



MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 15th February 2017
Venue: Aspire Academy
Time: 4.00pm

Present: Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Michael Carey, Sarah Elson, Jill Gray, Bill Greene, Ryan Sheldon and Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown (Principal).
Together with: Jane Beckford (Guest), Katie Hendley (Aspire Finance Lead), Tony Nicholson (FCAT CEO), Simon Blackwell (Assistant Principal – for part of the meeting), and Kath Buddle (FCAT Governance Administrator and minute taker)
Apologies: Bob Keen, Carole Sweeting and Phil Birch.

1. Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies were noted.

The Chair reported that Sheryl Cardwell had tendered her resignation as a Parent Governor, due to the pressure of work.

The Chair congratulated the academy on a positive Ofsted Report which had rated the academy as 'Requires Improvement' and praised the 'Getting to Good' plan developed in response to the inspection. She also thanked those Governors that had been able to come into school during the inspection. Ofsted had identified the Year 11 Recovery Plan as a priority area and the Academy Council would scrutinise this later in the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no specific declarations of interest for this meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 7th December 2016 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting were approved. The following matters arising were noted:

3.1 Training for Governors on Progress 8 (Item 3.3 from the previous minutes) – a session on Progress 8 had been delivered by John Woods, Assistant Principal, directly prior to this meeting.

3.2 Internal audit update (Item 5.3 from the previous minutes) – the Clerk confirmed that the audit on cash handling would take place week commencing 13th March 2017 and reports would be reviewed by the FCAT Audit Committee at its meeting in April 2017.

3.3 Self Evaluation Form (SEF) (Item 7.1 from the previous minutes) – an update on the SEF would be provided to Governors at the first meeting of the summer term following the data collection point at to the end of spring term.

3.4 Improvement Plan (Item 7.2 from the previous minutes) – confirmation that the 'Getting to Good' Plan had been uploaded to Governors Virtual Office.

4. Departmental Challenge

Simon Blackwell, Assistant Principal provided a summary of the actions in place to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the academy.

Action

Clerk
(agenda)



This was Priority 1 on the 'Getting to Good' Plan.

The aim was to create a positive vibe for teaching and learning and to develop a 'community of learners' supported by consistently good teaching. The academy had adopted a common framework and language (around the word 'golden' – i.e. 'golden hours', 'golden questions', 'golden nuggets' etc) so that all students and staff were working towards the same goals in a consistent manner. The system had already been trialled successfully in the English Department.

The academy had introduced 'Go Tasks'. These were task allocated to students immediately on entry to lessons. The Principal explained that this helped students understand their role in the learning process and reduced the incidence of low level disruption at the start of lessons.

Questions from Governors

Asked how the academy would ensure that the new framework did not become another 'flavour of the month' initiative, SB acknowledged that this was a concern but that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was passionate about developing the culture of learning across the academy, believing that accelerating the pace of learning and getting students to work harder from the beginning to the end of lessons was key to further academic progress.

Asked if students had been involved in developing the framework, SB confirmed that they had been fully engaged with the development and understood the reasons behind it.

Asked if there was a shared bank of resources for the 'Go Tasks', SB confirmed that this was the case and that a toolkit for staff was also planned.

Governors queried some of the terminology being used but commended the approach. In response to a suggestion that the framework be linked to the 'Golden Time' initiative taking place in primary schools, the Principal confirmed that this had already been identified as a potential benefit.

The FCAT CEO reported that the approach reflected the model being promoted nationally which focussed teachers on developing questions that required the students to think for themselves.

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

5. Finance and Resources

The Finance Lead provided a summary of the Management Accounts as at the end of December 2016 (Paper 5.1).

Spending was currently slightly higher than the budget, due largely to the payment of some settlement agreements that had been made earlier than planned.

Agency costs were high, but would be offset to some extent by insurance cover in the next set of accounts. The budget for exclusions and managed moves was also overspent at this stage.

The academy was still waiting to pay outstanding utility bills and money had been built into the budget for this.

Income wise, Pupil Premium funding had been higher than expected.



The cashflow position had not changed since the last report and the deficit remained at c£600k.

