

**MINUTES OF THE 140th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
TUESDAY 12 DEC 2020 AT 17.30**
*Meeting held remotely on the ZOOM platform
due to the on-going Coronavirus pandemic*

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Stewart Harris (SH), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Rachel Branagan (RB), Kevin Chamberlain (KC), Michael Collins (MCO), Joshua Hetherington (JHE)

In Attendance: Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

Start Time: 17:30

1. Apologies

DW welcomed on-line presence of members of the Executive Board, who had joined the virtual meeting via the Zoom online meeting platform. The only absence was Tony Bothwell (TB) due to work commitments.

2. Declarations

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 October 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

DW addressed an action from the previous minutes and asked JKD if she had sent out the presentation which Mike Smith (MSM) had presented at the last Executive Board. JKD apologised for not having sent it to the Board and confirmed that she would organise for this to be done after the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

No extra matters arising.

DW advised the Board that the Finance and Resource Committee (FRC) meeting minutes would be circulated to the Board confidentially prior to FRC sign-off and in a way that would allow Executive Board members to raise any issues that they may have, albeit that the FRC was not a sub-committee of the Executive Board itself but reported direct to Trustees.

5. Principal's Report

DMI welcomed the Board and introduced Michael Collins (MCO), Assistant Principal, and Joshua Hetherington (JHE), Assistant Principal.

DMI explained to the Board that much of his report was centred around the Academy's continued response to COVID-19 and based particularly on the last two terms. DMI updated the Board that ATA has had a total of 12 confirmed positive cases within the student body. DMI advised the Board that these cases were not related and

that ATA has the necessary control measures in place to protect its staff and students.

If a student presents with symptoms, they report to the Medical Welfare Officer who telephones parents. The student is sent home to isolate immediately and parents are advised to organise a test. Once the test has been taken and the parent has the results, the student can return if the result is negative and after ATA has received the formal notification parents receive. If the result is positive, the student isolates for 10 days and staff identify and isolate the student's close contacts who had such contact during the 48 hours before symptoms began.

ATA has experienced five cases in one-year group, which were reported to staff after verifying that the cases were unrelated. ATA followed the steps described above and took the decision to isolate more students than required in order to minimise any spread of the virus. DMI reports each positive case to the DfE and to the Executive Board.

DMI described a case of a Year 11 student's mother who was symptomatic with a high temperature and loss of taste. She had sent her child to the Academy and the child was in the Academy for three days before her mother telephoned ATA to say she had tested positive and that eight of her work colleagues had also tested positive. The child was subsequently tested and received a negative result but ATA isolated 35 children as an immediate action.

Also in the recent past, ATA had received notification that a Year 10 student had tested positive so ATA removed all students who had been in close contact with the student in question and these students were asked to isolate for 10 days. In total, a large number of Year 10 students were required to isolate, some of whom were symptomatic.

DW asked for more information about the Year 10 case. DMI advised the Board that, as a result of numbers required to isolate, a message was sent home to parents on Tuesday to provide them with the reassurance that all measures had been taken to isolate potential cases and protect the remaining students and all staff. Nevertheless, there was a drop in attendance in Year 10 following that message. DMI did explain to the Board that Year 10 parents were perhaps keeping their children at home to protect them before Christmas.

DMI outlined to the Board the measures that will be taken regarding the mass testing in all schools after the Christmas break. The testing will take the form of mass weekly testing for all staff, mass testing for all students and stream testing – 7 daily tests for students and staff who have been in close contact with a positive case.

Some parents might refuse to allow their child to be tested and schools cannot enforce tests.

DMI advised the Board that he had received guidance from the DfE on how the testing will need to be organised. ATA will be required to set up a testing centre which will also require six members of staff to facilitate various stages of the testing process. The set up will be as follows:

The Medical Welfare Officer will supervise the tests for students, but the student will administer the test themselves.

ATA staff will be required to collect a test from the test centre where they will be required to take the test at home on a Monday morning and then send in the reading to the Administrator before they come into School.

DMI told the Board that a letter will be sent home to all of the parents on 13 December containing a link to an online consent form for parents to complete. A central list will be produced and a plan will be put in place for set up of the testing centre over the Christmas break. The test centre will be ready for when the students and the staff return in January.

The Local Authority (Wandsworth) sent an email to DMI advising that ATA will receive the tests on the first day back after the break. ATA has received a batch of PCR tests for staff to use between 27 and 29 December. Staff will be required to take their tests to Wandsworth Town Hall where there is a collection service. Tests will be sent off of for processing and the results should be received by 4 January 2021.

