Chestnut Grove Academy
HEADTEACHER: MR CHRISTIAN KINGSLEY MA MSc NPQH

MEETING OF THE LOCAL ACADEMY COMMITTEE

Monday 04 March 2024, 6:04pm – 7:59pm

MINUTES

Constitution and Attendance:

Headteacher (1)		**LAC Members (10)**	
Christian Kingsley	Headteacher	Judi Dumont-Barter	Chair
		Jo Davies	Co-Vice Chair
		Jacques Szemalikowski	Co-Vice Chair
		Mo Asif	LAC member
		Alex Dixey	LAC member
		Sarah Guerra	LAC member *(arrived 6:10pm)*
		Lucinda Merritt	LAC member (staff)
		Danielle Morley	LAC member *(arrived 6.06pm)*
		Emma Oliver	LAC member
		Conrad Withey	LAC member

Apologies: **Mo Asif**
Lucinda Merritt
Conrad Withey

Also in attendance:

Louise Hake	Governance Professional
Paul Hepworth	Deputy Headteacher (Operations)
Jon Taylor	Deputy Headteacher & Director of Sixth Form
Duncan Holding	Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)

Papers issued for review:

- Minutes of the previous meeting & status of actions
- Headteacher's Report
- GMR: Parent Progress Meetings Y13
- GMR: Parent Progress Meetings Y11
- CGA Behaviour of Learning Policy – updates
- CGA Gifted and Talented Policy

	BUSINESS	ACTION
1.	**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**	
i.	**Welcome and apologies for absence** The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting of the Chestnut Grove Local Academy Committee. Apologies for absence were received in advance and accepted at the meeting, as outlined above.	
ii.	**Declarations of interest** When asked by the Chair, all LAC members confirmed there were no conflicts of interest related to the meeting.	
iii.	**Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions** The minutes of the previous meeting held 29 January 2024 were agreed by the Academy Committee as a true and accurate reflection of discussion and were signed by the Chair. The Chair talked through the status of actions, and the following was noted as not covered in this meeting agenda: Action 1d from the previous minutes regarding exploring onboarding new staff and probationary procedures. The link member responsible for Stakeholders took an **ACTION: to arrange a governance monitoring visit to seek compliance with trust policies and procedures and report back at the next LAC meeting.** It was noted that Actions 1a (regarding student voice from FSM students), 3b (regarding student voice from SEND students), 4 (regarding ECT interviews), and 5 (regarding evaluating CGA's literary strategy) were due for report in the summer term, and the Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to carry these items over to the next agenda.**	**JD** **LH**
iv.	**Vacancies and recruitment** The Chair wanted clarification on how many vacancies there were on the CGA LAC Committee, and the timeframe for the recruitment process. The Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to ascertain the needs and schedule for Committee member recruitment.**	**LH**
v.	**Governance training** The Governance Professional reminded LAC members of current training that needed completion by all members: • Cyber training (the video link was given in the Governance Bulletin dated 1/03) • GDPR training (an automated reminder via email – more detailed instructions will be given in the Governance Bulletin dated 8/03) The Governance Professional regretted to inform members that the Governance Workshop covering school improvement at scale planned for 11 March had been	

	cancelled. However, she reiterated that the Learning Walk on 26 March will go ahead as planned. There followed a discussion involving the newer Committee members about whether they felt embedded in their governance roles, and how best to offer induction help in the future. One member commented that he wanted guidance regarding prioritising the workload and modelling best practise. The Chair acknowledged that commitment to governance was time-consuming and she thought that more signposting would be beneficial. Another member declared that she found the LAC meetings too dense and that too much information (and the associated jargon) was presented in a 2-hour slot. Brief discussion concluded that it would not be preferable to increase the length of meetings. Some members reported that they struggled with both the use of Teams and the filing structure within it, and so the Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to ascertain whether some Teams training could be offered from the Trust IT department.**	**LH**
	If a new governance member felt overwhelmed with the workload, the Chair and Headteacher advised it was important to prioritise development to fill knowledge gaps, and where value would be added. It was suggested that Committee members should think of skilling-up throughout the duration of their term of office. New members should target an area in which they are interested, and link role areas should be prioritised. A LAC member tabled a query, **Q: In the link meetings I attend, I struggle to feel engaged with the other primary schools in the Trust – should I be more engaged with them?** *A (HT): Your priority is absolutely with Chestnut Grove Academy, but I think everyone should be open to learning. Areas such as EDI and staff wellbeing are common denominators in all school settings, both secondary and primary, so the sharing of ideas and best practice is invaluable. A connection and sense of belonging to the Trust as a whole informs our accountability as members for CGA. However, as the Trust enlarges with more schools, you cannot possibly have close relationships with them all.*	
vi.	**Governance monitoring visits schedule** The Governance Professional pointed out that the link meeting for Health & Safety was scheduled for April, and the link member should schedule his school visit accordingly.	
vii.	**CGA website Governance page** The Chair outlined that she had finished a first draft of the Governance Impact Statement, which was intended to be published on the CGA website to inform interested parties of the aims and achievements of the LAC. The Chair suggested that this document would be especially helpful in helping new members to prioritise key areas for investigation and training. She also welcomed feedback on the document from all members, and the Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to share the document on Teams**.	**LH**

