



**MINUTES of a Meeting of the Directors of the Academy Trust, held at Langtree School,  
Woodcote, RG8 0RA on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 7.00 pm**

**Present:**

Simon Bamford (SB)  
Linda Burton (LB)  
Ken Coveney (KC)  
Jesse Cleverly (JC)\*  
Alan Dunstan (AD)  
Jean-Francois Fava-Verde (JF)  
Vicki Hamilton (VH)

Claire MacVicar (CM)  
Neil McIntosh (NM)\*  
Sarah Parish (SP)  
Lucy Phipps (LP) \*  
Catherine Roche(CR)\*  
Jan Seal-Roberts (JSR) – Chair  
Annie Temple (AT)  
Clive Watts (CW)

\*Attended remotely

**Apologies:**

Alan Broomhead (AB)  
Graham Webber (GW)

**In attendance:**

Karen Barker (KB) – School Business Manager  
Jo Cundy (JCu) – Clerk

*Governor challenge is shown in red*

**1. Introduction**

- Quorum was confirmed.
- Apologies tendered were accepted.
- No substantive items were notified for AOB.
- No governor declared a material interest in any agenda item.
- Reminder to complete the Code of Practice and Declaration of Interest, also that it is expected that governors read all relevant documents prior to meetings.

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## 2. ATB meeting, 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021

2.1. Minutes which had been circulated were approved as an accurate record, and were signed by JSR for filing.

2.2. Review of Actions/matters arising: Unless otherwise discussed, assigned actions had been completed. Matters arising not covered by the current agenda were considered:

- Complete Prevent and GDPR training (item 2.2) – This is almost complete by JC

**Action: JC**

- Pupil placement planning update – SB is waiting for more information on this, he hopes to feedback to governors at the December FGB meeting (item 3.5)

**Action: SB**

- Ofsted Inspection Framework informational sessions will take place in autumn but in an informal setting (probably via a Zoom call), separate to an FGB meeting.

## 3. Headteacher's Section: SB presented the report which had previously been circulated. Discussion raised the following points:

- AB has suggested Pupil Premium data be shown within the performance and standards data. SB said that the data will be tracked throughout the year to see if there are significant changes.
- 5 of the 6 expected EHCP students have started in Year 7, this is an increase on previous years. The Year 7 cohort have proved challenging on arrival. It is unclear at this stage whether this is due to covid-related issues; some primary schools have feedback that challenges were to be expected. Reading ages are seemingly lower than where they should be (and a few are extremely low) - but again, it is still unknown whether this is attributable to covid disruption or ability.
- Attendance is very strong, despite pupils isolating due to covid. There are however a lot of illnesses such as colds and stomach bugs going around. The Persistent Absence figures are perhaps a little high for Langtree, but lower than the national average.
- Fixed term exclusions are now referred to as suspensions, there have been 4 so far, with a further 2 since writing the report. This area is being carefully watched.
- Due to a leak the gas has been turned off. Fortunately the school's heating is from biomass but science and food tech are being impacted. The gas leak is being looked into by a contractor.
- GDPR is monitored by the Finance committee, there have been no data breaches. The Data Protection Officer role is outsourced to Turn it On who oversee any issues and they audit GDPR compliance. **Are the safeguarding filters checked?** Yes, this is done through the IT support contractor, Monitor.
- Delighted that trips are being put back on. There are two ski trips this year because Year 10 missed out last year. Staffing in school will be difficult 11-15<sup>th</sup> July due to 3 foreign trips taking place that week. Nicki Smith is the new EVC.
- **How is the new timetable and revised school day structure going?** Canvassing hasn't taken place yet but believe it has been very positive. JC said that the issues they thought would be experienced are, but it seems okay, however it is a long time to wait until lunch.
- **Is the Risk Assessment proving fit for purpose?** It is greatly reduced but sanitizing, hand washing and one-way systems are still in place. Covid numbers are climbing in school and in the local area.