DMI advised the Board that there are number of things to think about before the Academy's return in January as infection rates have increased by 50% in the last week. Other schools in the area, such as Putney High School, have closed completely and St Cecilia's School, Southfields Academy and Burntwood Academy have had to send home whole year groups. DMI advised the Board that ATA have been fortunate and have only had to isolate the students

which have been in close contact of a positive student (of whom there have been relatively few).

Offensive Weapons Protocol

DMI told the Board that the Offensive Weapons protocol has returned and he gave the Board a brief summary of the revised protocol that had been sent to Head Teachers before the recent Wandsworth Head Teachers' meeting. DMI advised the Board that he had read the most recent edit and, following a discussion with the Leadership Group, DMI sent a response to Andy Hough, Head of School Participation and Performance for Wandsworth Borough Council. DMI made it very clear that ATA did not agree to the protocol.

At the most recent Wandsworth Head Teachers' meeting, Mr Hough advised those present that he would make further revisions and send an update to the protocol in due course. DMI advised the Board that he will update them once he has received this.

S.E.N

DMI informed the Board of an SEN issue he had been required to resolve. ATA had accepted a student in Year 9 who had come from a neighbouring school. After induction of the student, ATA discovered he had an EHCP in place. The Academy were able to meet his needs and provide the support; however, the student has a younger brother whose needs are very specific and sufficiently severe that, in the Academy's view and in the view of the SEN specialist in Wandsworth, a place in a mainstream setting would not be appropriate. The child's father would like the younger brother to attend ATA and had requested that Wandsworth cease the EHCP in place for the younger child so that this could happen. The SEN team at Wandsworth had agreed to this. DMI advised the Board that ceasing an EHCP in this way is illegal. DMI addressed this with ATA's lawyer and produced a robust letter to Wandsworth. Following this letter, Wandsworth reviewed their decision to cease the EHCP and decided against this course of action. A meeting was held with the parents and they understood the reasons why ATA could not meet the younger brother's needs and agreed to consider a more appropriate setting, which is in the best interests of the child. ATA felt strongly that ceasing the EHCP would have negatively affected the child in question. DMI was pleased to report that ATA's actions were successful and the child is now in a more appropriate school, but this came at some legal cost to the Academy to achieve this outcome.

GCSE, AS and A-Level exams in 2021

DMI advised the Board about the Exams for 2021. The Secretary of State announced that exams will go ahead but ATA are not sure what form they will take and it is likely that more changes will come from the DfE. The exams have been moved back to July, with contingency in place for a mop-up at the end of the exam season for students who were not able to sit the exams due to COVID-19.

Exam results this year will mirror the results students received in 2020 and not the results prior to the pandemic. DMI is mindful of the disruption to school attendance in the North of England and more recently in Kent. Consequently, DMI does not think that the exam process in its current form will be fair for all students. Nevertheless, ATA are preparing the students for the exam season and hope that the exams, in some form, will run.

Other Matters

DMI advised the Board that the attendance figures quoted are for the periods stated in the report.

DMI advised the Board that there had been two permanent exclusions and DW advised that no details of the exclusions were required to be presented to the Board at this stage as they would be covered by members attending the Discipline Exclusion Committee and should not be aired before that formal procedure.

PE asked DMI if any staff have tested positive for COVID-19 and DMI advised that only one member of staff had tested positive over the October break.

DW raised the accident report and confirmed with other members that no trends requiring Board enquiry had been spotted.

6. Current Topics for discussion

a. Attendance analysis from 2 September (Mike Collins - MCO)

MCO addressed the Board and provided an overview of the attendance data from the last two terms.

Student attendance in the Academy has been very good and students were happy to be back at school. Initially, there had been some concerns about attendance and whether there would have been reluctance from parents to send their child to school or whether students would refuse to return. Although there has had to be constructive engagement with a handful of parents, any issues were resolved quickly at the start of the year.

Students are working hard and making good progress since returning. There is a strong feeling that students wish to be in the Academy and are happy to be back with their friends, and to be learning.

Parental support for COVID measures has been excellent: parents are supportive of the changes that have had to be made and good communication has given parents the reassurance that their children are in a COVID-secure environment. Parents have also generally been supportive when managing student movement outside the Academy. The message to students is that when they leave for the day they must go straight home and consequently some parents are collecting their children at the end of the day. Students are benefiting hugely and making progress socially and academically within the structure, routines and systems in place at the Academy. This is something that students missed when schools were closed and were working from home. In the Academy, students are held to account for their choices, and recognise the link between their actions and consequences – this has a positive impact on their learning.

The Academy has robust measures in place and students are managed effectively within their bubbles. All staff are fully aware of the protocol regarding students displaying symptoms. Strict actions and procedures are followed accordingly: if a student is sent to the Medical Welfare Officer with symptoms, the child is then isolated close to the Welfare Office, parents are contacted immediately, and the child is sent home with a testing kit. The Attendance and Welfare Officer maintains contact with parents, enabling the Academy to obtain the results swiftly so students can return to school if they have a negative test.

