

MEETING OF THE LOCAL ACADEMY COMMITTEE

Monday 17 June 2024, 6:00pm - 8:02pm

MINUTES

Constitution and Attendance:

Headteacher		LAC Members		
(1)			(10)	
Christian Kingsley Headt	eacher	Judi Dumont-Barter	Chair	
		Jo Davies	Co-Vice Chair	
		Jacques Szemalikowski	Co-Vice Chair	
		Mo Asif	LAC member	
		Alex Dixey	LAC member (online, left 7.31pm)	
		Sarah Guerra	LAC member (arrived 6:08pm)	
		Lucinda Merritt	LAC member (staff)	
		Danielle Morley	LAC member	
		Emma Oliver	LAC member	
		Conrad Withey	LAC member (arrived 6:19pm)	
		Vacany	since 14/11/23	

Apologies: Mo Asif Danielle Morley

Also in attendance:

Louise Hake Governance Professional

Josh Ngondo Observing (as a newly elected parent member)

Richard Cheesbrough Deputy Headteacher (Curriculum)

Violeta Fabiani Deputy Headteacher (Professional Development)

Charlotte Robinson Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum)

Jon Taylor Deputy Headteacher & Director of Sixth Form

Papers issued for review:

- Minutes of the meeting held 04/03/24 & 20/05/24 and status of actions
- Nomination statements for the Chair and Vice-Chair roles
- WLT Local Governance Calendar 24/25
- Headteacher's Report
- CGA Safeguarding audit
- GMR: Safeguarding SU24

- Output to self-evaluation (skills)
- Governance Development Priorities 23/24
- GMR: Student voice panel
- GMR: Health & Safety
- GMR: Staff induction and appraisal
- GMR: EDI SP24
- 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, with special welcome to the newly appointed parent member, who was attending as an observer whilst onboarding recruitment checks were completed. Introductions were made.	
	The Chair acknowledged that this was the last LAC meeting for Lucinda Merrit, and she thanked her for the commitment and valuable insights she had contributed during her term of office.	
	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.	LAC confidentiality	
	The Chair reminded all members of the Local Academy Committee that they were oftentimes privy to confidential information about Chestnut Grove Academy and its staff. Confidentiality should be maintained at all times, and this included with all members of staff. Visits to the school should have a clear purpose related to a governance role and school improvement focus, and it was essential that professionalism was maintained at all times.	
iv.	Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions	
	The minutes of the previous two meetings, held 04 March 2024 and 20 May 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 1b regarding student voice from SEND students: it was noted that this had not taken place and the Chair took an <u>ACTION: to include this school visit in the LAC link priorities for next year</u> .	JDB
	Action 1c, regarding interviews with ECTs (Early Careers Teachers): the Chair reported that these interviews were in progress, and took an <u>ACTION: to table the monitoring report at the next LAC meeting</u> .	JDB
V.	Vacancies and recruitment	
	The Chair confirmed that there was one vacancy for a community LAC member in the CGA Committee, and that she was in the process of interviewing for this position. The Vice Chair commented that she thought it was important to finish embedding all current members so that the Committee was fully effective for the new academic year.	



vi.	Receive nominations for the Chair	
	The Trust Board had invited nominations for the Chair at Chestnut Grove Local Academy Committee. Judi Dumont-Barter had self-nominated for the role and LAC members confirmed that they approved her nomination for the next academic year and the proposal could be passed to the Trust nominations committee.	
vii.	Receive nominations for the Vice-Chair	
	Jo Davies and Jacques Szemalikowski had self-nominated to share the role of Vice-Chair, and Committee members approved the nominations. They were duly appointed to the role as Co-Vice Chairs for the next academic year.	
viii.	Meeting dates for 2024/25	
	The Governance Professional drew the Committee's attention to the WLT Local Governance Calendar, which listed all meeting dates for the next academic year. It was confirmed that the Chestnut Grove Academy meetings would continue to be held on Mondays at 6 to 8pm. The Governance Professional took an ACTION: to send out Outlook calendar invites to all members for the LAC meetings next year.	LH
	The Chair invited all members to arrive at 5.30pm for each LAC meeting, in order to socialise and partake in refreshments to facilitate the building of relationships between LAC members.	

