

Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday 20 February 2024
Location: TEAMS
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)	Sponsor 5	✓	
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	✓	
Gareth Williams (GW)	Associate Assistant Principal	✓ part	
Polly Wardle (PW)	Bristol Robins	✓ part	
Jane Morgan (JM)	Careers Lead	✓ part	
Phil De Scossa (PDS)	DSL	✓ part	

Matters Arising:

Date/No	Action	Owner
07.12.23 001	Careers Lead to be invited to the next AC meeting. This action is complete and can be closed .	SC
07.12.23 002	CB to invited PDS (DSL) to the next meeting to discuss safeguarding with the AC. This action is complete and can be closed .	CB
07.12.23 003	RGi and CB will create a schedule of Subject Leaders to invite to AC meetings. Ongoing .	RGi CB

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	RG opened the meeting and welcomed those present.	
2	Declaration of Interest	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	Academy Council Membership	
3.1	Governor vacancies were discussed. Stephanie Martin has been asked to complete an application form. WH has contacted the potential Councillor who works at UWE and is awaiting a response.	
4	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting of 7 December 23 were confirmed as a true record.	
5	Matters Arising	

5.1	The action table above has been updated.	
6	Jane Morgan – Careers Lead	
6.1	Jane Morgan (JM), Careers Lead, provided an overview of her work at DSSB.	
6.2	CEIAG within Digitech Studio School JM has been Careers Lead for 18 months and during her time at DSSB her main focus has been creating the Progressive Careers Plan.	
6.3	Gatsby Benchmarks JM provided a brief overview of the Gatsby Benchmarks. This was covered in some detail by SJ at the last meeting. JM advised that in terms of progress, the school had reached 100% on all but two of the 8 benchmarks.	
6.4	Destinations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSSB reports on destinations for Year 11 between March and May each year; this will be for offers the students have received for intended destinations. • In September the school completes an information gathering exercise which includes phone calls home and emails to colleges, to confirm which places have been taken up. • The requirement is for schools to report destinations for 3 years' worth of data; a CLF-wide strategy for achieving this is currently in progress. • For KS5, In Year 12 the school reports on retention; for Year 13 it is destinations. • Last year's top destinations included Digitech, SGS college, Boomsatsuma, St Brendan's and Access Creative College. • JM advised that all providers on the destinations list are invited in to talk to students about their offer. • The school would like to focus on apprenticeships to grow the number of students leaving for that destination (only 6 last year); part of the challenge is to help parents understand what an apprenticeship is and how valuable they can be, in the current employment landscape. 	
6.5	Provider Access Legislation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider Access Legislation has been updated. It now specifies that schools must provide two encounters with approved providers of apprenticeships and further education for all students in years 8 and 9, two in years 10 and 11 and two in year 12 and 13. • JM advised that at DSSB all students have four encounters in each of those year bandings. 	
6.6	Progressive Careers Plan JM shared an image showing the careers journey at DSSB, called the progressive careers plan. This involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 10 – introduction to the careers curriculum. • Launch of Work experience – introduction to • Envision cohort 1 – an opportunity to take part in a social enterprise project with local employers. • Enterprise week – a week dedicated to careers and employability. • Work experience week 1 (optional, must be in the employment areas DSSB represents). • Envision cohort 2 – as above. • Term 6 – work experience week 2 (any workplace). • Year 11 – introduction to careers curriculum. • FE Provider and apprenticeship assemblies. • Attendance at Apprenticeship Show. • One to one careers guidance. • Applications and attendance at FE open evenings. • Careers Fayre – attached to Y11 parents evening. • University Taster Visits terms 3 and 4. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Term 5 and 6 – exams and destinations gathering. 	
6.7	<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further engagement with parents, especially around apprenticeships. Build further links with relevant employers. Careers curriculum – rewrite it to bring up to date with the current world of work. Website – needs to be brought up to date and made engaging so users can see exactly what DSSB does for students in terms of careers. Target – Gatsby x 8 100%, Destinations 0% NEET or unknown, Every student engaged in a positive next step, each year by February half term students have at least one offer of an FE placement, apprenticeship or other next step. 	
6.8	Questions from the Academy Council	
6.9	<p>What constitutes an encounter under the Provider Access Legislation?</p> <p>An encounter is an opportunity for a student to have a meaningful conversation with the provider. If the provider comes in for an assembly, there needs to be an opportunity for questions afterwards. Sometimes, students are less willing to ask questions in that way, so at DSSB we have invited those same providers to the careers fayre to allow one-to-one interactions to take place.</p>	
6.10	<p>What is the difference between NEET and unknown? What is included in the ‘other’ category?</p> <p>Unknown is used where we cannot find out where the student is going. If we do not know, we cannot class them as NEET. ‘Other’ includes colleges that only one or two students have gone to – such as if they move away to a college in Wales or Dorset. It is any provision that is not in the top 8 providers listed.</p>	
6.11	<p>What are you doing with employers? How are you engaging with them?</p> <p>It is challenging. For the first week of work experience, where students are going out to employers that represent the things we do at DSSB, there are only 10 to 12 students that have got placements. Under the Envision programme we have linked with a local digital company and we are hoping to be able to do more with them. They will support us by taking some students for work experience as well as working with them through the Envision programme. We have reached out to a couple of local employers for extended work experience and have recently linked with Films at 59. We will keep reaching out and trying to make further links.</p>	
6.12	ACTION: AM and JM to meet offline to discuss further possible employer links, including with Bottle Yard Studios and through the Careers Hub.	AM JM
6.13	<p>How are you finding the work experience placements? Are you using a list or just reaching out to local companies? There is a website of placements available that schools can use.</p> <p>The onus is on the student to find the placement. I get a lot of information from employers and will pass that on to the student and I will help with the application, but it is up to the student to secure the placement. We also contract parents and family friends that have taken their own student previously to see if they will accept a different student this year.</p>	
6.14	KC advised the database for work experience no longer exists. RK advised there is a DfE list of companies for apprenticeships; it could be that often these are the companies that will also offer work experience, so might be useful.	
6.15	<p>Have you considered online work experience?</p> <p>Yes, we have done that in the past for a couple of students and it was a positive experience.</p>	
6.16	<p>How are you supported, in your role, by the central team and wider federation?</p> <p>Craig Jordan at BBA is the Careers Lead for the trust and he leads the network of careers professionals from across all academies. We meet quite regularly and share information with each other; it is a very valuable network for what can be a quite isolated role for some.</p>	
6.17	RG and CB thanked JM and she left the meeting.	
7	Polly Wardle – Bristol Robins	

