

MEETING OF THE LOCAL ACADEMY COMMITTEE

Monday 13 November 2023, 6:02pm – 8:03pm

MINUTES

Constitution and Attendance:

Headteacher (1)	LAC Members (11)
Christian Kingsley Headteacher	Judi Dumont-Barter Chair
	Jehangir Byramji Vice Chair
	Mo Asif LAC member
	Jo Davies LAC member
	Alex Dixey LAC member
	Sarah Guerra LAC member
	Lucinda Merritt LAC member (staff)
	Danielle Morley LAC member (elected parent)
	Emma Oliver LAC member
	Jacques Szemalikowski LAC member
	Conrad Withey LAC member

Apologies: **Mo Asif** **Sarah Guerra** **Jacques Szemalikowski**

Absent without apologies: **Lucinda Merritt**

Also in attendance:

Louise Hake	Governance Professional
Duncan Holding	Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)
James Wildman	Assistant Headteacher (Safeguarding)
Violeta Fabiani	Deputy Headteacher (Professional Development) <i>(present for agenda item 1 only)</i>
Charlotte Robinson	Assistant Headteacher (Curriculum) <i>(present for agenda item 1 only)</i>

Papers issued for review:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minutes of the previous meeting & status of actions ● Priorities for CGA LAC ● School Improvement Plan (SIP) ● CGA Self-evaluation Form (SEF) ● Headteacher's Report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Website Checklist ● Chair's Group Draft Minutes ● WLT Governance Bulletin 20.10.23 ● SCR Monitoring Checklist ● CGA Admissions Policy 2025/26 ● CGA Attendance & Punctuality Policy |
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BUSINESS	ACTION
<p>1. ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – Part 1</p>	
<p>i. Presentation: Embedding Literacy Strategies to Support Learners – Reading & Vocabulary</p> <p>Two members of the Senior Leadership Team attended the meeting to deliver an insightful presentation regarding Chestnut Grove Academy’s literacy strategy. It was explained that, nationally, reading standards had not improved post-pandemic, and that Ofsted had requested a ‘more rigorous’ approach to raising reading standards in schools. It has been reported that high reading competence in children can transcend social disadvantages, especially as a result of early intervention.</p> <p>The Deputy Headteacher (DHT) outlined five strategies that CGA had employed to improve literacy in Key Stages 2 and 3:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment of all pupils at their transition to secondary school so that interventions can be introduced as soon as possible. 2. Recognition that beginner readers can be any age: some children still needed to catch-up with their literacy in KS3. 3. The role of the Literacy Lead to upskill all staff so that they have knowledge of phonics and can teach children how to read. 4. Appropriate-level texts to be chosen in all subjects. 5. Development of reading for pleasure (in library time). <p>A LAC member wanted to probe the early assessment of pupils and queried, Q: Do you receive information from primary schools regarding each pupil’s reading level? A (DHT): <i>It depends on the school – we sometimes get this information. But we implement a rigorous set of tests in Year 7 so that we have a good picture of all pupils’ starting points. We want to start appropriate interventions as soon as possible.</i></p> <p>Another LAC member wanted to question choice of books, Q: What do you mean by ‘appropriate-level’ texts? A (DHT): <i>It is a balance: some pupils need challenge in their reading, and other pupils who are struggling need their texts to be accessible so that they can understand the subject matter – whether History or Science or English. We need to remove the reading barrier in all their studies.</i></p> <p>The Assistant Headteacher (AHT) explained that vocabulary and de-coding were the two skills needed to read. She outlined the three interventions that CGA offered: (1) Code sessions (learning to spell by looking at word morphology); (2) Accelerated Reader sessions (choosing books linked to reading levels); and (3) Reading Plus sessions (using computer programmes to aid fluency).</p> <p>A LAC member questioned how these interventions were timetabled, Q: If pupils are attending extra reading interventions, are they missing other lessons? A (DHT): <i>All pupils have extended tutor time and timetabled library time to develop their reading skills. The intervention groups require an extra 1.5hr/week and so these pupils are being pulled out of their timetabled classes. However, we rotate the timetable so that a</i></p>	



