

**MINUTES OF THE 138th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
THURSDAY 09 JULY 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), Steven Nash (SNA), Rachel Branagan (RB), Kevin Chamberlain (KC), Jennifer Calvert (JCA) and Lucy Sargeant (LSA)

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 all joined the virtual meeting via the Zoom online meeting platform. The only absence was Tony Bothwell (TB) due to WIFI constraints.

2. Declarations

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

DMI informed the Board that parents seemed happy with level and content of the work that has been provided by the teachers for the students during the lockdown, although this was being reviewed regularly if parents expressed concerns.

This has been a difficult situation despite everyone's best efforts for the students to continue to study at home. The live lessons and contact from the students' tutors have been very good despite the experience for students being very different without face-to-face contact with teachers and without seeing their friends. Some students haven't left their houses for 4 months.

4. Matters Arising

No further matters were raised beyond that covered above

5. Principal's Report

DMI welcomed the Board and introduced Lucy Sargeant (LSA), Curriculum Manager for RS and Social Sciences.

DMI explained to the Board that he had produced his report in the same summary format which he presented at the last meeting. One additional item was the IB Results, which had been released on Sunday 5th July.

The IB results were the first set of the results students received to have gone through an algorithmic calculation.

DMI advised the Board that the IB used a different statistical model to that which OfQUAL used. ATA set a Teacher Assessed Grade and submitted the work that would normally be internally assessed and externally moderated but which this year was marked and graded externally. The combination of the two grades was used to set the final grade for each subject.

DMI told the Board that the results had been, quite considerably, downgraded and that ATA were not happy with the outcome. One student had a conditional offer to study Biology at Oxford University and ATA were strongly of the view that the student's IB result would be 44. The result as awarded was 38. The student was predicted a grade 7 for Chemistry and the grade as awarded was a 5. The way in which grades were awarded was not clear at the time of the meeting and ATA cannot detect a clear pattern. ATA have contacted the parents of the student to discuss what steps can be taken.

DMI told the board that every school in the UK has had the same issue and that a number of students have failed to meet their conditional offers for university as a result. ATA's IB Coordinator, Joe Anson, has drafted a letter complaint to the IB, which is 20 pages in length with description, students' prior attainment, examples of students' work and reference to where we believe the grade setting has gone wrong. Rest assured, ATA y will do their best to remedy this issue and with the Universities concerned.

DMI advised the Board that he will keep colleagues updated.

DMI was asked the number of students this had affected and DMI advised that it had affected 7 out of 9 students.

CCN asked DMI if students will have the same problems with A levels but DMI advised colleagues that the method used for grading A levels is very different and has been published. This was not the case with IB.

SNA asked DMI if any of the parents have presented legal action against the IB and DMI advised that none have as yet but there could be in the future.

Lessons

DMI told the Board that he was keen to make sure that the all the students follow a normal routine while working from home and all lessons have been developed for ShowMyHomeWork so there can be no excuses from the students for not accessing work. Lessons were provided for all students Years 7 – 12 and additional work from the SEN department for the younger year groups. The Live lessons have made a positive difference.

DMI told the Board that he was pleased with announcement from the Government that Year 10 and Year 12 students we able to return to school for the last 3 weeks until the end of term. There will be a large number of students that have not attended school for over five months before they return in September.

DMI told the Board that if Year 10 and Year 12 students were an indication of what we should expect to see in September, students were enthusiastic when they attended the Academy. However, it was obvious that students had somewhat lost the art of interaction and were therefore very quiet in lessons.

Staff have enjoyed having students in the Academy.

ATA conducted an assessment week for Year 10 and 12 students, which worked very well with an attendance rate of 99% from the students. When students attended lessons, they were talking about their performances and their results, which clearly showed they care about their work and what they have been learning.

The Academy has seen a significant increase in the number of vulnerable students and children of key workers attending each day. The Teaching and Learning Assistants have been superb in the SEN and ARC departments and have worked with their student groups regularly on Teams. They have maintained regular contact with their key students and ATA will be able to hold the annual Arts Week on line.

Results and results days

DMI advised the board that the Teaching staff have followed the government guidelines in producing the students' predicted grades. Teachers and Curriculum Managers have used all the data they have at their disposal for each student so that they predict the grade that they firmly believe the student would have achieved had they sat the exam.

ATA believes the grades that were submitted were fair and as accurate as they could be, but it was a very complex process. The Exam Board will adjust the grades if they think the grades schools have awarded are too harsh or overly generous.

DMI advised the Board that ATA's Results day will still run in same way it has in previous years, with students coming in to the Academy, but will have the correct measures in place to make it COVID-secure.

The results will be released to students on the published day at 8am. The students will be able to see each other and celebrate together and ATA will have staff available to help with the clearing process for university. There will also be support for Year 11 enrolment and for students who have not met the entry requirements for our 6th Form.

Pastoral support

DMI advised the Board of a number of students who are known to Social Services or who are vulnerable.

Over the Lockdown period Phil Hall (ATA's Designated Safeguarding Lead) has made four referrals to Social Services (four separate students).

Form tutors have made fortnightly contact with their students. Mike Smith, Amit Chadda and Mike Collins have invited students from Year 7 to 9 to attend a meeting (with their parents) to discuss any concerns or issues they may have and to discuss progress.

Academy Staff

DMI advised the Board that four staff are shielding but more staff have been working within the academy buildings during the lockdown period

DMI advised the Board of ATA's external appointments and internal appointments, and also advised that ATA are yet to recruit one Mathematician and a TLA for the SEN Department.

