

**MINUTES OF THE 129<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON  
TUESDAY 09 OCTOBER 2018 AT 17.30**

**Present:** Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Angela Entwistle (AEE), Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Phil Hall (PHA), Mike Smith (MSM), Cheryl John (CHJ), Steven Nash (SNA), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Stewart Harris (SHA), Rachel Branagan (RB).

**Absent:** Simon Jones (SJ), Tony Bothwell (TB).

**In Attendance:** Conor Hewitt (COH) (Minutes)

**Start Time:** 17:30

**1. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

RJP informed the Board that, as this was the first meeting of the new academic year, the annual election of Chair and Vice-Chair was required to take place. Lord Ashcroft as an ex officio member of the Executive Board as well as Chair of Trustees had proposed DW and AEE to continue their roles as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. There were no other nominations. Both were duly appointed.

**2. MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Simon Jones' term of office was due to end in December and a replacement would be sought. Although he was not present, DW noted, for the minutes, thanks for all of Simon's past contributions. Simon's growing political career had made it difficult for him to attend many meetings of late but this was fully understood and the Board wished him well for the future. It was also noted that Rachel Jarvis had recently married and is now known as Rachel Branagan. Board members conveyed their congratulations and best wishes to her.

**3. DATES FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS 2018-19**

RJP shared the confirmed dates for meetings with the Board.

**4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

TBO, who was present for the preceding FRC meeting, gave his apologies for the present meeting. SJO was also absent (see above).

**5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

DMI provided an update on the risk assessments for the proposed residential trips that were mentioned in the minutes of the previous meeting. One trip was overviewed by DW, with a few queries answered satisfactorily, and the other trip had insufficient uptake. SNA had kindly agreed to take a look at the risk assessment for the latter and DMI said that he would be grateful if SNA (or other members) could undertake independent overviews for some of the residential or foreign trips in the future.

**6. MATTERS ARISING**

SNA asked COH if the minutes of the meetings could be sent to members somewhat sooner after meetings. COH agreed to endeavour to do this.

**7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

DMI welcomed Board members to the new academic year. DMI explained that he would like to discuss safeguarding processes and concerns in the Academy and that he planned to introduce this as a standing item in each Principal's report. He explained that he felt it is important for Board members to have a broader understanding of the types of student-centred issues the Academy faces on a daily basis.

Later on the agenda, MSM would discuss the Academy's results for the last academic year. DMI would also like to add 'student progress' as a regular item in the Principal's report. The purpose of this will be to analyse, on a regular basis, Year 11 and 13 data and ensure that the procedures that go into ensuring quality results are as effective as possible.

The start of the academic year has been successful. There were a number of new staff who started at the Academy in August. The Academy NQT programme has been redesigned, and this has helped the newly qualified teachers make positive starts to their Ashcroft careers which he was confident in most cases would lead to permanent appointments.

SNA asked for an update on the summer homework project which was discussed in previous meetings. DMI noted that the project had been amended and he estimated that the amount of content had reduced by around 20%; however, the level of challenge was still high. DMI added that they had received no complaints from parents and that 100% of students completed the summer homework.

SNA asked about the attendance at extra-curricular activities each week, highlighting the fact that 90 different clubs and activities was quite a large number. DMI noted that the majority of the clubs were well attended.

SNA highlighted a number of trends in the recent exclusion data. The majority of student exclusions were males of an ethnic minority with some form of SEN/EHCP plan. SNA asked DMI if the Academy had previously identified this trend and if so, what could be learned from this.

DMI noted that 67% of all exclusions last year involved male students and this was in line with the male/female split in the Academy. MSM added that nationally 75% of all exclusions were of male students. SNA asked whether the exclusion data highlighted a trend in ethnicity. DMI explained the fact that the vast majority of Academy students were BAME and so we would expect that to be reflected in our data.

SNA asked DMI why the accident report contained mostly males. DMI said this was because more boys take part in sport and that a significant number of the accidents reported occurred during lunchtime sporting activities.

## **8. CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS FOR DISCUSSION:**

### **A. FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD'S DATA REVIEW (STEVEN NASH AND PAT EDMONDSON)**

DW, SNA and PED met as a sub-committee in September to discuss and analyse the 2018 Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) produced by Ofsted in further detail. MSM joined the group to assist with data interpretation but did not direct conclusions which would be brought back to discuss in the Executive Board. The IDSR covers student attainment, value added and progress and is used as a basis for areas to scrutinise by Ofsted and for inspectors to query, if there should be an inspection. It has also replaced (and embraced) the previous "data dashboard" and enables schools and governors to compare their school's performance on various measures with national statistics for cohorts of similar pupils. The 2018 IDSR was based on 2016/17 outcomes and will be updated by Ofsted in February 2019, analysing data collected in 2017/18, including this Summer's public examination results.

