

**MINUTES OF THE 126<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON  
THURSDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2018 AT 17.30**

**Present:** Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Stewart Harris (SH), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Richard Perry (RJP), Keith Wilson (KWI), Tony Bothwell (TBO), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Phil Hall (PHA), Jennifer Calvert (JCA), Steven Nash (SNA)

**Absent:** Simon Jones (SJO), Rachel Jarvis (RJA)

**In Attendance:** Conor Hewitt (COH) (Minutes)

**Start Time:** 17:30

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were passed on from Rachel Jarvis (RJA) and Simon Jones (SJO).

**2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2017 were agreed as a true and accurate record and duly signed by the Chair as the scheduled December meeting did not take place.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

Regarding cladding on Academy buildings, RJP said that the DfE had not expressed any concerns about the cladding on any of the Academy's buildings because two storey buildings are not included in the 'at risk' category. Thus none of our buildings meet the criteria for instant inspection; nevertheless RJP will arrange to have the cladding inspected in the future when firms undertaking this work are available after prioritisation of high-rise inspections elsewhere.

**4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

DMI clarified that the reasons for exclusion marked as 'other' in the report were actually for defiance. DMI also informed the Board that student involvement in Study Hall is at an all-time high with students arriving as early as 7.30am to study.

**Recruitment & Retention** - In the national context, recruitment in education is becoming increasingly difficult. There has been a significant drop in students applying for teacher training courses. There are now a significant percentage of unqualified teachers in academies nationally. Despite this, we currently have a very small number of unqualified staff- well below the national average. Subjects such as Science and Maths are becoming more difficult to staff with a low number of applicants for each vacancy.

Other schools within the local community have started to create a number of additional leadership positions in order to promote and retain staff; however, this creates a top-heavy structure which has negative financial implications.

Prospective teaching staff have said that our Ofsted badge, behaviour management and excellent examination results are the key reasons they chose to apply for jobs at ATA. DW noted that behaviour management and frequent low-level disruption in many other schools are key reasons that teachers have given for leaving the profession. DMI added that former Ashcroft staff, who have secured promotion elsewhere, have reported that the lower support for them in behaviour management at their new schools adds a significant amount to their workload.

DMI said that ATA's professional development programme has been a positive experience for our teaching staff and we have recently developed a relationship with the Teacher Development Trust, which gives us access to research, support and training. JCA has started a qualification with the Institute of Teaching which will help us to develop our Professional Development programme. It is our aim to continue to develop good

relationships with PGCE providers whilst also developing a social media strategy to supplement our usual recruitment techniques.

DMI – Reminded Board members that last year there were a number of internal promotions in the Academy, including the appointment of a new Head of Sixth Form. This was good for retention as we have a group of young, ambitious staff looking for promotion and these internal opportunities allowed us to retain some valuable members of staff. DMI also noted that the majority of our recent appointees have come from schools that require improvement according to Ofsted.

DW praised the developments discussed and said that we must continue to attract quality staff without compromising our pay structure. DW also agreed that we should not create leadership positions simply for the sake of retaining staff. RJP & DMI commented on the positive negotiations they have had with new staff, noting that most have realistic expectations on pay.

## **5. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS FOR DISCUSSION (PRESENTATIONS):**

### **a. THE CURRICULUM MODEL FOR KEY STAGE 3 AND KEY STAGE 4 – J CALVERT**

DMI said that the new Head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, has focused her attention on the curriculum. We hear and read reports of schools that have narrowed their curriculum coverage to the core only at Key Stages 3 and 4 and that have removed students from subjects in which they are not performing well in order to maximise their Progress 8 score. These moves reduce the number and breadth of subjects students can study. DMI noted that Amanda Spielman wishes for a fair and balanced curriculum in every school with a well-thought through allocation of time given to Key Stage 3 and to Key Stage 4.

JCA commented that Ofsted said in 2015 that ATA offers a ‘broad and balanced curriculum’ and our longer school day also allows us to offer a wider variety of subjects than other schools at Key Stages 3 and 4. Since that Ofsted inspection we have split up subject groups even further, such as Humanities and Performing Arts in order to offer an even wider selection of subjects and a more meaningful content coverage. Furthermore, our extra-curricular provision permits students to continue studying subjects they enjoyed in Years 7 and 8 but choose not study as a GCSE option.

**Key Stage (KS) 4 Curriculum** – JCA explained that all students at Ashcroft are entered into the subjects comprising the English Baccalaureate (EBACC). The EBACC subjects are facilitating academic subjects, which, if students continue to study in the Sixth Form, will help them to achieve access to Russell Group universities. Our curriculum structure and expectations also have a positive effect on disadvantaged pupils. JCA noted that our disadvantaged pupils perform in the top 20% of all students nationally. Our students are able to obtain the EBACC due to the support that is in place in lessons, in study hall and in catch up.

