Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday 10 October 2023
Location: DSSB
Time: 5.00pm

AC Members		Attended	Apologies
Rob Gillman (RG)	Sponsor 1 **(Chair)**	✔	
Russ Gallon (RGA)	Sponsor 2		✔
Antony Merritt (AM)	Sponsor 3		✔
Rebecca Kemp (RK)	Sponsor 4	✔	
Lewis Wild (LW) Observer	Sponsor 5	✔	
Leila Henry-Thorne (LHT)	Teaching staff Councillor		✔
V Balasco (VB)	Support Staff Councillor		✔
Vacancy	Student Advocate		
Vacancy	LA Representative		
Chris Ballard (CB)	Principal	✔	
Vacancy	Parent Councillor		
Vacancy	Parent Councillor		
Kath Cooper (KC)	Senior Principal		✔
Invited attendees			
Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk	✔	
Simon Jones (SJ)	Vice Principal	✔	
Siobhan Cole (SC)		✔	

Matters Arising:

Date/No	Action	Owner
02.05.23 02	SEND gap to be discussed at next meeting. Deferred to September. This will be discussed later on the agenda and can be **closed.**	RG CB WH
06.07.23 01	CB to provide headline figures on the summer outcomes to the Academy Council as soon as they are available for release. This is complete and can be **closed.**	CB

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	**Introductions, Administration, Apologies**	
1.1	RG opened the meeting and welcomed those present. Lewis Wild was welcomed to his first meeting. Apologies are recorded above.	
2	**Declaration of Interest**	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	**Academy Council Membership**	
3.1	Governor vacancies were discussed. RG reminded everyone to let him know if they are aware of any person interested in joining the Governing body. LW will be joining as a Sponsor Councillor. There was interest from another person, but they have put their application on hold following them changing employment; it is hoped they will be in contact again in a few months.	
4	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting of 6 July 23 were confirmed as a true record.	
5	**Matters Arising**	
5.1	The action table above has been updated.	

DSSB Council meeting 10102023 Term 1 Minutes

6	Siobhan Cole - Teaching and Learning and Pedagogy	
6.1	SC highlighted the following: • Pedagogy is the theory behind teaching and the day-to-day practice in classrooms. • DSSB have worked on a Teaching and Learning framework that is researched based to meet the needs of the cohort. • It is based on evidence from EFW and research from the National Association of SEND. • The staff are using the framework in their PD sessions and using it to provide feedback to each other after dropping in on lessons. • The framework demonstrates what staff can use in their classrooms and includes suggested questions. SC circulated a draft of the Teaching and Learning Framework. **ACTION: SC will circulate a digital copy of the Teaching and Learning Framework to Academy Councillors.**	**SC**
6.2	**Questions from the Academy Council**	
6.3	**Has this identified any immediate barriers when observing teachers?**	
6.3.1	At the moment, the checking for understanding feels a little weaker across the school. I observed most lessons last week and I fed back on that. Equally there were lots of strengths identified.	
6.4	**Is this effectively a new initiative?**	
6.4.1	No, it is more of an updated framework of what we were already trying to do in classrooms. It links to the disadvantaged strategy too and provides teachers with tools to support disadvantaged students in the classroom.	
6.5	**Is there not already a Teaching and Learning framework that is set centrally, by the trust?**	
6.5.1	No. I worked on it with a member of staff from the central team, and Snowdon Village is also looking to produce something similar. Not all schools teach in the same way, and we have made it flexible to suit our students.	
6.6	**This is a really good framework, that embodies what DSSB is about. You mentioned that the checking for understanding was identified as less strong. Why do you think this is?**	
6.6.1	I think it felt less important when classes were smaller, and the teacher could spend a bit of time with each student. Now that the school is much fuller, and classes larger, they cannot do that, and the checking of understanding is therefore much more important. It is a strong framework to use to quality assure what is happening in lessons.	
6.7	**How do you reinforce it, and keep it current in teachers' minds?**	
6.7.1	I went into all lessons last week. I was checking for one of the active ingredients listed in the framework. These are things that should be happening in all lessons, regardless of subject. The teachers know in advance what I am looking for. Some asked for one-to-one feedback afterwards. This process will happen every term, on a different element of the key ingredients. They also coach each other every term and use the Teaching and Learning framework as a reference. There will be ongoing coaching, carried out in triads, and staff will use this framework to provide feedback to each other.	
6.8	**Has the peer coaching been broadly accepted?**	
6.8.1	Yes. It started after Christmas last year and we collected feedback at the end of each term. A couple of staff were less happy, but this was more to do with the triad they were part of, rather than the process. We have switched the groups around and staff seem happy.	
6.9	**There must be some students that warm to one teacher more than another. Or where a student makes much better progress in one class than another. Is this framework helpful for identifying those trends?**	
6.9.1	Yes. Staff go and observe their own students in other lessons. This can be helpful for identifying things that work with them specifically and teachers can take back things to try in their own classes; this could be a simple seating plan or a particular teaching method. We are bringing back a culture of low stakes observations and having staff in lessons. The peer coaching	

