

**MINUTES OF THE 134<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON  
WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2019 AT 17.30**

**Present:** Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Stewart Harris (SH), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Steven Nash (SNA), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Kevin Chamberlain (KC), Michael Collins (MCO), Amit Chadda (ACH).

**Absent:** Rachel Branagan (RB) and Tony Bothwell (TB).

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

**Start Time:** 17:30

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were passed on from RB, who could not attend due to work commitments. TB had attended the earlier FRC meeting but had been unable to stay for this meeting.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record and duly signed.

**3. Matters Arising**

The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair took place. DW and AEE were nominated for the roles and they agreed to continue in their current roles of Chair and Vice Chair of the Executive Board.

As stated in the previous meeting's minutes DMI is seeking to create a curriculum group, separate to the Executive Board, to scrutinise our curriculum. This has been done within the Executive Board meetings in the past but more time needs allowing for detailed understanding. DW, SHA, PED, SNA and CCN all agreed to attend the curriculum meetings, subject to any work or diary clashes.

DW noted that DMI had met with Wandsworth to discuss the offensive weapons protocol that was previously discussed. DMI had now notified Wandsworth that the Academy would not be supporting the protocol as, after careful consideration, the Executive Board disagreed with it and felt it would reduce the safety of students at the Academy. DMI had suggested a number of improvements to Andy Hough (Head of the Education Inclusion Service at Wandsworth) at a previous meeting but it was not known what action had resulted. AEE asked if any other schools in the local area had signed up to the protocol. DMI said that as far as he was aware no schools had.

DMI notified the Board about an incident that had taken place the previous week, involving a family member of a student.

**4. Principal's Report**

DMI let colleagues know that the development plan had been included in his report for the first time and he then asked the Board if they would like to ask any questions about the Academy's strategic plan. SNA asked a general question about the concerns and challenges the Academy is expecting to face over the next 5 years. Staff retention and funding were the main issues that most schools across the country, including Ashcroft, will face. PED asked if the staffing situation across the country was worsening. DMI explained that Ashcroft often struggled to retain a number of its young staff as the Academy invests heavily in training excellent teachers who are often offered promoted roles elsewhere. Teaching in London can also be transient, especially for young staff who subsequently wish to buy property, and there has been a sharp uptake in teachers moving abroad because of the rising living cost in London. PED also said that is becoming the accepted norm in younger generations to move jobs more often, including moves between industries. DMI and RJP added that because of the current lack of prospective teachers entering training for the profession, the problem would undoubtedly continue to grow unless the attraction of teaching as a career could be enhanced amongst graduates.

DMI reported that “high needs” funding had continued to be cut and SNA explained that he had witnessed the impact of this on families and asked if the Academy was covering the shortfall caused by the reduction in council funding for students with disabilities. DMI confirmed that the Academy was indeed doing this and gave a specific example of a student who required support which exceeded £28,000 per annum but for whom the Academy received only £10,000 in funding. SNA expressed frustration that this forced the Academy to cover for the council’s poor provision.

DMI was asked for more information about T levels. He explained that they were technology-based qualifications but also explained that the Academy would not be offering T levels. Asked why AS levels were being phased out, DMI reminded the board that this was due to the changes made to A-Levels (to a linear model) and to the added cost of entering students into AS exams. The reduction in the number of schools doing so had forced exam boards to phase out AS qualifications in minority subjects.

SNA asked if the Academy had alliances with universities, MCO responded that the Academy did have positive relationships with a number of universities but no alliance that would give students preferential treatment in any admissions process or joint collaboration on a particular qualification programme.

SNA also asked if any students of a particular faith, race, gender or sexual orientation faced any notable issues in the Academy. DMI said that all data showed no correlation existed and that the school was an accepting, multi-cultural school.

## **5. Current Developments For Discussion**

### **a. Early analysis of results (DMI)**

DMI distributed a document, which showed an early version of the Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR). DMI noted that the full IDSR would be released in January. DMI discussed with the Board the processes LG go through when they receive the data and results. DMI explained that that exam papers which are one mark below a grade boundary are automatically registered for a remark. There had been an issue with the GCSE Citizenship paper this year which had been marked incorrectly. The Academy had complained to the exam board and a number of papers had been re-marked with an increase of up to 15 marks.