7.1	PW provided an update on the work of the Bristol City Robins Foundation (BCRF), the official charity of Bristol City Football Club. The Robins work across Bristol with a primary focus on young people and families, areas of deprivation and South Bristol in particular. PW shared information about the updated BCRF strategy and in particular the three strands of Health and Wellbeing, Education and Employability and Youth Engagement.	
7.2	One of the key strategic goals for this year is the creation of a bespoke facility for BCRF and Filwood Fields in Knowle West has been identified as a potential site. The foundation is outgrowing the facilities at Ashton Gate and some of the other current sites where the provision is based.	
7.3	Health and Wellbeing are the smallest team currently and are recruiting a new leader. The Youth Engagement team have a contract with the police to work with the 8 most at risk young people in Bristol and have recently won a bid from the council to do mentoring in schools, and a funding grant from the Youth Endowment Fund for a Youth Council who will go out in the community and do research in the community to find out ways to better support young people. We Are City encompass the inclusive associate teams including the women's team and youth teams.	
7.4	PW advised that under the employability strand there are around 70 learners with DSSB and 85 with Ashton Park for BTEC level 2 and 3 programmes. There are also around 2 degree programmes with a further 100 students on those. BCRF recently won a bid with the Council for NEET provision and the first programme starts tomorrow. The NEET provision is designed to re-engage learners and get into secondary schools and engage at a younger age than 16. There is also a volunteering for employment programme where many of those volunteers go on to secure employment with BCRF; over 50% of the workforce comes from one of the programmes.	
7.5	PW provided an update on the Digitech partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biweekly meetings take place between CB and PW. • Positive feedback is received from site visits; there is a strong safeguarding relationship. • Last summer saw very positive outcomes, with 100% pass rate on Level 3 and Level 3 provisions. 100% of Level 2 learners progressed to Further Education or training. • Retention is at 95.89% this year. • Student numbers have grown from 48 to 73 this year. • There is good use of the CLF schools network to recruit into BCRF programmes. • The biggest challenge is the recruitment into Esports programmes. • There are continued opportunities for DSSB students to access stadium tours, BCFC tickets/rewards etc. 	
7.6	Questions from the Academy Council	
7.7	(To CB) How have you found recruitment to the ESports programme at DSSB?	
7.7.1	(CB) Recruitment to Level 2 is popular. For Year 12, we have had less interest, similar to the challenge described by PW. Recruitment looks okay for next year. Numbers are still coming in from applications. What we are able to do, at DSSB, is retain some of our own Level 2 ESports students, onto the Level 3 course.	
7.8	When students attend BCRF for Post 16 course, do you have to manage a lot of resits? How do you organise that learning?	
7.8.1	(PW) Yes, we do. We have English and maths teachers and students will have resit lessons on a Friday around their BTEC learning hours.	
7.9	Recognising that BCFC is not the same as BCRF, what difference would it make to your overall offer if BCFC were promoted to the premier league?	
7.9.1	(PW) It is something we often talk about. It would act in a positive way in terms of supporting our recruitment, especially for our sports courses. We are also aware of some possible negative effects. There may be less access to the stadium, because there will be a tighter football schedule; there may be less access to player appearances etc.	