	<p><i>pupil is not missing the same lesson every week. Staff have been supportive of this, because improving reading is so crucial for all subjects.</i></p> <p>The presentation concluded with a summary of the successes in implementing the literary strategy (e.g., it was fully resourced, teachers had been trained, timetables had been altered, and testing was accurate), as well as the issues faced (e.g., limited classroom space for the interventions, explaining to students why the intervention was needed, and communication with teachers concerning missed lessons). Further actions to support the success of the strategy were reported as the employment of a specialist phonics teacher, better communication with parents and staff, and monitoring attendance more closely.</p> <p>Questions were invited from LAC members, and were tabled as follows:</p> <p>Q: How can you make reading more attractive to pupils? <i>A (DHT): We have used modern techniques, such as rapping, to draw pupils in. Diversity in the books on offer is also important. We have workshops with authors, books clubs, and we encourage staff to lead by example, and share their reads in ‘book of the week’.</i></p> <p>Q: How has all this information about the literary strategy and the interventions been fed back to parents? <i>A (AHT): We have held coffee mornings for all parents, and individual parents have been told if their child requires an intervention. A suggestion was tabled by LAC members that a YouTube video explaining the strategy might be a good idea. The Senior Leadership Team agreed that an explanatory email to all parents would be sent out.</i></p> <p>Q: As a parent, I notice how my child struggles with his attention span – how can you persuade children to stick with the book until the end? <i>A (AHT): The Reading Plus computer programme has a quiz that pupils can only answer if they have read the entire book.</i></p> <p>Q: How much have you had to upskill current staff to be able to teach literacy skills? <i>A (DHT): Tutors have been trained for the tutor time discussions, but we needed to employ a full-time specialist for the specific interventions, and so a new member of staff has just started.</i></p> <p>As an extension of the Little Wandle Phonics scheme, the Headteacher remarked that this literacy strategy work at CGA was pioneering. The LAC members thanked the DHT and the AHT for their time and declared that they were keen to <u>ACTION: receive an update and evaluation towards the end of the academic year.</u></p>	CK
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2.	COMMITTEE BUSINESS	
i.	<p>Welcome and apologies for absence</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting of the Chestnut Grove Local Academy Committee.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received in advance and accepted at the meeting, as outlined above.</p>	

Absence without apology was noted and recorded.

ii. Declarations of interest

When asked by the Chair, all LAC members confirmed there were no conflicts of interest related to the meeting. The Chair reminded all LAC members who had not yet done so, to **(ACTION:) complete their annual declaration of interests** so that the Trust could ensure compliance for audit.

All

iii. Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions

The minutes of the previous meeting held 25 September 2023 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 5a from the previous minutes regarding a breakdown of pupils taking part in Duke of Edinburgh (in particular the cohort from black ethnic minority backgrounds and Disadvantaged groups): the Headteacher explained that applications to take part in this offering had only just closed, and so he was now able to examine the final list of participants to analyse this data. He took an **ACTION: to report this data at the next LAC meeting.**

CK

Action 5b from the previous minutes regarding updating the Governance section of the CGA website: the Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to continue with this task and chase the final outstanding Governor Biography.**

LH

Action 7 from the previous minutes regarding examining the reasons behind the escalation of complaints: the Chair reported that she had diarised a meeting with the Head of Governance and will **(ACTION:) report back at the next meeting.**

JDB

Action 8 from the previous minutes regarding an update on Arbor installation will be **(ACTION:) carried forward to the Spring term.**

CK

iv. Appointments, vacancies, and succession planning

The current Vice Chair confirmed that, following his resignation, this was his last Local Committee meeting. The Chair thanked him for his hard work and insight and wished him well in his new role as Trustee at The Wandle Learning Trust.

Nominations had been invited for the position of Vice Chair, but none had been received. The Chair voiced her concern that the additional workload might be a barrier to applications, and so she declared that the position could be filled with two members in a co-share. The Chair took an **ACTION: to invite nominations for this role via email,** with a view to the role being filled by January 2024.

JDB

The Chair reported that the Finance link role would not be recruited upon the Vice Chair's departure. She explained that financial oversight for the LAC could be achieved by including the monthly management account summaries issued by the Trust for

<p>v.</p>	<p>information and the fundraiser impact report in the Headteacher's Report, as included in the Report for this meeting.</p> <p>Governance training</p> <p>The Governance Professional reported that dates for Trust-wide workshops had been confirmed for this term, and she requested that LAC members reply to the invites so that organisers could know attendee numbers. She also reminded LAC members to make full use of the training resources available on the NGA website. A new LAC member suggested that this resource should be more clearly signposted in the induction material.</p>	
<p>vi.</p>	<p>Governance communication</p> <p>When asked for feedback, LAC members reported that they found the Governance Weekly Bulletin to be very useful, especially the list of key dates. To improve the communication, members suggested that perhaps the Bulletin could be shorter (one page only) and could be distributed bi-weekly. The Governance Professional took an <u>ACTION: to relay this feedback to the Head of Governance.</u></p>	<p>LH</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>ACADEMY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – Part 2</p>	
<p>i.</p>	<p>Review of strategic priorities and their intended impact</p> <p>The Chair referred to her Priorities document, and summarised the LAC priorities as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To monitor the new pedagogic approach with a book look/Deep Drive into a specific curriculum subject (as yet to be decided). 2. The Chair to attend a HoD (Head of Department) planning session, and to report back to the LAC. 3. To track the new literacy strategy with an evaluation in the summer term. It was also noted that LAC members were invited to attend an intervention session in the school. 4. To monitor disadvantaged/SEND access to the wider curriculum, as well as to assess progress and attainment gaps (as compared to not disadvantaged/SEND). 5. To challenge and support the school with its updated attendance policy. It was noted that attendance is a key priority for the school because, although CGA are above national average attendance figures, there was still a need for improvement post-pandemic. The Headteacher suggested that LAC members should follow an individual pupil's journey through attendance sanctions and interventions to assess the effectiveness of CGA's strategies. 6. To examine stakeholder engagement, both with the use of Arbor data and with parent questionnaires. A discussion ensued regarding whether it was useful for a LAC member to attend a Friends of Chestnut Grove [PTA] meeting, but it was concluded that a more effective strategy to garner parental views was for LAC members to attend Parent Evenings. 	

