

**MINUTES OF THE 142nd MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
WEDNESDAY 14 JULY AT 17.30**
*Meeting held remotely on the ZOOM platform
due to the on-going Coronavirus pandemic*

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Cristina Carli Nonnato (CCN), Stewart Harris (SH), Patricia Edmondson (PED), Jennifer Calvert (JCA), Matt Gallagher (MGA)

In Attendance: Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

Start Time: 17:30

1. Apologies

DW welcomed on-line presence of members of the Executive Board, who had joined the virtual meeting via Zoom. Apologies for absence came from Tony Bothwell (TB) due to work commitments, Kevin Chamberlain (KC) due to work commitments and Rachel Branagan (RB) also due to work commitments.

2. Declarations

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 April 2021 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

No Matters Arising

5. Principal's Report

DMI presented his report, which included a presentation from Matt Gallagher (MGA).

DMI provided an update on IB results and IB student destinations. DMI expressed the hope that there will be the same positive story when students receive their A Level results in August. There was a degree of nervousness before the IB results were released because the process the IBO instructed schools to follow last year disadvantaged some students. However, this was not the case this year.

DMI was pleased that each student can progress to their chosen course.

DMI advised the Board that ATA would publish the destinations for all Year 13 students' data but not the results. IB results can only be used for internal purposes

Changes to the Academy Day

DMI thanked the Board for agreeing to the proposed changes to the Academy day structure and explained that these changes should make a difference to the way in which student movement is controlled at lunchtime and the availability of time for students to take part in extra-curricular activities. At the time of the meeting there remained a degree of uncertainty over the expectations of schools in the months of September to December. The discovery of new variants of the Coronavirus and an increase in infection rates could necessitate the application of more restrictive control measures in schools. The revisions to the day structure will allow for flexibility should this be the case. Above all, the plan for the new academic year is cautious in nature so that the Academy can continue to keep every student and staff member safe, all the while operating a full curriculum.

DMI advised the Board that he will share the Strategic Plan at the start of the new academic year. DMI has already shared the Academy Aims with DW, after discussions with the Leadership Group and the Curriculum Managers, and included these within his report for colleagues to discuss.

DW raised a point about the inclusion of curricular opportunities, leadership opportunities, career and higher education guidance. He wished to note that some students do not go on to higher education and he would suggest a slight revision to the sentence so that it reads, "higher or further education".

The self-evaluation will remain broadly the same in format and wording; however, the experiences over the last two years will be included, together with the response from the Academy and the steps staff will take to help students recover from two years of disruption to their learning.

Admissions

DMI provided an update to the Board on the Year 7 admissions process. DMI explained to the Board that he had been involved in a number of meetings with representatives from the Local Authority and with other Head Teachers and Principals from Wandsworth schools. Three schools in particular have expressed concern that they are not receiving the number of students for which they have places while other schools in the Local Authority have been allowed to increase the number of students they can accept each year.

Wandsworth Pupil Services explained that this perceived imbalance was caused by parental preference.

PED told the Board that parents have strong views on why they choose the school that they do for their child and, even though parents have been allocated a school, they tend to be unhappy if they are not allocated their first choice. DMI did confirm that this is the case and added that that ATA does experience a degree of movement in September because parents have moved away from the area and students are then offered a place from the Academy's waiting list who were allocated to a school which was not their first choice.

Staffing

ATA have noticed a slight decline in staff movement due to COVID. Staff members who are leaving at the end of this academic year are either moving away from London, or have secured promotion or are retiring. ATA has been pleasantly surprised at the supply of good quality applicants in subject areas that have previously attracted very few applications. It appears to be the case that there are more student teachers, again because of COVID. Teaching appears to be a secure option for new graduates and this appears to have had a positive effect on recruitment.

Sexual Harassment

DMI informed the Board about the recent focus on peer-on-peer abuse and sexual harassment in schools. After updating the Board in his last report on the activities the Academy had in place after the death of Sarah Everard and the emergence of the website "*Everyone's Invited*" OfSTED produced a review of sexual harassment in schools. The review involved a series of visits to schools in England and interviews with students. The report makes clear that the issue of sexual harassment is serious and that schools should not assume that it does not happen in their organisation. At ATA, assemblies have been delivered to all students on the subject of kindness, peer support and signalling behaviour, which is inappropriate. It has also been made clear to students that they can speak to any member of staff about any issues, concerns or observations they might have and that they will

be taken seriously.

The report raised a number of issues in schools, which include staff occasionally 'turning a blind eye' to inappropriate behaviour and/or inappropriate sexual behaviour sometimes being seen as fairly normal amongst school age children. DMI outlined some examples provided in the report, which included casual use of language, sexual comments as 'banter', students feeling unable to speak to adults about concerns and fearing repercussions if they do.

DMI explained that he had watched the recent Education Select Committee meeting with Amanda Spielman on the subject of sexual abuse in schools, which was enlightening. Schools that manage this well have good Behaviour Management processes and clear policies, they monitor behavioural incidents to detect patterns, they speak to students on an informal basis to 'temperature check' and intervene, and the RSE curriculum is secure.