Analysis is then given by the exam board so the Academy can learn from the results and inform future plans in each department.

DMI said that the Academy’s projected progress 8 score was +0.77, which was pleasingly higher than first expected. The score was lower than in previous years but that this had long been anticipated due to the characteristics of this particular GCSE cohort. DMI added that the change in pastoral team in Year 10 had inspired improvement. DMI highlighted the SEN progress scores: students with SEN needs had achieved +0.82.

DMI then showed the progress 8 splits for advantaged and disadvantaged students and highlighted the excellent results for both groups in Maths and English. DMI noted the Academy had received more grade 3 results than in previous years. DMI also noted that Business Studies, Design and Technology and Psychology results were lower than expected but significant changes had been put in place in the departments to rectify this. SNA asked DMI about community languages at the Academy. DMI explained that a number of students who spoke a second language at home undertook a GCSE qualification in that language.

Looking ahead to next year, DMI added that the projected progress 8 score for the current Year 11 cohort was +1.1 which would be an excellent outcome for the Academy if achieved.

DMI highlighted the strong A2 results, but the (expected) reduction in the number of A\* grades received. This was no surprise and was a National trend since the government had been instituting some changes to try to avoid grade inflation. DMI also noted that the Academy received a higher number of C grades than in previous years. LG are currently meeting with Curriculum Managers to review and improve each subject’s curriculum. There had been a slight drop in A2 results overall but the results were still excellent and the best in the borough. SNA asked why more was not made of the fact that the results were so good. DMI explained that the Academy did not feel the need to trumpet results publicly as the Academy is still six times over-subscribed.

SNA asked if the data was used to determine which teachers are under-performing. DMI confirmed that the results of exam classes were a factor in any pay scale and performance decision.

#### **b. Sixth Form curriculum**

MCO showed the Board the curriculum changes that he and the Leadership Group (LG) had been developing. MCO noted that the sixth form was the highest achieving sixth form in the borough and was extremely popular. 20% of the sixth form cohort had recently applied for places at Oxbridge as part of the early entry programme. Four Ashcroft students from last year's cohort were studying at Cambridge and MCO expected that to increase. AEE asked if the sixth form received a large number of applications from any particular school in the local area. MCO explained that it varied from year to year. DW also asked for information about the split of internal and external students moving into the sixth form. MCO estimated that the sixth form currently contained 60% internal and 40% external. MCO also commented on the number of grammar, private and high performing schools that were providing competition.

MCO gave more information about the progression system, which is set to change. Previously students had to achieve 3 D grades in their AS levels in order to progress successfully to Year 13. SNA asked if students were allowed to repeat Year 12 at ATA. They are not. The Board discussed the huge leap in difficulty between GCSE and A-Level. The removal of AS levels in a number of subjects means that there is now no real benchmark for progression to Year 13 or nationally recognised qualifications at the end of Year 12 for university applications.

MCO highlighted that the majority of local sixth forms had moved to a 3-subject, 2-year model and that because of this, students expressed a desire to study three A-levels rather than four. MCO showed a graph, which highlighted the huge decrease in AS level entries across the country. LG had discussed this and concluded that because of this decline, the current curriculum model would become unviable. MCO explained that any changes to the curriculum would be instated in 2021. The Board discussed the pros and cons of AS level entry. SNA asked MCO to clarify the reasons behind the decline in AS levels; MCO explained that this had happened because of a change to a Linear A Level model in 2015. AEE noted that this change to a linear model had led to an increase in unconditional university offers.

MCO provided local context, comparing the curriculum the Academy offers with the curriculum that local rivals offer. MCO then showed the Board the benefits and threats associated with moving from 4 A Levels to a 3-A-Level system. The benefits included more curriculum teaching time and built in time for interleaving and better as well as removing the 'I'm going to drop it' factor. The threats included concerns about the narrowing of the curriculum and less flexibility. There would also be a threat that certain courses would be less likely to run. SNA asked which subjects would be at risk. MCO explained that Performing Arts, DT and PE would be at risk but that they would still be offered. MCO added that all students would study the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) and this would give students the opportunity to widen their subject knowledge.

