



MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 28th January 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: John Buchanan.

Action

1. Preliminaries

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly Michael Carey and Steve Parsons, new Sponsor Governors. Introductions were made.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2014

The minutes of the meeting were approved.

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

4.1 Appointment to parent and staff governor vacancies (Item 1.2 from the previous minutes) – the Headteacher reported that there had been no expressions of interest from staff outside of Senior Leadership Team members who, it had been agreed, were not suitable as staff governors due to potential conflicts of interest over areas of work on which they were leading. The Clerk explained that Mr Parsons had been appointed to the Academy Council as an additional Sponsor Governor in light of the difficulties being experienced in appointing staff and parent governors. Mr Carey had been appointed to replace Mr Andy Martin who had tendered his resignation from the Academy Council due to pressures of work.

4.2 Circulation of School Evaluation Form (SEF) to governors (Item 5.2 from the previous minutes) – the Clerk confirmed that the SEF had been distributed to all governors for information.

5. Teaching and Learning

5.1 Pupil Premium Report

Deborah Hanlon-Catlow joined the meeting for this item

DHC presented a report on the latest developments in terms of the Pupil Premium spend (Paper 7.4). In order to make the most of the funding, the Academy was using a phased approach to spending which allowed opportunities to assess the effectiveness of projects. Staff were required to bid for monies from the funding stream by putting forward a business case which outlined their proposal and its estimated effectiveness. The Phase 2 time frame had just begun and applications were coming in for approval.

A Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session on closing the



attainment gaps between students in receipt of Pupil Premium and other students in the cohort, had been delivered. Staff had looked at data sets to identify trends in achievement and discussed possible interventions to improve attainment for Pupil Premium students.

Achievement in English and Mathematics by Pupil Premium students had increased. DHC drew governors' attention to the impact of Shine Therapy Services who were working with the Academy to address speech and language issues. Their input had been considerable in improving attainment. Evidence showed that results had increased by between 1 and 3 sub levels as a result of the focus being given to speech and language development.

The Academy had contracted a learning mentor who was working with Year 11 boys in weekly one to one sessions and these were proving successful in raising student aspirations.

Generally, the rates of progress for Pupil Premium students was greater than that of other students in the Academy. Staff were looking into the reasons for this to ensure that all students were maintaining their progress towards higher achievement. The only discrepancy was in terms of Mathematics where the gaps in terms of 3 levels progress had widened. Again, staff were looking closely at the data for this to identify reasons and future interventions required.

Challenges

Asked about the amount of funding provided by the Pupil Premium stream, DHC explained that this was £900 per Pupil Premium student. This equated to £482k for the Academy as 68% of the school population qualified for the funding.

Asked if the funding could be used to supplement the core budget for the Academy, DHC explained that this was not possible. Monitoring of the use of the funding was rigorous and the Academy had to evidence the effectiveness of the spend as well as where the money had been spent. Although it was possible to use the funding to benefit all students, there had to be clear proof that the gaps in attainment had been reduced as a result.

In response to a question about how the funding was helping Pupil Premium students to access the Curriculum, DHC explained that there was data to support the fact that communication skills for this group had improved. Interventions included physical therapy and development of social skills, all of which helped to develop students' confidence and ability to involve themselves better in learning. Three case studies outlined in the Report highlighted significant progress. All Pupil Premium students were performing better.

Asked if she was confident in the validity of the data, DHC said that she was. Feedback from the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) and Curriculum Leads had been positive.

Asked about the impact on attendance, DHC acknowledged that there had been none so far. However, there had been a positive impact on behaviour which had improved by 80% across all the cohorts.

Asked about the rate of acceleration of progress for Pupil Premium



students, DHC confirmed that the Academy was committed to maintaining this. Every student was expected to make at least 2 sub levels progress in each subject and this was monitored on an individual basis. All staff were aware of those students that needed support and the type of support that was being provided. The recent SATS (Standard Assessment Tests) results showed some regression in Year 7 following the summer holiday break but it was expected that this would be redressed across the rest of the academic year. The Principal explained that changes to the leadership and improvements to the quality of teaching should further support greater attainment and progress.

In response to a question about support being provided for Pupil Premium students transitioning from Year 6 to Year 7, DHC acknowledged that this was a challenge for the Academy as it was dependent on information being made available from feeder schools. However, plans were in place to improve links with primary schools and to develop summer school activities which should improve support across the year groups. The Academy was also making use of the FCAT SEN Consultant to provide advice in this area.

5.2 Curriculum Planning

DHC presented a report on changes to the curriculum for the next academic year (Paper 5.4 – part of the Principal's Report).

The Report outlined the staffing needs for a structure based on two year groups at Key Stage 3 (as opposed to three currently) and three year groups at Key Stage 4 (as opposed to two currently) from September 2015. This will allow students to study options from Year 9.