2.	ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY		
i.	Receive draft SIP 2024/25 headlines		
	The Headteacher circulated a headline summary of the updated draft School Improvement Plan for next academic year. These bullet point headlines were deemed to accurately reflect discussion from the last LAC meeting. The Headteacher emphasised that the objectives were to be viewed as threads that follow students through their school journey, from Year 7 to Year 13, and that there would not be separate plans for each Key Stage. He confirmed that the final and fuller version of the SIP would be circulated before the end of this Summer term.		
	The Chair took an ACTION: to meet with the Vice Chairs to discuss how the school SIP priorities would connect with the LAC link priorities. The results of this discussion would be brought before the LAC at the next meeting.		
ii.	Review of the CGA literacy strategy		
	The Deputy Headteacher began her presentation with a summary of the two main strands of the CGA literacy strategy, Vocabulary and Reading, and the associated interventions. She shared that although assessment data had not yet been gathered for the end of the year, feedback had been sought from Heads of Department, tutors and students via interviews, surveys and observations.		
	Overall, the teachers reported feeling confident with teaching vocabulary, and that it was embedded into their teaching. Regarding reading, teachers reported that there was a solid foundation to this work, but that it needed to embed more securely.		



The DHT shared that more challenge, with a wider range of activities and competitions was needed for students in the lower years; that tutors felt that silent reading time was a calm start to the day; and that logistics had proved challenging because implementing interventions had required some complex timetabling and a high demand on teaching space.

Next steps were outlined by the DHT: more assemblies were needed to ensure that students understood the intent behind the strategy; resources needed to be adapted to stretch and challenge; a reward system needed to be introduced; and the bringing of a book to silent reading needed to be incorporated into the behaviour system. When the data was available, the DHT explained that patterns of improvement from Year 7 to Year 9 would be analysed, as well as the tracking of individual students, especially for the lower prior attainers. The DHT concluded that the most important priority was to foster a reading culture at CGA.

The Chair thanked the DHT for her insightful presentation, and questions were tabled as follows:

Q: Looking at your RAG-rated tables in the presentation, I can see that some of the 'less wordy' subjects feel that they are struggling to incorporate literacy into their teaching – how can it be achieved? A (DHT): First of all, I would like to say that these tables are based on the opinions of the Heads of Departments, and some of them are more critical of their department's teaching than others. However, you are right that there may not be much opportunity to correct student spelling in Drama, but there are ample opportunities to discuss choice of language. Maths lessons may not need to address punctuation, but there is specialised language used in this subject that the students need to be familiar with. The literacy strategy might need to be introduced into classes creatively – but every student has a full timetable to explore literacy in different ways in different subjects.

Q: Will the reward system be based on student progression (i.e. not on ability)? A (DHT): Definitely. We track individual progress using quizzes. All of the students are on a literacy journey.

Q: As a parent of a student in this school, I was not aware of this literacy strategy: do you intend to increase communication about it with CGA parents? A (DHT): Yes, we would like to get parents on board, especially with the Reading+ pupils, who can make great progress with their fluency and comprehension with parental support and practice at home.

iii. Update on CGA parent questionnaire

The Deputy Headteacher disclosed that the newly devised parent questionnaire was the first parent survey to be distributed since the pandemic. The aim of the survey was to drive improvement of the school. It had been sent out to parents at around the time of their year group Progress Meetings. Although the initial response rate was low, the DHT intended to build momentum over time. To further increase responses, it was planned to print a QR code on Progress Reports and in newsletters, as well as providing opportunities to complete the survey via the website and email.



The responses to the survey represented 14% of the school community, and within this group, there was a high representation from the SEND cohort, and a low representation from the disadvantaged cohort. There was a particularly high response rate from Year 7 families. Whilst the DHT acknowledged that this response rate was too low to accurately reflect the whole school community, he felt that there were some themes to draw out from the data.

Strengths of CGA were reported to be: a broad range of subjects; students making good progress; strong feelings of student safety and student and parental inclusion; effective school communication; and a school community that understands and values difference in backgrounds and culture. The DHT was particularly pleased to report that 89% of families would recommend the school to others.

Areas of focus for CGA included: increasing the range of clubs and making trips accessible for all; improving poor behaviour of students and consistently implementing behaviour policies; fostering the relationship between the student and tutor; more effective handing of complaints; and increasing parental involvement in their child's learning, as well as inclusivity for parents with English as an additional language. Although the DHT acknowledged that 29% of respondents reported bullying, he was reassured that 85% of respondents knew how to report an incident and 70% felt that bullying was dealt with effectively.

The DHT concluded his presentation by outlining that the next steps were to use this data to inform the SIP, as well as to disseminate this data to middle management in order to advise their action plans. The DHT underlined that it was crucial to receive a greater response rate in order to have a more accurate picture of opinion: the responses from Year 7 may be very different to responses from Year 11.

