MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 22nd April 2015
Venue: Aspire Academy
Time: 4.00pm

Present:	Wendy Middlemas (WM) (Chair), Sheryl Cardwell (SC), Michael Carey (MC), Alana Frith (AF), Catherine Hill (CH), Steve Parsons (SP), Colin Simkins (CS) (Principal)
Together with:	Emily Trotter (ET) (FCAT Services Lead) and Kath Buddle (KB) (FCAT Governance Administrator and minute taker)
Apologies:	Tony Nicholson

<u>Action</u>

1. Preliminaries

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and, particularly Sheryl Cardwell, new Parent Governor for the Academy Council. Introductions were made.

1.2 Apologies were received from Tony Nicholson. Catherine Hill had informed the Clerk that she would be late for the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2015

3.1 The minutes of the meeting were approved.

4. Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda

4.1 **Thanks and congratulations to the Geography Team** (Item 6.1d from the previous minutes) – the Principal confirmed that thanks and congratulations had been passed on to the Team for their achievement in being asked to join an Ofsted North West hub of schools focussing on excellence in the teaching of Geography to share with struggling schools.

5. Teaching and Learning

5.1 Principal's Report

The Principal presented his report which was based on the Ofsted Self Evaluation Form (SEF) framework. Directors of faculties are using the same framework to report to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) so that consistent processes across all levels are maintained.

Governors were informed that there had already been a significant change to the culture of the Academy since September with only a handful of students out of uniform during a recent check. Staff and student commitment to learning was high and the Academy was optimistic about forthcoming examinations.

John Woods, Assistant Headteacher (Attainment, Data and Progress) joined the meeting

a) Achievement

JW provided an update on student achievement in Year 11. He explained that an Assessment Group made up of representatives from each of the FCAT Academies was looking to agree consistent dates for the collection of data in order to better compare achievement across the three.

JW explained that the performance of every Year 11 student was being rigorously tracked, and, currently, 46% were on target to achieve five A* - C grade GCSEs including English and Maths. The next data collection point would be 29th April 2015 and information from this would be emailed out to Governors.

<div align="right">JW</div>

A significant number of interventions were in place to support achievement including breakfast clubs, additional lessons (Lesson 6) and mentoring sessions. A revision programme, tailored to meet priority needs, was due to start on 8th May and tutors from the Randstad Agency would be providing additional support for English and Maths. The Academy had also organised a Parents' Evening for Year 11 parents to explain the support requirements during revision time and the examinations and had spoken directly to those that had not been able to attend on the evening.

CH joined the meeting.

Challenges

In response to a question about parental attendance at evening sessions, JW acknowledged that engagement levels were low but that students themselves had responded to the action and seemed to understand the importance of structured revision.

Asked about the involvement of the Randstad Agency, JW explained that staff from the Agency were being used to support the Academy's own staff in delivering some of the interventions. The Agency would also provide support for Year 10 students during the summer term.

Asked about the 57% target for attainment of five A* - C grade GCSEs, JW confirmed that significant progress had been made this year and that this was achievable. The target may not seem aspirational, but, bearing in mind the issues faced by the current Year 11 cohort, in terms of the impact of joining together two disparate schools, and the legacy of poor leadership within these, it would be a huge achievement for the Academy if met.

Asked about how dependent achievement of the target was on Product Design, one of the subjects giving particular cause for concern, JW acknowledged that this might not be a significant issue. The Academy was working to support students and staff were fully aware of their responsibilities in respect of this. The Principal explained that staffing structure in relation to Design Technology (DT) and Information Technology (IT) were under scrutiny and that the structure for Year 10 students taking these subjects would be reviewed and improved.

In response to a question about the impact of the new build on the stability of the Academy, the Principal confirmed that this was likely to cause some problems and the move across would need to be carefully managed, especially for next Year's Year 11 students.

The Chair thanked JW for his report and he left the meeting.

Sarah Matthews and John Topping joined the meeting

b) Technology and IT

Sarah Matthews, Director of Technology and IT circulated a paper on developments in these subjects, highlighting the problems caused as a result of the amalgamation of the two predecessor schools. Currently there were 13 different groups studying IT in Year 11, ranging from 5 – 25 students in each. Some of these had only started work on the GCSE syllabus in March 2014. 50% were on target to achieve GCSE A* - C grade passes in IT, a rise of 14% since the previous data collection point. The original target was 81.9%.

There was just one group studying Computing as part of the E Baccalaureate qualification. The introduction of more structured planning had allowed an opportunity to identify more revision time in this subject and this would help support better achievement in the subject. 69% of students were on track to achieve the qualification against an original target of 77%.

Textiles was on track to achieve a 70% A*- C grade GCSE pass rate. However, this was a small cohort of students (9 only) so work to support individual students was critical to achieve this.

Further information on Graphics, Catering, Product Design and Construction was provided. Teachers were focussing on the written elements of the courses in order to boost grades. SM explained that monitoring and support systems had been improved significantly along with the quality of teaching.

Challenge

In response to a question about the makeup of the IT qualification, SM explained that this was 60% course work and 40% examination. Students and teachers were now aware of where improvements were needed and systems to support the current Year 10 students were in place in readiness for their move to Year 11.

The Chair thanked SM for her report and congratulated her on progress so far across difficult subject areas. SM left the meeting.

c) New build developments

John Topping provided an update on the development of the new building. Work was progressing well with most of the outside work completed. The old college walls had been incorporated into the new build along with the original stained glass panels. Outdoor shelters would be provided in the next phase along with a cyclonic rain system. JT highlighted the narrow corridors within the building which would require a one way system for the Academy once students were moved in.