The Academy also needed to take into account changes to the national assessment models which would come into play from 2017 i.e. Progress 8 and Attainment 8. Focus on English, Mathematics and Science would increase and this needed to be addressed across the curriculum.

The curriculum also included discrete PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) sessions of one hour per week for Years 8 and 9. This was in response to a national initiative which had identified this model as the most effective in delivering learning in these subjects.

The emphasis on core subjects and the requirements of Progress 8 meant that some other subjects might need to be withdrawn. The Academy was assessing performance of individual subjects and the course content for next year in order to identify their relevance in terms of options available.

Top performing Science students would study Triple Science.

Staffing changes would be needed to accommodate the new curriculum, given the reduction in the number of subjects and changes to class sizes. Staff were aware of the situation and the Principal acknowledged the enormity of the task at hand.

The Principal explained that the Academy was keeping abreast of qualification requirements for further education via a contact at the Sixth Form College. CH recommended that a similar contact be found in a higher education establishment in order that the Academy was kept up to date with expectations at that level and could help support students in achieving these.



Challenges

In response to a question about careers guidance which was currently delivered in Year 8, the Headteacher agreed that this needed to be carried out earlier in order to allow students the opportunity to assess the best options for them to study across Years 9, 10 and 11.

Asked about which teachers would be delivering PSHE, the Principal reported that this depended on the skills available across the workforce. The Academy had signed up to the PSHE training network to support staff delivering the teaching across the summer term.

In response to a question about admissions for the next academic year, the Principal reported that 75 applicants had put the Academy down as a first choice, and there were 75 others. Approximately 100 students were expected to join in September 2015. Improved results and the new build would attract more first choice applications in the future.

Asked if the new build would be suitable for the revised curriculum, the Principal confirmed that it was. Facilities were very flexible and could be adapted to meet the needs of the subjects that would be delivered.

Governors thanked DHC for her reports and she left the meeting.

5.3 Update Report on Student Progress

John Woods joined the meeting for this item

JW provided a brief summary of his Report (Paper 5.1). He highlighted the fact that the Academy was looking to achieve a target figure of 57% in terms of A* - C pass rates at GCSE, including English and Mathematics. Currently, tracking showed the Academy to be at 31%. This seemed to be a long way off the target, but a lot of students were only a few points away from attaining the grades required to achieve it. Staff were confident that 57% would be achieved. Every student was being monitored and supported to improve attainment through a bespoke action plan. An 'Aspirational' day had taken place the day before the meeting, during which teachers and students focussed on examination and revision techniques.

Challenges

Asked if every student was aware of their current academic level, JW confirmed that this was the case. Students had been given their marks and understood where they needed to improve. An additional lesson outside of school hours (Lesson 6) was being provided to support improvements to grades and this was proving popular with students.

In response to a question on parental engagement, JW explained that this had improved recently after some earlier struggles. There was strong evidence to show that parental support had a significant impact on results.

Asked about the barriers to achieving 57%, JW highlighted leadership outside the English and Mathematics subjects. English and Mathematics were being led by one Director who was proving to be successful in inspiring the teams to achieve. The quality of leadership in the other subjects was not as secure though support was being provided.

Asked about the recent mock examination results and how these fared in



relation to the 57% target, JW explained that although the results from the mock examinations showed just a 22% achievement, this was based solely on the examination results and did not take into consideration coursework. It was also pointed out that those students that did not attend for examinations had received a zero score and this was still counted as percentage of the cohort results. The Academy was working hard to improve attendance at examinations which had dropped considerably during this time.

In response to a question about the impact of the mock examinations, the Principal reported that they had provided a strong message to the Academy. Students had been concerned about their performance and there had been a distinct cultural shift in terms of attitude towards them.

Asked about comparisons with previous years' mock examination results, JW explained that although there was data available, it was not possible, due to changes in assessments and the fact that the Academy was now made up of students from two previous schools, to compare like with like results. The current Year 10 cohort was already being internally assessed to ensure they were being challenged enough to meet attainment targets at Year 11.

Asked to confirm that some of the Year 7 cohort seemed to have regressed over the year, JW agreed that this was the case but that plans were already in place to target the students that needed the extra support. Some funding had been made available for this.

5.4 RaiseOnline Report

Governors noted the report (Paper 5.2) and were made aware of the fact that Ofsted would be using this data to assess the Academy's achievements.

Governors thanked JW for his reports and he left the meeting.

5.5 Attendance Report

Laura Royds joined the meeting for this item

LR tabled a report on student attendance. Targets for the whole school for 2014-2015 are 94% attendance, 6% overall absence, and under 9% for persistent absence. At 27th January 2015, the Academy was at 90.31% in terms of attendance, 9.69% overall absence and 20% persistent absence. 152 students had been targeted for improvement and a number of interventions had been put in place to address their attendance issues. Work to engage parents was taking place and the first penalty notice actions and fines had been distributed.

