



MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 17th September 2014

Venue: Aspire Academy

Time: 4.00pm

Present: Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Andy Martin, Catherine Hill, Colin Simkins
Together with: Emily Trotter (FCAT Services Lead) and Kath Buddle (FCAT Governance Administrator and minute taker)

Apologies: Alana Frith, John Buchanan, Tony Nicholson

Action

1. Preliminaries

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Principal reported that elections for the vacant Parent and Staff Governor positions on the Academy Council were being prepared. It was expected that these would be filled by Half Term.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 None

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 28th August 2014

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting were approved.

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

- 4.1 **Income streams for fit out of new build** – this item was deemed confidential and minuted as such.

5. Teaching and Learning

5.1 Principal's Report

The Principal presented his report (Paper 5.1). He explained that the first few days in post had been challenging and that he had been thankful, particularly, for the support of Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown, his new Deputy Principal, seconded from Unity Academy for one year. Lisa had been instrumental in developing the Student Services as the hub of the Academy and in bringing about the beginnings of the change in culture that was required.

Physical changes to the building had been made particularly to the Reception area and the corridors in order to make it more welcoming and to showcase corporate messages and images.

Governors' attention was drawn to the fact that the Head of English would be resigning at Christmas and a replacement would need to be appointed as soon as possible to maintain the momentum of improvements in this subject. It was also noted that some other key members of staff would need to be provided with challenges and senior responsibilities in order to reflect their remuneration levels.

The Principal was in the process of analysing examination results to



identify areas for improvement. The Senior Leadership Team would be going into classrooms to assess the quality of teaching and the quality of work set for the students. This was an action to help ensure that future achievement targets were met. The Principal was also aiming to collect student progress data on a monthly basis to identify direction of travel and address any shortfalls.

Staff attendance had been good so far with two long term absentees being phased back into work. Feedback from students had been good including from Collegiate students, who had been reluctant to attend the Academy in the first instance. There had been considerable interest in the positions of Head Boy and Head Girl.

Challenges

In response to a question about staff management, the Principal confirmed that this was a priority area for him. All staff would be consistently assessed against the performance of students in their classes. A series of specific meetings had also been set up with senior staff to ensure their engagement with, and contribution to, the future direction of the Academy. The Extended Leadership Team included some very able members of staff and the Principal was keen to keep this together as a group in order to help deliver mainstream changes.

Asked about numbers of pupils on roll, the Principal confirmed that he still had to confirm exact numbers. One of the Deputy Principals was looking into the matter to ensure figures were accurate. Another of the Deputy Principals had designed a presentation to promote the Academy in the community. Staff would be going into schools to carry out other promotional activities.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his report and offered her congratulations on the progress achieved so far.

5.2 External Examinations Report 2014

The Principal introduced John Wood who presented the headlines from the Report on Bispham High School's and Collegiate High School's examination results (Paper 5.2). Governors considered the results for both schools and discussed the figures in detail.

Bispham High School Results

Bispham High's figures showed that pupils attaining 5 A* - C grade GCSEs including English and Maths, had fallen from 47% to 43%. However, this still represented the second most successful result on this Key Performance Indicator in the school's history.

For the first time in the school's history, pupils (3 in total) had attained both Maths and English GCSEs but had not achieved 5 GCSE grades or equivalent.

Pupils achieving 5 A* - C grade across any subjects had fallen from 84.5% to 61.5%. The major reason for this was felt to be the re-designation of the BTEC qualification from being equivalent to either two or four GCSE passes last year to one single pass this year.



Governors' attention was drawn to the significant gender gap in terms of achievement with just 30% of boys attaining 5 A* - C GCSE grades compared to 50% of girls. The same gap did not appear in the Collegiate results. The Headteacher confirmed that actions were already in place to change the culture of learning amongst boys.

Challenges

Asked about results for students in receipt of Pupil Premium and Free School Meals funding, JW thought that these students had performed worse than the previous year, but that he would bring a fuller report on this to the next meeting.

JW

Collegiate High School Results

The headline figures for Collegiate High showed that the percentage of pupils attaining 5 A* - C grade GCSEs including English and Maths had fallen from 38% to 32.2%.

No gender gap existed but it was noted that this was due, in part, to a reduction in attainment by girls from 45% to 31.9%. Also contributing to the fall was the fact that 12 pupils that attained A* - C in English and Maths had not attained five overall grades at C or above.

The number of students attaining five A* - C grades in all subjects had reduced from 84.5% in 2013 to 34.8%. As with Bispham High's results, the major reason for this was felt to be the re-designation of the BTEC qualification from being equivalent to either two or four GCSE passes last year to one single pass this year.

It was noted that there had been some good results in the non GCSE subjects including Dance and Sport but acknowledged that these only counted as being equivalent to one GCSE each.

The report highlighted members of staff delivering courses who had since left the Academy. The Principal explained that each Director was being asked to provide in-depth information about the impact of the results on future targets across their subjects.

Challenges

In response to a question, JW agreed that the small numbers on roll at Collegiate may have impacted on the reduction in achievement, but that results had identified more serious issues about the quality of teaching and learning that needed to be addressed. The Principal believed that students at the Academy were capable of much better results and he aimed to ensure that attainment improved.

