



MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 29th June 2016
Venue: Aspire Academy
Time: 4.00pm

Present: Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Michael Carey, Sarah Elson, Alana Frith, Jill Gray, Bill Greene, Bob Keen, Ryan Sheldon, Colin Simkins (Principal), Felicity Greeves (Executive Principal)

Together with: Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown (Deputy Principal), Jane McCumiskey (FCAT Services Lead) and Kath Buddle (FCAT Governance Administrator and minute taker)

Apologies: Sheryl Cardwell

Action

1. Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and circulated a structure for this and future meetings.

Apologies from Sheryl Cardwell were noted.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4th May 2016 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting were approved. The following matter arising from the minutes was noted:

- 3.1 **Financial presence at Academy Council meetings** (Item 5 from the previous minutes) – the FCAT Services Lead reported that half hour long pre meetings to discuss the management accounts would be held directly prior to each future academy council meeting to provide Governors with an opportunity to better understand the finances and to feel comfortable asking questions in academy council meetings.

Deborah Hanlon-Catlow, Deputy Principal and Pupil Premium Lead and Simon Blackwell, Acting Assistant Principal and Pupil Premium Co-ordinator joined the meeting for the next item.

4. Departmental Challenge – Pupil Premium

Governors challenged DHC and SB on the progress of the Action Plan to narrow the gaps in achievement between Pupil Premium students and their peers (Paper 4).

Questions from Governors

In response to a concern about the provision of a careers service following the main provider going into liquidation, SB confirmed that the academy was reviewing the situation and was focussing its attention on the more vulnerable students. The Librarian, who has qualifications in careers advice, was also providing information and advice to students.

Asked about what the academy was doing to support the other less vulnerable students with careers advice, SB explained that visits to local careers fairs had



taken place and a future visit was scheduled for January 2017. In addition, agencies had been contracted to come into the academy to provide information on careers and higher education opportunities and to help develop skills and aspiration. Year 6 students would be visiting the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) as part of their transition programme on 27th June 2016.

Asked about careers advice for less able students, SB explained that the academy was working with local employers to develop apprenticeship and placement opportunities.

In response to a question about the success of the mentoring programme for more vulnerable students, SB explained that a Learning Mentor had been brought into the academy to work with boys in particular. The programme was still running but early anecdotal feedback had confirmed that there had been a change in attitudes to learning from this group. Nationally there had been evidence of students moving on to apprenticeships and college courses following mentoring.

FG joined the meeting.

Asked about whether parents were successfully engaged in the mentoring programme, SB confirmed that the Learning Mentor had established links with parents and employers and was providing after school sessions in order to improve working relationships with both. Links with parents through case workers were also being established. DHC confirmed that parental engagement, generally, was a key priority for the academy.

In response to a query about the criteria for identifying Pupil Premium students, SB explained that the cohort included children and young people who had been in receipt of free school meals over the last six years, even if this had since been withdrawn. It also included children of parents in the Armed Forces and Children Looked After.

Asked about what the academy was doing to improve achievement of higher ability Pupil Premium students, SB confirmed that actions were in place to support their progress including taking groups to higher education establishments to raise aspirations, upskilling in terms of qualifications and offering personal support on a one to one basis. He reassured Governors that each Pupil Premium student received support appropriate to their need but acknowledged that there was more to be done to ensure gaps in outcomes were narrowed.

Asked if he felt the use of Teaching Assistants (TAs) was effective in narrowing the gaps in outcomes between Pupil Premium students and their peers, SB acknowledged that there was conflicting evidence. However, removing some students from lessons under the care of a TA could change the dynamic of a class and be extremely effective in supporting the remaining cohort, for example, in increasing the intensity and level of their learning.

Asked if those students experiencing difficulty in class were easily identified to the rest of their peers, SB confirmed that this was not the case. There was no stigma attached to those taken out of a class as the academy did this with different groups of students for a variety of reasons in order to improve teaching and learning. The academy was committed to providing individual support for students when and where it was needed.

Asked what one thing he would focus on to ensure improved outcomes for Pupil Premium students, SB replied that this would be on improving the quality of



teaching. He explained that the academy had already made significant progress in improving attendance and behaviour and this was the area the academy would be concentrating its resources on next year. In response to a linked question about the correlation between the quality of teaching and outcomes for students, SB confirmed that this was a key factor. An FCAT Teaching and Learning Quality Improvement Group (QIG) was looking at best practice to be shared across academies in order to ensure consistent 'Good' and 'Outstanding' teaching.

Asked about the main issue impacting on progress of Pupil Premium students, the Deputy Principal (LSB) explained that this was resilience and the academy had an action plan in place to address this. Literacy skills too were poor for some Pupil Premium students and a programme for students, including the higher ability students, was being developed.