2.	**ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**	
i.	**Arbor (Management Information System) Presentation** The Deputy Headteacher informed Committee members that Arbor was essentially a human resources system for employees and students and that the Trust had launched it in all its schools in September 2023. Areas on the system that were up and running were attendance, data, timetables, and reports. Areas that still required more work were exams, a MAT-level overview feature, and a payments system. The DHT shared that the system would be constantly updated, and so would always be a 'work-in-progress' to a certain extent. The LAC was shown a fictional student profile. The DHT demonstrated how behaviour could be tracked with an overview to see if there was improvement, but the data could also be drilled down to reveal more specific patterns such as time of day and type of behaviour incident. This could prove useful for deciding when targeted interventions might have most impact. Conversely, data could be widened to show whole school data in real time, which could then be broken down into a number of different demographics. The DHT explained that there was an app that parents could download to access Arbor but push notifications had proved to be too limited in function. For this reason, email was chosen to be the primary form of communication between school and parents. The school therefore had a log of all parent communication, unless a teacher used their traditional personal Outlook email. Since Arbor's launch, 94% of CGA parents had accessed it. The DHT revealed that CGA staff could see exactly what had been accessed by parents. A tutor could ascertain if a parent had accessed a student's report and could therefore chase up if necessary. However, the DHT was realistic that not every parent would be comfortable with IT technology and that some paper reports would still be needed, although he intended to determine the barriers to access and offer help as needed. The DHT finished his presentation with a final thought about future development: would Arbor be used to send out student exam results? The DHT was uncertain about the fact that this would mean that the parents received the results before the students. The Chair congratulated the DHT on a successful roll out of the new system and believed that Arbor would be a highly useful tool for both managing data and harnessing it effectively to drive school improvement. She invited questions from the Committee, and they were tabled as follows: **Q: This is a one-stop-shop for all the school's data needs – what is the risk should the system be disrupted? Where is the data stored?** *A (DHT): The data is stored in a UK-based cloud. If we lose the internet feed into the school, we lose Arbor. For this reason, we have the basics to run the school safely – paper copies of the registers and emergency contact details for all students. Risk would increase if the outage continued for more than 48 hours.* A member wanted to probe data security further, and queried, **Q: With regards to GDPR, how do you protect personal data? Could it be breached and how**	

comfortable are you with this risk? *A (DHT): I am confident in the thorough selection process when choosing the new system. Full DPIA (data protection impact assessments) were carried out.*

Q: You have demonstrated the qualities of Arbor – but what are the problems you have encountered? *A (DHT): Behaviour events have been complex and we have had to simplify the whole system. But in many ways, this is better and more user-friendly.*

Q: Why are you changing the payment system? As a current CGA parent, I think the current payment system works efficiently. *A (DHT): This is the last piece of the jigsaw that syncs everything together. There is also a cost implication to the current use of ParentPay that we can save. I plan to make this move over the summer when there is no movement from the users.*

Q: Have you had feedback from parents? *A (DHT): We have had very little feedback – and no concerns or issues have been raised.*

The link role member for Stakeholders commented that a question related to Arbor was included in the planned CGA parent questionnaire.

A parent member of the Committee shared that she did not feel confident that she knew all the features of Arbor, particularly how to locate specific information. This led to a question, **Q: How much information have the parents had regarding the use and features of Arbor?** *A (DHT): We gave all the information at the start of the year. Usage is high so parents must feel confident that they know how to access what they need.*

The Chair suggested that a feature could be included in a future CGA parent newsletter, to both celebrate and promote the use of Arbor, and the DHT agreed that this was a good idea.

The Chair thanked the DHT for his insightful presentation.

ii. Headteacher's Report

The Headteacher wanted to draw the Committee's attention to the data pertaining to attendance, since this was a key area of school improvement. He highlighted the data on page 19 of the report, which showed that overall attendance for all year groups had improved, as compared with Autumn 2022. In addition, persistent absence (i.e. below 90%) had also decreased in all year groups. He shared that the tiered approach to removing attendance barriers was proving successful at CGA. But despite this positive picture, attendance gaps for FSM and non-FSM, and SEND and non-SEND students, had widened; consequently, attendance officers needed to concentrate their efforts towards these groups.