Governors discussed the disparity of results across different subjects at Collegiate, and were concerned, particularly, with the Design and Technology (DT) GCSE results. The Principal explained that students had not always been advised as to which subjects were appropriate for them to take and that this had affected outcomes in some subject areas. The member of staff leading on DT had since left the Academy and the Deputy Principal had taken over responsibility for teaching the current Year 11 students.



Asked about the reasons for the poor results in the Single Science Award, JW explained that this was due, in part, to the way in which the subject had been delivered. Pupils had been taught one third of the course early in the year and then the rest too close to the examinations for proper revision to be possible. It was noted that in the current year this was not the case, and, together with staffing changes, results are expected to improve.

Governors discussed performance in PE. It was accepted that this subject was much harder than students thought and, as a result, they may not have been advised as to their suitability for the course.

Asked about the potential to over-estimate student grades during assessments, the Principal confirmed that this had happened in the past, but that staff were being coached to use current data as the primary measure for future assessments rather than predictions. This data will be presented regularly to the Academy Council to ensure progress is monitored.

WM

Governors thanked JW for his comprehensive report and he left the meeting.

The Chair agreed to draft a letter, on behalf of governors, thanking successful departments for their work so far.

5.3 Teaching and Learning Strategy

The Principal introduced Chris Wardle who provided an update on the Teaching and Learning Strategy at Aspire (Papers 5.3 a – c). The Strategy was based on two overarching actions:

- Establishing a series of regular lesson observations that took into consideration the progress of children rather than the performance of teaching staff.
- Assessing the quality of marking and feedback.

A small team of staff was looking in detail at the quality of teaching at the Academy and providing coaching to help teachers to make improvements in their classrooms. The Academy had linked with Roy Blake, a recognised expert in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) to put in place appropriate coaching techniques for the benefit of staff.

CW mentioned the importance of establishing a series of regular and informal, rather than one – off, lesson observations in order to develop consistently 'Good' and 'Outstanding' lessons. This had helped to bring about a different attitude to observations, with staff feeling much more positive about them.

Challenges

In response to a question about who was driving the Strategy forward, the Principal acknowledged that, at the moment, the momentum was with himself and the Senior Leadership Team. It was felt that Directors would come on board as the culture of the organisation began to change. Work had already begun to communicate to Directors the fact that they were expected to be accountable for everything in their departments, including delivery of the corporate direction.



Asked about how staff were being supported to adapt to change, CW explained that a significant number of the FCAT policies had helped people understand the future direction of the Academy. Examples of best practice from other FCAT organisations had also enabled staff to integrate innovative practices. These included the 'Show my Homework' initiative used in Unity Academy, which encouraged parents to actively engage with students' work, and structured student feedback which allowed staff to effectively monitor how well pupils were learning.

Establishing the coaching culture and personalising continuing professional development (CPD) had also been instrumental in highlighting to staff how improvements to their teaching practices could be implemented. Staff were also being supported with their planning.

The Principal accepted that there had not yet been time to put in place all the changes that he wanted, but that these would be delivered across the academic year and the Academy Council would be regularly updated on progress.

Governors thanked CW for his presentation and supporting papers and he left the meeting.

6. Strategy and Governance

6.1 Academy Action Plan 2013 – 2014

The Principal drew governors' attention to the Academy Action Plan for the year which had been drafted in response to Department for Education (DfE) requirements following the two schools becoming an Academy. It was agreed to discuss this in more detail at the next meeting. Governors asked for the Plan to be RAG rated in advance so priority areas could be identified.

KB
(Agenda)
CS

7. Finance

7.1 Pupil Premium Summary 2013 - 2014

Governors noted a summary report on actions carried out to date to meet the needs of students in receipt of Pupil Premium funding (Paper 7.1). It was agreed that Deborah Hanlon-Catlow would be invited to the next meeting to present the funding picture and future planned initiatives.

KB
(Agenda)

8. Safeguarding

Governors received the minutes of the meeting of the FCAT Safeguarding Board held on 17th July 2014 (Paper 8.1). Alana Frith, the Aspire Safeguarding Governor and Lisa Shuttleworth – Brown, would represent the Academy on the Board.

9. Any other business

9.1 Register of Interests – Governors had completed these and returned them to the clerk.

9.2 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) forms – Most of the governors had returned required details to the clerk. KB would chase for those that had not yet been received.

KB



9.3 Reporting cycle – Governors requested sight of items that needed to be covered at each Academy Council meeting for the next meeting.

Action
KB

10. Academy Risk Register

The Chair thanked everyone for their input into the Risk Register. It was agreed to add the risks in terms of poor results in Maths, English and Science to the Register, and to include a progress column.

In response to a request from ET to share the Register with Unity Academy who were considering developing their own, governors agreed, with the proviso that confidential issues were removed first.

11. Date and Time of next meeting

Day: Wednesday
Date: 26th November 2014
Time: 4.00pm
Venue: Aspire Academy

Signed: _____
(Chair)

Date: _____