



MINUTES of a Meeting of the Directors of the Academy Trust, held at Langtree School, Woodcote, RG8 0RA on Thursday 12th October 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Sue Ambler (SA)
Geoff Braham (GB)
Alan Broomhead (AB)
Jesse Cleverly (JC)
Ken Coveney (KC)
Vicki Hamilton (VH)

Rick Holroyd (RH)
Neil McDonald (NM)
Val Nowell (VN)
Jan Seal-Robers (JSR) – Chair
Dennis Rocks (DR)
Graham Webber (GW)

In attendance:

Simon Bamford (SB) – Deputy Head
Helen Batten (HB) – Clerk

Quorum confirmed.

Governor challenge is shown in red

1. Introduction

- Apologies were received and accepted from Will Bromage, Regina Grosier, Antony Ketteridge and Mark Vitty.
- JSR welcomed everybody to the meeting and acknowledged the assistance that she has received from Tracy Sedwell over the summer regarding handover of the Chair.
- JSR introduced KC who was interested in joining the governing body. This proposal had been previously put to governors and KC provided some additional information about his skills.
- No items of AOB notified.
- No governor declared a material interest in any agenda item.

- 2. Appointment of Community Governor:** KC withdrew from the meeting. Following previous general agreement, the recommendation for the appointment of KC with immediate effect was agreed by governors and formally agreed by Members of the Trust (AB, NM, JSR). On returning KC was given this decision and formally welcomed to the governing body.

Langtree School, Woodcote, Reading, Berkshire RG8 0RA

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Headteacher: Mr R Holroyd B.A. M.A. Deputy Headteacher: Mr S Bamford Assistant Headteacher: Ms S Burman

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3. ATB Meeting, 13 July 2017

3.1 Minutes had been circulated, and were agreed to be an accurate record and signed by JSR for filing in school.

3.2 Review of Actions/matters arising: Unless noted below, all agreed actions were complete or covered by the current agenda.

- **Exclusions policy** (item 3.2): Policy will be circulated for information. **Action: RH**
- **Parent database** (item 5.2): RH confirmed his view that this is a strong and useful idea, which will be of benefit to the school. P&C will continue discussion and provide a recommendation to the December FGB. **Action: VH - P&C agenda**
- **Student planner** (item 5.3): The new planner is in use and will be circulated for information. **Action: RH**
- **Standard operating procedures (SOP)** (item 5.3): RH explained that this work flowed from concerns about consistency and communication identified by the staff survey. The September inset included work with staff, and production of a series of single-sheet SOPs is now in hand. Staff appreciate this response to their concerns and the practical impact of SOPs will be assessed going forward. SOPs will also inform wider reviews of why and how we do things. Example SOPs will be circulated for information. **Action: RH**
- **Exit interviews** (item 6.3): NM and GW interviewed six staff members in July and reported that this was a useful process. Key points arising will be provided to RH and JSR to decide next action. **Action: NM, GW**
- **Staff survey feedback** (item 6.4): MV has notified that all reasonable steps have been taken to include non-union staff in survey feedback discussions, and it was agreed that no further action is required. Surveys for all stakeholder groups (staff, parents, students) will be repeated later in the school year, probably in March 2018.
- **P&C committee** (item 8.1): It was agreed SA will transfer from C&S and that DR will transfer from F&P to join P&C Committee. Committee Chairs thanked both for their previous work.
- **Governor visits** (item 8.6): It was agreed that in case of an emergency the presence of another book in reception may cause confusion, so a sign-in book for governors will not be introduced. A useful future task will be to extract governor information from the main book to maintain a clear narrative of governor activities.

4. Committee reports

4.1 Finance & General Purposes: Minutes of 21st September had been circulated.

- **Biomass boiler:** RH updated re ongoing enquiries, for which a response from the consultant is awaited.
- **Risk register:** The risk register had been circulated. AB explained that there are no risks rated higher than 3 which shows that we consider everything is well controlled, although the impact of some of these potential events is assessed at 5 and would be extremely serious. Annual review of the register ensures that all aspects are considered. *What are the outcomes of the review?* AB explained that

the review is intended to identify any control procedures that need adjusting. *How can we maintain an overview of things which depend on policies and procedures being followed in school?* These activities in school are operational and the GB has evidence-based knowledge that the school is being managed effectively.

