

GOVERNING BODY ANNUAL REPORT

2016-2017

In our annual report Governors share with you the achievements of the school, its staff and pupils. We have had a very good year this year, and are now thoroughly settled into the new routines of being a Co-Operative Academy with the changes that allows us and the challenges it brings.

Whilst we expect an Ofsted inspection in the near future because we are considered a “new school” following our conversion to Academy in 2015, this last year has been a peaceful one for us without any inspections. We were pleased that the last inspections of the (old) school and of the residential provision found us to be good in every category tested. But we are driven not so much by Ofsted as by the feedback we receive from our parents and students which encourage us in what we do, and make us want to go on improving our offer to you. Thank you to all of you who have encouraged us during the year and given us feedback to consider about how we might improve. Thank you too to the 4 families who contributed their case study to our new introductory booklet for prospective parents this year. We are really delighted with how the booklet presents our offer to families. And right up front in this report we want to thank Nick White for his inspirational leadership of this very special school over the last year.

Student assessment, engagement and 6th Form

During the year our Senior Leadership Team have continued in their dedicated leadership of the school, with the hard work Steve Forder has put into developing pupil assessment now demonstrating its value in our Governors’ meetings. Chris Allan continues to encourage us all in her role as innovator, and has supported the development of regular running groups for pupils which are proving very successful in improving students’ ability to settle down in class. At our last Governors’ meeting she delighted us all by preparing and bringing two pupils to the meeting who agreed to regularly represent the views of the school to Governors so that we are always mindful of what our students think. As a result new toilet cubicles with locks on the doors are currently being installed, and homemade soup with a crusty roll has been requested for winter lunches. We are looking forward to the students’ next appearance in the Autumn Term! At our last meeting Governors approved the first phase of some development work on “The Gatehouse” so that it can become the new work experience home for our sixth form students, and we are looking forward to working up the plans for stage 2 with the Senior Leadership Team. A big thank you is owed to parents who fundraised for us, the individual who ran the London Marathon and to a recent generous donation that is helping us to get this project off the ground.

About the Student Roll

Chris Prisk's thorough work on admissions has also been fruitful and we are seeing our pupil numbers rise as a result. The table below shows the growth in students since we became an Academy.

Start of year pupil numbers	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Total	80	86	103
Day	61	72	87
Boarding	19	14 (all boys)	16 (4 girls, 12 boys)

Lilac class opened this year to accommodate the growth in student numbers whilst maintaining the small classes which work so well here. Although we are delighted that parents are actively seeking out our school for their children we believe that we should begin a discussion with you about whether further growth is desirable and if so how to ensure that it is managed strategically. Nick White plans to begin this consultation with you in the Autumn Term, and for the moment Governors have set a cap on further admissions so that we aim to retain a roll of 100 pupils (plus or minus 5). Please look out for the opportunity to contribute your views and let us know what you think.

Governors' Plans

One of the positive advantages of the additional pupils is a healthier financial position, and we expect to be able to maintain the staffing reserve fund needed for a school of our size as well as planning some improvement to our boarding facilities. Governors are in the process of taking advice on what a modern boarding offer might be and what are the current expectations of boarding facilities. During the past year we developed a flexible boarding offer for families but we are aware that this may not be affordable for some of you without Local Authority assistance as part of a respite package. We will continue to consider ways in which we can support your family life through the education and respite that we are able to provide. We aim to maintain an affordable, quality offer to you all.

Student Leavers

This year we have 10 student leavers who enjoyed their Prom Night at Dartford Working Men's Club last week. We thank them all for their contribution to our school, wish them well in their future plans and hope that they will all stay in touch with us. Their destinations are in the table below:

Onward Destination	Numbers
Local College	5
Residential College	1
Unconfirmed	2
Moving country	1
Alternative school	1

An active year

Our students' have been busy during the last year getting out and about, and making their contribution and skills known. Here are just some of the things they have got involved in:

- Step into Dance got through to Step Live at the Royal Festival Hall
- The Steel Band played at the Savoy Hotel for the Frankham's Ball
- Students undertook a fundraiser fun run
- The camping trip in May
- Leiston Abbey trip in June
- Auditioned with CBeebies - watch to spot one of our students on the programme!
- Music therapy for parents and students
- Learning Makaton

Staff moves

As usual in a school, we have had a number of staff leave us this year - 15 in total during the year, and we thank all of them for the many ways in which they contributed to the life of our school. 17 new members of staff have started in their place and we are pleased to welcome them and look forward to the contribution they can make. The Governors would like to give a special shout out to Christophe who was not only the much-loved Catering Manager but also an active and thoughtful Governor during his time with us. He has moved back to France with his family and we wish them all well. Although a hard act to follow, we have been really pleased to see Simon (our new Catering Manager) come storming in with a new range of menus ready to delight his customers...

Your Governing Body

Parents have four Governors representing them on the Governing Body.

Name	Status	Term of Office expires
Richard Allalouf	Parent Governor	24/04/21
Soshana Austin	Parent Governor and chair of Curriculum and Strategy Committee	30/06/19
Simon Blackburn	Parent Governor	31/10/18
Steve Finch	Parent Governor	21/06/21

Please let them know about your concerns and priorities so that they can represent you effectively. You can contact them through the school. If you are interested in exploring what is involved in becoming a Governor or in getting more involved in the life of the school, please get in touch with Nick White who will be delighted to hear from you.

Our thanks go to Thelma Morito for her quiet but wise counsel as a Parent Governor on the Governing Body until 09/02/17. We are really grateful for her contribution but know she has big plans to develop with her family for their future and we wish them all well.

Your other Governors are listed in the table overleaf:

Name	Status	Term of Office expires
Abidemi Agidee-Adekunle	Community Governor	23/11/20
Libby Blake	Community Governor and Co-Chair of Governors	02/02/20
Christopher Bray	Community Governor	23/11/20
Barbara McBrien	Community Governor	29/06/20
Kola Olounbanjo	Community Governor and Co-Chair of Governors	05/01/19
Katherine Priestley	Community Governor	21/06/21
Bob Walkington	Community Governor and Chair of Finance Committee	05/01/19
Nick White	Principal	Ex Officio
Kirsty Wiseman	Staff Governor	31/10/18
Vacant Position	Staff Governor	

The vacant position for a Staff Governor is to be advertised at the beginning of the Autumn Term, and we hope that this will be an interesting developmental opportunity for one of the staff team.

Thanks also go to Patricia Walker for the contribution she made to the Governing Body until April 2017. And welcome to Richard Allalouf, Katherine Priestley and Steve Finch for taking the plunge and joining us as Governors. It's great to have you all on board!

In November 2016 Libby Blake joined Kola Olounbanjo as Co-Chair of Governors, and they have enjoyed supporting each other in the role of critical friend to the School Leadership Team, and maintaining the Governing Body's accountability for the direction of the School and its financial stability. Soshana Austin and Bob Walkington have taken on the role of chairing the two sub-committees which is where all the decisions get worked up before they come to the Full Governing Body - and they have both been a big support to the two of us. It's a privilege to serve such a wonderful school in this way, and to be supported by such a talented group of Governors.

Kola Olounbanjo and Libby Blake

18th July 2017