SNA and PED outlined 6 key areas to question/challenge further: .

1. They had identified a high number of students leaving the Academy in 2016/17 and wanted to clarify whether this was an on-going issue.
2. Progress in Science and languages was low when compared to other subjects.
3. Year 7 students who were high attainers in primary school seemed to make less progress comparatively.
4. Non-GCSE attainment was lower than the national average.
5. The sub-committee questioned the difference in the gender intake in Year 7 and Year 12. More male students were given a place in Year 7 and more female students obtained a place in the Sixth Form. Can anything be done to balance better?

6. Males underperformed compared to their female counterparts and were also less likely to go to university.

DMI noted that in any future Ofsted inspection the inspectors will use the IDSR document to inform their enquiry.

Off-rolling (the practice of removing children from the roll of a school) has become an issue nationally, 11,000 students were off-rolled last year and were therefore out of education. ATA does lose students at a higher than average rate when compared to the national data. However, London has a far more transient community and in the vast majority of cases students leave the Academy because they move to a different part of the country or move country entirely. The relationship the Academy has with the Brazilian Naval Commission also means that we do have students leaving the Academy to return to Brazil. We do not know where we stand compared to other London schools as there is no specific London data available.

DMI noted that the Academy and the local authority have to be vigilant and thorough in their processes when students leave the Academy suddenly or under suspicious circumstances, as this raises a number of safeguarding issues. DW asked whether the Local Authority had a division to follow up these issues, DMI confirmed that they do.

SNA asked to what extent students who move to different schools within the borough are moving due to the strict discipline at the Academy, and, if so, what can the Leadership Group (LG) learn from these situations? DMI noted that in the last year only 1 student was known to have left because of general dislike of the discipline policy. DMI explained that parents do have a choice and that the Academy is very clear on expected behaviours in its marketing and open event activities. If the Academy is not to their liking, they can choose to move their child. This is rare, but it does happen. ATA does indeed carefully reflect on the reasons why students leave.

DMI also noted we do have two cases of persistent non-attendance.

DMI discussed the gender balance in the Academy. The Academy has always had more male students than female which can be attributed to a number of factors. There are a number of successful all girl's schools in the local area and, since ATA has a majority of Muslim students, some families wish for their daughters to attend all girl's schools. The female/male split is approximately 60-40 and therefore not wide enough to be considered a serious imbalance. DW suggested that the term "technology" in ATA's name may put off young female students but MSM noted that as technology becomes more digitised, it is not as off-putting as woodwork and metalwork was in the past. AEE agreed that the definition of technology has changed significantly and that female students are now more interested in pursuing careers in engineering and technology. DMI noted that technology in the Academy is now closely associated with Maths and Science and this attracts students who perhaps have ambitions of working in these fields. We also have a number of female students in the Sixth Form who wish to pursue roles in the medical field. The IB is also a course that traditionally appeals to female students.

DMI noted that all Sixth Forms are co-educational, which means there is a more even spread of gender throughout the local schools. However, the difference in male and female attainment is a national trend - female students traditionally perform better at GCSEs level, both in the Academy and nationally. This means that they are more likely to progress into Sixth Form. This year, the Academy managed to close the gap between male and female progress up to GCE. This is due to the support in place for Year 11 students and a change in the style of exams.

DMI explained that, as the result of an administrative error, the destination information contained in the IDSR is wrong and does not reflect the real picture.

As a further response to the sub-committee's questions, MSM explained that the Academy's Science and Modern Foreign Language (MFL) results are in line with our open subjects and they are currently in the top 25% of all results nationally. They are also improving consistently on a year-on-year basis. The Academy's

Maths and English results, however, are exceptional this year and the Academy places great focus on these subjects. Finding well-qualified science teachers is a problem nationally - however, we feel we have recruited well in this area this year.

MSM noted that the MFL results will look slightly lower compared to the national picture because all students must study a language as part of the EBACC but around 44% of schools in the country do not insist on students studying a language.

