



## MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
Venue: Aspire Academy  
Time: 4.00pm

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**Present:** Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Michael Carey, Sarah Elson, Alana Frith, Jill Gray, Bill Greene, Bob Keen, Ryan Sheldon, Colin Simkins (Principal), Felicity Greeves (Executive Principal)

**Together with:** Kath Buddle (FCAT Governance Administrator)

**Apologies:** Sheryl Cardwell

### 1. Preliminaries

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly Michael Carey who had returned after an agreed leave of absence period.
- 1.2 Apologies from Sheryl Cardwell were noted.
- 1.3 Jill Gray was formally appointed and welcomed as a Sponsor Governor.
- 1.4 Sarah Elson and Ryan Sheldon were formally appointed and welcomed as Staff Governors.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting were approved.

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

- 4.1 **Circulation of Education Funding Agency document 'Schools Financial Efficiency: top 10 planning checks for governors'** (Item 5.1 from the previous minutes) – the Clerk confirmed that the link for this had been circulated to Governors on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016.
- 4.2 **Conference on supporting schools' financial health 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016** (Item 5.1 from the previous minutes) – the Clerk confirmed that Governors had been invited to attend the conference. Sheryl Cardwell would be attending the conference at a later date on behalf of her own school.
- 4.3 **3 – 5 year budget projections** (Item 5.1 from the previous minutes) – the Clerk confirmed that 3 – 5 year projections are being included in the budget process for each FCAT academy.

*BG and FG joined the meeting.*

### 5. Teaching and Learning

The Chair explained the structure of Academy Council meetings for the future, which would focus on the Ofsted themes that required strengthening. It was agreed that 'Effectiveness of Leadership and Management' was already at 'Good' with a highly skilled principal and robust Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in place,

Action



and to concentrate instead on the other three themes; 'Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment', 'Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare' and 'Outcomes for Children'.

*Ryan Hughes, Head of Maths and English joined the meeting for the next item.*

### **5.1 Departmental Challenge**

The Head of Maths and English provided answers to questions from Governors on the performance of the Department.

#### **Questions from Governors**

Asked about the reasons for the disappointingly slow progress in Maths, despite the high quality of teaching in the subject, the Head of Maths and English explained that many students were starting from a very low level and, often, did not have the basic foundation in the subject on leaving primary school. In addition, the pass grade boundaries changed year on year, making it difficult for the academy to meet requirements. To help address the matter, intensive Maths lessons had been scheduled for some students (e.g. 3 sets of 23 students (69 in total) had received 25 hours of Maths teaching across one week). The Head of Maths and English himself had also increased his teaching load in order to support improvements. The academy aimed to reach a 50%+ target of GCSE A\* - C grade passes in Maths by the end of the year.

In response to a question about lesson observations, the Head of Maths and English explained that the focus of these was on the pitch of lessons and the amount of challenge given to students. Lesson observations were only one way of assessing progress however. Book marking and exam results also impacted on the judgements provided by staff.

Asked about the number one priority for the department, the Head of Maths and English confirmed that this was to reduce the number of 'U' grade results. Getting some Year 11 students from 'U' to 'E' grades would be a significant achievement, but the cohort was difficult to move forward.

Asked about support in place for struggling teaching staff, the Head of Maths and English explained that joint planning arrangements were in place to support less confident teachers. The profile of the department had changed with some weaker teachers leaving and less reliance on supply teachers. However, it was proving difficult to find good permanent Maths teachers.

Asked what the department was doing to support Special Educational Needs (SEN) students whose performance in English had dipped, the Head of Maths and English confirmed that progress was being carefully monitored. Many of the students concerned had been in classes where there had been a high level of supply cover. It was expected that stabilisation of the staffing structure over the rest of the year would provide a more suitable learning environment for students to better achieve.

Asked about the tracking system for Year 7 students and whether he felt confident that this was effectively monitoring progress, the Head of Maths and English reported that a common assessment framework had been introduced this year. In English, students were being assessed in Reading and Writing twice over the year, and Reading was being externally assessed. In Maths, students were being assessed after every topic had



been taught. The level of rigour in assessments had been increased and reading age assessments had been reintroduced.

