



MEETING OF THE ASPIRE ACADEMY COUNCIL

Date: Wednesday 23rd May 2018
Venue: Aspire Academy
Room: Meeting Room
Time: 4.00pm

Present: Wendy Middlemas (Chair), Mica Goldstone, Jill Gray, Bill Greene, Emma Newton, Ryan Sheldon, Lisa Shuttleworth-Brown (Principal) and Phil Birch (Executive Principal)
Together with: Simon Brennand (FCAT Capital Projects Lead), Katie Hendley (Aspire's Finance Lead), Pete Montgomery (FCAT Lead in Data), Tony Nicholson (FCAT CEO), Laura Royds (Assistant Principal) and Helen Livsey (FCAT Governance Administrator)
Apologies: Mick Carey, Sarah Elson, Paul Marsden and Michelle Stevenson

Action

1. Preliminaries

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made around the table. Apologies for absence were noted.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest to note.

3. Area of Academy Focus – Behaviour and Attendance (Laura Royds, Assistant Principal)

Governors noted the previously distributed reports and did not feel it necessary for the Assistant Principal to present the information and would instead, challenge the data provided.

Questions from Governors

The differences in attendance between Pupil Premium (PP) students and non-PP students was noted as significant. The Assistant Principal highlighted that there was an improvement in attendance for both sub-groups compared to 2016/17 with PP pupils at 91.9% annual attendance and non-PP at 95.6%, which was above national average. While the Assistant Principal accepted that there was a significant difference between the two figures, she felt that improved attendance for both sub-groups confirmed that progress was being made and the strategies and interventions in place were working. Capacity had been added to the Attendance Team, using PP funding and this had enabled them to complete targeted home visits, develop monitoring groups and this has aided with the improvements seen in attendance across the whole school.

The Principal explained that attendance had been a whole school issue in previous years, but now on the whole it had improved. The Senior Leadership Team were able to examine in more detail, which interventions and strategies work for each sub-group and implement more targeted support. This included changing the culture within the school, so that pupils wanted to attend and looking at rewards rather than bribes to attend. She further highlighted that the PP population in Aspire made up 71% of the cohorts and therefore it did not constitute a sub-group. When the Assistant Principal took over the responsibility of monitoring and improving attendance, it was at 89% and the Principal confirmed the Assistant Principal had worked tirelessly to improve it to the point it

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is at now. Governors agreed credit needed to be given to the Assistant Principal, the Attendance Team and to the school as a whole.

Governors queried what was being done to improve Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) attendance and the Assistant Principal again highlighted that it had improved from the previous year and was above national average, but acknowledged it was not where it needed to be. She discussed the Student Support Panel and the meetings they held each week to support SEND students and tailor individual plans to improve attendance and behaviour. Governors were informed that the sub-group of SEND also included pupils that had medical issues and were absent from school for varying lengths of time due to their medical needs. These were for legitimate reasons and would vary year on year, making it increasingly difficult to predict in advance. The Principal confirmed that there were a significant number of pupils who could not attend school on medical grounds as often as they would like.

The Assistant Principal was asked how Persistent Absence (PA) had changed over recent years and she explained that three years ago, it was based on the number of sessions missed and if attendance was 85% or lower, the pupil would be considered persistently absent. This had now changed and was not based on sessions missed, but on registrations missed and categorised from 90% or lower attendance. With high transience and the level of non-routine admissions that take place, this affected the school negatively. The Principal gave the example of a student joining two weeks before the end of term and missing two days through illness. This student would then be classed as persistently absent. The Assistant Principal stated that non-routine admissions had a considerable impact on the attendance figures but noted that all local schools were in the same position and working together to find solutions to these issues.

It was felt schools were often in competition with activities taking place outside of school, and Governors asked what was being done to ensure pupils wanted to be in school. The Assistant Principal discussed a shift in culture at the school and embedding the fundamental desire in pupils for them to want to be in school. The badges that had been implemented across the academy were having a positive effect, with pupils proud to wear them and wanting to gain more. Rewards were being implemented with regards to behaviour and attendance and an increased effort was being made to celebrate successes and this had helped instil a drive and desire in the pupils. The Assistant Principal acknowledged that the changes would take time to embed further, but felt it important to note that it was moving in the right direction.