MSM also noted comments that the IDSR highlights the fact that our middle attainers have been achieving greater progress than the high and low end. MSM believes this is due to our academic curriculum which stretches the average student and pushes them to make significant progress. LG have been looking into the fact that high KS2 attainers aren't making as much progress and they are working hard to ensure that this improves with the current Year 11 cohort.

The IDSR data had also suggested that attainment in non-GCSE subjects was lower than the national average. Here, MSM explained that the Academy generally promotes an academic curriculum and last year there were only 2 BTEC subjects on offer: Engineering and ICT. In past years, the Academy had up to 4 engineering classes; however, this was unavoidably reduced because recruiting good quality Engineering staff has been an issue. Furthermore, the BTEC ICT course was designed to give low attaining students a vocational option in KS4.

SNA asked whether Ashcroft is focusing on the middle attainers rather than low and high attainers. MSM explained that the Academy pushes every single student, regardless of attainment, with study hall, power hours and a number of other initiatives. MSM noted that that the Academy has a lot of high attaining students and they are in fact the majority. MSM and DMI fully accepted that the Academy must continue to push and stretch the most able students as well as low attainers. Leadership Group (LG) and Curriculum Managers meet regularly to discuss specific students and to organise interventions for students who are not working to the best of their ability.

In response to the sub-committee's comments on the difference in results between genders, MSM explained that the 12 poorest progress 8 scores in the last cohort were all male students – but the majority of the best 12 progress 8 scores were also male. MSM added that white working-class boys and Afro-Caribbean boys underachieve both at Ashcroft and in the national context. The difference in attainment between male and female students nationally has stayed consistently divided throughout the years and MSM had data to show a consistent trend from 1952 to the present day.

## **B. 2018 RESULTS (MIKE SMITH)**

MSM showed the Board the results from the 2017-18 academic year. MSM noted that the IB figures were not part of the presentation, however, they were outstanding and put our results amongst the best private schools in England. The Year 12 AS results indicate there is work to be done with this cohort, due to a number of reasons. A large percentage of Sixth Forms no longer offer AS levels and this has skewed the national analysis.

The 2018 GCSE results are outstanding. The +1 progress score is the best ever achieved and MSM estimated that this would put Ashcroft in the top 50 schools nationally. The latest results were an improvement across the board. While the EBACC figure did drop slightly, this was largely due to a change in the way the EBACC is calculated rather than the actual results. The progress 8 score for EBACC was +1.13, the open subject progress was slightly lower and LG are looking into ways to improve this. Nevertheless, the results are still extremely good. Disadvantaged students also performed exceptionally well - at which point SNA asked how the government determines if a student is disadvantaged. DMI noted that if a student received free school meals, was a "looked after child" or in receipt of an EHCP they are deemed to be disadvantaged.

## **C. SAFEGUARDING UPDATE – KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION AND MYCONCERN (CHERYL JOHN & PHIL HALL)**

CHJ and PHA will update the Board regularly on safeguarding issues as it is an area of growing focus and importance. As a result of this increase, PHA has now become the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead and will support CHJ. CHJ outlined the differences between safeguarding and child protection. Safeguarding is an everyday process that prevents harm and protects children. Child protection is what PHA and CHJ deal with when situations occur. CHJ noted that we only see the tip of an iceberg at school and often a small situation in the Academy can uncover a serious issue at home.

CHJ showed the board NSPCC data for the number of children who are dealing with some form of abuse. DW asked whether or not the huge increase in neglect over the last 5 years is down to a change in definition or a increase in safeguarding problems. CHJ said that she felt that the number of cases of neglect is growing. PHA also noted that the increase in data could be because awareness of these issues is growing and therefore more people are reporting and dealing with cases much more pro-actively.

Neglect is the most common form of abuse. ATA has a number of children on a child protection plan and other forms of anti-abuse plans. Sexual abuse includes exposure to inappropriate material and sexting.

The Executive Board has a duty to make sure the Academy's practices and procedures are in line with legislation and that the safeguarding policy and procedures are regularly updated and assessed. The Academy's ICAS mentors, Sixth Form Management Team, LG and Head of Years received Level 3 safeguarding training. All staff throughout the Academy receive Level 1 safeguarding training. SNA asked how students are made aware of the procedures and how they know what to do if they need to report an issue. This information is delivered in CPHSE and students are encouraged to report any issue, no matter how small, to staff who then pass the information to CHJ.

CHJ noted that we take safeguarding very seriously at ATA because we have students who need our help. CHJ noted that the Academy is creating a culture of vigilance and there is a new system in place to support this.