The Chair commented that she felt reassured that feedback was as expected and that all focus areas were to be included in the SIP for next year. She invited questions from the LAC members, and they were tabled as follows:

Q: How did you create the questions in the survey? A (DHT): I have been working on these questions with the LAC link member for stakeholder engagement. We used the Ofsted questions as a base, and then personalised for feedback that linked to priorities for CGA.

Q: You say that you would like to increase the response rate, but will you only circulate the questionnaire at parent Progress Meetings? A (DHT): No, I expect we will receive a trickle of feedback throughout the year in response to the newsletter and website links. But I intend to push for responses at Progress Meetings. I would like to have boards with the printed QR codes placed around the gym so that parents can fill in the questionnaire whilst they wait for their appointments.

An idea was put forward that LAC members could attend the Progress Meetings with their laptops and help parents to fill in the form as needed. It was suggested that this may encourage more disadvantaged parents to complete the survey.

A follow-up question was tabled, Q: Could you use WhatsApp Friends of Chestnut Grove groups to encourage survey uptake? A (DHT): This route would be too



informal for the school to pursue. There is nothing to stop a parent from passing on the QR code via WhatsApp, but it would not be school policy.

The Chair thanked the DHT for his work, and expressed a hope that members would be available to attend Progress Meetings next year in order to increase parental engagement.

iv. CGA enrichment plan for next year

The Assistant Headteacher disclosed that whilst there were many extracurricular clubs on offer at CGA, attendance was not tracked. For this reason, there was no data available regarding the inclusivity of SEND and disadvantaged pupils.

From next academic year, the AHT confirmed that all CGA staff would be expected to run one hour of enrichment per week. Staff and student voice would be sought to ascertain what clubs might be popular. In order to formalise the enrichment offer and attract pupils to sign up to clubs, the AHT explained that she would publish a full programme of clubs at the beginning of the year, to share with both students and parents. The AHT also outlined her intent to organise an Enrichment Fair for all Year 7 students, where they could explore all the clubs and sign up immediately. Attendance would be tracked with the use of registers on Arbor.

Regarding trips, the AHT acknowledged that intent was not always clear, and that there needed to be a clear reason for students to miss class time. She explained that the key to maximising inclusivity for trips would be to offer a variety in terms of expense, and to outline which trips were compulsory for coursework, and which trips were optional. In this way, families could plan their budget for their child's entire educational journey. Arbor would be used to track uptake.

A question was tabled concerning trips, **Q:** What are the workload implications for staff who organise trips, and what support do they receive? A (AHT): Unfortunately, there is a lot of paperwork needed when organising a safe group trip. We need to find a way to refine trip management so that workload is minimised.

The Headteacher explained that all parents paid for trips using ParentPay, and he thought that this system could also be used for consent forms. He further disclosed that a new IT system called Every was being introduced by the Trust, and he anticipated that this might be useful in streamlining the paperwork involved.

A further question was tabled, **Q: How can you ensure that a pupil isn't missing too much school by attending all the trips?** A (AHT): All of the lengthy trips take place in school holidays. We will also start to use Arbor to track the attendance of each pupil.

The Director of Sixth Form shared his concern about the intention to map out all trips and their associated costs: he feared that cost implications would become a deciding factor in subject choices. For instance, geography and biology have compulsory field trips that are needed for coursework requirements. It was therefore important to keep costs down for all compulsory trips, and to make clear which trips were optional.

The AHT concluded that CGA would strive to provide experiences beyond the classroom for every pupil, and the Chair thanked her and all staff for this commitment.



v. Headteacher's report

The Headteacher reiterated his request that members email queries concerning his report to the Governance Professional before the meeting, so that discussion could be targeted and more meaningful.

The Headteacher drew the LAC's attention to numbers on roll, and the fact that the school had 39 more students this year. He confirmed that CGA was now full and that this could be a challenge for the budget going forwards. He disclosed that secondary school rolls were falling in Wandsworth and that although CGA could not be complacent, the excellent Ofsted report put the school in a strong position.

Regarding the new Year 7 cohort, the Headteacher shared that there were increasing numbers of students with EHCPs and that this could be a difficult balance. Whilst CGA was proud to be an inclusive comprehensive school, with a reputation as a caring environment, EHCP students bring financial and staffing pressures.

A member referred to the management accounts in the Report, and tabled a question, Q: Are you concerned that this financial summary contains deficit figures? A (HT): The current £31k surplus will leave a very small deficit, which does not overly concern me in these difficult financial times.

The Headteacher commented that although CGA attendance figures were above national levels, absence was still too high, especially persistent absence levels. He reiterated that reducing levels of absence would continue to be a priority for the school.

