

**MINUTES OF THE 132nd MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
THURSDAY 02 MAY 2019 AT 17.30**

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Mike Smith (MSM), Stewart Harris (SH), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Steven Nash (SNA), Rachel Branagan (RB).

Absent: Tony Bothwell (TBO), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Kevin Chamberlain (KC).

In Attendance: Conor Hewitt (COH) (Minutes)

Start Time: 17:30

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from AEE, KC and TBO.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record and duly signed.

3. MATTERS ARISING

DMI updated the Board on the creative technologies department merger. DMI shared that the Academy had recruited two Design and Technology teachers and that the Academy would once again be offering both Product Design and Food Technology at GCSE from September 2019.

4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

DMI included an update on the IB Diploma Programme in his report. The Academy has started the 5-year review process and, in preparation for this, DMI recently attended a Head of Schools Conference. DMI explained that the 5-year review was self-led and that all completed documentation will be sent to the IBO (International Baccalaureate Organisation), who would in turn provide the Academy with recommendations in order to improve the delivery of the programme. PED asked for further information about the process and the consequences of failing the review. DMI said that failing to pass would trigger a visit from the IB inspection team. DMI expressed no concerns over the review and added that he expected IB numbers to remain consistent in the future.

DMI reported that there is a further challenge to staffing. The Academy has noticed that private schools have been using tactics, which include offering attractive salaries, in order to attract state sector teachers. The Academy has recently lost both a Science and an MFL (modern foreign languages) teacher in this way. DMI explained that the Academy had managed to recruit suitable replacements, including a teacher of MFL who had originally applied for the role of 2nd in charge, but accepted a main scale role after a positive interaction with a student they had taught at their current school. DMI and RJP agreed that Ashcroft's strong reputation had helped in this situation and in many other recruitment scenarios. DMI noted that the Academy was still seeking to recruit a teacher of Business Studies and a teacher of English.

DMI had a meeting with CCN and PED in-between Executive Board meetings to discuss a view of the Academy from a parental viewpoint. Washrooms and reporting (along with the reporting schedule) were two of several topics discussed. PED had suggested separating Science grades into Biology, Chemistry and Physics in order to provide a more accurate picture. DMI agreed but explained that the change would take a couple of reporting cycles to fine-tune. Other matters raised were not judged to be mainstream Executive Board business but exchanges like this on day to day issues with parent members of the Executive Board were valuable and DMI would bring back into the Executive Board any matters on which wider sharing or discussion would be helpful. DMI informed the Board that a student had been Permanently Excluded from the Academy for the first time in 2 years. This had been upheld by the Discipline Review Committee (consisting of DW, AEE and SH) in a meeting attended by the student, his mother, sister and a number of advocates for both sides. Further outline

details were given verbally to Executive Board members but since legal issues were involved and a possible appeal for independent review is outstanding, these are not recorded in these minutes.

5. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS FOR DISCUSSION

a. ESFA (DICK WHITCUTT)

DW updated the Board on a complaint relayed via ESFA to Lord Ashcroft as Chair of the School's Trustees regarding off-rolling of an allegedly vulnerable student. Issues involved were detailed and complex and related to a student who had just moved from Scotland close to the beginning of last Summer holidays. He attended ATA for only three weeks, then his mother said he would be attending a different (named) local school after the holiday. DW had sent a full response to ESFA, with detailed appendices from DMI, covering unsuccessful enquiries by the school to establish if any special needs or vulnerabilities had been formalised and the fact that information given by the mother about a place at another school was incorrect. Although ATA informed our local authority that the student had left ATA to join the other school, definitive checks should have taken place that he had in fact "arrived there". He did later join the other school but spent time absent from education, which his local authority (he lives outside our borough) appears to have referred to ESFA as a complaint. The outcome was that ESFA were satisfied with our response and our assurances that extra procedures would be put in place to ensure that in all cases, however short the attendance and whatever information was given by the parent, positive verification would be obtained from the receiving school that a place had been made available and confirmed. The problem was unlikely to occur with local transfers of longer-established students, since ATA would invariably be involved in the reasons for transfer and discussions between all parties before the move was finalised. For distant transfers on moving home, established practice was always to seek verification from the remote destination school.

b. IDSR (MIKE SMITH)

MSM presented the latest IDSR (Inspection Data Summary Report) to the Board. MSM noted that the data for the academic year 2017-18 had been an improvement on even the excellent indications for the previous year's cohort. MSM discussed the areas to investigate, noting the general lack of concerns. The percentage of fixed-term excludees whose first language was not English was higher than the national average, but MSM explained that as an inner London school, the Academy also had a larger proportion of EAL students so this statistic was almost inevitable. The percentage of SEN students excluded was also higher than the national average. The Board discussed the increase in SEN diagnoses nationally whilst also discussing the huge range of varying conditions that fell under the SEN banner. DMI explained to the Board that all Ashcroft students were pushed to achieve the most they could and were held to high standards in order to best prepare them for further/higher education and employment. Whilst each specific SEN condition is taken into consideration and additional support is provided, all students are expected to behave appropriately.