'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (DFE statutory guidance) is a key document that all staff in the Academy have read. CHJ explained the minor changes in the document. These include an increased focus on protecting SEN students and on opening lines of communication for students. There is also a major focus on online safety.

Every student must now have at least 2 emergency contacts detailed on their SIMS profile as there have been cases throughout the country of a school's inability to contact the parents or guardians of a child which has led to fatal outcomes. All schools are now required to conduct enhanced DBS checks for all staff and this something we do already. Also, highlighted in the document, is the use of reasonable force. CHJ explained that LG would take the lead in all serious scenarios that may involve restraining a student. SNA asked if teachers have the right to use reasonable force with students if there is a very serious issue and CHJ confirmed that staff members do have the right when people's safety is at risk.

PHA introduced the new safeguarding tracking system. MyConcern is an online platform that is used to record safeguarding concerns. This does not replace the traditional conversation with the safeguarding lead and staff are still encouraged to speak to CHJ and PHA if they have any concerns. All staff members were trained in safeguarding and on the use of MyConcern on the first PD day of the academic year.

Every time a concern is logged, PHA, CHJ and DMI receive a notification. This can then be shared with Heads of Year and other relevant staff members who need to be informed. PHA showed the board how concerns are recorded on the online platform. PHA also showed the Board what PHA, CHJ and DMI see when a concern is raised. PHA referred the Board to the Principal's report which highlighted the breakdown of safeguarding concerns. This system allows the Academy to keep a historical database of issues and use the data to inform future training programmes. PHA explained that MyConcern allows the Academy to contact and transfer records securely from other schools. This is particularly useful in Year 7.

PED asked about peer on peer abuse, PHA explained that every situation is different but in most cases the abuser will be disciplined in school and if the issue is very serious parents will be contacted and further action will be taken.

SNA asked PHA if he felt confident that the data in MyConcern was secure. PHA said he felt it was an extremely secure place to store this sensitive data. SNA asked about data destruction and PHA explained that the MyConcern data would be deleted in line with the Academy's policy of securely destroying student data (date of birth + 25 years).

## 9. VICE-PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

RJP discussed in detail the capital works that have taken place since the last meeting. The previously discussed ventilation works have been completed. This work appears to have made a difference; however, we will have a better understanding of the improvements made once the temperature starts to rise next summer.

The CCTV upgrades and other IT services work have yet to be finished but should be so by the time of the next meeting.

The new sound and lighting truss in the auditorium has also been installed and was in place for the open evening for prospective year 7 students in September.

In terms of revenue funding, RJP commented that the Academy's projected outcome for the previous academic year is very similar to that of the year before. Subject to some final adjustments, the Academy may well achieve a small revenue surplus for the year. The Academy has continued to cut costs where possible and, by way of an example, less major work was undertaken during the summer holidays in order to reduce expenditure. There has also been a reduction in staffing costs, which has meant we are not faced with the deficit most schools are experiencing.

RJP expects the government to maintain its approach to educational funding in the medium-term. However, the government has accepted a multi-layered pay increase for teaching staff and it has promised to help cover the increased costs that will be incurred by schools with an additional pay grant. RJP estimated that the Academy will receive a grant towards this of around £70,000, however, the total cost to the Academy of implementing the award in full is expected to be around £88,000. Teachers in the early stages of their careers will receive a 3.5% pay increase, there will also be a 2% increase for teachers who are placed on the upper pay scale and a 1.5% increase for staff on the leadership scales.

The government has also promised assistance in covering the costs associated with the recently announced increase in employer pension contributions, which take effect from September 2019. While the government remains keen to ensure that staff costs for schools across the country do not exceed 80% of all expenditure, this is becoming increasingly impossible to achieve.

The extra income the Academy will receive from the increase in student numbers will help the financial projections over the next 3 years and will provide a welcome increase in total income. However, expenditure is also expected to increase year on year and this means that financial projections show a deficit for each of the three years of the latest plan, which will impact cash reserves. RJP noted that the Academy remained in a very strong financial position, when compared with other secondary schools and academies, and that the trustees have agreed for the Academy to continue operating at the level it is currently, whilst drawing on reserves. DMI and RJP still continue looking for efficiencies to save money where possible.

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

PED asked if the upcoming prize-giving evening was for all year groups, DMI confirmed that it was.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Richard Whitcutt  
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 12/12/2018