



## MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015  
Venue: Aspire Academy  
Time: 4.00pm

**Present:** Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Michael Carey, Alana Frith, Catherine Hill, Steve Parsons, Tony Nicholson (Executive Principal) and Colin Simkins (Principal)  
**Together with:** Kath Buddle (KB) (FCAT Governance Administrator and minute taker)  
**Apologies:** None

### 1. Preliminaries

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 None.

### 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015 were approved.

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

4.1 **Academies Away Day** (Item 10 from the previous minutes) - Governors were made aware of the new date for the event – Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2015 from 9.00am - 4.30pm at the De Vere Hotel. TN provided a brief resume of the proposed schedule for the day which would focus on the FCAT core values and academies' business plans.

### 5. Governance arrangements – presentation from the Chair

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

### 6. Teaching and Learning

#### 6.1 Principal's Report

The Principal presented his Report (Paper 6.1). Governors were made aware that the Academy has 63 students in its current Year 7. The figure for next year is potentially 134, a huge increase due to the attraction of the new build, developments in the Curriculum, and potentially good GCSE results. Year 10 internal exam results were pending and would be brought to the next meeting.

#### a) Curriculum development

From September 16 out of 25 lessons per week were dedicated to the core subjects of (English, Maths & Science). Due to current performance, Expressive and Performing Arts (EPA) were vulnerable to a reduction in the Curriculum and also IT & Design Technology. However, as some staff in these areas had recently left the Academy, there would be no need to reorganise the staffing structure for the summer. The Academy was already on track to save £1 million from this year's budget.

#### b) Quality of teaching

The Principal explained that Chris Wardle, Assistant Principal (Teaching and Learning), was working with colleagues to provide coaching to staff in order to develop the quality of teaching. 26 members of staff had now been

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trained to coach for improvement. The team was focussing on outcomes of teaching rather than grading assessments, and were looking at the quality of lesson planning, marking, feedback and student work. Chris was doing an excellent job and the quality of teaching was improving.

### **Challenges**

Asked about staff morale, the Principal explained that he was instigating a cultural shift at the Academy and that some staff had not responded well to this and chosen to leave. Morale amongst the staff that had bought into the new philosophy was good.

Asked about the decision to focus on learning outcomes rather than lesson observations, the Principal explained that the Academy was working to institutionalise robust lesson planning and to ensure the high quality of learning, rather than teaching. This was best measured by outcomes for students. It was acknowledged that some staff needed training and support in this area and the Academy was moving forward on this. Chris Wardle had opened debate on the issue through a new staff newsletter and a continuous professional development (CPD) programme. Teachers were being encouraged to make lessons more interesting and to stimulate learning. This was also helping to encourage better punctuality and attendance. Feedback on the training was good and there had been a reduction in the number of on-calls for support across the Academy.

#### **c) Attendance**

Student attendance was improving but not at a fast enough rate. The number of students with 100% attendance for a week had increased from 60% on 12/12/15 to 76% on 06/03/15 and initiatives had been put in place to support this further. The Academy expected to see even better attendance figures over the coming terms.

#### **d) Leadership and management**

Line managers had carried out mid-year staff reviews and the Principal had completed the same with Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members. Individual staffing targets had been linked to the Development Plan and all staff were aware of their responsibilities and accountabilities.

The Academy had been approached by HMI Inspectors to join a North West hub of schools focussing on excellence in the teaching of Geography. This was a significant accomplishment for the Geography Team and Governors asked that their congratulations and thanks be passed on to Ms Stevenson (the Faculty Director) and her team.

The Principal drew Governors' attention to the fact that John Topping, Deputy Principal, had been approached to join FCAT for two days a week to provide support to the Trust with its media links, branding, community networking and building construction. John would continue working with the Academy for the rest of the week in his current role.

## **6.2 Behaviour Update**

Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown, Deputy Principal (Behaviour), joined the meeting for this item and provided an update on behaviour issues. (Supporting papers on the Academy's SEF in response to Behaviour and Safeguarding were provided for this item). Governors were made aware that behaviour in the majority of lessons had improved and on-call incidents had reduced by 5%. English, Science, Expressive and Performing Arts (EPA) and

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Technology had the highest rate of on-call incidents though this had reduced in some of the subjects over the second term. There had been no on-call incidents in Humanities and Maths, however, which evidenced the correlation between good teaching and behaviour.

A systematic behaviour procedure had been put in place and 90% of Year 7 students surveyed agreed that rules and routines were now very clear. Fixed term exclusions were high due to the fact that a clear behaviour policy had been established along with a zero tolerance philosophy.