	observations are 15-20 minutes, once a term. The ones carried out be SC were about 15 minutes. They are not whole lesson observations.	
7	**Academy Council Report**	
7.1	Admissions - Currently on roll there are 92 in Year 10 (PAN 90). - There are 88 in Year 11, giving a total of 180 in KS4. - Digitech has a good reputation in the community and lots of interest in the school from parents and this is reflected in admission numbers. - There are 30 on site in Year 12. - The Open Evening for Y10 and Y12 for next September were successful. There is confidence in being oversubscribed again next September for Y10. There were over 200 families that attended the Open Evening for Y10, and around 25 families attended for the Post 16 Open Evening. Another Open Evening will take place towards the end of the year. - Overall, it has been a positive recruitment overall. E-sports has been very positive as have some other curriculum changes. - The right staff have been recruited to deliver the courses. - There may some staffing and rooming challenges if recruitment is as successful again next year.	
7.2	**Questions from the Academy Council**	
7.3	**For E-Sports are you exposed to a teacher being enticed away for a better deal elsewhere?**	
7.3.1	We found it quite hard to recruit a teacher with the skillset to deliver the course. There is no provider that specifically trains E-Sports teachers, so they have to have a passion for the subject and the vocational skills needed to teach. It is niche.	
7.4	**How is staffing? How is staff absence?**	
7.4.1	Last week we had some staff absence some of which was due to Covid. The challenge is the lack of cover supply teachers again. This results in SLT being stretched in terms of capacity. A Head of Creative Arts starts after half term. We have had a strong supply teacher in covering and that has been quite successful. The hardest roles to fill are Teaching Assistants. We do have two candidates to interview and will do a further round of recruitment. Part of the issue is that a lot of them are fixed term contracts, because the funding is not guaranteed. We are in conversation with the finance team about making one of the roles permanent to try to encourage more applicants. We still need to recruit a PE teacher for 2 days a week, and a further person in a pastoral role to meet the needs of the larger cohort.	
7.5	**Current Year 10**	
7.5.1	Year 10 are a cohort with a lot of high needs. Lots of students have lots of gaps in their learning, ACES, and other anxieties. Some have arrived after accessing some kind of AP at their last mainstream. There are some behaviour concerns with some of them and some with undiagnosed need. We are still at the finding-out stage with some students; we have identified the need to improve transition arrangements around the information that is provided by the last school. From a behaviour perspective, it has taken a little while for some of them to understand our expectations and standards. We will unpick that over time and help them to get that right.	
7.6	**Is the challenge that there are a significantly higher number of children with needs, or is it that their individual needs are more complex?**	
7.6.1	It is both. 45% of students are on the SEN register. Few come with funding. Many arrive with previous trauma, but also various education needs, and we have to manage those complex issues together. Many students are under CAHMS. The majority are getting it right in lessons. It is difficult to judge behaviour more accurately until we have unpicked those complexities further. Students are generally compliant and will do as asked. If they are out of lessons, most of the time it is due to them not being able to focus for the whole lesson. There is no fighting or	