Challenges

In response to a question about the companies involved in the building works, JT reported that the architects had been very accommodating but the actual physical work had been completed very quickly leaving little or no time for consultation with the Academy.

Asked about a completion date, JT confirmed that this would be made known within the next two weeks.

The Principal explained that, in addition to his duties at Aspire, JT had been

seconded to FCAT for two days per week to help with marketing and public relations for the Trust.

The Chair thanked JT for his report and, particularly for his leadership in the development of the new build and he left the meeting.

d) Leadership and management
The Principal drew Governors' attention to the section of his report on leadership and management, explaining that, due to the change in culture across the Academy, a number of staff had decided to move on. It was important to maintain adequate staffing levels and he was working with as many as possible to encourage their commitment to the new values. However, 4 that had left, or were in the process of leaving, had been replaced with very good staff and it was noticeable that the Academy was beginning to attract better class candidates for vacant positions.

Challenge
Asked when he thought the impact of the changes would begin to show results in terms of improved life chances for students, the Principal reported that this was already happening. The 57% expected level of attainment in GCSE A* - C passes would be the highest either of the predecessor schools had achieved. Actions in place to provide greater support included the establishment of a summer school to work with new Year 6 students on English and Maths in particular prior to the September 2015 year start. By December 2015 the Academy should be showing progress for the first time ever in the first school term and improvements to monitoring across Years 7, 8 and 9 would identify areas to be targeted in order to improve results year on year.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

6. Finance and Resources
6.1 Reforecasted budget for the current year
Emily Trotter presented the reforecasted budget for the current year (Paper 7.1) which highlighted the significant variances. The Academy had received more funding than expected from the local authority and there were monies brought forward from the predecessor schools. Furthermore, staff costs had decreased following resignations from higher paid teachers. Additional costs were shown against catering following a price increase from the local authority. Monies had also been allocated against ICT costs for the new build.

Governors approved the reforecast.

6.2 Draft budget for 2015-16
Governors noted the draft budget for 2015-16 (Paper 7.2).

Challenges
In response to a question about the use of the Academy's surplus, ET explained that this was likely to be absorbed into the budget as funding decreased in future years. The current budget was set against 110 new students joining the Academy, though this would rise if numbers increased.

Asked about the size of the new build in terms of student numbers, the Principal explained that it would accommodate 900 in all and 180 each new intake (PAN).

Asked about Pupil Premium funding, ET confirmed that this amounted to £513k for the year.

In response to a question about why the budget was not based on the higher numbers expected to join the Academy in 2017-18, ET confirmed that knowledge about the potential for additional student intake had only come to light recently. Currently, the budget was based on 110 students joining in 2015-16 and 140 in 2016-17. The final budget would reflect this and other new information will be brought to the next meeting for approval. ET agreed to include information about the assumptions in future budget summaries.

ET

6.3 Internal Audit update

Governors considered the Internal Audit Report for Quarter 1 2014-15 (Paper 7.3). It was noted that the Academy had performed well in its financial transactions and thanks were passed on to the Finance Team. However, concern was raised about the robustness of the audit. ET explained that web based ordering was about to be introduced which should make transactions and controls more efficient. The internal audit supplier is also due to be reviewed.

Challenge

Asked about the £250 spending limit for staff, the Principal confirmed that this was the case and had been necessary to introduce in order to gain greater control over spending. The limit might increase over the next academic year once new staffing structures had been embedded.

7. FCAT Risk Register

ET provided an introduction to FDF Risk Manager, an online system designed to manage academy specific risks based on the 'Bow Tie' method. The system incorporates nine key risks and a number of threats that can be scored depending on the level of the threat to each academy. The system also allowed for the inclusion of controls put in place to address threats. ET would be working with SLTs across all three FCAT academies to identify the level of threats against each risk.

Challenges

Asked about the cost of the software, ET reassured Governors that this was an FCAT central cost and that the Academy would not be expected to pay any more towards it.

Asked about reporting mechanisms, ET confirmed that the system generated Red Amber Green (RAG) rated reports which would be provided to Governors at future meetings.

The Chair thanked ET for her reports and she left the meeting.

8. Strategy and Governance
8.1 Governance arrangements

The Chair reminded Governors of the three key functions for the Academy Council, i.e.:
- To set the strategic direction for the Academy
- To challenge the Principal to meet the strategic direction
- To oversee the finances for the Academy

It was noted that the proposed performance management system for the Academy had been superseded by the introduction of the FCAT Risk

Register.

8.2 Academy Improvement Plan
The Principal confirmed that, following the FCAT Academies Away Day on 17th April 2015, a new draft plan for the forthcoming academic year was being drafted and would be emailed out to Governors when completed. The Academy's SEF would be considered by SLT during the week and informed by progress against actions on the current Improvement Plan.

CS

9. Safeguarding
Governors noted the minutes of the FCAT Safeguarding Board meeting held on 16th March 2015.

The Safeguarding Governor provided a summary of the meeting, highlighting the development of an FCAT wide Safeguarding Policy and work in place to provide support for students at risk moving from primary to secondary education. The Board had links to the Blackpool Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) through the Chair and the meetings also provided a forum to discuss safeguarding case studies and good practice.

10. Dates of meetings for the 2015-16 academic year
Governors considered and approved the timetable of meetings for the new academic year.

11. Review of risks
No new risks were identified.

12. Any other business
None.

13. Confidential items
The Clerk agreed to identify any potential confidential items in the minutes and make the Chair aware of them.

14. Date and Time of next meeting
Due to a number of apologies for the originally scheduled meeting, the date for the next meeting was amended to:

Day: Monday
Date: 15th June 2015
Time: 4.00pm
Venue: Aspire Academy

Signed: _____

(Chair)

Date: _____