Regarding the safeguarding data on page 23, there was an overall reduction in the number of incidents, and it was the Headteacher's opinion that the spike in incidences post-pandemic seemed to be levelling off.

Finally, the Headteacher was pleased to announce that the financial position of CGA currently predicted a small surplus at the end of the year.

The Headteacher invited Committee members to table questions:

A member wanted to probe the Sixth Form 2023 predicted grades and referenced page 11 to ask, **Q: Why do you describe new staff as 'cautious in awarding higher grades' and how are you addressing their lack of confidence?** *A (Director of Sixth Form): It takes some time for ECTs (early career teachers) to acquire a full understanding of the syllabus and the examiners' feedback. We need to assess and support the ECTs' learning of this knowledge – so that they feel confident to answer, 'what does a certain grade look like?', and to pass on this knowledge to the students. If the ECTs are not feeling completely confident to answer this question, then they tend to be cautious in awarding prediction grades. CGA has a high number of ECTs at the moment, so I wanted to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that grades might seem low for this reason.*

Further probing Sixth Form data, a member queried, **Q: You describe the current Year 12 students as 'incredibly able' yet their results in the November exams were low – how will you address this?** *A (Director of Sixth Form): We have discussed this at our Raising Standards meetings. We know that, if their talent is harnessed and directed, this year group will produce some fantastic results. And this is echoed in the predicted grades for this cohort, which are significantly higher than the cohort at the same point last year.*

A question was tabled about the CGA Geography Department in particular, **Q: On page 15, the Geography department is described as having 'inconsistencies across the department' – how was this identified and how is it being addressed?** *A (HT): The Head of Department wrote a report outlining how his ECTs were not yet on par with longer-standing staff. The focus next term is therefore to embed the ECTs' knowledge with coaching, especially as regards CGA's pedagogical approach. One member of staff also needs support with managing students' behaviour.*

Regarding behaviour management, the Chair commented that she was pleased to see that suspensions in the Black ethnic minority groups had decreased over the past year. The Headteacher replied that therapeutic and other targeted interventions were proving to be effective. However, another member raised a concern with the question, **Q: CGA has quite a low cohort of disadvantaged pupils, yet numbers of suspensions for this group seem very high – can you explain this?** *A (HT): We are tracking this trend and targeting our efforts to this area. The fact that disadvantaged students are disproportionately featured in suspension numbers is in line with a national pattern.*

Due to time restrictions, the LAC resolved to **ACTION: email any further questions for the Headteacher to the Governance Professional.** — **LH**

iii. Mobile phone policy

Although the government's new initiative prohibiting mobile phone use in school had caused some disquiet with school leaders who felt that this issue was not a priority, the Headteacher wanted to clarify the stance on this issue at CGA. He shared that zero use of mobile phones was difficult to enforce but that all students were clear on the 'no see and no hear' policy. The Headteacher reported that it was rare to see a mobile phone in use at CGA, and that any phones that were seen or heard were confiscated.

iv.	**Creation of a Wellbeing Hub** The Headteacher explained that there was a need for more small office space at CGA. Small offices were needed for specific student interventions, and they were often required to be confidential for counselling or social work. At the moment, these meetings often changed location from meeting to meeting, and this was confusing for students. The Headteacher revealed that an anonymous donor had come forward, and so the school was carrying out research into buying a garden-like structure. It would be a cost-effective small building with three or four small rooms. A member commented that it would be important to soundproof the building properly, and another member queried, **Q: Will this new Hub be in the corner of our site that is currently leased to the neighbouring pub?** *A (HT): No – we don't want to lose the income we get from letting this small area. I am envisioning that it will be located along the wall that adjoins the neighbouring school, where key services (such as electricity) already exist.*	

3.	**REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION**	
i.	**Governance Development Plan (GDP)** The Chair explained that the purpose of this document was to provide a clear link between the Trust priorities, the School Improvement Plan, and the LAC priorities. The GDP then drilled down further to areas for investigation for specific link role governors. It was acknowledged that the GDP was also a useful document for Ofsted inspections. The Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to circulate the GDP to all LAC members for their comments.** The Chair asked that all link role holders check that their priorities were aligned with the Link Role Planner. Any comments from the members should be emailed directly to the Chair.	**LH**
ii.	**Safeguarding** The Governance Professional apologised for her omission of this supporting paper and she took an **ACTION: to circulate the Safeguarding Spring term report via Teams**.	**LH**