7.10	What is ESports? Is it gaming? There are huge opportunities in the digital gaming community, to the extent that some companies look overseas for talent. It is concerning to hear that recruitment is challenging, it should be very popular.	
7.10.1	(PW) Yes. It is gaming. We were so excited to offer this and felt that we were at least 12 months ahead of the curve in terms of other providers. We invested quite heavily in marketing and the recruitment just has not followed as expected.	
7.11	In terms of the South Bristol focus, what are the implications of that on the relationship with DSSB? How close is the intended new site?	
7.11.1	(PW) Students from anywhere can join a provision, but it is important for us to give learners from South Bristol, in particular, that opportunity, so are seeking to secure a site in that area.	
7.12	There are some potential changes coming, especially in terms of curriculum. Do you have a strategy for dealing with that, especially in respect of the triple award that is being reduced? From next year, you will have to increase the delivery time to 4 hours of maths, and 3 hours of English, for resits. How will you address that?	
7.12.1	(PW) We urgently need to make a decision, specifically around Esports. We are considering offering Level 2 Sports to see if the learner intake at that level is more popular; it is definitely a priority in terms of looking at wider courses. It is an ever-moving picture; the exam board may yet change their mind. In terms of resits, we will ensure we provide the required number of guided learning hours.	
7.13	(To PDS) What is your view of the safeguarding link with BCRF?	
7.13.1	We meet regularly. It is useful and helpful to have the open dialogue that we do. I have gained some excellent resources from Boomsatsuma and BCRF. It is useful to be able to jointly look at the challenges that we both face and come out with some actions.	
7.14	ACTION: KC and PW to meet outside of the AC meeting to discuss changes to curriculum and the changes to the required teaching hours for maths and English resits.	KC PW
8	Phil De Scossa - DSL	
8.1	PDS advised that he has been in post for 3 terms at Digitech, having previously been at JCA for 4 years. The cohort is smaller and different to that at JCA; PDS has been spending time building relationships and getting to know students and their families. The cohort at DSSB is one with a high amount of mental health need, with self-harm, anxiety and low mood being common threads in some students as well as diagnosed/undiagnosed SEN and all this is evident from the safeguarding reports. PDS reported that he liaises with Off The Record and hopes to roll out Off The Record ambassadors in school. As well as one to one work with students, Off The Record support with a select cohort that are struggling with particular issues, meeting for a series of weeks and tailoring the support to suit the group.	
8.2	DSSB has a counsellor who attends once a day, streamlining who needs what in terms of cognitive behaviour therapy or determining who is best suited to talk to a counsellor. In some incidents, what the student needs is beyond the threshold and staff will talk to parents about visiting the GP and engaging with CAMHS.	
8.3	RK reported that she meets with PDS to discuss the diverse cohort. DSSB is unique in what it offers and the support it gives students. The challenge is that the students are at DSSB for just two years, or less, and this offers a small window in which to identify and support need. CB noted that systems are in place to identify SEND, safeguarding and teaching and learning needs, all of which are closely connected	
8.4	Questions from the Academy Council	
8.5	Given that it looks like you will be oversubscribed again, in KS4 and have further growth in Post 16, do you think safeguarding is properly resourced, especially given the complexities of the cohort?	
8.5.1	Yes. When I joined Digitech, we had one pastoral member of staff and there are now 3. We couldn't have all the conversations we are having with students without those 3 members of staff supporting on the ground, they are invaluable.	

