

**MINUTES OF THE 145<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON  
THURSDAY 24 FEBRUARY 17.30  
*Meeting held remotely on TEAMS due to the  
on-going Coronavirus pandemic***

**Present:** Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Rachel Brannagan (RB), Stewart Harris (SH), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Phil Hall (PHA), Joshua Hetherington (JHE)

**In Attendance:** Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

**Start Time:** 17:30

**1. Apologies**

DW welcomed the on-line presence of members of the Executive Board, who had joined the virtual meeting via TEAMS. Apologies for absences came from Angela Entwistle (AE), Kevin Chamberlain (KC) and Tony Bothwell (TB)

**2. Declarations**

No interests were declared.

**3. Minutes of Last meeting**

DW referred to the previous minutes about Coronavirus updates and asked if DMI would be covering these in his report and DMI confirmed that he would.

DW asked DMI if the critical incident which took place at the Academy recently involving an aggressive parent was now resolved and DMI confirmed that the student had moved to another school and the matter was therefore resolved.

DW asked if there would be an update about the exams process and DMI confirmed that he would give a detailed presentation about this.

DW commented on the accident report and remarked that there are no accidents that show patterns about which the Executive Board should be concerned.

RW mentioned concerns about staff recruitment and the fact that these will be covered in DMI's report.

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 9 December were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**4. Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

**5. Principal's Report**

DMI shared with the Board an update on the government announcement that Covid restrictions would end from today. This means that all of the legal restrictions the Academy has had in place are now guidance. DMI advised the Board that he will write to parents to inform them that the legal requirement to self-isolate has ended and that self-

isolation is no longer a legal requirement, although government guidance recommends to do so until April, if symptomatic.

DMI told the Board that there is no longer a requirement for students or staff to take an LFD test twice weekly. If students present with symptoms they will be tested in the Academy.

The DfE confirmed on Tuesday 22 February that ATA will only receive replenishment stocks of LFD tests for the SEN students, but the amount of tests ATA will receive has not been confirmed.

ATA is fortunate in so far as it has a significant stock of LFD tests which can be used for testing students. If a student receives a positive LFD result, he or she will be sent home. Parents will be told to monitor overnight and if the student is well enough to return to the Academy the next day, they will, but will be required to wear a mask and observe social distancing. If a student returns a negative result, they will be sent back to lessons and will be given a mask as a precaution.

By 1 April 2022, it is predicted that there will be no COVID-related restrictions in place at all.

All of the operational changes that were made in September 2020 will remain in place to allow ATA to continue to keep everybody safe. ATA does not plan to change this system in the near future because the Academy wishes to protect itself from newly identified variants.

DW asked DMI if there would there be any harm in asking students to wear a mask if they have symptoms and DMI confirmed that although it is not mandated ATA would offer students one.

### **Staffing**

DMI informed the Board that with the feeling of optimism over the ending of COVID, a number of teachers are now looking for new opportunities near family members or abroad. Three members of staff have secured positions abroad, because they can now travel.

Some members of staff have decided to move out of London and closer to family – who they missed over the last two years – and to locations where houses are much more affordable. Although ATA may lose a number of very good and very experienced members of staff, there will be the opportunity to recruit new staff.

DW asked DMI what has changed, as it was getting very difficult to recruit and DMI said that a lot of people have realised that being a teacher is a very secure job and people who are maybe in other roles have perhaps been made redundant, have thought about entering into teaching and feel that the time is right now and ATA's recent Ofsted result has been a big influence too.

### **ACTRAC**

As the Academy emerges from COVID, ATA has been able to welcome parents back on site. ATA held the ACTRAC day before the February break for Year 7 students. This was the first time that parents had been able to visit the Academy and meet with their child's Form Tutor. The Students are released from their lessons for that particular appointment and they're able to talk about how the student is settling into Academy life.

This was very positive and parents were very complimentary of the Academy.

### **High School Musical Performance**

The Academy held a performance of High School Musical. DMI would like to congratulate Ms Di Bartolo who is the Curriculum Manager for Performing Arts, for staging a great show in very challenging circumstances. The commitment of the students and of the whole of her team was phenomenal. It was a superb full West End production of High School Musical and the parents were delighted that they could see their children doing the things that they loved to do.

## **6th Form Parents' Evening**

ATA will be holding the 6th Form parents' evening virtually on Thursday 10 March to discuss performance in the recent mocks.

## **Parents Evenings**

All other planned parent evenings will take place on site.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities and Trips**

DMI told the Board that the number of local trips being organised is increasing. It feels like normality is returning to the Academy. ATA is looking to reintroduce two day trips at the end of the next academic year – the Year 7 trip to France and the Year 8 trip to the Belgian Battlefields.

## **SIMS Parent App**

ATA has purchased a SIMS Parent App which is an add-on to the SIMS programme used in the Academy and will make the method of communicating with parents much more efficient. The app will allow ATA to track students' attendance to extra-curricular activities.