DW asked whether or not it would be advantageous for students who struggle academically to take more practical subjects that suit their skills. DMI noted that these students are stretched by the academic curriculum and therefore make better progress. This gives them more options in later life. JCA also added that there are a number of more practical subjects such as the BTEC classes on offer, which students are free to choose as part of the options process.

DW then asked the Executive Board for their thoughts on the curriculum. PED commented on the 2 year KS3 by saying that it is a shame that students only study subjects they don’t choose as GCSE options for 2 years. PED also noted that, in her experience, the 3 year KS4 had been a positive experience for her son. PED also commented on the fact that every child, as part of the EBACC, had to take French. She asked whether it would be more beneficial for lower set students to focus on other subjects rather than a language. DMI responded by saying that categorising students based on potential is very difficult and automatically limits the ambition of the students. Universities and workplaces understand the value of the EBACC, so it is essential we offer all our students the chance to achieve this qualification. AEE added that she felt one of her children, who has dyspraxia, thrived when learning languages, as it provides a level playing field amongst students, since most students start off with a very limited amount of knowledge in the subject. Overall, members of the Executive Board then agreed that the current curriculum is well-considered, balanced and permits students access to a full range of subjects at Key Stage 3 and 4.

## **b. ANALYSING AND TRACKING STUDENT PERFORMANCE – P HALL**

PHA explained that analysing and tracking student performance is one of his responsibilities as Associate Deputy Principal.

**Centralised Data Tracking** – PHA explained that he is working closely with Curriculum Managers to get the most out of their data, with the aim of creating a uniform approach to data analysis that can be used for discussions between departments.

**Effort and Progress Analysis** – PHA has been looking into effort and performance grades. These grades are used to inform subject interventions and “Study Hall”. SNA noted that effort grades are subjective and therefore may not always be a fair and accurate form of comparison data. PHA agreed but noted that there had been a push throughout the Academy to standardise the effort and predicted grades. To this end, PHA has included a weighting system for each teacher which helps to improve the accuracy of the data. PHA noted that, overall, effort grades across the Academy are positive. SNA asked how much new information has been uncovered by this level of data analysis. PHA said that, while the students flagged for good or bad performances are not a surprise to the school, the data does help to identify trends over time because you can see the amount of effort students are putting in over the course of the academic year. This level of analysis does help us to identify issues or concerns in application and/ or behaviour and address these efficiently. DMI added that this can also help Curriculum Managers to identify positive or negative trends within their department and added that as long as the data is informing actions within the Academy it is a positive tool.

**Pathways Guidance** – The new data could also be used to inform the student’s pathway decisions, as the spread sheet formulates the best set of subject choices for each student. JCA noted that we have not determined whether or not this data will be given to students as of yet. SNA believes that the students should not see the data as the differences in predicted grades may be minimal and may influence them to take subjects that they are not passionate about, which could reduce their effort in the long run.

PED noted that the results of the options process were given out quite late last year. JCA regretted this and said that this will change as part of the new pathways process.

**Behaviour Analysis** – PHA will work with ICAS mentors and tutors to help them utilise the behaviour analysis data to inform conversations and interventions.

## **6. VICE PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**

Since the last Executive Board meeting the Academy’s Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 31 August 2017 has been completed. The report was signed off on 19 December 2017 and has been published to the Academy website.

The Academy incurred a small deficit in the year. RJP had alerted members to this possibility in previous meetings. The accounts were approved and the Academy was given approval by the Trustees to continue to operate in its current format. RJP noted that we do have a number of reserve funds to call upon although these will start to disappear. SNA asked RJP how many years the Academy can continue to operate at a deficit before the financial situation is untenable. RJP explained that the Academy has around £4.7million in reserve funds and that our financial situation is generally positive when compared to the majority of other Academies across the country.

RJP is still awaiting information on future funding with the planned introduction of a new National Funding Formula. The Government has said that there will be no cuts to education funding. However even if it does stay the same, this will still not be keeping pace with inflation. The Government will have to address school funding in the near future as schools will continue to struggle financially unless something is done with many having no funds to fall back on.

RJP noted that staff costs have been eased with a number of long serving members of staff having retired or left the Academy over the last year, they have been replaced by younger and less expensive members of staff, who are lower down national pay spines. RJP noted that the Academy is seeking to save money by making small savings across the Academy rather than making drastic cuts. We are cutting down on large scale developments but not overall maintenance. There remains an issue with the temperature on the top floor of blocks C and D this is being looked into, and we expect to receive quotes from the consultants shortly. DW noted that this has been a repeating issue for a while now; RJP added that these were part of the structure of the original Mayfield School built in the 1950's with the rooms and flow of air not readily equipped for larger class sizes or the levels of technology in use.

RJP finally reported that £100,000 of the funds raised by the trading company were to be donated to the Academy - broadly in line with the previous year.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

SNA requested to learn more about how the governance system works in the Academy, DW agreed to share this information at a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 19:10

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 16 May 2018.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Richard Whitcutt

Chair of Executive Board

Date: 15 / May / 2018