8.6	Where are you in terms of strategic safeguarding for the academy? What key actions are you working on?	
8.6.1	Steve Bane is attending on 21 April to carry out a safeguarding audit. This is an in-depth process but hugely helpful. CB and SJ will meet with PDS weekly to review the document and go through areas that need attention ahead of that audit. One of the key priorities is to ensure we have an appropriate evidence bank in place to provide assurance around some of our processes; we do a lot of the right things but sometimes there is a lack of evidence to demonstrate that.	
9	Gareth Williams - Maths Lead	
9.1	<p>GW highlighted the key parts of the subject improvement plan for maths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Y11 November mocks were relatively successful, slightly better than the summer results were last year. • The mock data has been reviewed and there has been some re-setting to ensure students are in the right groups. • There have been some visits from CLF central colleagues. • If progress continues it looks like results for 9 – 4 will be at 50% and 9 – 5 at 40% which will be the best ever results. • Many of the students have low starting points with some currently around grade 3; progress looks to be good and staff are trying to get those students to a grade 4 or above. • Pupil voice has been collected; students can articulate what they can do well, but do not always feel their success is recognised in class. There will be a focus on this going forward. • Routines in maths are well embedded; including quality assurance. Teaching uses the DSSB pedagogy discussed previously and teachers focus on praise and recognition in the classroom • Homework is now embedded as part of the weekly routines. • The focus is now to raise the number of grade 4s at GCSE and to ensure students have the right support and feel their successes are recognised. • In term 3, students began completing weekly practice papers; this is earlier than started last year. • The content has finished being taught in foundation for a while; students are in revision mode. It is hoped that the content for the higher tier will be completed by the end of this term. • In order to further support progress for crossover students, period 7 has been introduced and small groups of students will be invited to attend. This will allow staff to build confidence in those students, make them feel valued and plug some of the gaps. 	
9.2	Questions from the Academy Council	
9.3	What are the homework completion rates like? Are you tracking that?	
9.3.1	The homework is completed via a programme called Sparx; to show as completed all parts of the homework must be done, questions cannot be missed. The completion rate, on that basis, is around 60%, however up to 75% of students complete homework on a regular basis. The other 25% do homework more sporadically. There are only a handful that do not complete any homework.	
9.4	With the mixed classes of higher and foundations students, does that present any difficulties in teaching or with the resources required.	
9.4.1	Teaching higher and foundation in maths is possible in Year 10 but is much more difficult to do this in Year 11 and have had to group those that are doing the higher paper in the top set. We have some slighter higher class sizes in order to accommodate some smaller groups, both to reduce an element of disruption to the other classes, and to raise the performance of all.	

9.5	Is there a resource implication in having the smaller groups? Do we need more resource to be able to have further smaller groups?	
9.5.1	For context, DSSB is not typical, our larger group is 26 students; this is a smaller class size than in some secondary schools. The top group is around 26 students, there are 25 in another group and 18 to 20 in another group. The disruption mentioned was caused by a very small group of students and it was more to do with them not be able to get what they needed in a larger setting. Now in a smaller group, they have the adult support they need. Barriers have been removed and they are making progress.	
7	Academy Council Report	
7.1	Achievement and Standards – Year 11 mocks	
	Whilst some data has been collected from the Year 10 term 3 mid-terms, the Year 11 trust equivalent blackbox data has not yet been received. ACTION: The Year 11 mock data will be reviewed at the next AC meeting.	CB
7.2	Attendance and Behaviour	
7.2.1	SJ provided some headlines on Attendance and Behaviour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The additional capacity in the pastoral team is massively impacting behaviour and the operational processes on the ground. This generates capacity for CB and SJ, and others, to be more strategic. The progress can be seen in the attendance data and suspension data. One of the next priorities will be to review the policy on mobile phones. DSSB has joined with other school in the South Gloucester cluster to discuss the challenge of meeting need for all students in the current landscape of a lack of funding. Middle leadership is working well; there are busy pinch points but the school is moving forward and SLT are taking a step back to think strategically to shape further improvements across the academy and focus on the identified priorities. 	
8	Trust Wide Updates	
8.1	KC reported that there is no further update regarding growth. The aim of the trust is to grow well and the next stage is to stabilise and induct the new schools well, over a period of time. Central services continue to be close to academies and to ensure there is no feeling of disconnect as the trust grows and expands.	
9	Safeguarding	
9.1	This has been covered within the AC report.	
10	Finance, Health and Safety and Estates	
10.1	Nothing further was reported.	
11	Student Voice	
11.1	Nothing further was reported.	
12	Policies	
12.1	The Academy Council noted the Complaints Policy.	
13	Governance	
13.1	Nothing further was reported.	
14	EDI	
14.1	Nothing further was reported.	
15	Matters for the attention of the Board	
15.1	No matters for the board were raised.	
16	AOB	
16.1	No further business was raised.	
16.2	The meeting closed at 19.10 hrs.	

Date/No	Action	Owner
07.12.23 003	RGi and CB will create a schedule of Subject Leaders to invite to AC meetings. Ongoing.	RGi CB
20.02.24 001	AM and JM to meet offline to discuss further possible employer links, including with Bottle Yard Studios and through the Careers Hub.	AM JM
20.02.24 002	KC and PW to meet outside of the AC meeting to discuss changes to curriculum and the changes to the required teaching hours for maths and English resits.	KC PW
20.02.24 003	The Year 11 mock data will be reviewed at the next AC meeting.	CB