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- Staff are reporting that, so far, this year seems much easier than last year. LP agreed that it is much better this year: with everyone on the same timings there is now much less disruption. VH added that there will be the usual staff wellbeing questionnaire in the spring term, and there may even be an additional wellbeing survey at some point this year.
- VH said that school is responding very well to the issue of Peer on Peer sexual abuse. The main concern is a mechanism for students reporting it. Sarah Burman is working on making concerns easier to report, the intention is that this will be done with just 1 click on the website. It is felt that the anti-bullying page is too complicated, this is being worked on.
- **How is the new RSE programme bedding in?** SB said that the programme was rolled out last year. They are struggling to get speakers in to talk to the students but hope this will improve. Google Classrooms is loaded up with all of the resources so that students can access these if and when they need to.
- The governing body Open Morning is scheduled for **21<sup>st</sup> October**. The plan is for a small tour of the school, the opportunity to drop into some lessons, and then some student and also staff focus groups. The topic might be on food at school and/or the new school day. SB will be sending out the envisaged agenda shortly, and will ask govts to confirm attendance please.  
**Action: SB**
- CW noted that there will be a new law coming through next year to make school uniform more affordable for all. SB said that he has already had an initial discussion with the uniform provider, and has removed the stipulation for Trutex trousers. VH noted that she recently visited another secondary school where some of the girls were choosing to wear a hijab with the school logo on. **Should we now include the facility to wear a hijab and headscarves in Langtree's school uniform, in anticipation of the potential for future requirement?** Governors agreed this would be a good development, in line with our ongoing aim to provide an inclusive culture of mutual respect. Simon will discuss with Sarah Burman.  
**Action: SB**
- Very pleased with the GCSE grades awarded in 2021. **How was the grade distribution compared to previous years?** It fits with the national picture, and is similar to last year although grades were higher than previous years when exams had been taken. It is believed that next year's grade profile is likely to be in a mid-way point between 2021 and 2020.
- The School Development Plan now includes the action plans that sit behind each high-level Priority. It is an ever-changing, live document and priorities are regularly reviewed.
- School recovery report data will be closely monitored. Most students are expected to be on track, there isn't a huge gap in learning. School recovery is a standing item at the SLT weekly meeting, school is confident that there is a robust plan in place.

#### 4. Drama Studio Working Party: feedback to Governors

AD reported back on the findings of the working party that conducted a feasibility study on the proposed Drama Studio in order to get a better idea of what the project entailed and to gain a better idea of costs. The full report is very detailed and was circulated to governors prior to the meeting. The main areas under review were:

- Design evolution of a carbon neutral performing arts building
- Construction process: Traditional vs. Community
- Disruption to school during the build
- Cost projections to June 2023, including inflation and contingency
- Fundraising challenge

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A full risk assessment has been completed based on the findings of the above. In summary, the estimated build cost would be £1,470,000. It is envisaged that if we would find a large corporation prepared to partner with Langtree on the build, this could be achieved with no financial risk to the school. The carbon-neutral design of the studio is leading-edge and should therefore attract endorsements from performing arts foundations. Large corporations, particularly those with a green agenda, could also be attracted to help Langtree shape the presentation and provide advice on finding a lead sponsor for the project. The ideal sponsor would be a contractual partner with Langtree, who would be committed to the journey from beginning to end. So far the project has accrued £5,000. No more money is envisaged being spent until a sponsor is in place.

Questions raised from governors included several regarding potential disruption to the school and neighbourhood while the build takes place, the size and viability of the studio to the community, ongoing maintenance costs, and whether it is realistic to expect large corporations to be attracted to the project. A target date of June 2022 has been set, by which time if a sponsor hasn't been found, governors will consider shelving the project. In the meantime, governors gave their united approval for the working party (plus anyone else interested) to continue forward to the next stage of the project on behalf of the school. AD will report back to governors at each FGB meeting.

