

**MINUTES OF THE 156<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON  
WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 17.30**

**Present:** Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Stewart Harris (SH), Kevin Chamberlain (KC), Pat Edmondson (PED), Madeleine Hughes (MH), Tom Chmielewski (TC), Maria Chiara Sechi (MCS), Mike Smith (MSM), Joshua Hetherington (JHE)

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

**Start Time:** 17:30

DW welcomed colleagues to the Executive Board meeting.

**3. Apologies**

No apologies were declared.

**4. Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

**5. Minutes of Last meeting held on Wednesday 13 December 2023**

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed by DW.

DW referred to the number of 6<sup>th</sup> form applications received so far. These look healthy for this year and said that DMI would answer any further queries, if the Board had any.

DW referred to ATA's in-house CAMHS support on Page 2 and the counselling support the Local Authority are yet to provide to schools in the area. He asked if ATA would use whichever service the Local Authority provides for the Academy. DMI said that ATA would use Place to Be.

The minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 13 December 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

## **6. Principal's Report**

DMI took the Board through his report.

### **Gender Identity**

DMI spoke about the Academy's approach to gender identity and the ways in which the Academy supports students who are questioning their identity. The Academy takes a neutral stance in its approach and works with each child to understand their needs and wishes. DMI spoke about two current individual cases and a discussion took place after.

MH asked if staff at ATA would speak with the parents of a child who was questioning their gender. DMI said that staff would but that they would not do anything if the child were to suggest significant safeguarding risks in doing so.

DW asked about the government's guidance and DMI explained the guidance and reinforced the fact that the Academy's approach was consistent with the guidance.

### **Attendance**

DMI told the Board that student attendance is impressive. The national average attendance has dropped to below 90% at the moment. At ATA, student attendance is 97.8%.

DMI gave a summary of five cases of poor attendance. In each scenario, the issue of inadequate external support in the form of Local Authority agencies. As a result of this, DMI shared with the Board that ATA seeks to appoint a Pastoral Lead – a new position in the pastoral structure. The successful candidate will primarily support students whose attendance is a cause for concern and students who experience significant safeguarding concerns.

MH asked about the breakdown on ethnicity from the report and why the White and Asian category is particularly low. DMI explained that ATA has an international cohort and some parents take their children on holiday early and return late into the term, which has a negative impact on attendance.

### **Staffing**

DMI spoke about staffing and outlined the staff who will be leaving at the end of the academic year.

DMI also spoke about the concerns over teacher training and the very low number of new recruits now entering the profession. ATA has also noticed a drop in the number of PGCE students on placement and a drop in the quality of these students. Nevertheless, ATA has employed two of PGCE students who have impressed to start teaching in September.

### **Accident Report**

DMI shared the accident report, and asked if anyone had any concerns. After a short discussion the Board were happy.

### **Exclusion Report**

DMI shared the exclusion report and a discussion was had.

### **Safeguarding Report**

DMI shared the safeguarding report and asked if the Board had any questions. DW asked about the way the categories are laid out. DMI said he will circulate the report based on children with early help, children in need and some specific cases of concern.

### **IDSR discussion – Mike Smith (MSM)**

MSM shared his presentation with the Board, providing an overview of the IDSR data and invited questions from the Board.

MSM outlined various aspects of the IDSR to the Board, including the number of students on roll, which has increased by 5% every year (for the past five years) and the increase in the number of 6th form students on roll. The number of students who receive Free School Meals remains stable and above average. The number of SEND students is sizeable. The percentage of students with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) remains the same.

MSM spoke about student stability and whether that was an issue. He explained that ATA has had a number of students move, particularly due to families relocating to different areas. This is particularly true of some of our families from ethnic minorities. In some cases, it can be that Ashcroft may not be the right school for a child and their parent chooses to move their child to a school which better fits with their own ethos.

PED asked if the spaces are filled immediately and MSM confirmed that spaces are filled promptly.

MH commented that many students travel to the Academy from some distance, which could be due to them moving out of the area or being rehoused but wanting to remain at the Academy.

MSM spoke about prior attainment. He explained that the students ATA receive in Year 7 are an equal spread across the ability bands and ATA is usually close to the national averages in terms of ability due to this selection process.

The EHCP numbers are increasing slightly. This reflects the increase in the number of students in receipt of an EHCP nationally.

TC sought clarification on the difference between EHCP and SEND students. MSM gave an explanation on the distinction between EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) students. An EHCP is a legally binding document where the school is named by the Local Authority, with funding attached, and SEND is highlighted by teachers and parents within the school.

DW asked if parents of students with special needs, who feel their children are not being supported to a high enough level, tend to pursue an EHCP. MSM explained that some parents feel that if their child has some SEND, they don't understand why their child does not receive the same level of support as an EHCP student, which can be an issue sometimes.

MSM spoke about children with SEND support receiving extra time with their exams. DW asked if that is growing directly due to the particular need the student has to complete the exams in the designated time. MSM commented that the number for SEND support is high across schools.

Staff turnover is an issue, this is partly due to teachers seeking opportunities outside of London due to increasing housing costs and the current cost of living. ATA recognises the quality of its staff and their pursuit of promotional opportunities.

The student absence figure is very low.

Student exclusions have increased – in part because some students present with more persistent non-compliance and in part because of the zero-tolerance approach to vapes.

The exam results continue to impress and students are entered into more subjects than students in other schools.

DW commented on the downwards trend towards Humanities and MSM gave the Board an explanation.

TC asked a question about percentiles and MSM gave the Board a breakdown.


The 6<sup>th</sup> form performance is outstanding.

## **7. Any other business**

TC asked about Openview and the lease details. RJP gave an explanation about the relationship with Openview and lease details.

DW thanked everyone for their participation and continued support.

The next Executive Board meeting will be Tuesday 30 April 2024.

Signed:   
Richard Whitcutt  
Chair of the Executive Board

Date 30/4/2024