	particularly dangerous behaviour. Some of this is also linked to the pandemic. There is a literacy gap.	
7.7	**Are the complexities compounded by larger class sizes, as the school has grown?**	
7.7.1	Yes, both inside and outside of the classroom. We are trying to manage more students, and this is part of the thinking around the need for more pastoral provision and more TAs. Some find it hard to manage a whole lesson and seek reasons to have a short break. There are also a number who have simply come in and settled well.	
7.8	**Has the safeguarding need increased? The report details there are 60 open cases on CPOMs. Is that about normal?**	
7.8.1	Yes, we would normally see between 50 to 70 cases (including Boomsatsuma, Robins and BSA). There would be 40 – 50 on-site cases. We currently have two students with Child Protection Plans and one Child in Need. There are some high-level cases. RK is visiting the school next week to meet the DSL.	
7.9	**Outcomes**	
7.9.1	RG confirmed that he and CB had reviewed the results and outcomes ahead of the Scrutiny Panel and it was further reviewed by Councillors at the CLF Board and AC Results Review meeting. - KS4 was disappointing in some areas; - KS5 was good overall; - There were challenges again with the crossover group, and this impacted the basics figure. RG reported that he and CB had met with Sally Apps to discuss an action plan to try to improve this. One of the things examined was the link between attendance and the attainment/progress. Councillors discussed the links and looked at some of the data provided. The conclusion taken from the data was that there is a powerful link between attendance and attainment.	
7.10	**Questions from the Academy Council**	
7.11	**Did the crossover group, as a whole, have below average attendance?**	
7.11.1	Of the 18 students in the crossover group, there were 8 students that had 90% or more attendance. None of those achieved basics. The student in that group with the lowest attendance (33%) was the only one that achieved basics. It is quite a small data set and so a mixed picture. Generally speaking, if children are in school, they are more likely to do better. There is a need to look at the middle attainers and focus on ensuring those children achieve basics. Middle attainers are about 60% of the cohort; we need to make sure we have got the right strategy in place for that cohort. Higher attendance leads to better progress which should lead to stronger attainment.	
7.12	**You have done a lot of positive things to strengthen attendance, and we have learned there is a link, although complicated, to attainment. Do you have enough resource to manage attendance generally? Do you prioritise your crossover students for attendance?**	
7.12.1	We have to prioritise everyone, for safeguarding reasons. Everyone is held to the same account, and all will be put through the attendance process. The Attendance Officer is experienced and has already starting to have impact in getting children into school. They are targeting children with persistent absence (PA) who take the odd day off quite regularly but is also working with high end cases where they should be in a different provision.	
7.12.2	Other actions have been identified as part of the action plan. A more stringent homework policy has been developed. The identification of a crossover group is now more cyclical, with students moving in and out of the group as needed. There is no complacency; this is a priority for all staff.	
7.13	**SEND and disadvantaged gap**	
7.14	Digitech has the lowest disadvantaged gap across the trust, however the issue is that the generally results are lower overall, than at other academies in the trust, so the bar is set lower.	
7.15	The SEND gap will be discussed in more depth when the SENCo presents to the AC later in the year. There is a trail for SEND K students. These are the students that do not attract funding, and	

	who make up a significant part of the cohort. There is a gap between their outcomes and the non-SEND outcomes. From an attainment perspective, 32% got 9 – 4 compared to only 6.4% of the SEND cohort.	
7.16	**Who decides if a child has the SEND marker? Is that the SENCo?**	
7.16.1	Mainly yes, but there are discussions with SLT and teachers. There is no consistency across the schools, in that it is very much up to staff to decide who goes on the register. There is a national debate around whether students with SEMH needs should be on the register. We consider it is better to have them on the register so that we can identify and cater for those needs.	
7.17	**Is your attendance target of 96% realistic?**	
7.17.1	It is a CLF target and is also the national target. It is aspirational. Digitech is a mainstream provision and so is held to account on that measure.	
7.18	**Are you able to write the attendance policy for Digitech, or is it written by the central team?**	
7.18.1	We can change things like the time we close the register and we have changed the structure of the day. It now starts at 9am. Gates close later and this has resulted in less U codes (students that arrive after registers are closed).	
7.19	**How is tutor time working now that it is at the end of the day?**	
7.19.1	Tutor time is longer, and it is mainly working well. It gives us more time to do some of the PHSE and RSE content. Assemblies can be a challenge as the children are less focused at the end of the day and we need to consider our approach to assemblies. Period 7 has been introduced on a Tuesday and Thursday after school where small group work takes place in core subjects. We are also reading in tutor time.	
7.20	**Is period 7 for Year 11 only?**	
7.20.1	Yes, they do English, maths or science intervention groups that are focused on key content that the students did not do well with, in their previous assessment. It is reviewed every six weeks. Not all Year 11 students are in for every intervention group.	
8	**Progress against AIP**	
8.1	RG reported that the AIP was reviewed at the Board and AC Results Review meeting on 27 September 2023.	
9	**Safeguarding**	
9.1	This item has been covered.	
10	**Finance, Health and Safety and Estates**	
10.1	Nothing further to report.	
11	**Staffing and Wellbeing to include staff voice**	
11.1	This has been included within the AC Report.	
12	**Student Voice**	
12.1	Nothing further was reported.	
13	**Policies**	

13.1	Governors noted the following CLF Policies:
	    ○ CLF Safeguarding Policy
	    ○ CLF Charging and Remissions Policy
	    ○ CLF Data Protection Policy
	    ○ CLF Trustee and Councillor Expenses Policy
	    ○ CLF Academy Health and Safety Policy	

14	**Outlook for next year**	
14.1	This has been covered in the AC report.	
15	**Governance**	
15.1	Nothing further was reported.	
16	**EDI**	
16.1	Nothing further was reported.	
17	**Matters for the attention of the Board**	

17.1	None	
18	**AOB**	
18.1	**No further matters were raised. The meeting closed at 6.35pm.**	

Actions carried forward

Date/No	Action	Owner
10.10.23 01	SC will circulate a digital copy of the Teaching and Learning Framework to Academy Councillors.	SC