Governors felt that improved attendance was an indicator of a happy academy and that children felt safe in the setting. Governors were pleased to note that every Year 11 student had turned up for their exams so far and had worked hard throughout each assessment. The Principal was proud to note that the rest of the school had been supportive of the Year 11's, remaining quiet whilst walking past examination areas or taking other routes. It was felt that this was another key indicator of the change in culture that had been taking place around the school.

When asked how students on a Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE) affected the attendance data, the Assistant Principal confirmed that they were still reported on in the figures and this had a significant impact.

The Assistant Principal discussed low level disruption in classrooms and confirmed that these instances were now being reported accurately. Class Charts had enabled the teachers and Senior Leaders to respond proactively, particularly with the students known to cause low level disruption. The system now alerted the

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Assistant Principal and her colleagues when C1, 2 and 3 interventions were issued for particular pupils and they were no longer going undetected. There had been incremental improvements made year-on-year and this was in part due to the quality of teaching and more independent learning, which students were engaging with.

Governors praised the Senior Leadership Team on the impressive attendance data and queried what the next steps would be, to continue to improve. The Assistant Principal highlighted that the next step was ensuring that the pupils wanted it for themselves, as much as the staff wanted it for them. Developing the "Golden Futures" and "Golden Characters" were the next immediate steps, ensuring pupils had experiences and developed skills needed in adult life, such as, joining a club and leading a lesson. It was essential that they continued to be independent and reflective learners.

It was noted that Aspire Academy was arguably, a rapidly improving school and the Executive Principal stated that Governors needed to be aware that improvement and attainment were not always in line. Discussions were held around the present Year 9 cohort, who had been a challenging year group since admission. The Assistant Principal confirmed that Year 9 attendance was again improved on the previous year, but agreed that work needed to be completed specifically with this cohort. Ensuring teachers knew their pupils was essential, while some pupils behaved particular ways through choice, teachers needed to ensure the pupils needs in the classrooms were being met, through SEND screenings and appropriate challenge for example. Specific students would be targeted for managed moves and ensuring staff remained proactive with this cohort was important. A buddy system was recommended by a Governor, linked with the "Golden Character" and a change in culture, pairing challenging Year 9 students with older Year 10 students was a possibility.

Discussions were held around permanent exclusions and the rationale behind these. The Assistant Principal confirmed that a permanent exclusion would only be issued if there was no other option remaining. Extensive packages of support and collaborative working with other schools would take place before an exclusion. There were clear criteria for issuing a permanent exclusion and this had always been and would continue to be followed.

The Assistant Principal left the meeting at this point.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 21st March 2018 and matters arising:

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed and the following matters discussed:

4.1 3-Year Academy Improvement Plan

A draft document was tabled (available on GVO). The Principal discussed the journey that the Academy would be on, with clear goals, actions and targets for the next year. An updated Improvement Plan would be provided to Governors when available.

4.2 SEEF (Schools Energy Efficiency Fund)

Simon Brennand (FCAT Capital Projects Lead) attended to discuss the proposal with Governors. He explained to Governors that the plan had been devised by the Department for Education (DfE) to put capital funds into school's energy efficiency. Current lighting in schools was fairly inefficient and the average savings provided were 75%. A survey was completed eighteen months ago at Aspire and that established there were around 7,000 lights that could be replaced under this scheme.

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He explained that Aspire had some old LED lighting, but this scheme would provide an upgrade on this lighting and replace non LED lights. The total cost of the project for Aspire would be £70,000. £37,600 would be from the SEEF loan that would be repaid over 8-years from the savings made in electricity costs and the remaining £32,400 would be funded via FCAT. The FCAT Capital Projects Lead further confirmed that the upfront cost to Aspire was £0 and it was a cash neutral project.

