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THE LANGTREE SCHOOL ACADEMY TRUST COMPANY ("THE ACADEMY TRUST")
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MINUTES of a Meeting of the directors of the Academy Trust held at Langtree School, Woodcote, Reading, RG8 0RA, on Thursday 14th July 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Alan Broomhead (AB) – item 6 onwards
Brian Davies (BD)
Rick Holroyd (RH)
Sue Lea (SL)
Sarah Loveland (SLo)

Neil McIntosh (NM)
Val Nowell (VN)
Tracy Sedwell (TS) – Chair
Jules Varnham (JV)

In attendance: Helen Batten, Clerk

Quorum was confirmed.

1. Introduction

- Apologies were received and accepted from Sue Ambler, Regina Grosier, Jan Seal-Roberts, Dennis Rocks, Mark Vitty and David Warren. Alan Broomhead would be arriving late.
- TS notified that resignations have been received from SL and DW, to be discussed under item
- No substantive items were notified for AOB.
- No governor declared a material interest in any agenda item for this meeting.

2. Minutes of 6th June

2.1 Minutes which had been circulated were agreed to be an accurate record and signed by TS for filing in school.

2.2 Review of Actions/matters arising: Unless noted below all agreed actions had been completed or would be covered in discussion at this meeting.

Signed (Chair) Date

- **Document storage** (item 2.2): TS confirmed that an update will be provided to the next meeting. **Action: SA**
- **Voluntary contribution letter to parents** (item 2.2): The proposed final version will be circulated for information. **Action: RH**
- **Social event** (item 2.2): TS thanked all governors who attended a most enjoyable evening.
- **RHI payment** (item 3.1): RH confirmed that this is being chased.
- **Revision materials** (item 3.2): RH reported that MV has taken on the task of gathering information from the various departments to be provided to parents.
- **Equality policy** (item 6.2): Work is ongoing to produce a simplified statement. **Action: RH, NM**

3. Committee updates

3.1 Finance & General Purposes: Minutes of 28th June had been circulated and noted. BD presented key points:

- **2016-17 budget planning:** Committee discussion was noted. It was agreed to defer formal approval of the budget to the end of the meeting when AB would be present.
- **IT recruitment:** Notice has been given to end the RM contract and preparation is in hand for recruitment during the autumn. It is anticipated this will provide savings in the region of £50,000 annually.
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3.2 Curriculum & Standards: TS presented key points from the minutes of 29th June which had been circulated.

- **Student destinations:** RH confirmed that the school is required to report on this and actual information will be collated after results are received.
- **Music technician:** RH has considered this request but explained that it is not a current priority. It was therefore agreed to look at other ways of providing occasional assistance at busy times or by using a student or volunteer. **Action: RH**
- **School council conference:** Governors are invited to attend and details will be circulated when available. **Action: HB**
- **Languages:** RH provided further details about arrangements for next year. Governors were concerned about RH's workload but he explained that there may be a number of different staffing options that can be considered as the year progresses. The new arrangements will fit with curriculum changes for Y9 to reduce to one language and cover that to a better standard. This will also support the increased MFL emphasis in the EBacc and RH will be looking for a dynamic new department head to develop this. Governors asked why uptake has been poor and RH explained that this is not peculiar to Langtree and there has been a longstanding resistance to languages for some time, which the EBacc addresses.

3.3 Pastoral & Community: Minutes of 29th June had been circulated and noted.

- **Student leaders:** It was agreed that a governor will join the selection panel and further information will be circulated. **Action: RH**

4. Headteacher's report: The report had been circulated and noted.

4.1 Young carers gold award: Governors congratulated RH and all staff on this achievement which recognises the quality of Langtree's work in supporting young carers.

4.2 Attendance reporting: It was agreed to streamline reporting so that P&C receives full attendance details from Debbie Mallam and this will no longer be included in the Head's reporting to FGB.

4.3 Holiday absence: Governors requested an update and RH reported a recent spike of requests following the successful court challenge widely reported in the media. RH is still refusing requests except where a compelling case is made, and it is not clear how the court action has affected actual absence rates. RH also noted that absence requests that have been authorised have included some great opportunities with genuine educational value.

4.4 Staff absence: NM described the creative ways by which some schools are enabling exceptional staff absences and enquired whether such an approach should be considered at Langtree. RH confirmed that he would always look at any such requests individually and that it is important to find ways to support the commitment of staff members.

5. School Improvement Plan

5.1 2015-16 final review: An update had been circulated following a full SLT review. RH explained that most red areas are where strategic decisions not to proceed with activities have been taken due to financial or capacity constraints. It is recognised that some activities are aspirational and it may not be possible to achieve everything. The updated SIP and SEF information will be used to prepare the 2016-17 SIP. Governors agreed that the schedule of termly reviews has worked well and this will be continued. Governors also thanked RH for producing clear and simple to use documents which summarise a great deal of work in school and support the governor role well.

5.2 2016-17 draft objectives: RH tabled draft objectives. Further discussion took place on some objectives as follows:

- *2.1 – implementation of marking & assessment policy:* Governors enquired about the role of parent engagement in improving standards and RH

described an international study which indicates that the key factors are effective feedback and students understanding what they need to do to progress. However these in turn also enable effective the parent engagement that will further support progress, and there are a number of ways this is happening in school.

