGA had reduced in number since October last year, and the LAC members discussed whether this could be a future trend. The Chair reported that she had garnered much positive feedback at the recent Y11 progress meeting, from parents and pupils. The LAC members considered whether the resumption of face-to-face meetings (post Covid) had contributed to a greater feeling of connection and satisfaction with the school.
- *Finance:* when the Trust Head of Finance confirmed that the Board of Trustees was accountable for financial management, a dedicated finance link role at local level was felt to be redundant. It has therefore been confirmed that the finance link group has been disbanded, although Chairs will continue to receive the management account summaries for their school each month.
- *EDI strategy:* the co-CEOs of the Trust have been tasked to develop and articulate a statement of intent regarding EDI strategy. This statement would be realized at school level, where LAC members are tasked with tracking its implementation.

ii. Attendance

The link member for Stakeholders referred the LAC members to her Governance Monitoring Report which summarised her meeting with the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) to discuss attendance levels at CGA. The link member disclosed that she now understood the bands for 'persistent' and 'severe' absent levels. She reported feeling confident that CGA had been reducing the levels of absenteeism with strategies such as dedicated attendance officers and the punctuality register.

A LAC member queried, **Q: Do your staff need training in how to manage absenteeism?** A (DHT): *No – all the tutors and our designated attendance staff team are trained.*

iii. Stakeholder Voice

The link member for Stakeholders referred the LAC members to her Governance Monitoring Report which summarised her meeting with the Deputy Headteacher. It was acknowledged that a parent questionnaire was overdue (the last questionnaire being pre-Covid). Although the exact questions to be used for a new parent questionnaire was still under consideration by the SLT, it had been decided that there would be 20 questions in an online format (using Arbor). This format would be less cumbersome to answer than previously. The questions would be based on the Ofsted questions, but with extra questions tailored for CGA to include EDI, communication, and curriculum.

A LAC member wanted to probe the dissemination of the questionnaire and questioned, **Q: Will the questionnaire be sent out one per child or to every parent (to capture parents who do not live in the same household)?** A (DH): *Good point: we will make sure that every parent receives it.*

The Chair clarified that this questionnaire would not be used by LAC members when they attended parent consultation meetings to gather more informal feedback from parents and pupils. It was noted that LAC members also attended parent consultation evenings as a way by which to raise the profile of the LAC.

4. REPORTS FOR NOTING

i. Safeguarding: Governance Monitoring Report

This report was recognised to be insightful, and it was acknowledged that no issues were reported.

ii. Education Policy Institute report

The Chair wanted to draw the LAC's attention to this interesting report on the Influence of Headteachers on their Schools.

5.	EVALUATION OF IMPACT	
i.	<p>Summary report to the Trust Board</p> <p>The Academy Committee was asked to reflect on the impact of discussion on school improvement and to matters for reporting to the Trust Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the exam results presentation, LAC members are clear on the procedures put in place to help every pupil reach their potential. • LAC members are pleased to see the excellent work being carried out by CGA to address staff wellbeing. • After the presentation on pupil voice, the LAC members are confident that most pupils feel safe and know how to seek help. • The LAC are reassured that CGA has strong SEND provision in place, but members will continue to track and assess their implementation and the results for SEND pupils. • LAC members want to thank all the Deputy/Assistant Headteachers for contributing to the meeting – the different voices and opinions are valued. <p>The Chair noted each point and took an <u>ACTION: to prepare and submit the summary report to the Trust Board by 9 Feb 2024.</u></p>	JDB

IMPORTANT DATES		
WLT workshop: Finance and Operations	Mon 05 Feb, 6–8pm	Teams
School Production: <i>The Sound of Music</i>	26/27/28 Feb	CGA
Local Academy Committee	Mon 04 March, 6–8pm	CGA
WLT workshop: School Improvement at Scale	Mon 11 March, 6–8pm	Teams
WLT Governance Community Forum	09 May 2024, 5.30–7.30pm	CGA

Signed:



Date: 15/3/2024

Summary of Actions: CGA LAC Meeting: 29/01/24

Action No	Item No	Action	Responsible	Timescale
1.	1.iii	<i>Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions:</i>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To garner student voice from FSM pupils with regard to inclusion, their sense of 'belonging', and levels of engagement with the school community. 	JD	Summer term
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To write a document that outlines the LAC's achievements and aims to include on the CGA website. 	JDB	Spring term
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To invite the Deputy Headteacher for Operations to a LAC meeting for a full update on Arbor's efficacy for all stakeholders. 	CK	Next meeting
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To organise a meeting with the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) to discuss onboarding new staff and probationary procedures. 	JD/DH	Spring term
2.	1.v	<i>Governance training:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (All members who have not yet completed Safeguarding training): to undertake the NGA e-Learning module as a matter of urgency. 	All	Priority
3.	1.vi	<i>Governance monitoring visits:</i>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (The CGA Safeguarding link team): to organise a meeting to ascertain a focus for the term ahead. To speak to some SEND pupils about how they felt on a day-to-day basis regarding the help and resources they received. 	MA/CW	Priority
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To speak to some SEND pupils about how they felt on a day-to-day basis regarding the help and resources they received. 	SG	Summer term
4.	2.i	<i>Interviews with ECTs:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To carry out these interviews late in the summer term. 	JDB	Summer term
5.	<i>carried over</i>	CGA literacy strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To update and evaluate in the summer term. 	All	Summer Term
6.	5.i	Summary report to the Trust Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare and submit the summary report to the Trust Board by 09/02/24. 	JDB	By 09/02/24