



PUTTING LEARNING FIRST

AN 'OUTSTANDING' SPECIALIST PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE

Ofsted 2009

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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 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 at 7.00 pm.**

**Present:**

Alan Broomhead (AB)

Val Nowell (VN)

Brian Davies (BD)

Jan Seal-Roberts (JSR)

Kevin Davies (KD)

Tracy Sedwell (TS) – Chair

Rick Holroyd (RH) (not item 1)

Mark Vitty (MV)

Sue Lea (SL)

**In attendance:** Helen Batten, Clerk

**1. Preparation for Ofsted:** Governors welcomed Bethan Owen, an Ofsted Inspector, who presented information about the new inspection format and the increasing emphasis on quality of governance. Following questions framed in a way that inspectors would use with governors, Bethan suggested the following points for further governor development:

- Improve data knowledge – be familiar with the Data Dashboard, particularly performance against key indicators and any gaps; look at producing a single-page of key data points for governors; consider establishing a governors' Data Group to take responsibility for drilling into data in more detail and developing understanding and confidence to discuss with inspectors.
- Develop role in target-setting – Review and challenge will be a supportive process for the Head.
- External validation of targets and progress – This will support information provided by the school.
- Website compliance – Ensure that all statutory information is present and up to date.

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Signed ..... (Chair) Date .....

- School Improvement Plan – Ensure this includes governor monitoring and challenge, possibly against pre-agreed milestones, and evidence of impact.
- Governance challenge – In a stand-alone academy the governing body does not report to a higher authority; another layer of challenge will support stronger governance.
- Head’s appraisal – External advice is recommended to ensure appropriate targets.
- Self-evaluation – Governors need to take ownership of the SEF to understand how the school measures up against Ofsted requirements, and to follow progress as the SEF evolves over the year.
- Safeguarding – Governors must understand safeguarding responsibilities and how the school meets these, and be satisfied that all required actions and information are complete and up to date. The lead governor should scrutinise the single central record at the start of the year and report other safeguarding monitoring into FGB regularly.
- Evidence of progress – Inspection will now focus more on evidence in books so governors need to ensure they see and understand this by requesting updates on various aspects such as marking & feedback, presentation of work, handwriting.
- Capital works or financial management are unlikely to be the focus of rigorous questioning by inspectors although they will be aware of any major concerns in advance from the EFA and other issues should be raised as appropriate.

Bethan will provide some further written feedback.

Governors thanked Bethan for her attendance and she left the meeting.

Main business commenced at 8.30 pm.

## 2. Absent governors

- Apologies were received and accepted from Sarah Loveland, Neil McIntosh, Robin Peirce and Jules Varnham.
- In discussion it was agreed that the governing body needs to provide strong support and challenge and that all individuals need to be fully engaged and active through attending meetings, training and other events and in responding to correspondence as required. Poor attendance and engagement is currently weakening governance and that these concerns will be raised with individuals as appropriate. **Action: TS**

## 3. Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015: Minutes which had been circulated were agreed to be an accurate record and signed by TS for filing in school.

**4. Review of Actions/matters arising:** Unless noted below all agreed actions had been covered.

**4.1 Staff governor vacancy** (item 3.3): Recruitment ongoing. It was noted that this is now a priority to maintain a strong balance between different categories of governors.

**4.2 Code of Conduct** (item 8.4): Outstanding returns will be followed up. Governors were reminded to sign and return the Code promptly. **Action: Clerk**

**4.3 Declaration of interests** (item 8.5): No declarations of interest were made in respect of any current agenda item. Information was provided by all present to update the register, to be completed also with absent governors. **Action: Clerk**

**4.4 Governor activities** (item 9.3): Governors were reminded again to provide details of any training or events attended to the Clerk. **Action: All governors**

## 5. Exam results

- Due to lack of time prepared slides would be circulated with the minutes and RH provided headline information verbally: Results compare well both locally and nationally and outcomes against all indicators are pleasing. 5 A\*-C including English and Maths was 72%, against the Fischer Family Trust 'D' target of 71%. This is lower than in 2014 due to a slightly weaker cohort, but the results show better progress from lower starting points. A/A\* performance fell slightly in line with the different cohort. EBacc was slightly reduced in line with lower language performance. There was a significant gender gap due to a high number of boys in the cohort, with lower achievement since Y7. In contrast the girls in this cohort generally did very well. 50% of Pupil Premium students achieved 5 A\*-C EM, following a 38% prediction. Unusually one student achieved English and Maths but not 5 passes, which would have made the figure 56%.
- Priority areas for improvement have been included in the School Improvement Plan, and are as follows:
  - Gender gap: Although peculiar to this cohort and not a trend, the performance of boys against girls will be monitored closely.
  - A/A\*: Team leaders have been challenged to look at this in department planning, with a view to raising A/A\* achievement to 36% of all grades in 2016.
  - Modern Foreign Languages: A department action plan is in place to address some identified areas of weakness.
- Governors congratulated all staff and students on the strong performance this year.
- Curriculum committee will examine results in more detail, including consideration of a governors' data group. **Action: TS/committee agenda**

- Exam results information will be circulated. It was also agreed that a single sheet of headlines will be prepared for governors as suggested by Bethan Owen, including some narrative to place data in context. **Action: RH**

## 6. School Improvement Plan

- The SIP, updated to include exam results, had been circulated. RH explained that green shading shows the areas already achieved. A colour-coded update will be circulated before each FGB.
- Governors enquired about the use of milestones in monitoring activities and RH explained that this approach is unlikely to be practical for some activities since it will not be clear whether they have been successful until the end of the year. However updates will be provided regularly to show that activities are on track.
- Committees will maintain an overview of the SIP sections as previously agreed, with Curriculum & Standards focussing on priorities 1 and 2, Pastoral & Community on priority 4, and Finance on priorities 3 and 5.