The Principal reported that, as part of the strategy to reduce spending, assistant principals were the only staff authorised to spend money and only then on items up to a cost of £100. The Principal herself had to authorise the purchase of any items at a higher cost.

Questions from Governors

In response to a concern about the overspend on exclusions, the Principal confirmed that it would be possible to access funding from other budget areas to cover future shortfall and that she was in regular contact with the Finance Lead to keep abreast of all budget areas.

Asked about the academy's ratio spend on staffing, the Principal reported that this currently seemed to be at 81% of General Annual Grant (GAG) income (6% higher than the FCAT guidelines) but that the Finance Lead was checking this again. There had been a significant number of staff leaving the academy that had not been replaced and the Principal felt sure that the actual level was lower than 81%. The Finance Lead agreed to bring the latest figure to the next meeting. A three year plan to steadily reduce staffing costs had been implemented.

KH

6. Principal's Report

The Principal highlighted the key points from her Report (Paper 6.1).

The academy had been able to recruit to its Science teacher vacancy by appointing a Unity Academy teacher who had been appointed to an already fully staffed team there. Unity had over-appointed in the subject because of the difficulty in recruiting good Science teachers, and in the knowledge that an FCAT academy would need them in the future. The member of staff had already completed Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and attended induction processes, saving Aspire Academy time and recruitment costs. The academy also had a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) placement student in the Science Team.

A full time SCITT placement student would be appointed to a vacancy in the English Department from September 2017. A vacancy within the Humanities Department had been advertised nationally. Three Teaching Assistants, all qualified teachers, had been appointed that day.

Mike Cladingbowl, Independent Consultant and former National Director of Inspection Reform at Ofsted, had been invited back to assess the academy's academic progress and had been pleased with the direction being taken towards achieving a 'Good' rating.

Changes to the Curriculum had been made with a greater emphasis on Computing and Computer Literacy. The Curriculum offer had gone out to Year 8 students that day with a wide range of options for them to choose from.

Attendance had been affected by norovirus bug and there had been some impact on punctuality due to the closure of Crossley's Bridge. The academy was looking very closely at attendance and punctuality in order to improve rates and focussing on making learning more enjoyable as being central to this.

Questions from Governors

In response to a question about support provided to new staff, the Principal



explained that these received mentoring from their subject leads on a weekly basis and support from experienced professionals in group sessions along with other newly appointed colleagues. Induction was also carried out in groups in a phased approach across the year and staff were able to identify and address any common issues together.

Asked about whether or not there was sufficient budget for training for new staff, the Principal confirmed that this was the case. The academy had a good budget for continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and full access to the Fylde Coast Training School Programme.

In response to a question about the quality of her teaching team following restructures over the past few months, the Principal reported that it was much stronger and included some excellent younger members. There were just a couple of teachers that still required support to improve their quality of teaching.

In response to a question about how the 'Getting to Good' Plan would be monitored across the year, the Principal explained that milestone dates for each action had been agreed and that these would be scrutinised at each SLT meeting. Members of the SLT would meet with middle leaders to monitor progress of actions on a weekly basis and the Principal would also discuss progress in her weekly meetings with the Executive Principal.

In response to a question about the work being carried out in Year 7 on Science, the Principal confirmed that this had been approved by the FCAT Lead in Science. The aim was to bring more challenge to the cohort and avoid duplication of topics already covered on the primary syllabus.

In response to a question about moderation, the Principal outlined the difficulties of carrying this out over time. A programme of lesson observations was going well but the SLT had agreed that this needed to be strengthened. Middle leaders had taken on this responsibility and would hold individual teachers to account themselves in order to embed better quality teaching across the academy.

In response to a question about the reason for the high level of churn (students joining and leaving the academy mid year) the Principal explained that this was a Blackpool wide issue. Families often moved across the town/out of area and back again a number of times and the impact on the academy was considerable. In-year vacancies left the academy vulnerable to requests for admissions which then impacted hugely on teaching and learning.

The Chair thanked the Principal for her Report.

7. Year 11 Recovery Plan

Governors focussed on the Year 11 Recovery Plan (Appendix 4 of the Principal's Report).