LSB provided further information on absence trends, punctuality, partnerships with outside agencies to support children and young people, the Academy's approach to Children Looked After (CLA) and other pastoral and safeguarding matters. These were detailed in her papers.

### **Challenges**

Asked if she thought the number of exclusions would decrease, LSB confirmed that this was expected. The Academy had had to put procedures in place and set out expectations for students, including the zero tolerance position. The increased rigour in addressing behaviour would establish a culture at the Academy in which students would better understand the boundaries.

Asked to provide more information on the Chrysalis Project, LSB explained that this was a six week course, based on neuro linguistic programming (NLP) for young people at risk of exclusion. It was costly but had a 50% rate of success in supporting better behaviour and reducing the need for exclusion.

In response to a question about the rate of change in terms of behaviour, LSB explained that there was still a need to embed the culture and that some students had not yet bought into it. However, students were now aware of the fact that they cannot refuse a reasonable request from a member of staff. It had taken a long time to get to this stage and staff were aware of family and other external pressures on young people that impacted on behaviour. Improvements over the last two terms had been significant.

Asked about the gender split in terms of poor behaviour, LSB confirmed that boys were responsible for double the amount of on-call incidents than girls, but that a small pocket of girls in Year 10 were causing problems.

Asked about the link between behaviour and safeguarding, LSB explained that there was a significant correlation as student absence, in particular, triggered child protection concerns.

*The Chair thanked LSB for her presentation and she left the meeting.*

### **6.3 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)**

Sarah Bishop, Director of SEND, joined the meeting for this item and provided an update on SEND matters. (A supporting paper was also provided for this item). SB explained that at the beginning of her time in post, 27% of the Academy's students had been registered as SEN. That figure was now down to 12% following work to identify those that did not necessarily have SEN but were lower ability pupils and those with challenging behaviour.



Governors were made aware that some SEN students had high abilities in addition to special needs and these had been masked by the volume of numbers previously registered as SEN. Staff were now being trained to use a new SEN referral system which better identified SEN students. Teachers were also addressing SEN issues in the classroom rather than in a specific SEN area which was better suited to supporting students. A specialist professional had been contracted to assess specific needs and from there interventions had been put in place across the Academy, including the establishment of 'Student Passports' which helped students to take ownership of their own needs.

It was noted that 69% of the current SEN cohort were also students in receipt of Pupil Premium funding.

Through the original sift to identify SEN students, a number had been found to be suffering from social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues and an audit of these would take place in July 2015.

### **Challenges**

In response to a question about whether some SEN students also had SEMH needs, SB confirmed that this was the case. Approximately 20 students had a range of complex needs.

Asked about the number of Teaching Assistants (TAs) employed to support SEND students, SB reported that there were currently six Level 2 TAs assigned in this area. The importance of training them to support students to improve their performance in class, rather than provide a watching brief outside of formal lessons, was acknowledged.

Asked about the number of students with mental health statements, SB reported that there were just two. These were both in Year 7 and required one to one support across the day.

In response to a question about how the Academy was working with feeder schools to identify SEND needs, SB explained that there was a process in place for this. Special tours round the Academy for children with SEN were arranged for them to come into the Academy prior to starting.

*The Chair thanked SB for her presentation and she left the meeting.*

#### **6.4 Expressive and Performing Arts (EPA) – Progress and Targets**

Ben Lavelle, Director of Expressive Arts, delivered a presentation on the performance of the EPA subjects. (Paper copies of the presentation were provided). It was noted that all the EPA subjects were under performing as follows:

- Art had a target of 86% in terms of A\*- C grade passes, and at February was achieving 71%,
- Dance had a target of 90% passes and, at February was achieving 62%
- Drama had a target of 76% passes, and, at February was achieving 42%
- Music had a target of 73% passes and, at February was achieving 18%
- PE had a target of 67% passes and, at February was achieving 30%.

BL explained the interventions in place to address the poor results. These



included additional revision sessions for students, exam question practice and regular testing. As Director, BL met with individual subject leads on a weekly basis to monitor progress against targets.

Governors were concerned about the performance across the subjects and asked the following questions.

### **Challenge about Art**

In response to a question about the latest achievement figure for Art, BL explained that he was as confident as he could be that this was correct. Results had been externally moderated and this had corroborated the internal findings. However, there were 12 critical students that the Department was relying on to meet the set target. These were being monitored closely and provided with support as required.

### **Challenge about Dance**

Asked about the additional support provided in Dance by the Deborah Hanlon-Catlow, Deputy Principal, Curriculum Teaching and Learning, BL acknowledged that the Department had needed her to help achieve current standards as there was a very inexperienced teacher in the team who was teaching Year 10.