A question was tabled regarding suspensions, **Q:** It is reported that suspensions have increased from 14 in Spring 2023 to 26 in Spring 2024 – what is behind this increase? A (HT): A pattern of increased suspensions from school is reflected across the borough. CGA has taken a tough line regarding behaviour after the pandemic: 12 of these suspensions are for persistent breaches of the Behaviour for Learning policy. We endeavour to support these pupils with specific interventions.

The Chair noted that the school had delivered an exam anxiety workshop, and she congratulated the Headteacher on this forward thinking and its success in supporting pupils' mental health.

The Headteacher was pleased to point out that the number of complaints had stabilised.

Regarding staffing in the Senior Leadership Team, Emmanuel Solate had resigned and it was confirmed that Lois Vanstone would become AHT for Inclusion and SEND in a smaller SLT team. To accommodate the rising number of students in the Sixth Form, a new Head of Year 12 was recruited to manage student transitions, and it was intended that a Head of Year 13 would be sought for the 2025/26 year, to increase general workload capacity such as UCAS applications.

vi. Additional information from the Headteacher

The Headteacher wanted to inform the LAC of two recent school developments that were not included in his Report. First, he was pleased to announce that the school had been provided with two new police liaison officers and a school nurse. He hoped that this would be the beginning of a fruitful relationship. Second, the school that adjoins the CGA boundary had proposed to rent a little-used area of the CGA playground to



construct a classroom building that would be connected to their property by a bridge. The Headteacher revealed that the agreement would be lucrative for CGA, and that the school would inherit the legacy building.

3.	SAFEGUARDING	
i.	Safeguarding updates	
	CGA had a Safeguarding Audit in April 2024 and the Headteacher confirmed that the feedback was mainly positive. The Safeguarding Assistant Headteacher was unable to attend this LAC meeting due to sickness, and so the Governance Professional took an ACTION: to invite the Safeguarding AHT to the next LAC meeting to deliver more detailed feedback.	LH
	The LAC link role holder for Safeguarding summarised the two main takeaways of his Governance Monitoring Report: that the number of safeguarding incidents had drastically reduced, and that more counselling space had been provided in the school. There were no questions tabled.	

4.	GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT	
i.	Review output to self-evaluation exercise	
	The Chair acknowledged that there was a large amount of information to unpack from both the skills audit and the Chair's review. The Governance Professional took an ACTION: to provide a printout of the 16 questions that were completed at the last meeting.	LH
	LAC members completed the RAG-rating of the Governance Development Priorities for last year, and it was noted that the majority of the objectives had been completed. Collecting stakeholder voice and communicating the value of the LAC was a piece of work that would continue; and tracking and analysis of complaints across the Trust was a project tasked to the Head of Governance by the Trust Board. The Chair took an ACTION: to meet with the Vice Chairs to discuss governance priorities for next year by considering feedback from the three self-evaluation exercises.	JDB
	The Chair concluded discussion with an emphasis on the importance of school visits so that LAC members could fully understand the views of both staff and pupils at the school.	

5.	REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION	
i.	Student Voice: FSM pupils and engagement	
	The Chair explained that the purpose of the school visit was to interview small panels of pupils (from SEND and disadvantaged groups in Years 7 to 10) to discuss their school experience, with a focus on enrichment, extra-curricular activities, personal development and inclusion. Referring to her Governance Monitoring Report, the Chair	



summarised the main takeaways: all the students felt safe to speak up at school; and the students lacked full involvement in enrichment opportunities. The Chair was reassured that increasing involvement in enrichment and tracking student uptake was already a priority for CGA, as discussed earlier in this LAC meeting. The Chair concluded that it would be interesting to cross-reference her findings with the results of the parent survey.

6.	REPORTS FOR NOTING	
i.	Health & Safety Governance Monitoring Report The members thanked the H&S link role holder for his insightful report. The link role	
	holder commented that it was crucial for CGA to finalise its Critical Incident Plan, especially considering the school's proximity to a main railway line. The Headteacher agreed that this was a priority. No questions were tabled.	
ii.	Onboarding new staff Governance Monitoring Report	
	The link members for Stakeholders wanted to properly understand the staff induction, appraisal and probation policies at CGA. Referring to their report, the members confirmed that they were reassured that robust procedures were in place. They reported a high retention rate of ECTs at CGA, a high uptake of NPQs, and the Ofsted staff survey contained positive comments regarding wellbeing. There were no questions tabled.	
iii.	EDI Governance Monitoring Report	
	Referring to her report, the link role holder summarised that EDI was embedded at CGA, where staff were effectively promoting EDI with pupils and their families. She pointed out that there had been a rise in homophobic incidents (as evidenced in the Headteacher's Report), and this had been identified as a focus for improvement. There was also reported to be a need for clarity on how the Equality Act objectives are set, implemented and monitored at Trust level and in each school. No questions were tabled.	