SNA asked if MSM had looked at the points the sub-committee had raised last year to see if any trends could be identified this year. MSM said that he had and that all of the points would be covered in his presentation. DW suggested that the sub-committee meet biennially to study the data and assess the Academy's exam performance.

The progress measures were incredibly positive, with all GCSE progress scores in the top quintile and significantly above the national average. A point raised by the sub-committee about the previous IDSR was that the scores for higher achieving students at KS2 were significantly lower than the lower and middle attaining KS2 students. MSM highlighted the specific measure and the marked improvement this year. MSM then highlighted the fact that the MFL progress scores were comparatively lower than the other EBACC subjects and provided a context to explain this, noting that every student in the Academy must study a language as part of the EBACC. Therefore, some students at ATA were taking a language at GCSE who did not have a particular keenness or talent for MFLs. Nationally this is not the case. In other schools, languages are optional and typically studied by those more able to achieve. The fact that the Academy does offer the full EBACC to every student, regardless of ability, demonstrates its commitment to providing all students with a high-quality curriculum.

MSM highlighted the fact that each set of students, whether advantaged or disadvantaged, low or high attaining, achieved a progress score of between +0.8 and +1.0. MSM then showed the Board a scatter graph which plotted the progress score of each individual student. SNA asked about the lowest progress 8 scores on the graph and asked if there was anything else the Academy could have done to improve those individual cases. MSM explained that persistent non-attendance and serious issues at home had significantly contributed to the particular students' low scores that SNA had highlighted. DMI and MSM noted that they would continue to do everything in their power to support individual students who did not receive support at home. MSM added that he had previously talked to parents at a Year 7 open evening about the importance of valuing education and supporting students with homework. DMI added that study hall sessions had made a significant difference and helped students who perhaps did not have a quiet place at home to work to form good study habits.

DW commented that he found the IDSR a very useful tool as it allowed the Board members who do not work in education to easily understand how the school was performing on meaningful comparisons, not just the "old" count-up of GCSE A*- Cs. MSM noted that the Academy's focus on EBACC subjects was evidenced in the data as student progress across subjects in the 'open element' was slightly lower, albeit still significantly above the national average.

MSM explained that the gender mix in Sixth Form had grown increasingly equal and that the progress data at KS5 was also significantly above national averages. MSM showed the Board a breakdown of the progress scores in each A level subject.

6. VICE-PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

RJP updated the Committee on the ongoing plans to redevelop parts of the Academy in order to accommodate an additional form of entry. He and DMI had hoped that the project would be completed across two phases by the end of August 2020. However, some complications had arisen. He added that RJP and DMI had met with representatives from Wandsworth, the appointed design company and the main contracting firm. Since the last meeting there had been a significant lack of communication between all parties, which ostensibly has been due to a key member of the design company (the named Project Manager) being medically signed-off for the foreseeable future.

After a more detailed feasibility and a subsequent meeting between Wandsworth and the main contractors, the proposed cost had risen from around £250,000 to £416,000. Wandsworth had asked the firm to reduce the overall cost; however, after initial review, the contract price has hardly moved and remains significantly over initial estimate. RJP noted that the Academy's project was part of a package of work that included developments at 3 other Wandsworth academies and the contractor had similarly overpriced on at least 2 of the other developments (the third is yet to be returned). If the financial aspect of the project cannot be agreed to, then the Academy and Wandsworth will look to separate our proposed work from the larger projects in the other academies to effectively become a single project and work with smaller, local companies to achieve the refurbishment.

The majority of the work had been proposed to take place over the next 2 summer holidays in order to avoid any disturbance in the Academy. RJP explained that a resolution to the issue of cost was required as soon as possible in order to maximise the amount of work that could be undertaken in summer 2019 if still possible and therefore reduce the pressure on summer 2020.

RJP updated the Board on the refurbishment of the library area. Over Easter, the ceiling and lighting had been updated and the new laptops had arrived and were ready to use. The remainder of the works, including the flooring, additional library shelving, additional power points, chairs and tables, and the relocation and downsizing of the library office had been put out to tender. RJP explained that the project will most likely be separated into 3 smaller works packages.

RJP noted that the estimated outturn figures on the revenue comparison sheet would be very similar to last year's. There had been a slight increase in expenditure but no more than expected. To cover the higher than anticipated teacher pay increase last year, the Government had granted a separate Teacher Pay Grant to help

schools cope with rising staffing costs. He added that there was no guarantee this additional funding support would be continued or indeed consolidated into the main grant provision.

RJP noted that although the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) had been reduced to around £425k, the reduction was lower than expected (by under 5% in the year). RJP expressed his hope that the MFG would continue to be a part of school funding for longer than had been anticipated, all the while acknowledging that it will eventually disappear completely.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business.

Signed: 
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 11 / July / 2019