Asked what the academy was doing to address the regression in progress of Year 9 students, SB confirmed that targeted interventions were being implemented within classes, especially for the core subjects. The Shine Project which provides speech and language therapy would help develop resilience and readiness for learning. Asked how motivation for learning would be maintained for the cohort in Year 10, DHC explained that the changed culture within school had already made a difference to attitudes to learning and there had been an increase in the number of extra-curricular activities available for students. It was expected that the range of programmes in place would help support progress for the coming year.

Asked about the take-up of extra-curricular activities, DHC reported that some had been more successful than others. 14 students had joined the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme this year and 20 were down to take part next year.

Asked how the progress of Pupil Premium students in Aspire was benchmarked, LSB explained that the Pupil Premium QIG compared progress across all FCAT academies and was also a forum for sharing good practice.

Asked if it was possible to identify the effectiveness of specific activities to narrow the gaps in terms of outcomes, SB explained that this was difficult as most were part of long term strategies and success was reliant on the full package of support provided and the ethos and culture within the organisation.

In response to a question about data collected on Year 11 students, SB confirmed that each student had an individual 'flightpath' which allowed staff to track progress and provide interventions where necessary.

The Chair thanked DHC and SB for the information on Pupil Premium and Governors for their questions. DHC and SB left the meeting.

5. Finance and Resources

5.1 Management accounts to end of April 2016

The FCAT Services Lead highlighted the key points from the management accounts as at the end of April 2016 (Paper 6.1). The academy had budgeted for a deficit of £300k last year but this was running at a deficit of £360k currently with a deficit of £430 forecast by the end of the year. This was mainly as a result of additional building work and refurbishments required for the new build that were not originally budgeted for.

The academy had healthy reserves but these would be needed in the future to counteract the reduction in funding as a result of falling student numbers expected in the next few years.



5.2 **Three Year Budget Plan 2016 – 2019**

Governors considered the budget for 2016 – 2017 and the forecast until 2019 (Paper 6.2). The FCAT Services Lead explained that some Pupil Premium funding would be carried forward from this year into next but that the academy would need to make some difficult decisions in terms of staffing in order to ensure the budget remained viable. FG explained that the academy had been over funded in the past due to its debt on leaving the local authority. However, the surplus needed to be protected in order to supplement the budget over the coming years.

The Principal reported that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was already reviewing its associate staffing structure in order to identify potential savings.

Questions from Governors

Asked if the academy might need to make formal redundancies in order to make savings, the Principal acknowledged that this might be the case and that fixed term contracts were also under review. Some higher paid teaching staff had already left the academy and not been replaced, but further cuts would be necessary.

In response to a question about the cost effectiveness of making redundancies, the Principal acknowledged that whilst this might be expensive for the academy in the short term, a number of support staff roles were now not fit for purpose and needed to be reviewed.

Asked if it was possible to increase the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) to attract more funding, FG confirmed that this would be possible because most schools in Blackpool were full and there was a shortage of places. However, increasing the number of students would require more teaching staff which would be expensive. There might be potential to increase the PAN in order to initiate further building work to accommodate numbers but a strategic approach to this would need to be developed.

The Chair thanked the FCAT Services Lead for her work in the budget and for steering the academy in the right direction in terms of spending.

5.3 **Risk Register update**

Governors noted the latest version of the Aspire Risk Register (Paper 6.3)

JMcC gave apologies and left the meeting.

6. Governance and Leadership

6.1 **Appointment of new Principal**

Governors were officially informed of the appointment of Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown as Principal from September 2016 and gave congratulations on her promotion.

Colin Simkins would move to become Executive Principal on a part time basis from September offering support to LSB in her first term in charge. Phil Birch, Executive Principal at Garstang Community Academy, would take over as Executive Principal at Aspire when CS retired in December 2016. CS reported that he had met with Phil who seemed very pleased to be offered the opportunity to support LSB and the academy.

FG reported that 11 new principals and executive principals had attended an



induction session the previous week and job descriptions for both positions had been drafted. Principals were responsible for the day to day operation of the academies with executive principals providing support and quality assurance.

Governors expressed their satisfaction with the FCAT process which allowed for such a smooth transfer over at senior level.

6.2 **Reappointment of Alana Frith as Sponsor Governor**

Governors recommended to Directors the reappointment of Alana Frith as Sponsor Governor for another four year period.

6.3 **Academy Council Skills Balance**

Governors noted the report on skills within the Academy Council (Paper 5.3).

6.4 **Content of meetings 2016 – 2017**

Governors received the paper outlining the items to be discussed at meetings over the next academic year (Paper 5.4).

7. **Strategy**

7.1 **Academy Improvement Plan 2016 – 2017**

Governors noted the Improvement Plan for next year (Paper 7.1).

