



MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 14th September 2016
Venue: Aspire Academy
Time: 4.00pm

Present: Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Michael Carey, Sarah Elson, Jill Gray, Bill Greene, Bob Keen, Ryan Sheldon, Carole Sweeting, Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown (Principal), Colin Simkins (Executive Principal)

Together with: John Woods (Assistant Principal – for part of the meeting), Tony Nicholson (FCAT Deputy CEO) and Kath Buddle (FCAT Governance Administrator and minute taker)

Apologies: Sheryl Cardwell

1. Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly the new Principal, Ms Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown and new Governor, Mrs Carole Sweeting.

Apologies from Sheryl Cardwell were noted.

Governors asked that their thanks to Alana Frith, outgoing Governor, for her contributions to the Academy Council be recorded and wished her well on her appointment as Chair at Westcliff Primary School.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chair declared her involvement in the development of the FCAT Free School.

There were no specific declarations of interest for this meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 29th June and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting were approved. There were no matters arising. The Clerk confirmed that pre-meetings to discuss the management accounts prior to academy council meetings would begin from December 2016 when the first set of accounts was due to be scrutinised.

4. Governance and Leadership

4.1 Review of Academy Council Membership

Governors noted the current membership of the Aspire Academy Council including the move of Alana Frith to Westcliff Academy Council and the appointment of Carole Sweeting as new FCAT Governor.

4.2 Appointment of Safeguarding Governor

The Academy Council considered the appointment of a new Safeguarding Governor to replace Alana Frith. The Principal explained the remit of the role and the importance of this in respect of holding the Principal to account and participating in internal safeguarding audits. CS expressed an interest in the role and the Chair offered to mentor her through the early stages. Both agreed to meet with Neill Oldham, Designated Safeguarding Lead for Aspire to discuss the matter further and to feed back at the next meeting.

4.3 Register of Interests

Action

Chair/
CS



Governors returned completed declaration of interest forms which would inform the Register of Business Interests.

4.4 Governor Skills Audit

Governors noted the latest analysis of the skills audit returns which showed a good balance of skills across the board. The Clerk confirmed that the Governors Training Programme for 2016-2017 was nearing completion and would be circulated soon.

4.5 Published Admission Number (PAN) 2018-2019

Following a brief discussion it was agreed to leave the PAN for 2018-2019 at 180. The Principal confirmed that, apart from four places in Year 7, the academy was full.

JW joined the meeting for the next item.

5. Principal's Report and Summary of Examination Results

The Principal and Assistant Principal provided a summary of the recent summer examination results. The academy had met national floor targets and this was encouraging taking into consideration the fact that this followed the merger of two struggling schools but staff were aware that significant improvement was needed. The Principal and Executive Principal had met with all subject leads to carry out detailed analysis of the results and to identify where improvements could be made. Every member of staff had been disappointed with the results and was on board to ensure progress was accelerated for the current year.

Questions from Governors

In response to a question about how the academy aimed to narrow the gaps in achievement between Pupil Premium students and their peers bearing in mind the fact that results for this cohort had been particularly disappointing, the Principal and Assistant Principal confirmed that actions targeted at this group were included in the action plan for this year. All staff had been made aware of the data for this cohort and the fact that the level of progress was unacceptable, especially for those pupils at the higher ability level. Going forward, the academy would be measuring progress for Pupil Premium students against progress for this cohort nationally which might prove even more of a challenge for staff.

In response to a question about the reason for the decline in performance of students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) the Assistant Principal confirmed that out of 21 students in this cohort only 10 had achieved positive Progress 8 scores. A correlation between the results and the amount of support students received in class had been identified. Last year there had been almost twice the number of students in this group but their ability levels had been higher and they had been able to attain A* - C grade GCSE passes. Staff were aware of the need to introduce early interventions for SEND pupils in all year groups. It was unlikely, however, that there would be any SEND students taking exams next year.

Asked if there had been any lessons learned about the effectiveness of support provided this year for SEND students, the Assistant Principal acknowledged that the allocation of Teaching Assistant (TA) time in class had not been successful. Some small group work carried out on and off site had proved beneficial as had the PET-xi programme (national results based programme aimed at providing intensive support for young people in danger of under achieving academically) that the academy had signed up to. However, high quality teaching made the real difference to performance of all cohorts and the academy was focussed on



increasing the proportion of outstanding teachers as a priority.

In response to a question about how support for the lower performing subjects might be improved, the Assistant Principal explained that there were FCAT Quality Improvement Groups (QIGs) for core subjects made up of professionals from across the academies who could provide best practice and expert support. The Executive Principal agreed to raise the potential for providing the same for foundation subjects at the Executive Heads meeting scheduled to take place the following week.

CS

Asked if writing skills had affected performance in exams, including English and Maths, the Assistant Principal confirmed that this was a contributory factor. He also acknowledged that teachers of all subjects needed to pick up on this and ensure that literacy levels were continually monitored. The English Team was relatively new and it was expected that this would make a significant difference this year. A meeting with the Head of English to identify issues within each class was scheduled to take place later in the week.

In response to concerns about the performance of Music and Art, the Assistant Principal confirmed that meetings with the subject leads to discuss shortfalls had taken place and that support plans had been implemented for one of them. The academy was also investigating why the Art results were so different to the previous year with the AQA exam board. It was acknowledged that subjects with just one teacher responsible for programmes were more vulnerable than those that had teams of staff. Asked if this could be remedied by sharing staff across FCAT, the Principal agreed that this might be possible but that, at the moment, academies were using different syllabuses and exam boards which made it difficult. However, it was something to be discussed at the FCAT Executive meeting.