## **Attendance**

Staff attendance has been very good but the Academy has still been affected by COVID. Asymptomatic teachers deliver live lessons from home even though they are isolating, which demonstrates the commitment of ATA staff who do not want to miss lessons, particularly for exam classes.

DMI told the Board that the overall attendance is in line with previous years and at 97.6 %. The national average at the moment is 89%. ATA is therefore significantly above national averages, particularly disadvantaged groups. Students who are in receipt of an EHCP are eight percentage points higher than the national average and ATA's people premium attendance is about 9.5% percentage points higher than the national average.

There is a continuing concern about attendance nationally, but ATA students are aware that they must attend school every day and the message to the students is slowly returning to ATA's pre COVID attendance message.

## **Accident Report**

DMI asked the Board if there were any areas of the accident report that they wanted to raise and the Board said there were none.

## **Exclusion Report**

DMI explained to the Board that the number of exclusions is quite high. DMI told the Board about a shop in Southfields Station that sells vapes to children and that a commuter had contacted ATA to let staff know about this. From the description given, ATA staff identified Year 9 students who had purchased vapes. ATA conducted a full search and seized 15 phones and three vapes. DMI confirmed that two students were excluded for having a vape.

## **Social Media**

DMI explained to the Board that the Academy has observed an increase in inappropriate behaviour online at the start of last two terms. It is the case that students are using their phones far more frequently at home to connect with their friends over holiday periods – something that they learnt to do over both periods of lockdown. ATA was informed after the Christmas break of an issue of unpleasantness between several students. These students were excluded and understand exactly what they did wrong. ATA had meetings with their parents, who have realised that they need to take greater control over their children's use of social media and use of their devices.

DW asked DMI how ATA is aware of these issues because phones are banned from the Academy. DMI confirmed

that they are reported to the Academy. DW also asked how many students ATA think bring a phone to school and DMI told the Board that there are less than 5%.

DMI asked the Board if they had any questions, which there were none.

## 6. Current Topic for discussion

### i. ATA response to changes made by the exam Boards to GCSE, AS and A-Level summer exams. (DMI with JHE and PHA).

DMI shared his presentation with the Board and outlined the details for the Exam period for Summer 2022.

The Government has confirmed that exams will take place this year and are keen to address the disparity in teaching students have experienced in England during COVID. OfQUAL has responded to this disparity and have suggested that the content of the exams should change slightly and that schools should be told about these changes in advance of the exams so that students' revision can be focused revision.

The grade boundaries set this year will be between 2019 and 2021 grade boundaries. This means that the grade boundaries are going to be lower than they had been in 2019, and in the years before 2019, in order to gradually rebalance the grade inflation that has occurred over the last two years. Schools and students shouldn't therefore observe a sudden drop in the grades that are awarded but a gentle levelling off of those very high grades. The grade boundaries for each subject will be set by senior examiners after they have reviewed the corrected exam papers.

ATA has reviewed the information sent by OfQUAL very carefully and measured that against existing specifications to see exactly what these changes are in each subject area. These changes vary from subject to subject. However, in truth, the changes are very minor and students will still need to revise the full range of topics in each subject for each exam. ATA's message to the students therefore will be that they need to keep working hard. The Year 12 and Year 13 Year have not sat an external exam so this will be a big deal for them. The students will have to work harder than previous years because they have been affected in a way that previous cohorts of students were not.

The education that our students received over the two lockdown periods over the course of the last two years was excellent and has been reflected in their attendance, but students still need to work hard to make sure that they are in a much more competitive position.

The exam period will be much longer than previous exam periods because each subject paper is scheduled 10 days apart. If a student misses one paper – for reasons related to COVID - then they will have time to recover from COVID and sit the next paper. If a student only sits one paper in a subject, the paper will be marked and an overall grade for the subject will be derived from that one paper. As the exam season will run for a longer period, ATA has started to think about the sort of activities it will plan to run on site for students so that they continue to benefit from maximum exposure to good teaching before they sit their exams. There are only 44 teaching days until the start of the exams season.

ATA has many things in its favour for summer 2022, such as excellent attendance figures, a longer school day 25% extra teaching time in Year 12 and a very robust approach to setting and completing homework. Having this advanced information has allowed ATA to plan. There will be big push for revision from now on and DMI highlighted some of the strategies in place so students understand exactly what is required of them in their preparation for the exams.

In terms of accountability measures, there will be a return to publishing full performance data in 2022, which will include the publication of an ISDR report.

DMI asked the Board if they had any questions.

PE asked if the exam period will start earlier than normal and DMI confirmed that it is bit later than normal.

7. Any other business

DW raised with the Board the replacement of two of the Executive Board members who are due to finish at the end of the academic year and that ATA should begin their processes to replace them.

The Executive Board meeting dates for the remainder of the academic year are Wednesday 27 April 2022 and Tuesday 5 July 2022.

DW thanked colleagues for attending and their continued support.

Signed: 

**Richard Whitcutt**  
**Chair of Executive Board**

Date: 27 April / 2022