It has become more apparent over the lockdown period that some NQTs feel nervous about starting a new position in a school after having had their NQT year cut short. One NQT has rejected our job offer as a result of this nervousness.

Communication with Parents

DMI informed the Board that he has written to the parents each week since the closure and included important updates and information in each letter. The weekly Newsround has been sent to parents every Friday.

Day to Day Activities

All trips and visits scheduled to take place during the lockdown period were cancelled and parents were refunded.

SNA asked DMI about the assessment week and whether the results be used to produce a report. DMI advised that there will be no reports for parents and that the grades awarded after the assessment week were to help teaching staff monitor students' progress and plan their lessons.

Finance and Administration

The Academy is still expected to incur a deficit in the year, although with Covid-19 it is difficult to be precise and some areas of expenditure such as exams still remain unclear. The deficit was originally forecast to be £500k but it is likely to be reduced, although the true extent is not clear as of yet.

The Government announce that there will be Funding of £1bn for Schools but ATA do not have detail as of yet.

The Expansion to ATA's teaching spaces is now moving quickly after the various setbacks. DMI reiterated to the Board of the areas which are being worked on at present and was pleased that we are two weeks ahead of schedule.

6. Current Topics for discussion

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Policy (Lucy Sargeant – LSA)

DMI introduced LSA to the Board and the revised RSE policy for discussion.

LSA advised the board that the RSE policy has been updated and changes have been made to the curriculum too. LSA advised the Board that the policy had not been changed in substance in 20 years and therefore it did not reflect the world in which we now live. For example, behaviour online and protection online are issues facing young people now.

There have also been many changes made in relation to gender, sexuality and acceptance.

Parents can withdraw their children from taught sex education but not the taught lessons on the subject of relationships. In order to withdraw, parents will have to write to the Principal, but the student can opt back in three terms before they turn 16.

DW asked LSA about the topic of families in appendix 2. Christian and Western family compositions are detailed but no mention is made of alternatives held to be valid (even if not acceptable here) by other cultures.

LSA explained that ATA will consider all family structures, including cases of multiple marriage. It is important for the students to understand that there are many different types of relationships and also to be made aware of the legal rights which married couples have in this country - students do need to understand the law of the country.

Issues around homosexuality, equality for women and the discussion of gender have to be included in the policy and in the curriculum.

Return in September

DMI gave the Board an overview of the Academy's return in September and of the areas that have been considered.

The guidance from the government, which was received on 2nd July, covered a number of important areas but did not include areas such as PE and Performing Arts. The Academy is delighted that staff and students will be able to return in September.

DMI advised the board that ATA have to make practicable and reasonable adjustments to the running of the school day so that students and staff are safe when they return. The adjustments will be called control measures and will create an even controlled environment in which students will remain in bubbles and in which staff supervision will increase.

DMI told the Board that it is important that the students receive their full entitlement to teaching and to the curriculum, and that the guidance is very clear on this point. Thought will be given to socialising, student movement and hygiene.

Each Year group will be a separate bubble and operate as they would normally expect to operate. The year group bubbles will not mix but will be able to move around the Academy following a one-way system outside. The extra-curricular activities may not happen straight away as the Academy cannot have children crossing over into another year group bubble, but ATA is giving thought to this programme in a COVID-secure manner.

The same behaviour and attendance policies will be in place and Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued to parents who choose to not send their child to school. ATA only has two students who are shielding, but the shielding programme will come to an end shortly.

For parents wishing to come to the Academy, they will only be able to do this by making an appointment.

All desks will be front facing and staff and students will be required to socially distance at all times.

DMI will review the Covid-19 risk assessment each week and will publish changes, consulting the Executive Board about any substantial alterations in approach.

The structure of the school day will be slightly different with timings and movements between lessons elongating to allow for a longer transition. Students will be encouraged to walk to the Academy and not take public transport, which will be limited.

ATA will try to organise a Year 7 Induction as ATA are keen to speak with parents before the academic year begins.

DMI advised the board that ATA's curriculum won't change. DMI also showed an overview of the plan.

DMI is keen to address each year group on the first day back and the leadership group will address the students in their year group as well. It is important to meet with new year 12's and to meet with each year group individually in order to explain the plan to the students.

Each year group will have an assembly upon their return and timetables will be posted home with form tutor details over the summer break.

The students will have to bring in a packed snack for morning break. The Lunch break will be extended and the students will be brought to the restaurant at staggered times, beginning with Year 7's.

The Transit times will change slightly and students will follow a one-way system both inside and outside the Academy's buildings.

All ATA classrooms will have hand sanitisers and wipes so that staff and students can keep areas clean after use. Air mists will also be provided to sanitise surfaces.

The Academy's day will start as a normal day at 8.30am. The students will be told to go directly to their designated playground when they arrive. The students will line up in these areas and their tutors will escort them to their assembly or form room.

There will be a staggered release at the end of the day in five waves again beginning with Year 7. DMI will ask the parents to support the Academy as much as possible and no parent will be allowed to gather to wait for the students at the end of the school day apart from Year 7.

The behaviour policy will not change.

CNN asked DMI about very first day and whether all students will return - Year 7 to Year 13. DMI advised that all

students will return at staggered times.

DMI advised the board that that sQUID accounts for new students have now all been created and details have been sent to the parents, which will allow them to purchase the correct school uniform online.

DW asked DMI if Covid-19 testing was going to be regular for the teachers. DMI advised DW that schools will be sent a number of tests.

CNN raised a question about the certificates for Prizegiving. DMI agreed to check on the status of the certificates.

7. Any other Business

DW thanked members for their participation in this on-line meeting.

Signed: 
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 16/10/20