ATA conducted a test to see if ATA are dealing with these areas correctly.

In Year 10, three boys have been reported for using sexually motivated language and, as a result of this report, PHA (Deputy Principal with responsibility for Year 10 and the DSL) met with each student and their parents. They will undergo an intensive mentoring programme so that they can be re-educated on the use of language and appreciate that any repeat of the behaviour will result in a more serious sanction.

In Year 9, two boys have made inappropriate comments towards girls and because of this, they have received appropriate sanctions and MCO (Assistant Principal with responsibility for Year 9) has met with parents to secure their support.

Year 8 showed a use of more casual language and Year 7 is similar.

The Important thing is that this has been proactively sought out, with assemblies having been run to address the issues. In the new academic year ATA will hold a series of single sex focus groups to obtain a clear understanding of any issues the Academy needs to address.

Appendices

DMI is pleased with ATA's student attendance; however, at the date of the meeting there is the start of an increase in positive COVID-19 cases which is in line with an increase in positive cases in the local area.

CCN asked DMI if ATA has any students who have been vaccinated and DMI advised that one student in the 6th Form with an underlying health condition has been.

ATA does not send home vast amounts of students if there is a positive case but are identifying the close contacts to that student and then sending them home to isolate.

6. Current Topics for discussion

a. Early careers framework – policy and overview (Matt Gallagher)

MGA outlined the Early Careers Framework (ECF), which will become a statutory requirement for all schools to deliver from September 2021. The purpose of the ECF – a two-year induction programme - is to provide a more supportive approach to developing confidence and expertise among newly qualified teachers. The aspiration is that this will help to retain good members of the profession, within the profession, for longer. ATA's ECF will be a very structured introduction into the profession

The new framework makes it a requirement for a completely new body of content and knowledge to be provided for new teachers, which includes looking at cognitive science, the science of learning and the strategies which work well in the classroom, and a much more comprehensive study of teaching received over the two years.

Over the past few years, a number of providers have built programmes, which can be used to deliver the ECF. There are three options, which are:

1) to buy-in a provider: this would be an external agency who would train staff and provide the guidance and framework online.

2) to use one of six providers who have put together a programme, which schools can deliver themselves.

T3) schools to take the framework and create their own programme.

ATA has a strong, clear brand and felt that the third option would be best for creating a comprehensive programme for new teachers. ATA has created a programme and over the course of the first year, the Early Career Teachers (ECTs) will receive 50 sessions delivered by the experts in the Academy with the help of mentors who will guide them through the content.

The second year is developmental and new teachers will have additional time off timetable to help reflect on their performance.

Starting from September 2021, ATA has a large body of ECT's, and ATA is confident that this programme and the framework will help them to develop into outstanding teachers.

MGA confirmed that he would share the framework with the Board.

b. Results days and potential appeals (Douglas Mitchell)

DMI updated the Board about the upcoming results days and the potential for appeals from students who are unhappy with their results.

DMI spoke about the centre policy and the process ATA established for determining the grades that would be awarded to the students. The centre policy was approved by OfQUAL and ATA had followed that correctly.

This has been one of the hardest things that the staff have had to do and the process has been dealt with very professionally amongst staff. ATA were required to upload the data by the deadline and ATA were asked to send off a sample for English and Maths, which was approved. ATA have not been asked for any other evidence.

The Results day will run as normal and students will experience a normal results day. Students will enter via the courtyard and receive their results and ATA will have a clearing centre set up where the Exams Manager will be on hand to help students who need to go through the clearing process.

All students can appeal the grades if they are not happy with their results. They can contact The Exams Manager who will explain the process, and he will share the data with the student and provide the students with the instructions on how to appeal.

The process will be the same for the GCSE grades. They will be able to enrol into the 6th form if grades are sufficient and the careers advisor will be there to help the students if they do not have the grades for enrolling into the 6th Form. DMI will share with the Board the grades once they are released and the number of appeals that may be placed.

c. New academic year – system of controls and curriculum (Douglas Mitchell)

DMI advised the Board that at the start of the new Academic Year, ATA is required to COVID test all of the students before they can access their lessons.

The Academy will return as normal on the 31 August, which will be a Professional Development day for staff. The students for Year 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 will be COVID tested on 1 September over the course of the day; each year

group will come into the Academy at a designated time. Year 12 and Year 13 will be COVID tested the following day.

The Students will have a second testing which will happen on the following Tuesday. For most part, life at the Academy will remain unchanged for all students but ATA will look to operate extra-curricular activity at lunchtimes and with after school activities, if the year group bubble requirements are relaxed.

If the government guidance becomes restrictive, ATA will be prepared for any changes.

DW asked if there were any questions, of which there were none that were not raised during the presentation.

7. Any other business

There was no other business.

DW thanked colleagues for attending and their continued support.

Signed: 
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 13/10/2021