He reassured Governors that the project had been through a series of rigorous tests, to ensure that the savings made were enough to repay the loan of £37,600.

Questions from Governors

Governors asked for assurances that the savings would be made, in order to repay the loan. The FCAT Capital Projects Lead confirmed that the historical evidence that was available ensured that the savings made were greater than the loan repayments. The annual repayments would be in the region of £4,700 and with electric bills of £51,000 annually, this saving should be made.

Asked what the process would be for staff and pupils that had any sight conditions, the FCAT Capital Projects Lead discussed that the design for the LED lights should have as little affect as possible for anyone within the academy with sight issues. Reasonable adjustments should be made for anyone that was negatively affected, but progress had been made in the design and technology of LED lights to develop it into more friendly light.

After discussions, Governors agreed to the SEEF funding, which had been pre-approved by FCAT Directors at their meeting in April.

Governors thanked the FCAT Capital Projects Lead for his time and left the meeting at this point.

4.3 Data with Pete Montgomery (FCAT Lead in Data)

The FCAT Lead in Data guided Governors through the previously distributed document, highlighting areas for focus. He discussed the difficulties in showing where the results were headed as the accountability and measures changed regularly. With the exception of Maths and English, there was no comparison data for these subjects which students were taking this time. The Principal added that the exam boards had not provided grade boundaries or suggested a guide and therefore all predictions had erred on the side of caution. The document had been developed over time to be a visual aide, with clear graphs to highlight sub-groups and the numbers in each group.

Discussions were held around how Governors would like data to be presented and areas for development on the document. The FCAT Lead in Data acknowledged that this was a working document and changes would be implemented to reflect the views of Governors over time. This included a marker on each bar chart, to show where each sub-group was at the previous data collection point, to ensure progress was being made and to address issues if this was not the case.

It was known that the Progress 8 national average would be 0 and the floor level at -0.5 so those provided two measures for the academy to compare and make judgements against, but as the examinations process moved to the 9-1 scheme, this also required some guess work. This was due to the changes to the curriculum and exam boundaries from the previous year.

Questions from Governors

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Governors queried if the 9-1 results were based on a linear progression and the Executive Principal confirmed that this was not the case. The grades were based on comparison outcomes and had made the system more competitive. Instead of every pupil receiving X marks to obtain a particular grade, the system had a set number of each passes to be awarded for each grade. Therefore, grade boundaries would not be established until all pupils' exams in the country had been marked and submitted.

The Executive Principal clarified that it has been more difficult for Governors to hold Leaders to account for forecast outcomes this year due to the changes in the examination system for most subjects. They could be held to account for Maths, English and the Basics data, which went to the 9-1 system in 2016/17. The FCAT Lead in Data recognised that in 2018/19, there would be fewer variables and the data would be able to be compared to this current Year 11's cohort's results.

It was asked how a Governor could compare Aspire to other schools nationally and the Principal confirmed that the league tables show that Aspire has progressed rapidly. While they were once in the bottom 100 of schools in the country, they have since moved up 380 places. This was based on progress 8 measures, but there was no way to compare school to school by subject. Governors agreed that it would not be beneficial to compare Aspire against other Blackpool schools. They would continue to aim for the national average and beyond instead.

Governors thanked the FCAT Lead in Data for his time and he left the meeting at this point.

5. Finance

5.1 Management Accounts March 2018

The Finance Lead highlighted that March closed with an in-year deficit of £21,000 which was £154,000 better than budget. She explained that the savings had been driven by income, grant income, insurance funding for absences and secondments, which were not in the original budget.

Governors noted that staffing costs were under control and acknowledged that the areas for concern were exclusions and utilities.

5.2 Actual Budget Figure and Projection for the Year

The Finance Lead explained that the reforecast provided had been sent to the ESFA (Education Skills and Funding Agency) and it showed an improving picture. The Trust and the Principal were satisfied with the budget position.

5.3 First Draft of Budget for 2018/19

Governors examined the document and agreed to recommend the budget to Directors for approval.

