



MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 26th November 2014

Venue: Aspire Academy

Time: 4.00pm

- Present:** Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Tony Nicholson (Executive Principal) and Colin Simkins (Principal)
- Together with:** Kath Buddle (KB) (FCAT Governance Administrator and minute taker)
- Apologies:** John Buchanan, Alana Frith, Catherine Hill, Andy Martin and Emily Trotter.

1. Preliminaries

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that the meeting would not be quorate if decisions had to be made.

1.2 Apologies were given from four governors (as above). It was noted that some governors were involved in a training session. It was agreed that recruitment of parent and staff governors was a priority for the Academy. Two potential staff governors were proposed.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2014

The minutes of the meeting were approved.

4. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

4.1 New build update (Item 4.1 from the previous minutes) – the Principal reported that the Academy was in dialogue with Carillion PLC about timescales for the new build. A member of the Senior Leadership Team had taken responsibility for handling the logistics of the move and preparation for that.

4.2 Letter from governors to successful departments (Item 5.2 from the previous minutes) – the Chair explained that, following a review of the situation, it had been decided not to send out letters as this might pre-empt performance management arrangements. Verbal congratulations had been passed on.

4.3 RAG rating of the Academy Action Plan (Item 6.1 from the previous minutes) – the Principal provided his ratings against each of the actions outlined on the Academy Action Plan. It is still only the first term in the 'life cycle' of the Academy and this will be an original benchmark against future progress. Most of the actions were Red or Amber or Red/Amber. Governors noted the positive progress in relation to Action 1.7 (Forming a robust system which ensures appropriate support and progression for all students with SEND) and Action 3.5 (Establish new standards with regard to personal appearance, uniform, equipment for learning and presentation of work) which were both rated Amber. Action 3.4 (Ensure all statutory safeguarding requirements are met and effective anti-bullying procedures provide a safe learning environment) was rated Amber/Green

However, it was acknowledged that the Academy had a long way to go in

Action

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achieving successful completion of the other actions.

- 4.4 Reporting cycle** (Item 9.3 from the previous minutes) – the Clerk provided a paper outlining the expected content for future academy council meeting agendas. She agreed to add RAISEOnline data as an agenda item for the Academy Council’s January 2015 meeting.

KB

5. Teaching and Learning

5.1 Student Achievement Report November 2014

John Woods joined the meeting for this item

JW provided a summary of the Report and highlighted the following issues:

- 11 students are currently subject to alternative provision to the mainstream Curriculum through Blackpool and the Fylde College, 4techMoto and the Speedwell Centre.
- Currently 28% of students would gain 5 A* - C grade GCSEs including English and Maths if the examinations were taken today. The Academy was making progress in this area as the figure had improved from 22% at the last data collection. The target was 57% (40% by Christmas 2014) and staff were committed to achieving this through a series of interventions.
- The Academy had dispensed with predictive data as this had proved unreliable in the past and is now only using current data.

Challenges

Asked about how the latest mock examinations would impact on data, JW confirmed that the results would provide a clearer picture on where the Academy was currently positioned.

Asked what had been learned from the data, JW explained that it had been easier to identify the students that needed support, including those that only needed a small amount of support to help them achieve targets. Individual staff were aware of the pupils’ support needs and where they were currently placed in relation to meeting their targets.

In response to a question about the biggest areas of concern, JW confirmed that these were Drama and IT. The Senior Leadership Team had met with the Departments to support them in the use of data and application of interventions where appropriate.

Asked about the mind-set of pupils going into the mock examinations, JW reported that this had been positive on the whole. Behaviour was very good apart from a small cohort. This was encouraging because the merger of the two predecessor schools had been a challenging exercise and it was satisfying to see that students were getting on well with one another in the main.

Asked if further mock examinations were scheduled, JW confirmed that another series was planned for March 2015. It was noted that the delivery of the mocks was a fairly costly exercise in terms of invigilation. However, the benefits were significant and results would provide a clear picture on progress against attainment. Past papers were also being used in lessons on a regular basis in order for students to become used to the format and what was expected from them in examinations.