In response to a question about the progress of middle ability students in Maths compared to English, the Head of Maths and English confirmed that this was mainly to do with the quality of Maths teaching and the impact on the department of some good staff that had left the academy. There had been some improvement in performance of Year 7 students since the introduction of a Teaching Assistant who was providing support on basic Maths principles.

Asked what the department was doing to support improved results for the current Year 11 cohort, the Head of Maths and English explained that staff were focussing on providing more contact time with students on the Curriculum, rather than in after school settings. The Scheme of Work had been completed early in order to focus on needs of specific groups of students and the Head of Maths and English was reviewing plans to ensure their effectiveness.

In response to a question about what the academy was doing longer term to support improvements in Maths, the Head of Maths and English provided information on the project in place with PET-Xi, a company providing immersive and inspirational learning to young people at risk of not achieving their academic potential. 12 PET-Xi staff had recently delivered English, Maths and Science lessons over 5 days, with 69 Year 11 Pupil Premium students. There had been excellent feedback from the initiative and it was proving very beneficial and a possible model for the future.

Asked about the targets set for high ability students, the Head of Maths and English confirmed that these were challenging enough. The department was looking at the performance of students on an individual basis and working towards everyone making one whole level of progress no matter what their starting point.

*The Chair thanked RH for his time and he left the meeting.*

*John Woods, Assistant Principal: Achievement joined the meeting for the next item.*

## **6.2 Student Progress update – feedback from Data Collection Point 3**

Governors noted the data report from the Assistant Principal (Paper 6.2).

### **Questions from Governors**

Asked what the academy was doing to narrow the gaps in Maths for Pupil Premium students, the Assistant Principal explained that a high level teaching assistant was providing support to the Pupil Premium cohort. Bespoke revision in Maths and English was also in place and master classes at the Pleasure Beach at a weekend had been provided. Staff were aware of the gaps in outcomes between Pupil Premium and non-Pupil Premium students and were focussed on supporting the individuals concerned.

In response to a question about the accuracy of the data being collected on student progress, the Assistant Principal reassured Governors that extensive quality assessment of data took place and was moderated FCAT-



wide across the year.

Asked about data collection at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 3, the Assistant Principal confirmed that this too was externally moderated and more robust than ever.

In response to an observation that girls' progress was higher than boys in English and Science in Year 7, the Assistant Principal agreed that this was the case. Staff were trying to address this through the Curriculum, designing 'boy friendly' course work in order to better engage male students.

In response to a comment about a seeming anomaly in the data for Year 10's achievement at Data Collection Point 3, the Assistant Principal agreed to check this out in case of error.

JW

Asked about what the academy was doing to address the significant changes to the Curriculum at Key Stage 2, the Assistant Principal reported that FCAT's Data Quality Improvement Group was reviewing this and the potential to move away from reporting on grades to reporting on levels of progress instead.

In response to a question about Progress 8 figures, the Assistant Principal reported that the academy currently stood at -0.6 and was aiming to reach 0. The Self Evaluation Form (SEF) identified where the focus needed to be brought to support achievement of the target, which was mainly around achievement of Pupil Premium students.

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

### 6.3 Principal's Report

The Principal provided a summary of his Report (Paper 6.3), highlighting the fact that the academy now had potentially 175 students on roll in Year 7 for this September, compared to a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 180 which was very satisfying.

The wider SLT had met at an 'away evening' the previous day to review progress against the Ofsted themes and to agree plans for the coming academic year.

Building work was finally complete.

The Principal confirmed that the academy had been impressed with PET-Xi's input into teaching and learning in Year 11 and work to support Pupil Premium students was progressing on the strength of this.

The staff profile was more settled and the appointment of 3 new teachers from Teach First for the coming year had already taken place.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his report.

