

**MINUTES OF THE 136th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 17.30**

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Stewart Harris (SH), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Steven Nash (SNA), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Mike Smith (MSM), Amit Chadda (ACH).

Absent: Rachel Branagan (RB), Tony Bothwell (TB), Kevin Chamberlain (KC)

In Attendance: Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

Start Time: 17:30

1. Apologies

Apologies were passed on from RB, TB and KC who could not attend due to work commitments.

2. Declarations

No interests were declared

3. Minutes of Last meeting

DW addressed an (un-minuted) issue raised at the previous meeting by SNA during discussion of the Local Authority's 2019 Autistic Resource Centre (Resource Base) report. The report had referred to a previous review of the ARC in 2016 which had raised some concerns about leadership and management issues in the base. SNA's concern was that this did not appear to have been shared with the Executive Board, whose role it was to hold the school to account on effectiveness of education provision. DW had now investigated and discovered that the previous review pre-dated any present parent member's membership of the Board but was not written up in the neutral Ofsted-style of the recent report. Points raised with the then Principal had included observations about personal abilities and competencies of certain individuals, some based on reciprocal critical comments by those individuals. This reflected known issues and relationships which had to be addressed at the time but formed sensitive staff matters not appropriate to discuss or resolve in the forum of the Executive Board meeting.

Subject to the above clarification, the minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

No further matters were raised beyond those covered above

5. Principal's Report

DMI updated the Board with regards to the ski trip to Italy. DMI advised that the Academy took the precautionary measure of isolating the students and staff who took part in the trip, as per the guidance provided by the Foreign Office.

DMI advised that, as at the date of the meeting, no further update had been issued by the Government regarding the isolation period, but confirmed that he was closely monitoring the situation.

DMI also added that every step has been taken to keep students and staff safe in the Academy. He further advised that there are four forthcoming foreign trips and that he will monitor the government advice and advise staff and students if there are any changes.

DMI drew the Board's attention to a report written by Tom Bennett, a respected educational "guru" regarding student behaviour in schools, which has attracted a huge amount of media coverage. DMI outlined the recommendations in the report. The recommendations reflect the approach adopted at the Academy.

DMI advised colleagues about Online Safety and that a letter will be sent to parents next week. The tragic events surrounding the death of Caroline Flack have highlighted the need for schools to take a proactive approach towards instilling in students and parents the power of social media and the negative impact it can have.

The letter will be sent out to all parents addressing all the issues from last week. A forum has been set up to discuss online usage and how much usage is healthy.

There will be guidance for parents to advise on the control of students and their mobile phones. Unfortunately, the Academy has a number of parents who do not monitor their child's mobile phone usage and the sites they are using and we do require this to change.

SNA reflected a concern about the amount of time students are spending on their phones and asked what the limitations should be.

CNN raised the issue of guidelines for the parents and advice and DMI explained that there will be recommendations in the letter.

DMI advised colleagues that staffing changes are taking place for next year and that the Academy prioritises such matters at this time of year in particular.

DMI advised the Board that the accident report has been pared back to just show situations where actual injuries were sustained and advised colleagues that a new, permanent, Welfare Officer who will be starting on Monday, 9 March.

6. Exclusion data

This was noted by those present.

7. Safeguarding

DMI presented the safeguarding report.

8. Current Developments for Discussion

IDSR (Inspection Data Summary Report)

MSM presented the IDSR, and an updated version was circulated to the Board at the meeting.

MSM advised the Board of the trends they should be considering and the issues that might arise from these trends. He added that the report has changed format once again this year. The Chairman commented that it was a pity the detail had been reduced as the IDSR had previously given many finer details to prompt follow up questions by Board members.

Data shows that the average number of subjects at Key stage 4 was lower than in the academic year 2018 to 2019 – a move from 9.7 to 9.1. In response to a request for more information, MSM explained that there were more ARC students in last year's cohort and three did not take French. Furthermore, there were fewer Triple Scientists

last year but more BTEC students. There will be more Triple Scientists this year. With the national average at 7.5 GCSE subjects, the Academy can still most confidently say that it offers a broad curriculum to all its students.

14 of the 17 Key Stage 4 subjects clusters were satisfied. This is very positive indeed.

MSM reminded the Board of the make-up of the EBACC: English Language and Literature, Maths, Science, History or Geography and a language. The Government targets for EBACC entry are: 75% by 2022 and 90% by 2025. The Academy percentage is 98%.

The Average Point Score places the Academy in the top 300 schools in the country and EBACC entry places us in the top 11 schools in the country. The Board congratulated the Academy on these achievements.

Performance in all subjects is in the top 20% in the country, with the exception of French. Staffing changes and a thorough curriculum redesign should see a marked change this year. Predictions are very encouraging. Nevertheless, unlike other schools' entries, every student at ATA sits GCSE French (in other schools this is an option for the more able) so our data will always be skewed. Furthermore, the grade boundaries were raised this year, which exam boards have pledged to address in the forthcoming exams.

Progress was slightly down on last year but still very strong. The Board asked why this figure was down, and what is being done to correct this trend for future years. MSM and DMI explained that Year groups are known very well by their Heads of Year, the culture of ambition is very strong and, where required, intervention begins at an early stage. Curriculum development has had a material impact on the way in which students know and understand the content of their lessons. French was given as an example because the Academy has seen a dramatic difference in engagement and in knowledge in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. This has happened gradually over time.

Out of 35 exclusions, 15 had unspecified reasons. The Academy is aiming to minimise the number declared as unspecified but the system does not allow for this to happen easily so there are times when the prescribed reasons do not match the incident.

The progress of minority groups, Pupil Premium and EAL within the Academy is excellent. Some SEN performance is not as strong and MSM has been working with the SENDCO to address this. The Academy does welcome twice the number of students with EHCPs that other mainstream schools would typically take in.

Only 28.4% of teachers had at least one period of sickness throughout the previous academic year, compared with a national average of 54%. This accounts for 1.3 days on average at ATA compared to national figure of 4.0. The Board thought this was an excellent achievement by the Academy staff.

SEN Report

ACH discussed the Wandsworth SEN report with colleagues. The report, written by OfSTED and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) identified a number of weaknesses in the Local Authority's processes – identification, monitoring and allocating to schools.

ACH advised the Board that there are some concerning areas of weakness, which the Academy has also identified. ACH advised of the challenges of working with the Borough and explained to colleague that we had encountered a number of issues this year which centred around mal-administration, communication and significant staff changes. The Academy is now aware of the steps it must take to fulfil its part in the process and has arranged to meet with key staff at the Borough to go through the challenges we have faced working with them this year - lost information being one significant issue. Wandsworth Council are stretched and the support is not as available as it should be. There was a large turnover as well as a reduction in staff in Wandsworth Council which resulted in the quality and consistency of service jeopardised.

9. Vice Principal's Report

DW reminded the Board members that the key finance and resource issues and developments were dealt with through the Finance and Resources Committee which typically met just before the Executive Board meetings.