**Action:** JCu to add standing item to FGB agendas

## 5. Governor update

- i. Val Nowell has very sadly passed away. Val was a teacher at Langtree for many years, she was also a well-loved and respected senior governor who was Chair of the Curriculum and Standards committee. Val was a terrific friend to Langtree and will be greatly missed. A card has been sent to Frank (Val's husband) on behalf of the School and the FGB.
- ii. Governors unanimously agreed to renew the term of office for Ken Coveney for another 4 years. Ken's term of office will start on 12.10.2021. Ken has also swapped committees and will now sit on the Curriculum and Standards committee.

**Action:** JCu to update documents on the website

- iii. Proposal for Claire MacVicar to join FGB: Claire has an education background and is currently a Maths teacher at The Abbey School, in addition to being Deputy Director of Sixth Form. Claire has recently moved to the local area and would like to become more involved with the community. Governors voted Claire onto the governor board. Claire will join the Finance and General Purposes committee. **Action:** VH to conduct new governor induction, MTL do DBS check and JCu to update governor documents on website.
- iv. Governors noted that Caroline Henderson is approaching her 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Teaching Assistant at Langtree! A card for Caroline was circulated for signature, and governors asked SB to pass on their warm congratulations and thanks. **Action:** SB
- v. Training update and skill gaps in governing body: VH said that she is not aware of any large training gaps within the governor body. There is possibly a lack of specialist HR knowledge but this is not regarded as problematic as the school business manager usually deals with HR issues. VH noted concern that if a committee chair fell ill there is currently no deputy to cover, and suggested that Chairs nominate and agree a Vice Chair for each committee. Governors agreed to this suggestion. **Action:** AB, GW, VH
- vi. It was noted that while gender diversity on the governing body was strong, the P&C committee is 100% female and would welcome a male on the committee. SB said that there are a few possible leads on the Inspiring Governance which he is currently following up. **Action:** SB

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- vii. VH said that the recording of governor monitoring visits to the school will change slightly in future, and that she will be providing governors with a pro-forma A4 sheet on which to record their visits. Reason for visit and how it might tie in with link governance or an area of the SDP should also be documented. Examples of what governors should complete will be provided. **Action:** VH and JCu to update governor monitoring records.
- viii. JSR reported that the senior governor meetings (JSR, AB, GW and VH) held during the peak of the covid lockdown to ensure things were ticking over had proved very useful – and that she is planning for these occasional meetings to continue as they had proved helpful. Senior governors are planning to utilise a questionnaire to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the governing body, to determine how useful this might be as a tool. With regards to succession planning, JSR said that she is expecting to be willing to continue to put herself forward as Chair of Governors for another year or two – but asked any governor who might be interested in taking on the role of chair or committee chair in the future, or just in getting more involved, to please let JSR know. It was agreed that having committee vice chairs could help with succession planning. **Action:** Senior governors to report back on governor effectiveness questionnaire at some point in the future, and Committee Vice Chairs to be identified and named.

## 6. Committee reports

- **Finance and General Purposes:** Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> September had been circulated.
  - CW reported that the existing ToR had been reviewed and approved as previously agreed.
  - The committee welcomed Claire MacVicar (a potential new governor), Karen Barker (the School's new Business Manager) and Chris Nonweiler (Assistant Headteacher).
  - Due to factors relating to covid restrictions, the in-year surplus has increased from £35,000 to £182,000.
  - The 5-year forecast now depicts a bigger deficit than previously, the loss of the bulge year is a large factor here. A sub-committee has been formed to review what would need to be done if the deficit plays out. **Could there be another bulge year in the near future?** Demographic data shows that numbers are dropping in the local area, however a number of students have previously come from Reading. We are waiting for the Pupil Placement Plan for South Oxfordshire to become available to assist our planning. SB expects this to be available in November 21
  - A recent audit had highlighted areas that were required to be reported to FGB, although these are scrutinized within the Finance committee. CW reported that the key items were:
    - Safeguarding, H&S and estates management
    - External reviews of governance
    - Exit payments
    - Cybercrime
    - Notices to improve
    - Academy accounts direction
    - Financial management good practice guides
    - School resource management self-assessment tool
    - Financial returns dates for 2021-22