4.	**REPORTS FOR NOTING**	
i.	**Parent Progress Meetings (Y13 & 11)** Following attendance at parent progress meetings for years 13 and 11, members had produced a governance monitoring report, and the Chair confirmed that she had already reported pertinent feedback to the Headteacher. There followed a discussion on the topic of whether the school placed too much emphasis on their Oxbridge students, and whether the attention given to the six students who gained a place at Oxbridge reflected the inclusivity of the school. The Headteacher felt that CGA promoted the achievements and destinations of all its students – whether university or apprenticeship. The Director of Sixth Form shared that, when recently interviewing Y11 Sixth Form applicants, he had learnt that Chestnut	

	Grove Academy was not viewed as a school that was successful for Oxbridge entry. For this reason, he reported that it was important to change this perception: although CGA was an inclusive intake, it can differentiate for the high achieving students. The Chair felt that this was a valuable debate that should be continued. The Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to add this topic of discussion to the next agenda**.	**LH**

5.	**POLICIES, REVIEWS, AUDITS**	
i.	**Amendments to the CGA Behaviour Policy** The Academy Committee reported that the changes made to this policy were clear and no questions were tabled. The Policy was therefore accepted by the LAC and would be finalised on the CGA website.	
ii.	**CGA Gifted and Talented Policy** The Chair requested that she met with the Headteacher to discuss this policy before it was re-submitted to the LAC at the next meeting. This was agreed and the Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to add this policy discussion to the next agenda**.	**LH**

6.	**EVALUATION OF IMPACT**	
i.	**Summary report to the Trust Board** The Academy Committee was asked to reflect on the impact of discussion on school improvement and to matters for reporting to the Trust Board: • The school was to be congratulated on the smooth implementation process of Arbor, which was testament to the school's competency. • The Committee appreciated the opportunity to reflect on how they worked as a group, and especially how new members could feel embedded. • Considering the recent attendance data, the LAC agreed with the school's confidence that strategies for improving attendance were proving successful. • The LAC shared the Headteacher's optimism that the high number of post-pandemic safeguarding incidents might be reducing. • The LAC congratulated the Headteacher on the news that CGA was expected to have a budgetary surplus at the end of the year. • The addition of a Wellbeing Hub was considered a useful resource for the school and its students. The Chair noted each point and took an **ACTION: to prepare and submit the summary report to the Trust Board by 15 March 2024.**	**JDB**

IMPORTANT DATES		
Year 7 Parent Progress Meetings	Tues 19 March, 3–6pm	CGA
Summer Concert 1	Wed 24 April, PM	CGA
Year 10 Parent Progress Meetings	Thurs 25 April, 3–6pm	CGA
Year 8 Parent Progress Meetings	Thurs 09 May, 3–6pm	CGA
Local Academy Committee	**Mon 20 May, 6–8pm**	**CGA**
WLT Governance Community Forum	09 May 2024, 5.30–7.30pm	CGA

Signed: ……

Date: 18/6/24 ……

Summary of Actions: CGA LAC Meeting: 04/03/24

Action No	Item No	Action	Responsible	Timescale
1.	**1.iii**	*Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions:*		
		• To explore the onboarding of new staff and probationary procedures at CGA.	**JD**	**Summer term**
		• 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**
		• To speak to some SEND pupils about how they felt on a day-to-day basis regarding the help and resources they received.	**AD**	**Summer term**
		• To carry out interviews with ECTs in order to track their development, and to ascertain their views on classroom behaviour, workload and wellbeing.	**JDB**	**Summer term**
		• To receive an update and to evaluate CGA's literary strategy in the summer term	**All**	**Summer term**
2.	**1.iv**	*Vacancies and recruitment:* • To ascertain the needs and schedule for Committee member recruitment.	**LH**	**Priority**
3.	**1.v**	*Governance training:* • To enquire whether Teams training could be offered from the Trust IT department.	**LH**	**Priority**
4.	**1.vii**	*Governance page on CGA website:* • To share the Governance Statement on Teams, so that feedback can be emailed directly to the Chair.	**All**	**Priority**
5.	**2.ii**	*Headteacher's Report:* • To email queries regarding this report to the Governance Professional, who will collate and forward to the Headteacher for a written reply.	**All**	**Priority**
6.	**3.i**	*Governance Development Plan:* • To share the Governance Development Plan on Teams, so that feedback can be emailed directly to the Chair.	**All**	**Priority**

7.	**3.ii**	*Safeguarding:* • To circulate the Safeguarding Spring report to the LAC via Teams.	**LH**	**Priority**
8.	**4.i**	*Feedback from Parent Progress Meetings:* • To further discuss the level of emphasis placed on Oxbridge students by CGA.	**All**	**Next meeting**
9.	**5.ii**	*CGA Gifted and Talented Policy:* • To put this policy forward for Committee discussion.	**All**	**Next meeting**
10.	**5.i**	Summary report to the Trust Board • To prepare and submit the summary report to the Trust Board by 15/03/24.	**JDB**	**By 15/03/24**