### 6.4 Academy Improvement Plan

The Principal presented the latest version of the Academy Improvement Plan (Paper 6.4) which reflected the Ofsted themes and had been Red Amber Green (RAG) rated. SLT had agreed to remove non-priority actions from the Plan in order to focus on areas of concern, particularly around the 'Outcomes for children and learners' theme. Following advice from the



Head of Maths and English who was undertaking the Future Leaders Programme, SLT had also agreed to change the plan every term to take into account new issues. Governors approved the decision but advised the Principal to make sure that evidence in support of progress from Amber to Green actions was collated.

A paper on the transition project (i.e from Year 6 to Year 7) being carried out in conjunction with a number of local primary schools and with advice from the headteacher at The Breck Primary School in Poulton le Fylde was circulated. The Principal explained that this was a priority issue nationally and regionally. Progress so far and next steps, including the potential secondment of an assistant headteacher from The Breck for two terms to guide Year 6 – Year 7 work in the Whitsun Term 2016, was noted.

## 7. **Governors Virtual Office (GVO)**

Alana Frith presented GVO, a specially designed system for governors to access meeting papers and other documents online in one place. Governors were made aware of the different folders and the Discussion Zone which provided an opportunity to discuss issues outside of meetings. The academy was trialling the system for a two year period in order to assess the potential for further roll out across all FCAT academies longer term.

Governors discussed the potential risk of getting caught up in management issues via the Discussion Zone and agreed the need to focus on maintaining their 'governance' remit. The Chair agreed to develop a protocol for use of the system, and, at the request of another Governor, a Glossary of Educational Terms.

Chair

The Clerk agreed to provide access for each Governor on the system and to upload documents as required.

Clerk

The Chair thanked AF for her presentation.

## 8. **Finance and Resources**

### 8.1 **Management Accounts to end of January 2016**

FG presented the accounts to end of January 2016 (Paper 5.1). It was noted that salary costs had risen a little higher than the budget. FG reminded Governors that the target was to spend no more than 75% of income on staffing. There was also an over spend in terms of fixed asset purchases (£148k compared to £50k budgeted for) and it was recommended that there be no further spending in this area until the budget for next year had been set. The Principal explained that the academy had needed to complete some of the finishing on the new build hence the additional spend from this heading and that additional funds had also had to be put into 'reserves' since.

### **Question from Governors**

Asked about plans in place to reduce staffing costs, the Principal confirmed that two assistant heads and a number of teaching assistants had left the academy and would not be replaced. Although new staff were being recruited, on the whole, they were being appointed on lower pay scales. In addition, the support staff structure would be reviewed to identify potential savings.

### 8.2 **Risk Register Update**

Governors noted the updated Risk Register (Paper 5.2).



**9. Strategy and Governance**

**9.1 Admission Arrangements**

The Clerk reported that the admission arrangements for 2017-2018 had been included on the academy website and returned to the Local Authority as required.

**9.2 Dates of meetings for 2016-2017**

Governors noted the dates of meetings for the coming year (Paper 7.2) and agreed to add them to their diaries.

**9.3 Chair's feedback on FCAT developments**

There were no new issues to report.

**10. Safeguarding**

AF circulated a paper showing the results of a safeguarding audit carried out at the academy by Paul Turner from Safeguarding Blackpool, the Blackpool Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The outcome was very positive for the academy and highlighted the extensive work being carried out by Lisa Shuttleworth Brown and her team to strengthen safeguarding. Paul had been satisfied that robust structures and processes were in place and had identified e-safety procedures as being particularly strong.

A further peer review carried out by colleagues from the FCAT Safeguarding Board had also been carried out that day. Again, the outcome was very positive for the academy. Results had been shared on GVO for Governors to access.

The minutes of the FCAT Safeguarding Board meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016 (Paper 8.1) were noted.

**11. Any other business**

FG reminded Governors of the need to be mindful of time frames when appointing the new Principal as CS was due to come to the end of his contract.

Following a brief discussion, Governors agreed that making an appointment in June 2016 for a start date of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 would be in the best interests of the academy.

**12. Review of Risks**

The following new risks were identified:

- Effectiveness of actions to improve outcomes for children and learners
- Appointment of new Principal.

**13. Date and Time of next meeting**

Day: Wednesday

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Time: 4.00pm

Venue: Aspire Academy

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Chair)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_