7.	POLICIES, REVIEWS, AUDITS	
i.	CGA Gifted and Talented Policy	
	It was confirmed that the wrong draft of this policy had been circulated to the LAC. The Assistant Headteacher took an ACTION: to email the correct version to the Governance Professional, who would circulate on Teams for comment or approval.	LH
ii.	Volunteer for website audit	
	It was suggested that Mo Asif (who sent apologies for this meeting) might agree to complete the website audit because he carried out this task last year. The Chair took an ACTION: to ask the member if he would agree to complete this task on behalf of the LAC.	JDB



iii. Policies for approval

Small updates (mainly name changes) had been made to the following policies recently and needed LAC approval:

Accessibility Plan; Anti-Bullying Policy; E-safety Policy; Guest Speaker Policy; Policy for Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions; Relationships and Sex Education Policy; Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Report for Parents; Student Use of ICT; Visitor Policy; Volunteer Policy

Members shared that they had not had time to read the policies, and so the Chair took an ACTION: to extend the deadline for comments or approval of the above policies to 1st July 2004.

ΑII

8. 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:

- Members confirmed that they would like to recommend Judi Dumont-Barter as Chair of the LAC for the next academic year.
- Members confirmed that they have agreed that Jo Davies and Jacques Szemalikowski would be Co-Vice Chairs of the LAC for the next academic year.
- The LAC were impressed with the efficacy of the CGA literacy strategy, and they looked forward to more detailed end-of-year data.
- The LAC agreed that a higher rate of response to the new Parent Questionnaire
 was vital to ascertain a complete picture from the school community. Members
 hoped that they would be able to attend parent Progress Meetings next year in
 order to encourage uptake.
- The LAC were enthusiastic about CGA's plans to increase student participation in the enrichment offering and plan to track the inclusion of SEND and disadvantaged groups.
- The LAC was pleased to hear of the reduction in safeguarding incidents.
- The Chair and Vice-Chairs intend to spend some time unpacking the feedback from the self-evaluation exercises, and will use this information to inform governance priorities for next year.

The Chair noted each point and took an <u>ACTION: to prepare and submit the</u> summary report to the Trust Board by 5 July 2024.

JDB



IMPORTANT DATES			
WLT workshop: Equality, Diversity, Inclusion	Mon 24 June: 6-8pm	Teams	
Learning Walk (linked to EDI and Reflecting Realities)	Tues 02 July: 10-11am	Paxton	
Chestival	Thurs 18 July	CGA	
WLT Annual Safeguarding Training	Tues 10 Sept: 6-7.30pm	Teams	

Signed:			

Date: 1 October 2024



Summary of Actions: CGA LAC Meeting: 17/06/24

Action No	Item No	Action	Responsible	Timescale
1.	1.iv	 Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions: To include a school monitoring visit on the link priorities for next year: to speak to some SEND pupils about how they felt on a day-to-day basis regarding the help and resources they received. 	JDB	Next meeting
		 To table the Governance Monitoring Report regarding interviews with ECTs in order to track their development, and to ascertain their views on classroom behaviour, workload and wellbeing. 	JDB	Next meeting
2.	1.viii	Meeting dates for 2024/25: To send out Outlook calendar invites to all members for LAC meetings next year.	LH	Priority
3.	2.i	 SIP headlines 2024/25: To discuss the translation of SIP priorities to link priorities, and to report back at the next meeting. 	JDB	Next meeting
4.	3.i	Safeguarding audit: To invite the Safeguarding Assistant Headteacher to the next LAC meeting, to deliver feedback.	LH	Next meeting
5.	4.i	 Governance development: To provide the Chair with a printout of the output from the 16 questions self-evaluation exercise. To consider all self-evaluation feedback in order to inform governance priorities for next year. 	LH JDB	Priority Next meeting
6.	7.i	 CGA Gifted and Talented Policy: To circulate the most recent version of this policy for Committee comment/approval. 	LH	Priority



7.	7.ii	 Website audit: To confirm a volunteer to complete this task on behalf of the LAC. 	JDB	Priority
8.	7.iii	Policies for approval: To examine the 10 amended policies (as listed above) and provide comments or approval to the Chair.	All	01/07/24
9.	8.i	Summary report to the Trust Board: To prepare and submit the summary report to the Trust Board.	JDB	By 05/07/24