MCO then showed the Board the proposed curriculum model. The majority of students would study 3 A-Levels and students who wish to study Maths and Further Maths would be allowed to study 4 A-Levels. All students will study the EPQ and it will be timetabled. Terminal AS exams in Year 12 will be retained in subjects that continue to offer these exams and internal assessments will take place in subjects without AS exams. Students in Year 12 will be monitored closely so that underperformance and suitability for study in their chosen subjects can be identified and tackled.

AEE confirmed that universities do not have any preference between students who have studied three or four A-Levels. MCO confirmed that the students would receive UCAS points for the EPQ.

The Board confirmed that they were happy to progress with the new curriculum model.

#### **c. Other reports**

The board noted, but found no issue with, other reports in DMI's submissions to the meeting including the accident report which showed no particular trends or concentrations of hazards beyond normal expectations in a busy school.

## 6. Vice-Principal's Report

RJP notified the Board that the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) renovation had made a positive impact on Academy life. RJP showed the Committee a number of pictures of the LRC and explained changes and outcomes. The Board agreed that the renovations had been a success. RJP noted that the overall cost had been 30% higher than expected but the majority of the additional costs were for items not included in the original estimate. RJP explained that the LRC area would especially benefit pupil premium students who did not have access to computer facilities at home and that the project had been partially funded by pupil premium funding. RJP and DMI noted that the facilities had been in constant use, with 104 students in before school just the day before.

RJP then discussed the planned refurbishment works, which will help to house the extra form of entry. RJP expressed his hope that the project would start to progress as there had been a number of hold ups. The refurbishment will create a number of new classroom spaces as well as a new conference area. The SEN department will move to F block with ARC and the Art department would move to the previous SEN area. RJP hopes that some small preparatory works would be undertaken in Easter, with the main schedule of the work taking place as soon as the formal summer exams had taken place and through the 2020 summer holidays.

RJP updated the Board on last year's revenue funding situation. RJP had previously estimated that the Academy would incur a deficit of around £100,000. However, the Trustees had previously been consulted and they were happy for the Academy to continue operating in such a way for the immediate future, funded from reserves. RJP also notified the Board that the 3-year revenue budget forecast return had been submitted to the ESFA.

RJP noted that there would also be a 2.75% pay increase for teaching staff and that an additional government grant had been given to Academies to help cover the cost of the 0.75% element of this, expecting schools to find the remainder. RJP added that the costs of contributing to the pension scheme was continuing to increase and that more funds had been granted to cover the rising costs, at least for the immediate future.

RJP updated the Committee on the staff attendance reward scheme and discussed the educational benefits of excellent teacher attendance and the financial implications of minimising temporary staff. 62.6% of all teaching staff attended every single day of the academic year. 94.5% of teaching staff received some form of bonus, which is the highest rate since the scheme's creation. RJP noted that Associate staff also were also eligible for the scheme but the performance had historically not reached the level of teaching staff. RJP hoped that the new Higher Level Teaching Assistants would help to improve the attendance of TLAs at the Academy, who have typically struggled to attend consistently. The overall cost of the scheme was £100,000, which RJP felt was good value for money as it minimised the number of time students were educated or supported by someone less familiar to them. DW noted that the net cost of the scheme was lower than stated, as the Academy saved a large amount of funds on supply staff. SNA asked if associate staff, particularly Teaching Learning Assistants, were made aware of their poor attendance in comparison to teaching staff. RJP noted that this information was not shared publicly and ACH added that the role was often filled by people in transition whether graduates or parents returning to work.

RJP noted that there had been an increase in Openview hirings which had led to an increase in revenue. RJP added that the Spencer club had again increased their maintenance costs for Openview, and that he would be discussing these with them in due course.

## 6. Any Other Business

No other business

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

Richard Whitcutt

Date: 11 Dec /2019

**Chair of Executive Board**