The Executive Principal highlighted the fact that those subjects that had FCAT QIGs, including Computer Science and IT had performed well in exams. TN reported that a senior subject specialist at national level had been invited in to discuss computing with the QIG and this had proved very useful and might be worth replicating across other subject areas.

Asked if there was a correlation between results and performance management, the Assistant Principal confirmed that robust performance management systems and lesson observations were in place. Teachers with consistently poor performance were provided with support and then taken down a formal process which could ultimately see them being dismissed if improvements were not seen. A system for support staff had also been introduced.

Asked about how teaching for the most able students differed to that of their peers, the Assistant Principal explained that these were taught in individual classes. All staff were aware of the students that fell into the category and their individual expectations. In response to a question about how this was audited, the Assistant Principal confirmed that this was largely through lesson observations and learning walks. This year the aim was to observe both high and low performing teachers to identify how good practice might be shared across subjects that required the most improvement. JG pointed out the need to ensure good learning as well as good teaching was taking place in classrooms and the advantage of replacing the term 'teaching' with 'learning' when talking to staff about progress.

In response to a question about teaching of More Able and SEN students, the Principal acknowledged that the academy needed to improve its differentiation



and that this had been identified as a key issue for continuous professional development (CPD) across the whole academy.

Asked if the academy was providing enough focus on literacy, the Principal and Assistant Principal confirmed that this was the case. Staff were immersing students in language initiatives including accelerated reading programmes and extended writing projects. Staff knew the reading age of each student and were committed to progressing these. SEN support had been implemented for any student with a reading age that was significantly lower than their actual age and this was proving successful in raising standards. Asked if the academy was perhaps over-prioritising literacy initiatives at the expense of other subjects, the Principal confirmed that staff had worked hard to identify superfluous topics that could be withdrawn from the Curriculum in order to focus on the really important areas including literacy.

Governors were concerned that they had little knowledge of Progress 8 and identified this as a training need. The Clerk agreed to add this to the Governor Training Programme.

Clerk

The Chair thanked the Principal and Assistant Principal for their reports and Governors for the discussion.

JW thanked Governors for their time and left the meeting.

6. Strategy

6.1 Academy Improvement Plan 2016-2017

Governors received the Improvement Plan for the year and agreed to use the facility on Governors Virtual Office (GVO) to discuss this further. The Principal agreed to add the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) to GVO once it had been verified for Governors' information.

The Principal reminded Governors that the actions that had been rated 'Green' from the previous plan, but were still ongoing, had been removed from this year's plan in order for staff to focus on priority areas still outstanding. They had now been placed on a 'success board' and continued to be monitored.

6.2 Academy matters

The Principal reported back on an incident taking place at the beginning of term when large uninterrupted power supply (UPS) batteries in the server room had failed creating a release of hydrogen sulphide. The academy had had to be evacuated and the Fire Brigade called out. The evacuation process had run smoothly and staff and students had behaved admirably. The Business Continuity Plan had been implemented and the Police had been satisfied with the way in which procedures had been followed.

Governors asked that, in future, they were made aware of events as soon as possible after they had happened in order to provide support as required. TN identified another learning point from the incident which was to do with the use of appropriate language to ensure that people were not unnecessarily worried about what was happening.

Asked if Highfurlong School (attached to Aspire) had also had to be evacuated, the Principal confirmed that this was not the case. A fire screen separated the school from the academy and this had prevented the need to evacuate their students.



The Principal reported back on the boot camp exercise for year 7 students which had taken place in Anglesey at the beginning of the year. 159 students had taken part in the programme and seemed to be very settled in school as a result, including five from a Special Educational Resource Facility (SERF). The Principal was considering a similar programme for Year 11 students to develop team building and support resilience.

6.3 Feedback on FCAT Developments

The Chair provided feedback on the following matters:

- The Department for Education (DfE) had approved the development of the Free School on the old Arnold School site in South Shore. This would be an all through school (ages 4 – 16) and was intended to open in 2018.
- Westcliff and Gateway had now joined the Trust and Mereside Primary School was scheduled to do so in the next few months.
- The FCAT governance structure was being developed to include five Members whose role was to hold Directors to account. The number of Directors was being increased to nine from six.

7. Risk Register

Governors reviewed the current Risk Register, paying particular attention to Risk 14 (academic achievement levels). Following a discussion, it was agreed that scoring for this should be increased to 9 (3x3) and the risk be rated as 'Red'. It was felt that Risk 4 (risk of injuries to students, staff and visitors) and Risk 9 (procedures for cover absence) also needed re-scoring and the commentary amending.

In addition, it was thought that the appointment of the new Principal was a risk that also needed to be identified on the Register.

8. Review of Risks

No additional risks other than those above were identified.

9. Any other business

The Clerk explained a clash of dates for the FCAT Away Day and asked Governors for their approval to change the date to Friday 31st March 2017 (from 10th March 2017). There were no objections to the change of date.

10. Date and Time of next meeting

Day: Wednesday
Date: 7th December 2016
Time: 4.00pm
Venue: Aspire Academy

Signed: _____
(Chair)

Date: _____