7. To hold interviews with the (approx.) 15 ECTs (early career teachers) in order to track their development in the role, and their views on classroom behaviour, workload, and wellbeing. What support have they received and what challenges have they faced?
8. To examine parent complaints to the school, and discuss how best to prevent complaint escalation.
9. To continue race conversations and to analyse CGA's anti-racism approaches.

ii. Headteacher's Report

The Headteacher highlighted some important themes from his Report:

Students on roll and off-rolled: The Headteacher noted that the roll of students had again increased this year, and that this was testament to CGA's reputation as a successful school. He shared that the roll would only increase for one more year before it reached a plateau. He also pointed out that the main reason for students to be off-rolled was movement to another area of the UK (a trend which has continued post-pandemic).

Attendance: The Headteacher pointed out that the gap between attendance figures for FSM (free school meal) students and not FSM students was significant. The Chair noted that attendance was on the LAC priority list for investigation, and that an FSM student could be chosen for the case study.

Finances: Although the accounts showed a current overspend, the Headteacher declared that he was not unduly concerned because he had the rest of the academic year to balance the budget. A LAC member tabled a finance-related query, **Q: Could you tell me more about the purpose and role of Hardship Funds, which you say you are considering introducing at CGA?** *A (HT): The bottom line is that the school never has enough funds, and the cost-of-living crisis has amplified financial shortages for families. Although CGA does have a growing number of affluent parents, one quarter of our intake are from disadvantaged backgrounds. For instance, the price of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme has increased significantly, and although we have used some pupil premium money to finance some students, I know other students could not sign up for this offering due to financial constraints. With the Hardship Fund, I want to explore how it might be possible to address this gap in uptake of extracurricular activities, so that more disadvantaged students are able to participate more fully in all aspects of school life.*

Finally, the Headteacher pointed out the list of Key Dates (on p.7) when the LAC were invited to visit the school. These opportunities would be useful in garnering parental engagement and opinion.

In order to keep to time for the meeting, the Headteacher invited questions from the LAC to be sent via email, and the Governance Professional took an **ACTION: to collate all emailed LAC queries and forward to the Headteacher for answer.**

LH

4.	REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION	
i.	<p>People & Wellbeing links meeting</p> <p>The link governor responsible for this area reported that the following areas were examined at the People & Wellbeing links meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parent questionnaire was being discussed at Trust level so that it could be standardised across all Trust schools. It was intended that there would be five questions related to the Trust, and 15 questions would be focused on CGA. • The Trust had concluded that the latest Trust-wide staff wellbeing survey, managed by an outside provider, had lacked focus, and that the Trust intended to manage the staff wellbeing survey for the coming year. • It was felt that there was a general lack of clarity regarding the probationary procedure for new staff, and that this needed further exploration. The Deputy Headteacher agreed to <u>ACTION: provide more information regarding this onboarding procedure to the link governor.</u> • In order to raise the profile of the LAC with all staff, it was decided that LAC member(s) would be welcome to attend at the end of the next CGA staff meeting so that they could pass on thanks for staff commitment and exam result success. • It was reported that the CGA Careers Fair had confirmed a wide variety of participants and that involvement from local businesses was strong. 	DH
ii.	<p>SEND/EDI links meeting</p> <p>The Chair thanked Alex Dixey for attending the SEND/EDI links meeting in place of the CGA link member, who was unable to attend. It was acknowledged that the SEND/EDI monitoring visit for CGA had yet to take place this term. The LAC members noted that data gathering for SEND pupils was easier to obtain than tracking data for EDI strategies.</p>	
iii.	<p>Website audit</p> <p>This had been completed by a LAC member and it was reported that the school was working on updating the CGA website, taking into account all its recommendations.</p>	

5.	REPORTS FOR NOTING	
i.	<p>Chairs Group</p> <p>The minutes from the Meeting of the Chairs' Group Committee were acknowledged to be insightful for LAC members, as they contained Trust-wide information.</p>	
ii.	<p>Safeguarding/SCR monitoring</p> <p>No issues were reported in the checking of the Single Central Record.</p>	