### **Challenges about Drama**

Asked about the reasons for the poor performance in Drama, which had not improved since November 2014, BL explained that this was because moderation of work would only take place at Easter and so assessments could not be confirmed. Between now and the exams, students would be focussing on written, rather than practical work. The Principal confirmed that staff had been reluctant to engage with the written part of the Curriculum across most of the EPA Faculty.

Asked what the Head of Drama was doing to improve results, BL explained that he was working with him and his line manager to move towards the target in this subject.

### **Challenges about Music**

In response to a question about performance in Music, BL acknowledged that with just 14 students on the course, this should be better than 18% at this stage. There had been some staff sickness that had disrupted the timetable for Music and students were struggling with the listening and appraisal part of the course work. The performance of 5 students was critical to meeting the target.

Asked when he had first become aware of the problems in Music, BL reported that this was following the mock exam results in December 2014.

Asked about monitoring across Year 10 students, BL reported that the Head of Department was aware of the need to focus on improvements in exam technique and on supporting better attendance to lessons.

Asked if monitoring was carried out as rigorously with Year 10 students as with year 11, BL acknowledged that this was not the case. However, the Department was under no illusions that improvements were needed before May 2015.



### Challenges about PE

Asked about the quality of teaching in PE, BL stated that he thought it was at least 'Good'. Governors refuted this in light of current performance and the fact that course work had not been completed. BL responded by explaining that there were problems with a Girls' Group as a result of a member of staff being on maternity leave.

When questioned as to why the Department had not begun to tackle the theoretical part of the PE course, BL explained that the practical work still had to be finished. He accepted that the theory for PE was difficult and that this would be something that needed to be monitored closely over the next few weeks to ensure the target is met. Governors commented on the fact that teachers might have ignored the written part of the Curriculum because some of the students on the course were particularly challenging. They expressed their concern about this and asked that BL ensure this was addressed for the Year 10 students.

Governors asked that BL attend the Academy Council meeting in June 2015 to reassure them that progress for Year 10 was on track.

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*The Chair thanked BL for his presentation and he left the meeting.*

The issue was raised about what appeared to be informal arrangements between BL and the Football Association (FA) for him to work as a coach for the national under 18 England Football Team, and that this takes him out of the Academy for a significant amount of time. As there was no evidence of any agreement between the Academy and the FA, the Chair and the Principal agreed to look into the matter further.

### Challenge

Asked if all the EPA subjects were being offered by the Academy over the next academic year, the Principal reported that Drama and others would be reduced because of the increased importance of the Core subjects.

## 7. Strategy and Governance

### 7.1 Academy Improvement Plan

The Principal presented the latest progress on the Academy Improvement Plan (Paper 7.1). Governors noted the actions that had moved from Red to Amber and Amber to Green. Further discussion on the Plan would take place at the Away Day.

### 7.2 Academy Council Risk Register

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

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### 7.3 Draft Performance Monitoring Document

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

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### 7.4 Academy Council Governor Attendance

Governors noted the report on Governor attendance at all three academies (Paper 7.4).

## 8. Finance and Resources

### 8.1 Management Accounts January 2015

Governors reviewed the latest Management Accounts and agreed that finances looked to be healthy. The Principal explained that the management of the staffing budget was under control and that the Academy



was likely to be able to save £1million by the end of the year. Student numbers were also increasing which would bring in additional funding.

### **Challenges**

Asked about the under spend on CPD, the Principal confirmed that a considerable amount of training and development was being carried out across the Academy, and it was likely that this was being funded centrally.

In response to a comment about the need to ensure adequate staffing in favour of saving money, the Headteacher confirmed that it was not the intention to reduce staffing levels where they were needed. Governors were reminded that the funding that was being saved had been allocated to the Academy for students it did not currently have on roll.

## **9. Safeguarding**

### **9.1 Minutes of the FCAT Safeguarding Board 9<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

Governors noted the latest minutes of the Safeguarding Board (Paper 8.1). The Safeguarding Governor explained that the meetings provided an opportunity for representatives from each academy to share best safeguarding practice. Currently the Board was developing a generic FCAT Safeguarding Policy and was considering how best to support vulnerable students during transition from primary to secondary education and those staff working on child protection cases.

### **Challenge**

Asked about whether the Board was looking at Radicalisation and Extremism, the Safeguarding Governor confirmed that this was the case. It was included in the draft Safeguarding Policy and training for staff on this area was being arranged by Blackpool Sixth Form College.

## **10. Estimation of new risks (including safeguarding risks)**

- Performance and GCSE exam results in Expressive and Performing Arts (EPA).

## **11. Date and Time of next meeting**

Day: Wednesday  
Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015  
Time: 4.00pm  
Venue: Aspire Academy

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

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