Students being absent due to testing is unavoidable in the current climate and is a national issue. All of ATA's students can access home learning via Show My Homework and they are already well versed in accessing this platform on a daily basis for their regular homework. MCO advised the Board that an email is sent out asking the relevant staff to upload lessons and work for absent students so that they don't miss out.

Recent trends show there has been a big surge of cases nationally and ATA are not immune to this but are in a fortunate position. The national picture for attendance had hovered in the high 80%'s during September while the attendance increased in December to 90%. ATA's attendance figures are 91.76%, this would be higher but the students isolating have been removed from the figure. Compared with national figures, ATA has been less affected to date.

The Academy's attendance average is 97.2% for this academic year.

The percentage for the vulnerable students is 96.25%, ICAS attendance is 98.4%, which shows our protocol is largely working and that ATA's students are not losing out on valuable lessons.

ATA's absence percentage due to COVID this Year is 3.39%, which comprises of students who are isolating, have tested positive or are symptomatic.

MCO asked the Board if they had any questions and the Board confirmed that they felt all relevant points had been covered. DW congratulated the school on behalf of the Board on the good work that has been done.

b. International Baccalaureate 5-year review (Josh Hetherington - JHE)

JHE addressed the Board and gave a presentation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) five-year review.

JHE advised the Board that the review process occurs every five years at all IB World Schools and following our authorisation as an IB World School in 2009, ATA had its last review in 2015.

The purpose of this process is for the school and the IB to evaluate how well the IB is being delivered.

The report that was sent to the Board was a draft report and the final version is due.

The first part of the review process is a self-study, which takes two years and focusses on the Philosophy, Organisation and Curriculum at each school.

A wide range of stakeholders contribute to the self-study, which culminates in a questionnaire that is completed by the IB Coordinator at ATA. This is a lengthy document – circa 38,000 words.

The IB review the self-study documents and issue a report, which contains commendations, recommendations and matters to be addressed:

Commendations on practices that address the programme standards and practices in ways that solve challenges faced by the school and/or show outstanding implementation.

Recommendations suggested further developments to be discussed in the context of a particular school.

Matter to be addressed are areas within the Academy's practice that need to be addressed urgently.

In 2015, ATA received 11 commendations, three recommendations and one matter to be addressed.

The matter to be addressed in 2015 was to meet the IB's costly professional development requirements. The IB would like all new members of staff and at least one teacher per subject to attend a three-day residential training at a cost of around £1,740 (the equivalent A-Level course costs around £200). In 2015, the ATA IB budget was increased by just under £8,000 to enable more members of staff to be trained each year. A plan was submitted to the IB to demonstrate the way in which this particular matter would be met over a number of years in order to spread the cost of the training. This was accepted by the IB.

The 2020 draft report was received in November. The report contained 15 commendations, an increase of 4 from 2015. It also contained 7 recommendations, an increase of 4 from 2015, and one matter to be addressed.

JHE gave examples of how the Academy intended to act upon the recommendations in light of ATA's context.

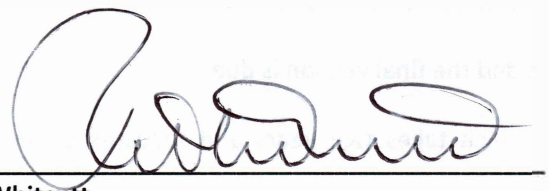
JHE explained that the matter to be addressed was the same as in 2015 – to meet the requirements for IB professional development. Whilst the matter to be addressed was the same as 2015, this wasn't to say that it hadn't been met following the 2015 review. The nature of staff turnover means that staff who were trained at the point of the last review have left ATA and so new members of staff need to be trained. In addition, when a new specification is introduced (which has happened in several subjects since 2015), staff need to be trained again. It is the combination of these factors that mean that not every member of staff was trained at the point the self-study was submitted. To spread the cost of training, a number of staff attend courses each year rather than all staff attending training immediately prior to the self-study review.

JHE explained that, as in 2015, an action plan was being created in relation to the matter to be addressed. This will again allow the Academy to prioritise training where it is most needed and spread the cost over a number of academic years. JHE explained that in response to the pandemic, all IB training was now available virtually at half of the usual price and so the Academy was making the most of this by booking in training courses at the reduced rate. The action plan will be submitted to the IB before the deadline of 01/06/2021.

7. Any other business

There was no other business.

DW thanked colleagues for attending and their continued support.



Signed: _____
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 23/02/2021