- *3.1 - academy options:* RH reported that informal discussions are taking place with other local schools. A priority will then be to look again at the fast moving national and local landscape so that Langtree can be ready to take advantage of potential opportunities.
- *4.2 & 4.3 – attendance & exclusions for disadvantaged/SEN students:* RH explained that in each case the number of pupils is very small but there is no complacency and further ways to improve attendance and reduce exclusions for these groups will be explored.
- *5.1 - strategic capital plan:* This ties in with the need to develop good links with the parish council and other local bodies in Woodcote and surrounding villages.
- *5.2 - drama/dance studio:* There are some things we do not anticipate being able to start in the short term but it is important to retain these aspirational targets, some of which would need to run over several years.

AB joined the meeting.

6. Skills audit & 20 questions: BD presented information which had been circulated.

6.1 Skills audit: Movement is clearly in the right direction with the latest returns showing that more governors feel they have better knowledge across more aspects than previously. Finance skills which were a concern are now clearly in place following targeted recruitment in 2015, and there are now few perceived weaknesses. It was agreed that expertise is not required in all areas, and governors instead need to be able to ask the right questions and consult with experts as in the biomass project. Suggested actions were discussed:

- It was agreed to bring further skills in procurement and facilities management into the next round of governor recruiting.
- Local & business links: Some links are in place and steps will be taken to improve engagement with the parish council. We will also continue to liaise with other local bodies as appropriate, such as with Goring PC regarding proposed housing expansion. Business links are also strong through the Langtree Challenge sponsors but there may be more that could be done in the immediate locality.
- Knowledge of educational policy & thinking: Following some discussion it was agreed that all governors will circulate items of interest and relevant links.

6.2 20 questions: Responses identified similar issues to the skills audit, based on governors' perception of the effectiveness of the GB as a whole. It was agreed there is now ample evidence of GB effectiveness across all aspects and there is

therefore no value in simply repeating this exercise at regular intervals. Specific recommended actions will be prepared for the next meeting, based on identified needs:

Action: BD

- Investigation of external resources which will improve governor knowledge.
- More formal succession planning, including a governor job description which gives a clear indication of the time commitment required, availability being an important consideration in recruitment.
- Provision of regular governor information for the school bulletin.
- Continued development of the governor challenge and understanding of how this supports school improvement.

7. Governor business

7.1 Vacancies:

- **Parent governors:** Governors thanked DW for his input. Although there are now vacancies for two parent governors, it was agreed that consideration should be given to maintaining a good balance across the governing body. Parents are currently well-represented in the group of community governors so appointment of further specific parent governors may not be required. This will be reviewed again at the next meeting.
- **Community governor:** Governors thanked SL for all her longstanding support of the school. The vacancy will be publicised as follows:
 - Local newsletters and parish councils. **Action: TS**
 - Langtree Challenge partners and Probus Club: **Action: RH**
 - Individual contacts: **Action: All governors**
 - Information about government-funded support for governor recruitment will be circulated. **Action: HB**

7.2 Election of Chair & Vice Chair: TS and SLo confirmed their willingness to serve again and were appointed to serve as Chair and Vice Chair respectively until July 2017.

7.3 Committee deployment: Committees will be reconsidered following recruitment to current vacancies. A further member for P&C is a priority. Committee chairs were agreed as F&P – AB; C&S – TS; P&C – SLo.

7.4 Individual responsibilities: BD will retain the H&S lead. Brief job descriptions for the safeguarding and SEN governor lead roles will be prepared for the next meeting. **Action: TS**

7.5 Code of conduct: The Code, previously agreed by all governors, had been circulated and it was confirmed that no changes are required and this will remain in place for a further year.

7.6 Attendance register: The register had been circulated and will be placed on the website with other statutory governor information.

7.7 Declaration of pecuniary interests: The register of governor interests from the new policy had been circulated and the primary information to be requested from individual governors will be checked. **Action: HB**

7.8 Governor activities record: The record had been circulated. TS thanked governors for their efforts in maintaining a high profile in school activities.

8. Budget approval: The proposed budget, as discussed by F&P committee, was tabled. AB drew attention to the planned reduction in non-staffing costs and thanked Dawn Challis for her work in identifying a range of savings. It has been concluded that staff absence insurance is cost-effective, so that has been included. Governors thanked the committee and staff for all their work in preparing the recommendation and approved the budget for submission.

9. AOB: Governors joined TS in thanking RH and all staff for an excellent year in which Langtree has achieved considerable successes in all areas.

10. Next meeting: Thursday 13th October 2016, 7.00 pm.

TS thanked all governors for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 9.25 pm.

ACTIONS LIST from meeting 14 July 2016:

Minute	Action	By whom	When
2.2	Provide recommendation for online document storage.	SA	October FGB
2.2	Circulate proposed voluntary contribution letter to parents.	RH	Asap
2.2	Provide recommendation on Single Equality Policy	RH/NM	October FGB
3.2	Investigate options to provide music technician support	RH	October FGB
3.2	Circulate details of school council conference	HB	As available
3.3	Circulate school leaders selection panel information	RH	Asap
6.2	Recommend actions based on 20 questions responses.	BD	October FGB
7.1	Prepare information about community governor vacancy for local news and parish council.	TS	Asap
7.1	Publicise community governor vacancy to business partners and Probus Club.	RH	Asap
7.1	Discuss community governor vacancy with individual contacts.	All governors	Asap
7.1	Provide link to governor recruitment services.	HB	Asap
7.4	Prepare description of governor SEN and Safeguarding roles.	TS	October FGB
7.7	Define requirements for governor declarations of interest, for completion at next FGB.	HB	October FGB

Signed (Chair) Date