6.	POLICIES, REVIEWS, AUDITS	
i.	<p>Behaviour for Learning Policy</p> <p>In the last meeting, the LAC had requested that this Policy be revisited by the CGA leadership with a view to adding more clarity in Appendix 8 (Reasonable Adjustments). It was felt that some examples of the different scenarios would be useful, and it was agreed that an amended Policy would be brought before the next LAC meeting. However, the Headteacher revealed that adding some scenarios would be counter-productive because not all scenarios could be covered, and thus the Policy might be misleading and too constricting in its approach. He proposed to add a more general statement to the school website reiterating that the school would act under the Headteacher's discretion, with due regard to EDI policies. The LAC agreed that this was a sensible approach, and the Policy was therefore accepted and will be finalised on the CGA website.</p>	
ii.	<p>Provider Access Policy (CEIAG)</p> <p>This Policy was accepted by the LAC with no queries and will be finalised on the CGA website.</p>	
iii.	<p>CGA Admissions Policy 2025/26</p> <p>This Policy was accepted by the LAC with no queries and will be finalised on the CGA website.</p>	
iv.	<p>Attendance & Punctuality Policy</p> <p>The Deputy Headteacher confirmed that the changes made to this Policy were mainly adding clarity to the language and adding new and additional staff members. The LAC had no further queries, and the Policy was accepted and will be finalised on the CGA website.</p>	

7.	EVALUATION OF IMPACT	
i.	<p>Summary report to the Trust Board</p> <p>The Academy Committee was asked to reflect on the impact of discussion on school improvement and to matters for reporting to the Trust Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chestnut Grove Academy is undertaking pioneering work to improve reading levels. • Pupil numbers have again increased which puts more pressure on finances and resources (e.g., the high demand for time on the astro pitches). • Lack of funding for extracurricular activities. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at CGA is above the national average, although room for improvement is still acknowledged. The LAC have finalised a list of priorities for the academic year ahead. <p>The Chair noted each point and took an <u>ACTION: to prepare and submit the summary report to the Trust Board by 01 Dec 2023.</u></p>	JDB
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ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
	<p>A LAC member requested more information regarding how teachers at CGA were addressing the Israel–Palestine conflict. The Headteacher reported that he had reminded all teachers to be sensitive towards this issue, and not to share any personal views. Some staff disclosed that they did not feel comfortable having any conversations about this subject in class. Consequently, class became a safe space. For pupils who wish to explore this subject further, there have been workshops which have dealt with the facts and have had a humanitarian emphasis. In addition, the subject has been covered in assemblies and in the Religious Education lessons for older pupils.</p>	

IMPORTANT DATES		
WLT workshop: High quality inclusive education	Mon 20 November, 6–8pm	Teams
Learning Walk: High quality inclusive education	Thurs 7 December, 10 – 11.30am	CGA
Winter Concert	Tues 19 December	CGA
Y11 Parents' Evening	Wed 17 January, 3–6pm	CGA
Local Academy Committee	Mon 29 January, 6–8pm	CGA
WLT Community Forum	09 May 2024: 5.30–7.30pm	CGA

Signed: 

Date: 2/2/2024

Summary of Actions: CGA LAC Meeting: 13/11/23

Action No	Item No	Action	Responsible	Timescale
1.	1.i	CGA literacy strategy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To update and evaluate in the summer term. 	CK	Summer Term
2.	2.ii	Declarations of interest: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete the annual declaration of interests form. 	All	Priority
3.	2.iii	Minutes of the previous meeting and status of actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To include data regarding a breakdown of pupils taking part in Duke of Edinburgh, in particular the cohort from black ethnic minority backgrounds and Disadvantaged pupils. To continue to update the Governance section of the CGA website and to chase the final outstanding Governor Biography. To attend and report back after the meeting to examine the reasons behind the escalation of complaints. To invite the Deputy Headteacher for Operations to a future LAC meeting for a full update on Arbor's efficacy for all stakeholders. 	CK LH JDB CK	Next meeting Next meeting Next meeting Next meeting
4.	2.iv	Elect/Appoint Vice Chair: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To invite nominations for the Vice Chair via email so that an appointment can be made at the next LAC meeting. 	JDB	Next meeting

5.	2.vi	Governance communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To feed back LAC opinion regarding the Governance Weekly Bulletin to the Head of Governance. 	LH	Priority
6.	3.ii	Headteacher's Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To collate all emailed LAC queries regarding the Report to the Headteacher. 	LH	Priority
7.	4.i	Onboarding new staff: probationary procedure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide more information regarding this procedure to the link governor for People & Wellbeing. 	DH	Spring Term
8.	7.i	Summary report to the Trust Board <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prepare and submit the summary report to the Trust Board by 01/12/23. 	JDB	By 01/12/23