

**MINUTES OF THE 146th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
WEDNESDAY 27 APRIL 17.30**

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Stewart Harris (SH), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Jennifer Calvert (JCA) Claire Peterson (CPE)

In Attendance: Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

Start Time: 17:30

1. Apologies

DW welcomed the members of the Executive Board who were in attendance at the Academy. Apologies for absences came from Rachel Brannagan (RB), Kevin Chamberlain (KC) and Tony Bothwell (TB)

2. Declarations

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Last meeting

Referring to the previous minutes, DW asked for an assurance from DMI that ATA had enough lateral flow tests should any COVID testing still be required and DMI confirmed that ATA had a good supply.

DW asked about staffing and exclusions and DMI confirmed that these will be covered in his report.

DW asked about COVID positive students or staff attending the Academy and DMI confirmed that there have been no negative reactions to the requirements in force for these individuals.

DW asked for clarification on the movement of grade boundaries over the last two years since the previous minutes may be a little ambiguous. DMI clarified that grade boundaries dropped in 2020 and then again in 2021. The grade boundaries that exam boards will use this year will be close to the 2020 grade boundaries i.e between the grade boundaries in 2019 and 2021.

DW asked DMI to re-summarise why the exam period is longer this year. DMI explained that every subject has a number of different papers so there will be space between each paper so that should a student test positive for COVID and they miss one paper, the exam schedule will provide enough time for the student to recover before the next paper. In these cases, the overall mark will be derived from the one paper.

Board members asked if students have been given clear guidance on what they should concentrate their revision on. DMI confirmed that staff are following the guidance provided by the exam boards which will help to provide focus for final revision – but not definitive pre-knowledge of actual exam questions.

DW alerted members to two Executive Board members who are due to finish their terms of office at the end of this academic year. Arrangements would be put in place to replace them.

The minutes of the last meeting held on 24 February were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

5. Principal's Report

DMI shared his report with the Board.

The main focus has been the preparation of Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 students for their final exams. The students are working incredibly hard, which is very pleasing. DMI asked PED and CCN for their thoughts and they commented about their own child's experiences.

DMI is optimistic that ATA students will do well in these exams. Compared to other schools, ATA student attendance has been very high and the changes made to comply with the government's guidance did not negatively impact on the students' curriculum.

DW asked DMI to pass on the Board's thanks to staff and to say how impressed the Board is with the commitment that all staff at ATA have shown over the last two potentially difficult years.

Wandsworth admission data

DMI shared with the Board the admission data for new Year 7 students across Wandsworth secondary schools. DMI explained that parents can choose up to six schools. The data demonstrated that ATA is a very popular choice for parents.

DMI was interested to know how many parents had made the full six choices and PED commented that a number of parents only put one choice because they think that if they only select one school then they will stand a better chance of securing a place at the school they have selected.

DMI then spoke about the local schools who have taken steps to reduce their PAN because they are less popular. The pattern over time shows that they are significantly under number. Two of these schools benefited from funding from Wandsworth to expand, at the same time that ATA did.

SEN Green Paper

DMI told colleagues that there is an ever-increasing number of children with an EHCP, or children who have an identified educational need. Those in receipt of an EHCP display more complex needs.

The Local Authority in previous years looked to accommodate some students in small private schools that cater for very specific needs. However, funding cuts over the last few years mean that the option to do this has reduced over time. Consequently, the Local Authority must now look to accommodate more complex needs in their mainstream schools.

The result of this is that three new autistic units will open in the primary phase and (potentially) in two secondary schools. ATA does remain a very popular option for parents with children who have an EHCP and the OfSTED report has made the Academy even more popular.

ATA welcomes a higher than average number of SEN students, all of whom go on to perform very well. The average progress score for students who have an EHCP in England is -1.4. For ATA students, however, it is +1.6. The local authority know that, because of the approach at ATA, students do well.

At ATA, SEN students receive a high level of support and help but are very much part of the main school..

The Green Paper looks to standardised the EHCP process, provide Local Authorities with greater powers and also

provide more funding to the system. DMI explained that currently parents tend to have to fight hard in the primary phase to secure the correct support for their child if Special Educational Needs are identified or suspected and the system is not easy to navigate.

DMI took the Board through a presentation on the Green Paper findings and recommendations.

ATA has received a higher number of “consultation documents” for this year but has agreed to welcome a maximum of 10 students with an EHCP. Each consultation document is assessed to see if ATA is able to meet the needs of the student in question.

DMI confirmed that ATA currently has 45 students with an EHCP and 192 students with identified SEND support.

DMI told the Board that he will keep them updated on the progress.

Permanent Exclusions

DMI told the Board about his experience of sitting on an appeal panel for a permanent exclusion at another local school recently. He explained that this was not a pleasant appeal but he learnt a huge amount.

Education White Paper

DMI took colleagues through the Education White Paper and highlighted three main points.

1. A stipulation that students must be in school for 32.5 hours per week. Since the start of the pandemic, student hours nationally have reduced on average and DMI shared data from the local schools. The government is therefore keen to make sure that all students in England are in school for a substantial amount of time. ATA has continued to maintain its normal working hours for students and therefore exceeds the government’s target.
2. The aspiration that 90% of students will leave Year 6 literate and numerate.
3. All schools must be part of a strong Trust.

Staff update

DMI gave the Board an update on staffing at the Academy.

DMI shared with the Board a list of the teaching staff who are leaving ATA this summer and provided the reasons why.

6. Current Topic for discussion

i. Student Forum (DMI)

DMI took the Board through the details of the Student Forums that CPE has been running. The focus for each forum is both safeguarding and curriculum. The membership changes for each forum – students are selected at random to attend. The students have been open and honest and the information obtained from them has helped ATA to inform the approach to safeguarding policies.

Most recently, homework was discussed and CPE received a lot of information that has helped staff to think about the ways in which students should plan their week so that they are organised.

7. Any other business

The next Executive Board meeting will be Tuesday 5 July 2022.

DW thanked colleagues for attending and their continued support.

Signed: 
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 5 / 7 / 2022