

Longsands Impact Statement 2020-21



As members of Longsands Local Governance Committee (LGC) we wanted to take this opportunity to celebrate the Academy's continued improvement and success over the last year but also to let you know a little more about us and our role as well as our priorities and focus for Longsands going forward.



What is the Local Governance Committee?

At the start of 2020 the Longsands Transitional Management Board was re-constituted to form a Local Governance Committee (LGC). The Transitional Board was in place to help the Academy move from being a maintained school to becoming part of the Astrea Academy Trust. Now, with this process complete, the LGC has a more traditional governing role which is to provide support, challenge and guidance to the Academy at a local level, with a focus on driving improvement in educational outcomes for our children.

Our committee is represented by members of the local community, staff and parents, all of whom have specific skills and experience to offer a valuable role. Mark Young was appointed as Chair of the LGC, along with Lee Larcombe as Vice Chair, supported by Dawn Milne and Richard Slade. In January 2021, new members Barbara Hughes and Nathaniel Stephenson, joined the committee. And, although COVID's arrival meant only the initial LGC meeting was in person, we have continued to meet virtually throughout the last 18 months.

How are we promoting high standards at Longsands?

Each LGC member has taken on link lead responsibility for key aspects of the Academy. In these roles we work with the Academy to provide support, challenge and guidance in the areas of:

- assessment and moderation
- leadership and management
- Sixth Form
- safeguarding and behaviour
- personal development
- SEND and Pupil Premium
- teaching and learning
- curriculum and professional development.

By visiting the governance page on the website you can see which member is linked to which area <https://www.astrea-longsands.org/about-us/academy-governance/>

As part of these roles, we would usually visit the Academy each term to monitor progress and performance in that area. Unfortunately, COVID restrictions meant visits weren't able to

happen for much of the year although they did recommence in the summer term. Despite this, even during the previous terms, we were able to monitor these areas through online meetings, reports and presentations.

Indeed, in every LGC meeting the committee are given a full report from the Principal detailing everything from behaviour and attendance to academic results and staff training. There are also specific presentations on different areas of the school. In all instances it is the committee's role to question, probe and challenge - taking the role of 'the critical friend' to make sure the school is constantly improving.

For example, in December, the committee scrutinised the academy's application of its Behaviour policy regarding whether students received C2s in the first instance for forgetting equipment and were pleased that the Academy decided to make changes in response to student feedback and LGC discussions and now allow students one 'pass' per term without sanction.

And in March, the committee were given an in depth look at results across specific groups at the school by Mr Merson, Assistant Principal Assessment and Learning. We were encouraged to see that gaps in achievement for SEN and disadvantaged students have narrowed slightly, but also agreed that closing this further will remain a key focus for Longsands going forward and will be monitored closely.

In a recent meeting we have discussed academy arrangements for Year 9 student subject preferences. The committee acknowledged that supporting a broad and balanced curriculum in line with government targets regarding EBACC subject uptake would not reduce personal options/choices for Longsands students partly because we were assured that an academy appeal process was in place for those students and parents/carers who felt that EBACC was not the optimum route for their future.



At the end of last year Longsands carried out a Parent Survey and a Student Survey and the results were shared with the committee, who were pleased to acknowledge parent/carer views of encouraging signs of improvements to the education provision, since the last survey. Students felt they were receiving the information they needed to engage in learning provision and the majority of students were highly satisfied with the academy blended learning offer and knew where to find support as needed. It was pleasing to see that some of the issues noted in the parent/carer survey – the setting of homework, the range of enrichment opportunities open to students and further enhancing the support available for students with SEND – are key features of the Academy's Improvement Plan for the current academic year.

Going forward we are keen to assess the effectiveness of the additional teaching provision and additional investment of extra hours of study being provided by the Academy to our Year 11 and 13 students which we hope will be a real support to their preparation for GCSEs and A Level examinations this academic year

The Impact of COVID

COVID, and its impact on schooling and our students and staff has of course been a dominant theme of the last year. The committee worked with the Academy to establish what support was needed to address catch up gaps in teaching as a result of the pandemic and supported the Principal by ensuring we have the capacity to deliver quality of teaching and learning.



We were able to ascertain that Year 11 and Year 13 students had the chance to maximise their possible exam outcomes by being given every opportunity to submit work as evidence of their performance. Results this year have been determined by teachers, following a rigorous process designed to ensure students have the grades they merit and are able to move on to their next stage of study, training or work.

But also, on an even more important level, we have been able to see how the school has managed to care for our students and their families in these difficult times. During lockdown we were encouraged to see that the provision for free school meals was delivered and as a result, the most vulnerable students were supported. The Academy also assessed the mental health impact on each student and put together support packages for those in need. The committee was particularly pleased to see that these interventions were working as the number of vulnerable students requiring this support had fallen as the academic year progressed.

Safeguarding and care of our pupils is always going to be a hugely important part of the committee's role. We all undertake regular training in this area and this year have participated in child protection, safeguarding and prevent training and governance

webinars. Lee Larcombe has taken the LGC link role in safeguarding and is visiting the school regularly to monitor this whilst Dawn Milne has become part of the school's Wellbeing Award for Schools team led by Nathaniel Stephenson which will be looking at how student and staff wellbeing and mental health is at the centre of all Longsands does.

How are we engaging with parents?

Making sure we communicate effectively with parents/carers is a key priority for the Academy and the committee. As part of this, LGC member Dawn Milne has worked with the Principal to implement a parent/carer working group to improve good communication and parental engagement with the academy.

We are immensely grateful to all the parents/carers who have joined this group, giving up their time and sharing their expertise. It has been instrumental in improving all sorts of aspects of the Academy communications from the Principal's Weekly Bulletin and letters home to the handling of queries and concerns from parents/carers. This will continue to be a focus going forward with plans to improve other areas such as the Astrea App and student reports to make sure parents/carers feel fully engaged, included and informed.

We are also encouraged to see the Academy inviting feedback regularly from parents/carers on everything from wellbeing provision and personal development to parent teacher consultations and remote learning support. And part of our role going forward will be monitoring how this feedback is being used to make continual improvement at the Academy.

Supporting Longsands Sixth Form

The committee identified historic trends with regards to student numbers attending the Sixth Form and scrutinised what strategies it has adopted to promote and market itself for students locally and in the wider community.

Although numbers have held up well this year, we are keen that as well as focussing on continuing the upward trend on results, the Sixth Form also markets itself as effectively as possible. Again the Parents Communication Working Party has worked alongside the Academy in helping to redesign the prospectus and we will be seeing how this and the relaunched website and name change will help support recruitment.



All in all, it has been an unprecedented year for education settings across the board, but as your local committee, we are proud of Longsands' achievements, which have reinforced its resilience in dealing with challenges the Academy, staff and students have faced.