5.4 SCA School Condition Allocation Programme

Governors noted the document.

5.5 Works for approval

Governors were informed that work on the front doors was beginning on Friday 20th July and confirmation had been received that FCAT SCA (School Condition Allocation fund) would fund the project, which would be completed for the start of the next academic year.

Governors noted the two documents highlighting quotes for building works and furniture. As both preferred suppliers were quoting under £10,000, the Principal

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was able to authorise this work.

6. Governance

6.1 Calendar of Meetings

Governors noted the calendar of meetings for 2018/19.

6.2 Circulation of Governor Skills Audits

Governors were reminded to complete the Governor Skills Audit and return to the Clerk by 09th July 2018.

6.3 Scheme of Delegation Update

Governors were informed that Directors had approved a change to the scheme of delegation. Academy Councils would now require 3 FCAT appointed Governors, plus the Principal and Executive Principal to be quorate.

Governors were informed that Jill Gray would become Chair from September 2018.

7. Principal's Report

The Principal informed Governors that numerous external Quality Assurance (QA) visits had taken place, including one by Vicki Beer (Regional School Commissioner) who had provided positive feedback on the improvements that had been made within the Academy and provided a working mandate for improvements moving forward.

Changes in staffing were taking place within the Senior Leadership Team. Deborah Hanlon-Catlow would be taking a second year of secondment and therefore John Woods would become Acting Deputy Principal from September and Sian Rawson would take on the role of Acting Vice Principal.

Mike Cladingbowl (Former National Director for Inspection Reform (Ofsted)) would be attending the academy on 26th June 2018 to analyse Leadership and Management, in the context of becoming Ofsted ready and ensuring that self-analysis was accurate and correct. He would also speak with Senior Leaders and the core leaders of Maths, English and Science, before providing feedback.

8. Internal Audit Reviews

Governors noted the following internal audit reviews:

- Safeguarding
- Petty Cash Handling
- Business Continuity

9. Strategy

9.1 FCAT Developments

The FCAT CEO discussed the developments taking place within FCAT, highlighting that Armfield Academy had passed its readiness for opening inspection, relating to policies and the site and that it was on track for opening in September 2018.

It was confirmed that Longridge High School's application to join FCAT had gone to public consultation and the unions, staff and parents all appeared to be supportive of the move.

The first Principal and Executive Principal residential was discussed by the FCAT CEO. He explained it had produced a clear template for expectations regarding teaching across the Trust. Each academy was now ensuring that their existing Teaching and Learning policies were congruent with the new arrangements.

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**9.2 Revised Governor Self Evaluation Form (SEF)**

The Chair confirmed that a number of Governors had met prior to the Academy Council meeting to discuss the revised SEF. All agreed this was a better template and the meeting had been challenging yet productive. Areas for improvement that had been highlighted were, communication, training, induction and data analysis.

10. Safeguarding

The FCAT Safeguarding Board minutes from 26th April 2018 were noted.

Governors discussed a road safety issue, as staff had been informed to stop crossing students over Blackpool Old Road. Blackpool Transport, the Police and Road Safety Team were now involved in a joint venture between Aspire and Blackpool Sixth Form College to get a pelican/zebra crossing in place. There had been a number of incidents, including an Aspire student suffering a fractured elbow last week.

11. Review of Risks

No new risks had been identified.

It was agreed the risk around the front doors could now be lowered.

The Chair agreed to contact Bill Greene and John Woods to update the register.

12. FCAT Directors

1. Governors wished to pass on their thanks for the assistance with fixing the front doors.
2. New Senior Leadership Team appointments - John Woods would become Acting Deputy Principal and Sian Rawson would take on the role of Acting Vice Principal from September 2018.
3. Significant improvement in attendance and persistent absence data.

13. Date and Time of next meeting

Day: Wednesday

Date: 11th July 2018

Time: 4.00pm

Venue: Aspire Academy

Signed: Wendy Nisden
(Chair)

Date: 11. July 2018