- **Budget:** *Clarification of staff development spending was sought.* AB and RH explained that financial constraint has necessitated a reduction in staff training spending in recent years. While the minimal underspend is not completely clear, this item shows that with careful monitoring we are spending to budget.
- **Catering contract:** RH reported that the new Aspens contract has been agreed in principle, subject to the clarification of some minor points. The new cashless catering system will be a great improvement.

Can governors view the student food survey results? RH confirmed that this information will be made available to governors. **Action: RH**

Were nutritional standards specified in contract discussions? All companies considered are fully compliant with current government guidelines on food in schools. *Will the cashless system still enable us to provide food for students who for whatever reason are without credit at any time?* We will continue to help as appropriate to ensure that everyone is adequately fed in school.

4.2 Curriculum & Standards: Minutes of 27th September had been circulated.

- **Sex Education policy:** It was agreed to move this responsibility from C&S to P&C committee.
- **Health & safety concern:** The green felt by the bike sheds has been made safe.
- **Subject leader presentations:** VN reported that going forward a standard invitation would be sent to the subject leaders asked to attend the meeting, encouraging them to share their high points and any concerns, as well as their aspirations – both under the current financial situation and also if there were no spending restrictions. It was also agreed to ask a standard set of questions based around SDP priorities.

4.3 Pastoral & Community: Minutes of 10th October had been circulated.

- **Website:** VH will arrange to review website compliance with Mary Taylor-Lane. The rationale for a wider review of the purpose and content of the website was also discussed and it was acknowledged that this would be a larger piece of work than could be undertaken within a single committee.
- **Safer recruitment:** RH and Mary Taylor-Lane have safer recruitment training. GW has completed this in the past and will check and refresh if/as necessary. **Action: GW**
- **Policies:** It was clarified that all school policies should name a role rather than an individual, and it may be assumed that the necessary post-holder information is available in school. Final versions of reviewed policies will be circulated before the next meeting. **Action: VH**

4.4 Policy review schedule: The updated list had been circulated. Committees will be responsible for ensuring that reviews are completed in a timely way as required. This work will be scheduled into each committee's plan for the year and committee chairs will ensure that requests are made to the school in good time (Mary Taylor-Lane). The review cycle will include looking at all policies currently listed and making recommendations on any considered no longer necessary or that can be combined – but otherwise it should be assumed that all policies are to be retained.

5. Head's report: Governors discussed the circulated report.

5.1 New funding: Governors were concerned by implications of the anticipated funding changes. It was noted that Langtree, in line with other similarly low-funded schools, is not anticipated to gain from the new arrangements, especially once the recently agreed pay awards are taken into account and that the same differentials are being preserved which therefore will not make things any fairer!

5.2 Open events: RH reported a well-attended and positive open evening, which show-cased the school extremely well. Governors who attended agreed that the evening was very successful, with some excellent parent feedback.

5.3 Student number: The open events have helped to maintain our high profile but maintaining student numbers is crucial. Governors suggested that strategic 'blue sky' discussion at some point on the 'right' size for the school and potential expansion would be useful.

6. GCSE results

- RH and SB talked governors through the information presented on a series of slides: The 2017 cohort was slightly weaker than the previous one, but results were in line with or above school targets and these students made similar amounts of progress. English was particularly strong. Maths was less strong in comparison but still very good. These subjects show the success of work put in over the past few years. We are still working to close the Pupil Premium gap. This year students with low prior attainment generally made progress in line with expectations and in some cases made better progress than their higher-attaining peers.
- *How will we publicise this good news?* A press release showing how PP results contradicted Ofsted comments has been distributed and the *Henley Standard* will be visiting the school shortly to discuss these aspects further.
- *Is the progress of high prior attaining students a concern?* SB clarified that this group has made less progress than expected, however in terms of averages, if some had been expected to achieve the top grade it would not have been possible for them to achieve this.
- *Were any results challenged?* About 20 grade queries resulted in around 8 upgrades. This included only one each for English and Maths so it did not have a great impact on our headlines although it was extremely pleasing for the students involved.