Questions from Governors

Asked why the outstanding actions from the previous year were not included in next year's plan, the Principal explained that the SLT had agreed to focus next year's on the key priorities around the teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for children themes. Outstanding actions from this year would still be completed but not form part of the plan unless impacting on the two themes. FG and JG emphasised the need to focus on assessment as much as teaching and learning as this was a key issue at Ofsted inspection.

7.2 **Progress against Improvement Plan 2015 – 2016**

Governors noted progress against this year's improvement plan (Paper 7.2)

7.3 **Feedback on FCAT Developments**

The Chair and FG provided the following feedback on FCAT developments:

- The Regional Schools Commission had passed Westcliff and Gateway's applications to join the Trust.
- Mereside Primary School was expected to join in January 2017.
- FG and the FCAT Executive had attended four days of interviews with the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the opening of the free school and feedback on this was expected imminently. It was noted that the period of 'purdah' prior to national elections might delay the response.
- Chris McConnachie had resigned as Chair of Hodgson Academy and been replaced by Sarah Molloy. Sarah had joined FCAT as a Director.

8. **Principal's Report**

Governors received the Principal's Report (Paper 8.1). The Chair asked for Governors to participate in a conversation about student progress data on Governors Virtual Office (GVO) rather than at the meeting.

All



The Principal explained that this would be his last report and thanked Governors for their support during his time in post and in helping the academy move to its current stronger position. He highlighted the increase in student numbers and informed Governors that there was a waiting list of 15 for the next Year 7 cohort. The academy was also expecting to accommodate a number of refugee children from Syria. The ambitious transition programme for Year 6 children from feeder schools had begun and early signs were that children were responding well to it.

John Topping, Deputy Principal would be leaving the academy at the end of the year. The Principal asked that his thanks to John be formally recorded and paid tribute to his support and skills over his time in post. Governors recognised what a wonderful servant to the academy John had been and of Bispham High School prior to that and praised his commitment to successfully managing the move to the new building, in particular. FG explained that John would be working for FCAT on a part time basis to support marketing and estates maintenance.

The new structure at Aspire would incorporate an Executive Principal, Principal, Deputy Principal, three Assistant Principals and one temporary Assistant Principal

BK left the meeting.

Questions from Governors

In response to a question about the Self Evaluation Form (SEF), the Principal reported that this had been based on the Montgomery model which had been assessed during their recent successful Ofsted visit. The SLT had assessed Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment and Outcomes for Children as 'Requires Improvement' and Leadership and Management and Behaviour and Safety as 'Good'. The overall score was a tentative 2 ('Good') but the academy needed its summer exam results before a firmer score could be allocated.

Asked about student preparedness for learning, the Principal confirmed that this was improving though there was still some low level disruption in classes where the quality of teaching was less than good.

Asked if all the expected Year 7 students would have access to the transition programme, the Principal explained that all those for which they already had details would have the opportunity to participate, though it was expected that the children on roll would change a little before the start of the new year.

Asked about his specific concerns for the new year, the Principal identified Year 8 as a particularly challenging cohort. He also emphasised the need to move teachers that still required improvement to 'Good' standard and 'Good' teachers to 'Outstanding'.

Asked whether he was concerned about the planned reduction to the associate staffing structure, the Principal explained that he was worried about the impact on staff morale particularly following the disruption everyone had had to endure over the past three years.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his report and for his leadership of the academy through a difficult period and wished him well in his new role.

9. Safeguarding

Governors noted the minutes of the meeting of the FCAT Safeguarding Board held on 9th June 2016 (Paper 9.1).



Questions from Governors

In response to a question about students missing from school, the Deputy Principal explained that when families moved children to another school or out of area, the Blackpool Pupil Welfare Office (PWO) liaised with them to make sure the children continued to receive education. The academy would enter the student's name on the 'Missing Out Register'. In the case of students not turning up for school, staff would contact parents on day one of their absence to make sure there were no safeguarding issues to address and would continue to liaise with them for the whole period of absence. After nine days the PWO service would formally check the situation.

In response to a comment about the fact that there had been no representation from the academy at the last FCAT Safeguarding Board meeting, LSB explained that this had been an exceptional instance brought about because of an important meeting scheduled at the academy which had taken precedence. Normally the academy provided one governor and two members of staff who were very committed to the meetings.

10. Review of Risks

Governors identified the following new risks:

- Threat to staff morale as a result of the associate staff structure review
- The need to resource EAL provision in respect of the imminent arrival of Syrian students into the academy.

11. Date and Time of next meeting

Day: Wednesday

Date: 14th September 2016

Time: 4.00pm

Venue: Aspire Academy

Signed: _____
(Chair)

Date: _____