Attendance was highest in Year 7 and this gradually declined over the following years. However, there was strong evidence to suggest that interventions were working. The Academy was focussing a number of these on a group of 49 students and was looking to fast track these towards improved attendance. To date, 46 of them had shown improvements.

A rewards scheme had also been introduced and was starting to make a difference over some year groups.



Challenges

Asked which interventions were making a difference to attendance, LR explained that positive liaison with parents was the most successful action. Staff had developed systems for constantly keeping in touch with parents and students, including through home visits, and this was helping to change the culture of parent responsibility.

Asked about the service level agreement with the Pupil Welfare Service, the Principal confirmed that this had been successful in tackling particular cases of absence and in initiating home visits, court file submissions, legal letters and prosecutions.

In response to a question about the Academy's mini bus, the Principal reported that this had not yet been used to bring poor attenders into school, though it was something that might be considered in the future.

Governors thanked LR for her report and she left the meeting.

CH gave her apologies and left the meeting.

5.6 Principal's Report

The Principal provided a summary of his report (Paper 5.4) and highlighted the following points:

- The SEF would need to be completed in preparation for the next Ofsted visit. Future reports from the Principal would reflect the requirements of the SEF.
- The number of students on the SEN Register had been reviewed and was likely to be reduced based on new national definitions. Staff were being trained on the new data around this.
- The Academy was focussing on improving the quality of teaching with particular attention being paid to lesson observations, support to improve marking techniques and learning walks.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and coaching sessions had been provided to support staff in raising attainment.
- The framework for behaviour management had been strengthened and zero tolerance messages had been circulated across the whole Academy.
- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had been expanded to include Karen Clancy as a representative of the support staff.
- Line management of staff had been reviewed and made more robust. The Principal met with team leaders on an individual basis every week for an hour. Information was then cascaded down to other staff via the directors.
- The SLT were meeting regularly to monitor performance against targets and to ensure links relevant links across subject areas were made.
- Progress in English and Science was increasing with the appointment of new Directors of Faculty.

Challenges

In response to a question about teachers' knowledge of individual students' performance levels, the Principal explained that this was monitored in a number of ways across the academic year. Mid year reviews would be taking place the following week and moderation would be carried out as part of this along with written assessment reports. These allowed for a number of staff to understand the position that individual students were in in terms of



their progress.

Asked about the strategy being used to deal with under-achieving teachers, the Principal explained that a balance had to be made between providing support and taking staff through the capability procedure. Staff were very aware of the implications of poor performance.

Governors thanked the Principal for his informative report.

6. Strategy and Governance

The Clerk confirmed the resignation of Mr Andy Martin as Sponsor Governor.

7. Finance and Resources

7.1 Management Accounts November 2014

TN provided a summary of the Academy's accounts as at the end of November 2014 (Papers 7.1 – 7.3). Governors were informed that the finances were healthy. However, this was due largely to the fact that the Academy had been funded for more students than it had on roll and that money needed to be saved from this in order to support next year's budget, when it was likely to lose up to £500k. TN recommended that the Academy try to save up to £1million from this year's budget to carry forward into 2016/17.

The Academy was doing well in saving money on its staffing budget and needed to continue with this.

8. Safeguarding

The minutes of the FCAT Safeguarding Board meeting of 1st December 2014 were noted.

The Safeguarding Governor provided a brief summary of the role of the Board which was to identify common themes across the safeguarding agenda and areas for joint working.

The Safeguarding Governor had worked with Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown on reviewing the Ofsted safeguarding requirements and identified additional risks for the Academy's Risk Register. Improvements to policies and procedures had been carried out and the Academy was well placed to respond to safeguarding referrals within an hour of first receiving them. A further review of practices would take place over March 2015.

Governors discussed the difficulties and sometimes traumatic situations that staff were having to face in dealing with safeguarding issues. TN recommended Roy Blake as a potential consultant in this area. He was already working with the Fylde Coast Teaching School Alliance, and had counselling skills that might be useful to the Academy.

Governors thanked the Safeguarding Governor for her verbal update.

9. Estimation of new risks

Governors had received a copy of the latest version of the Academy's Risk Register (Paper 9.1). It was agreed that any new risks identified at this meeting be emailed to the Chair of the Academy Council directly for adding to the Register. The Clerk agreed to circulate the Chair's email address to everyone on the Academy Council.



Action

10. Any other business

The Clerk informed governors of the Academies Away Day that would take place on Friday 6th March 2015 at the De Vere Hotel, Blackpool. A schedule for the day and additional papers would be circulated nearer the time.

8. Date and Time of future meetings

- Wednesday 11th March 2015
- Wednesday 22nd April 2015
- Wednesday 10th June 2015.

All meetings to commence at 4.00pm.

Signed: _____

(Chair)

Date: _____