- *Was the EBacc performance disappointing?* Performance in some areas, such as MFL, was a little disappointing but we can review the subjects offered if it will help educationally. We know where further work is needed and current improvement strategies will continue.
- *Will information about the new grading be provided to parents in reports?* There is a useful DfE guidance leaflet and we can include this with reports.
- *Has the change in exams favoured boys?* The attainment gap has reduced to 6 percentage points which shows excellent progress. The new system is likely to favour many boys but that is not the whole explanation as this cohort did have coursework in some subjects. Next year will be different again. It is also vital to ensure that while boys' performance improves, girls' does not dip and we will continue to look at how we can make sure that no one is left behind.
- Governors thanked RH, staff and students for their hard work which brought such a great set of results. They were also delighted to note the letter received from one leaver, expressing appreciation for all that the school had done.

7. **School Improvement Plan:** The draft SIP had been circulated.

- RH explained that all departments have benefited from the high-quality strategic planning involved. Detailed department plans link into the SIP and it would be helpful for C&S committee to look at these discussions with staff.
- Committees will review the relevant parts of the SIP regularly and the GB as a whole will look at progress in more detail in terms 2 and 3.
- It was agreed that a working party led by DR with AB, NM, JSR (if available) and GW will consider an SDP section on governor development (especially in the light of the recent Ofsted feedback) and prepare a recommendation for the December meeting. **Action: DR**
- The self-evaluation links into the SIP and will also be circulated for information. **Action: RH**

8. **Governing body**

8.1 Staff governor: MV has been re-elected to serve a further term. A non-teaching staff governor would also be desirable and enquires are ongoing. **Action: RH**

8.2 Attendance & training: JSR emphasised the importance of maintaining high meeting attendance so that governors are visible, informed and able to provide effective support to the school. Induction training will be arranged for KC and JC. **Action: JSR**

8.3 GB structure: JSR recommended future discussion on an agreed optimum GB operating size and structure within the stipulations of the Trust. The existence and category of vacancies would then be clearer.

8.4 Governor panels: It was confirmed that special governor panels are convened only as necessary in order to consider school decisions such as exclusions, complaints or staffing issues, and that the composition of such panels will always depend on governor availability and the circumstances concerned (eg to avoid possible conflicts of interest or issues of impartiality).

8.4 Governor mornings: Potential dates in November will be circulated. **Action: RH**

9. AOB: Drama Studio: JC reported that a series of investigations have been initiated to look again at the creation of a drama studio. When further information is available some alternatives to deliver a feasible scheme over the next few years will be prepared for discussion. The project would involve a lot of additional work but would be an opportunity to make a real difference to the school. Governors thanked JC for all his work on this and endorsed the decision to continue investigative work for further discussion.

10. Next meeting: Thursday 7th December 2017, 7.00 pm.

JSR thanked all governors and closed the meeting at 9.30 pm.

ACTIONS LIST from FGB meeting, 12th October 2017:

Minute	Action	By whom	When
3.2	Circulate Exclusions policy	RH	December FGB
3.2	Progress development of database of parent skills.	P&C committee	November committee meeting
3.2	Circulate new student planner.	RH	December FGB
3.2	Circulate example standard operating procedures.	RH	December FGB
3.2	Provide feedback from staff exit interviews to RH and JSR.	NM, GW	December FGB
4.1	Circulate food survey results.	RH	December FGB
4.3	Check safer recruitment training & refresh if necessary.	GW	December FGB
4.3	Circulate Safeguarding and Whistleblowing policy recommendations for approval.	VH	December FGB
7	Convene working party to consider governor development section for School Improvement Plan, and report to FGB.	DR	December FGB
7	Circulate SEF (self-evaluation)	RH	ASAP
8.1	Continue enquiries to appoint a non-teaching staff governor.	RH	Ongoing
8.4	Circulate suggested dates for governor morning.	RH	ASAP