In response to a question about the other subject areas, JW confirmed that



the Maths Department was achieving its targets. There were concerns about English and Science, especially as staff had over predicted results in previous years. However, all staff now understood what was expected of students and attendance in classes had improved. Boys' results in English had been very poor the previous year. The mock results would provide more information on direction of travel in this subject. There had been a shortage of Science teachers the previous year at Collegiate High School, and the new team now in place was expected to provide improvements in the individual Science subjects. Aspirational and Science Days had been scheduled to help promote the subject further.

In response to a question from governors about children with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs (SEND), JW confirmed that the SENCO was making good use of data to inform interventions and this seemed to be working well.

Governors thanked JW for his informative report and he left the meeting.

5.2 Principal's Report

The Principal presented his report and highlighted the following issues:

- There were a number of staff absences at the start of this half term and FCAT's HR Team were helping to address the major areas of concern.
- All of the staff vacancies had been filled apart from the Director of English. A proposal to appoint the Director of Maths who is already at the Academy, to have responsibility for both subject areas is well underway for starting on 1st January 2015.
- Several problems in the IT Department have been uncovered by Stephen Cooke from Unity Academy who is a Senior Leader of Education (SLE) and is advising on the matter in a report on a proposed recovery programme.
- Behaviour, on the whole, had improved, but a number of permanent pupil exclusions had been necessary.
- Admissions had increased with students joining mid-term. There was no intention to change the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for 2015-16. It would remain at 180.
- It was intended to reduce the number of subject options at GCSE in the new Curriculum for 2015/16 in order to focus on core subjects as outlined in the Academy School Improvement Plan (SIP) 2014/15.
- The School Evaluation Form (SEF) for the Autumn/Winter term has been completed and would be circulated to governors before Christmas 2014.
- Work to address some minor building issues was being carried out.
- Coaching programmes to support staff in teaching and learning had been introduced and were working well.

Challenge

In response to a question on his opinion of the standard of teaching at the Academy currently, the Principal reported that his feelings were that of the 59 members of staff employed, 7 were 'Outstanding', 34 were 'Good' and 15 'Required Improvement'. This was a significantly better scenario than when he originally came to post.

6. Finance and Resources

6.1 Management Accounts September 2014

Governors considered the management accounts for September 2014. The



Principal reported that he was meeting monthly with Emily Trotter to review spending. Reducing staffing costs was a priority.

6.2 Pupil Premium Report September 2014

Deborah Hanlon-Catlow joined the meeting for this item

DHC provided a summary of her report (Paper 6.2) and highlighted the key points. Phase 1 of a programme of interventions for Pupil Premium students had been rolled out. £189k has been committed so far and is now being evaluated to assess its impact. Phase 2 would be discussed at the next Senior Leadership Team meeting. DHC explained that all staff now had to account for their spending on Pupil Premium projects and the impact of the spending. This had allowed the Academy to identify successful and less successful projects and to RAG rate the interventions.

In addition to hard data, staff were taking note of student opinion when assessing the effectiveness of projects. This had proved very useful in tackling the underachievement of White working class boys at the Academy. High quality teaching was needed to narrow the gaps in terms of achievement of pupils and the focus for the Academy was in this area.

DHC drew governors' attention to the impact of the Shine Therapy services in supporting pupils with speech and language problems. Although expensive, this had proved to be very successful in helping student achieve targets.

Challenge

Asked about the timescales for changes to the Curriculum to help narrow the gaps, DHC confirmed that this was being looked at already as these would impact considerably on next year's budget and staffing levels.

In response to a request from DHC, the Chair agreed to become the Pupil Premium Governor for the Academy.

7. Safeguarding

The minutes of the FCAT Safeguarding Board meeting of 22nd October 2014 were noted.

8. Estimation of new risks

It was agreed to add this as a core agenda item for the next meeting.

9. Any other business

Governors queried the format of documents, including the Principal's Report which they felt did not currently reflect the SEF requirements. The Clerk agreed to pass on the comments.

8. Date and Time of future meetings

- Wednesday 28th January 2015
- Wednesday 11th March 2015
- Wednesday 22nd April 2015
- Wednesday 10th June 2015.

All meetings to commence at 4.00pm.

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Agenda

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Signed: _____
(Chair)

Date: _____