## 7. Committee updates

**7.1 Terms of reference:** ToR for Curriculum & Standards and Pastoral & Community, which had been reviewed and circulated, were agreed. Work is ongoing to update Finance ToR in line with the latest financial procedures.

**7.2 Finance & General Purposes:** Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> September had been circulated. AB noted that the budget outcome is currently awaited. The HT report contains an update on the biomass boiler installation. There were no further queries.

**7.3 Pastoral & Community:** Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> September had been circulated. It was clarified that the Staff Absence policy will be reviewed by F&GP committee and that any significant issues will be raised via the HT report.

**7.4 Curriculum & Standards:** Minutes of 29<sup>th</sup> September had been circulated.

- It was confirmed that planned trips will be presented for governor approval via the HT report. **Action: RH**
- Governors noted that statutory information on PP spending and outcomes is not currently on the website. RH reported that this may be due to a recent technical issue and will be investigated. **Action: RH**

**8. Headteacher's report:** A report had been circulated and was discussed as follows:

**8.1 Absence:** Governors asked for further information about activities to reduce unauthorised absence. RH explained that this refers to following up enquiries

with parents to ensure that missing information is received. Some absence currently unauthorised can then be recorded as authorised.

**8.2 Number on roll:** Governors enquired if there have been any issues connected to the larger Y7 intake. RH confirmed that some practical actions have been taken to ensure the best accommodation and provision. The school has adjusted well to the change and there are no identified concerns.

**8.3 Safeguarding:** It was agreed that TS will take on governor responsibility for safeguarding monitoring. A review of the single central record will be completed and reported to the next meeting. **Action: TS**  
RH and Mary Taylor-Lane have completed safer recruitment training.

**8.4 Online information:** RH drew attention to data for governors available on line, which endorses the information provided through school.

## 9. Governor Open Morning

- TS thanked RH and all staff for their work in making this an informative and enjoyable morning, and those governors who attended. However a minimum number is required to be viable and it may be useful to review arrangements.
- Feedback from the student panel had been circulated. RH explained that where possible actions have been taken to address the issues raised and the school will be reporting progress back to students. However some concerns may stem from misunderstandings or relate to things that cannot be changed.
  - Homework: In response to students' concerns that overnight homework setting is sometimes unmanageable governors agreed that 48 hour targets and a clear timetable for homework would be beneficial. MV confirmed that homework scheduling does not present a significant problem although there may be individual specific concerns from time to time. Teachers are regularly reminded about expectations.
  - Classroom behaviour: Governors agreed it is pleasing that students are concerned to maintain high standards of classroom behaviour. However, although not a general problem, those students who raised concerns about low-level disruption felt strongly that this a problem in a small number of lessons. RH confirmed that there are some known issues which are being addressed, and also explained the purpose of seating plans to support learning which may not always be obvious to students. In response to questioning RH confirmed that although it cannot be guaranteed that no students will complain about classroom behaviour in future, he is confident that the actions being taken will reduce the perception that some behaviour is hindering learning. RH also confirmed that students are aware they can raise this sort of

concern in school and he considers they would have confidence to do this. Reports of classroom disturbance are not routinely received and there is very little need for the SLT on-call system.

**10. Governing body administration**

**10.1 Election of Vice Chair:** SL had confirmed she would be able to take the role of Vice Chair and was duly appointed, to serve until July 2016. It was agreed that KD can also provide additional support to the Chair if required.

**10.2 New governors:** Following an appeal to parents and meetings with prospective candidates, details of potential new governors had been circulated. It was agreed that David Warren will be appointed as a parent director, and that Sue Ambler, Regina Grosier and Dennis Rocks will be appointed as directors with immediate effect. This decision and committee deployment will be confirmed with the new governors. **Action: TS**

**10.3 Delegation planner:** The planner was approved without amendments.

**11. AOB:** None.

**12. Next meeting:** Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015, 7.00 pm.

TS thanked all governors for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 10.25 pm.

**ACTIONS LIST from meeting 15 October 2015:**

Minute	Action	By whom	When
2	Raise concerns about attendance with individual governors.	TS	asap
4.2	Follow up Code of Conduct with governors who have not signed and returned the document.	HB	asap
4.3	Complete register of interests with absent governors and provide information to school.	HB	asap
4.4	Provide details to Clerk of training and events attended.	All	ongoing
5	C&S committee to examine results in more detail; consider formation of dedicated data group.	TS/VN	November committee
5	Circulate results information; prepare single sheet key points and contextual narrative	RH	asap
7.4	Provide information about trips in next HT report.	RH	December FGB
7.4	Check presence of Pupil Premium spending and outcomes statement on website.	RH	asap
8.3	Review single central record and report to governors	TS	Visit asap, report to December FGB
10.2	Confirm appointment of new governors.	TS	asap

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Signed ..... (Chair)      Date .....