The Principal explained that progress of the Plan was monitored at every SLT meeting. Actions that were not showing any benefit, for example the 'night club' project, had been withdrawn. Staff were looking at activities that could motivate students and increase their confidence, including the introduction of visiting speakers to assemblies, and encouraging better attendance at parents evenings. The Principal took on board a suggestion from Governors to include talks from former students on the benefits of qualifications to support success in a chosen career.



Raising attainment meetings were being held each week where staff considered progress of different subject areas. Booster sessions, focussed on providing specific help required by students, were being offered after school hours. Students had also been provided with additional support to help with exams.

Questions from Governors

In response to a concern about the fact that many of the activities were being delivered by staff with unallocated duties (i.e. those that might be considered the weakest), the Principal reassured Governors that the staff delivering activities were excellent, and well able to provide the support required, especially those within the English Department.

Asked if she had seen any changes in attitude to learning from the cohort, the Principal confirmed that there had been some but it was still early days in terms of receiving feedback on the activities being provided. Attitudes to exams had been positive, however, and all of the Year 11 cohort had applied for courses at local colleges. She acknowledged that more work was needed to encourage students in younger year groups to identify earlier what they wanted to do after school and how they were going to get there, in order to strengthen attitudes to learning in Year 11.

In response to a question about impact measures, the Principal reported that results of the imminent mock exams would provide the first of these and that actions to address shortfalls would be monitored closely via the mechanism of meetings as mentioned previously to ensure focus on priority issues was maintained.

Asked how the academy aimed to address the gender imbalance in terms of outcomes in some subjects, the Principal explained that staff had worked hard on identifying how support for boys could be improved to help them achieve as well as girls in English and subjects requiring good English, focussing particularly on Writing skills.

Asked how the academy would manage to provide individual feedback to students, the Principal explained that information on what to do to improve on answers would be included with the marks for each question on feedback for the mock exams. There were already some common features that students needed to improve on and work to address these was taking place in groups.

In response to a concern about the decline in progress in the BTec subjects, the Principal explained that this was due to the fact that not all units for these had been completed yet and that improvements should be seen across the year.

In response to a question about Pupil Premium students, the Principal acknowledged that these were under-performing compared to their peers in Year 11. The Ofsted Report had recommended that the academy forge a link with Chris Morris, a recognised expert in this area working at Broughton High School, for support to improve outcomes for the cohort.

The Chair thanked the Principal for her explanation of the actions and the Governors for their scrutiny in this area.

8. Strategy

8.2 FCAT Developments

The Chair provided an update on the development of the free school. Following consultation, 'Armfield Academy' had been agreed for the name of



the school. Admission arrangements were about to be reviewed and a full consultation process would begin in May 2017. The construction company to carry out the building work had been selected.

The FCAT CEO reminded Governors of the Away Day scheduled for 31st March 2017. Hamid Patel, Chief Executive of Tauheedul Education Trust would be providing a key note speech at the event.

8.3 Data for Governors

The CEO provided an explanation of the dummy data sheet developed by the FCAT Strategic Lead for Data which would be used to report progress and achievement at future meetings (Paper 7.3).

The report would supersede the vast number of reports provided for Governors at past meetings and staff would also be able to drill down for further information as required.

9. Safeguarding

Governors noted the minutes of the FCAT Safeguarding Board meeting held on 11th November 2016 (Paper 8.1) and the key area of discussion which had been on the capacity of the Blackpool Children and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS) to support increased numbers requiring the service.

The Principal reported that the Chair of the FCAT Safeguarding Board was due to attend the academy to view the problems with the main door which was considered a safeguarding issue. The Site Manager was also meeting with the suppliers about the matter.

The Safeguarding Governor was thanked for his representation on the FCAT Safeguarding Board.

10. Review of Risks

No new risks were identified.

11. Date and Time of next meeting

Day: Wednesday
Date: 22nd March 2017
Time: 4.00pm
Venue: Aspire Academy

FCAT Away Day – Friday 31st March 2017 8.50am – 4.00pm at the Village Hotel, Blackpool (formerly the De Vere Hotel)

Signed: _____(Chair)

Date: _____