- **Curriculum and Standards:** Minutes of 21<sup>st</sup> September had been circulated.
  - JSR reported that the existing ToR had been reviewed and approved as previously agreed.
  - Jan Holroyd will be joining the C&S committee as a school representative.
  - Exam results - boys made more progress than girls, however girls still had higher attainment.
  - Curriculum review was discussed, in addition to the teacher-assessed grading process.
  - Careers statement was reviewed, it was agreed that it was appropriate.
  - PP update by JF has been deferred to the December FGB meeting.

**Action:** JCu to add to the December FGB agenda

- **Pastoral & Community:** Minutes of 20<sup>th</sup> September had been circulated.
  - VH reported that the Terms of Reference had been reviewed and approved by governors.
  - Sadly the school nurse is leaving at Christmas as she is being deployed elsewhere. Governors expressed great disappointment at this news: this is the 3<sup>rd</sup> nurse we have lost in 5 years.
  - CR and Sarah Burman are working on the mental health framework which is now part of the SDP.
  - The following policies were approved: Safeguarding, Exclusion, Home School Agreement.
  - VH reminded governors as part of the safeguarding policy, everyone was required to read specified parts of KCSIE 2021. Governors are each requested to email VH to confirm when this has been done. The safeguarding policy should also be read by governors. **Have all school staff read KCSIE?** All staff have signed that they have read KCSIE. Governors also asked about how this has been communicated to all staff, and re the staff induction processes / training. VH reported that she believes Sarah Burman has an excellent handle on this, and is confident that all staff clearly understand the current requirements.

**Action:** Governors are encouraged to find ways of seeking assurance re the effective application of our safeguarding policy when in school, and to ask (general) questions of staff re how well this is working when the opportunity arises.

- **Approval of statutory policies**

- The Exclusion Policy was presented by the Pastoral & Community committee which they had reviewed and approved. There is very little change except for the terminology of Fixed Term Exclusions which has reverted back to Suspensions. The Exclusion policy was ratified by the full governing body.
- The Safeguarding Policy was presented by the Pastoral & Community committee which they had reviewed and approved, again very little has changed. The Safeguarding policy was ratified by the full governing body.

AOB: NM raised the area of curriculum review and development, and will liaise with JSR and SB on aspects of the Curriculum which he would like to see covered at the next FGB meeting.

**Action:** JSR to advise what will be covered at December FGB.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 7:00pm

Finally, JSR thanked all governors for their time and input, and closed the meeting at 21:07

Signed .....

Date .....

**ACTIONS LIST from FGB meeting, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021:**

Minute	Action	By whom?	By when?
2.2	Complete online Prevent and GDPR training and confirm when complete	JC	ASAP
2.2	Pupil Planning Placement update at December FGB meeting	SB	December
3.8	Send envisaged agenda for Governor Body Open Morning	SB	ASAP
3.9	Discuss school uniform requirements with Sarah Burman	SB	December
4.0	Add Drama Studio update as standing item on FGB agendas	JCu	
5.1	KC re-appointed as Co-opted governor. Update governor documents.	MTL/JCu	ASAP
5.3	Claire MacVicar appointed Co-opted governor. Governor induction/DBS check and update governor documents.	VH/MTL/JCu	ASAP
5.4	Pass on congratulations and thanks to Caroline Henderson	SB	ASAP
5.5	Follow up with potential new governors	SB	ASAP
5.6	Update governor monitoring recording documents	JC/VH	ASAP
5.7	Distribute Governor Effectiveness questionnaire	JSR	
5.7	Committee Vice Chairs to be agreed and named	AB, GW, VH	December
5.5	Approved Policies to go on school website: Exclusion Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Careers Statement	JCu	ASAP
6.2	Provide PP update to FGB	JF	December
AOB	Aspects of the Curriculum to be discussed at next FGB	JSR/NM/SB	December

Signed .....

Date .....