

MINUTES OF THE 159th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2024 AT 17:35PM

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) – Chair, Richard Perry (RJP) Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Angela Entwistle (AEE) via TEAMS, Stewart Harris (SH) via TEAMS, Kevin Chamberlain (KC), Madeline Hughes (MH), Pat Edmondson (PED), Mike Smith (MSM), Claire Peterson (CPE).

In Attendance: Margaret Doherty (minutes).

Start time: 17:35pm

Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

The appointment of the Chair and Vice-Chair took place. DW and AEE were nominated and agreed to continue their current roles of Chair and Vice-Chair of the Executive Board.

DW welcomed colleagues to the Executive Board meeting.

1. Apologies:

Tom Chmielewski (TC) due to work commitments.

2. Declaration of Interest:

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting:

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed by DW.

DW referred to page 2 and ATA scholarships. He asked if the £500 on offer was sufficient to cover all costs. DMI confirmed that he had considered this, but the costs of courses have not gone up due to their taking place online. He concluded that the £500 was sufficient. DMI added that they could consider adding to this in the future, if required. DW also asked why the majority of scholarships awarded were for medicine. DMI stated that a lot more students are now applying for medicine and that free work experience is less available, however, paid-for simulated experiences are. DMI added that there were no restrictions for other students applying for scholarships for other subjects, and that Mr Hetherington encourages all students to apply.

DW referred to page 3 and the results of the study on students who do not engage in clubs and activities. DMI responded that there were only 8 students across the Academy who do not attend any club.

DW asked for an update regarding the teaching assistant review on page 4. DMI reported on a number of interesting models used in other schools and spoke of his desire to elevate the position of TLA's in the Academy. He explained that he would discuss this later in the year after he sees the results of various trials in the Academy.

DW referred to page 4 and asked about statistics of unauthorised holidays. DMI told the Board that our student body is international and we therefore experience higher than average rates of unauthorised holidays. The Academy issues Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence and he explained the process for doing this.

The minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 9th July 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

No matters arising other than in scheduled reports for the meeting.

5. Principal's report

Review of Papers

DMI shared his report with the Executive Board and commented on the positive results achieved by students in all exams. 124 GCSE reviews and 129 A-Level reviews had been submitted and the outcome of these has resulted in a further improvement in the results, as shown in the report. Some of these changes have meant a secure first choice of university place for students who had just missed out before the review. DW asked if any of these re-marks resulted in a lower grade. DMI responded that no re-marks had actually resulted in a lower grade this year. MH asked if it was a bit unfair that students' exams were marked wrongly in the first place. DMI agreed, but the re-marks meant the students received the mark they deserved. DMI explained that there were 62 successful GCSE re-marks and in total only 50% of these re-marks are included in the new data shared with the Board.

Policies

DMI gave an update regarding the RSE policy and said it was relatively unchanged from before. It is combined with two other policies for ease of reference. He asked the Board members to read at their leisure and to email with any comments.

Open Events

DMI said that the open mornings and evenings were very busy this year. PED asked if the numbers were around the same as usual: DMI answered that there was a slight increase in the open mornings due to poor weather conditions and train disruptions on the open evening.

SEN

There is a significant increase in the number of SEN students being welcomed into Year 7. The Board compared numbers of SEN students who entered Year 7 this academic year with other schools in the borough. DW asked if the numbers were inclusive of students in ARC and DMI responded that 3 of the students were ARC students.

DW asked if the overall numbers of SEN students in Wandsworth were going up and DMI confirmed that this was indeed the case. He added that the Academy had been directed to welcome a disproportionately high number of SEN students and mentioned his concerns regarding resources.

MH asked if the Academy is a victim of its own success regarding students requiring extra support. DMI agreed that this was probably the case. The reputation for success with all students means that parents select the Academy over other local schools. Mr Gallagher and Ms Soliman spend a good amount of time with new parents so that they can understand the needs of each child and so that all parents understand exactly what support their child will receive and the expectations of the Academy.

Early Career Teachers

DMI said that there are 7 ECTS this year which is the lowest number in quite a few years. The new additions are very strong practitioners and have really bought into our approach and are thriving. One has left for personal reasons.

Exclusions

DMI discussed the exclusion report with colleagues. Of particular note, he explained that of the exclusions, 55 were one-off incidents so, pleasingly, the majority of students have learnt from their exclusion.

DW suggested that the Board might quite like to see more detail given in the reporting table next to the reason for exclusion.

OfSTED and IB five-year review

DMI spoke about the IB 5-year review and told the Executive Board that the initial review meeting would take place in December. In terms of Ofsted, schools will no longer be awarded a one-word judgement, following much publicity and debate about the possible demotivational effect of these judgements in the past.

Attendance

DMI shared the attendance report and explained the dip in attendance at the time of Eid celebrations last year. Overall, the Academy's attendance is significantly higher than the national average. We can now access weekly live data from the Department for Education, which shows we are in the top 10% nationally (this being their uppermost band) and the top school in Wandsworth.

6. Current topics for discussion:

Results analysis & departmental responses: MSM

MSM presented data and led a discussion on the results from this year's GCSEs. He explained that they were the best results the school has ever seen, with a Progress 8 score of +1.33. Last year's score was +1.09 and, at the time, the Academy was ranked 14th best in the country for progress. The Board discussed this year's results and compared them with previous years, and other schools in the Borough. MSM added that this was the largest cohort, with 240 students in the year group. The most common grade was a 9 with 17.3% of students achieving this. Nationally, students who receive Free School Meals achieve half a grade worse - yet our students achieve a whole grade better. EHCP students outperformed students without an EHCP, with one of the highest achieving students receiving a progress score of +4.3. This is strong evidence that when students have high expectations and are provided with the correct support, they are successful. The progress 8 score will put us in the top 1% of all schools when national comparisons are published.

MSM told the Board that there was no government data yet for A-Level results but 44.5% had received A-A* grades. DW asked how this affected University entries. DMI said that a lot of students had received high conditional offers and 60% of students secured their first choice on results day, with closer to 80% actually getting their first choice after results day. PED asked what happens if a student doesn't secure their first choice but are awaiting a re-mark. DMI explained that we contact the University to let them know. The place is generally held pending the outcome of the re-mark.

MSM said that following the high GCSE results we have the biggest sixth form we have ever had. DMI added that not only are more students progressing within the Academy, we are attracting more students from other schools.

Safeguarding: CPE

CPE shared the safeguarding policy and the changes that have been made to it, along with some context on the current safeguarding caseload. CPE explained the process of reporting a case of concern about a student to external agencies and typical responses from these referrals. DW told the Board that he was surprised to know that there is no "multi-agency" system in place to review cases together after referral. DMI explained that the Academy follows up on these cases. MH asked whether, if you did not keep referring the case, would it just fall away? DMI replied yes, and in cases where a parent does not consent, then the case is also dropped.

DW thanked MSM and CPE for their presentations and congratulated the Academy on the exam results.

7. Any other business

There was no other business

DW thanked colleagues for attending and their continued support.

Signed: _____



Date 12/12/2024

Richard Whitcutt
Chair of the Executive Board