

**MINUTES OF THE 137th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
THURSDAY 30 APRIL 2020 AT 17.30**
*Meeting held remotely on the ZOOM platform
due to the ongoing 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), Tony Bothwell (TB), Kevin Chamberlain (KC)

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. There were no absences.

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.

DW asked why unspecified reasons (quoted in the IDSR) for fixed-term exclusions had been used. DMI explained that there are only four categories to choose from when uploading information for an exclusion (unspecified reasons being one). If the reason for an exclusion does not fit an exact description, the school has to select "unspecified" and provide a brief description in the accompanying dialogue box.

4. Matters Arising

No further matters were raised beyond that covered above

5. Principal's Report

DMI explained to the Board that his report reflects what is happening at ATA in the context of the Coronavirus outbreak and national guidance given to schools. We await news of a date to reopen to more students and a detailed plan of how schools can do this safely.

It is anticipated that schools will be given notice of three weeks before Government suggests they return. At the date of the meeting, the target appears to be 1st June, but this date is subject to change and it will be some time before schools will be able to run as they did before the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

Furthermore, some parents will be concerned about the return and the possible risk of infection, while others might be keen for their children to return so that they can return to a degree of normality. DMI explained that social

distancing would be very difficult to manage for a large number of students, so careful planning will be necessary.

Virtual Lessons

DMI told the board that the current priority was that the students' routines and structures were replicated "virtually" as far as possible.

Luckily, the Academy was ready to move to a virtual presence straight away and the Academy's staff have worked hard to achieve this. Our students should begin work at 9am with all normal breaks. The students worked well before Easter; however, some students' patterns changed after the break, which means that they wake up later and work until late into the day. As a result, pastoral staff are working with parents to help the students restructure their day.

Year 11's are finding it more difficult because they ought to have been preparing for exams now. Some have lost a bit of momentum. Therefore, the Academy has produced a pre-A-Level plan for Year 11 students to help them prepare for 6th Form.

The Academy had eight students attending today, working in exactly the same way as the students who are working from home.

DW asked why not all of the expected (greater) number of key worker and vulnerable children were attending the Academy. DMI explained that it is a choice - and many parents are unwilling to send their children to the Academy while infection rates are high. Some students also have family with underlying health conditions, which mean that they have to shield. Despite this, vulnerable children are monitored and contacted regularly by a designated member of Academy staff. The frequency of the contact is determined by the individual's level of need or risk experienced.

A number of qualifying students would nevertheless benefit from being at school. Consequently, pastoral staff are working with those students and the parents to encourage attendance.

The Academy is also moving towards recorded lessons of 15/20 minutes for students in order that they can benefit from a more interactive format.

Results

The Academy has received communication from Edexcel, who are looking to receive predicted grades by mid-June. A standardisation process will follow and results will be released as normal - 13th August for the AS and A-Level results and 20th August for GCSE results. IB results will be released on 5th July.

The Academy is currently in the process of setting and moderating results.

Pastoral Support

The Academy's vulnerable students (those who receive regular support in the Academy or from social care) have been ranked red (daily contact), amber (weekly contact) or green (fortnightly contact) for pastoral support.

Students who receive mentoring when at the Academy will continue to receive mentoring from their ICAS mentor. Form Tutors are communicating with other students every fortnight and ICAS and SEN staff are in touch with students who are receipt of an EHCP or who are finding independent work a challenge.

The Academy has had three cases of domestic violence reported to it, by the students concerned. The police were informed and social care have intervened with the necessary support.

Academy Staff

The Academy was fully staffed before the school closures were announced. However, two candidates have subsequently rejected the offer of employment. One required a sponsored visa and while further advertising and

checks on the status of Tier 2 visa applications were completed, the member of staff secured another position. The second member of staff was concerned about COVID-19 and the impact it had had on her PGCE year. She does not feel ready to begin as a teacher in September. The Academy has two advertisements for an English and a Maths teacher at the moment.

Finance, resources and other matters

Just as the school closures were announced, the Academy was contacted by Wandsworth Council and told that the refurbishment work associated with the increase in student numbers at ATA was being re-tendered. Although it is the Council's contract, DMI and RJP interviewed three contractors via Zoom and gave advisory input. Once the successful contractor has been appointed, the works will start at the end of May and are scheduled to be completed by the middle of August.

The Academy is pleased that much of the work can happen over the summer holidays, and that there will therefore be minimal disruption to the students. If students are unable to return after the May holiday, the timescale for the work may be shortened.

It is important to note that schools will not receive an ISDR for this year's results nor will attendance figures be reported.

SN asked DMI about home-learning. He asked about the plan for Year 11 and Year 13 students. DMI explained that a special assembly will take place next week for Year 11 students and external students who have applied for the 6th form. They will be set enrichment and GCSE consolidation work to help them prepare for Year 12. Year 12 will be starting their Year 13 timetable on Monday 4 May and Year 13 will be encouraged with university applications and guided through university reading lists.

The Academy has supplied a number of students with a laptop who have limited access to technology at home. A number of laptops have also been ordered from the DFE under their loaning scheme for Year 10 disadvantaged students. All students who require a laptop are required to sign a loan contract upon receipt of the laptop. The Academy is also looking to provide 4G dongles to students who have poor broadband connection.

CCN mentioned she might be able to provide some laptops from her employer that the Academy could perhaps use. DMI thanked her but advised that we appear to have sufficient supply at the moment.

SN asked what the completion rates were for home learning. DMI advised that the Academy has only four students not accessing SMHW and was delighted with the uptake. However, it was apparent that some students can rush the work set for them while others will spend an excessive amount of time on the same work. The Academy is working with parents and asking them to check work rates and help with self-regulation. Students are encouraged to stick to the 1 hour and 15 minute-lessons for each subject. The Academy is receiving a lot of work back from students.

KC asked more about the refurbishment work. He asked if the Academy has a say over who wins the contract. DMI explained that whilst the Academy has ranked the contractors according to their performance in the interview, it is ultimately for the Council to decide.

CN asked DMI if we have had many comments from parents about the amount of work that is set for students. DMI explained that some have been surprised at the amount of work expected of children and the amount of work children routinely complete when in the Academy. The majority of parents were pleased with the level of work and with the help the teachers are providing to the students. Working from home and its challenges is an area that DMI addresses in his weekly letter to parents.

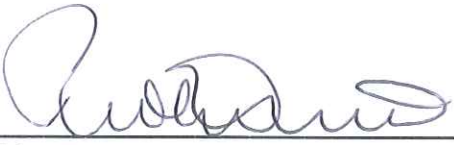
SN asked DMI if the Academy had any students or staff ill with Covid-19. DMI explained that we know of no seriously ill students or staff, although, sadly, some students have had some elderly family members who have passed away with COVID-19. DMI advised that there is now testing available for members of staff who are showing symptoms and, thankfully, we have no requirement for this so far.

RB asked DMI if all planned trips or events have been cancelled and if families are being refunded. DMI advised that, at this stage, tour operators and airlines have just postponed trips. However, DMI advised the Berlin trip has been cancelled and families will receive a refund.

PED asked DMI if, since the last meeting, any teachers have resigned to move to another school. DMI advised that no teachers have resigned since the last Executive Board meeting.

Conclusion

DW thanked members for their participation in this on-line meeting, which he felt had proved a very acceptable alternative to the usual Board meeting in the light of the current Corona virus outbreak.

Signed: 
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 3/Oct/20 *Agreed at weekly*