

Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday 2 May 2023
Version: Approved
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 | | ✓ |
| Vacancy | Sponsor 5 | | |
| Leila Henry-Thorne (LHT) | Teaching staff Councillor | ✓ | |
| V Balasco (VB) | Support Staff Councillor | ✓ | |
| Chris Ballard (CB) | Principal | ✓ | |
| Vacancy | Parent Councillor | | |
| Vacancy | Parent Councillor | | |
| Sally Apps (SA) | Executive Principal | | ✓ |
| Invited attendees | | | |
| Wendy Hellin (WH) | Clerk | ✓ | |
| Simon Jones (SJ) | Vice Principal | ✓ | |

Minutes

| Item | Description | Action |
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| 1 | Introductions, Administration, Apologies | |
| 1.1 | RG opened the meeting and welcomed those present. Apologies are recorded above. Simon Jones was welcomed formally as Vice Principal. | |
| 2 | Declaration of Interest | |
| 2.1 | No verbal declarations were made. | |
| 3 | Academy Council Membership | |
| 3.1 | RG reminded everyone to let him know if they are aware of any person interested in joining the Governing body. | |
| 4 | Minutes of Previous Meeting | |
| 4.1 | The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as a true record. | |
| 5 | Matters Arising | |
| 5.1 | There were no matters arising. | |
| 6 | Academy Council Report | |

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| 6.1 | Achievement and standards (including raising attainment and preparation for exams) | |
| 6.2 | <p>CB highlighted the following regarding Year 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> From a Basics perspective, the results from the last round of mocks were disappointing. The English outcomes were poor. Maths improved in terms of the number of marks they achieved since the last mock paper; there has been some discussions on grade boundaries across the trust. There is confidence with maths now. Science was where it was expected to be. In terms of English, students were just not prepared enough for the mock exam; there was not enough preparation or work completed at home. A lot of work has been done with the English department and the trust, to unpick this and put a plan in place. English lessons are strong, and the work ethic of students is strong. It is now necessary for the school to hold its nerve and trust the process. The English lead is predicting stronger summer results; she knows the students well, is still doing preparation and intervening with the right students. There is an action plan around what students need do to move forward in maths, English and science. All have extra intervention, including after school clubs. | |
| 6.3 | Questions from the Academy Council | |
| 6.4 | Do the right students attend the after-school interventions? | |
| 6.4.1 | All attend the interventions during the school day, but not enough of the right students attend after school. There needs to be a culture shift across the school in terms of completing homework and attending after school learning. The timetable will change from 15 May, once exams start, to ensure we maximise the time students spend with their subject teachers ahead of each exam. | |
| 6.5 | In terms of the timetable change, 15 May is not far away. How much prior intervention can you realistically do by then, and who is it aimed at? | |
| 6.5.1 | For maths, the capacity for additional intervention came when Jas Khera (JK) started. JK worked with individuals and small groups during lesson time. Historically, we have also paid for an English tutor, but unfortunately, she has not been available as much this year. It is a challenging scenario; you need to balance between pulling students out of lessons for intervention against them being in that lesson and what goes on in the classroom every day. | |
| 6.6 | Where you do have interventions, are you focused on crossover students (those that are not expected to achieve either maths or English, or are expected to achieve a grade 3 in both)? | |
| 6.6.1 | Yes, there are around 30 students where they are currently expected to achieve a grade 2 or 3 that we think can get to a grade 4. We do invite them to stay after school and do speak to home, but sometimes there are cultural reasons that students do not attend. | |
| 6.7 | With a crossover group as high as 30 students, is it right that this year's results could be very volatile? | |
| 6.7.1 | Yes, it could be. | |
| 6.8 | Have the lower-than-expected English results had an impact on the students themselves, that were perhaps expecting higher grades? | |
| 6.8.1 | Yes, some were achieving grade 7, 8 or 9 across other subjects and then seeing a grade 3 for English. | |
| 6.9 | Did you hold a parents meeting for exams information? | |

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| 6.9.1 | Yes, it was quite well attended at around 70% or just over. | |
| 6.10 | Did the right parents attend? | |
| 6.10.1 | Yes, and there were some good conversations. In general, Year 11 are working hard, with no real behaviour issues. There are some issues in Year 10. For Basics, it is anticipated that 40% of students will achieve 9-4 against a target of 60%. For 9-5 14% are predicted to achieve against a target of 40%. | |
| 6.11 | Those figures are concerning, and you have detailed the steps you are taking to remedy that including intervention and having the support of the trust's school improvement team. It may not be enough; what else are you doing to ensure those key students make further progress? | |
| 6.11.1 | Based on the last round of mocks, it will be a challenge to get to either of the targets for 9-4 and 9-5. It is a larger piece of work than getting the interventions right; it is a focus on continuous improvement and getting every lesson right, every day. We also need to focus on Year 10 to ensure we get them to where they need to be within the next 18 months. The ARVs show that we are doing the right things; however, that is not yet translating into outcomes. | |
| 6.12 | Do students recognise the issue at hand, and understand the part they need to play in this? | |
| 6.12.1 | It varies. The majority do. There are some students that do not have the buy in, and that do not value English as a subject. There are some students that will have already got what they need for their college course. There needs to be a culture shift around better buy in and valuing the core subjects. | |
| 6.13 | ACTION: Year 10 will be a focus for the next agenda. | RG CB WH |
| 6.14 | Attendance | |
| 6.15 | Attendance data is included in the AC Report. CB invited questions from the AC. | |
| 6.16 | You were planning to employ someone to support attendance. Is that post now filled? | |
| 6.16.1 | Yes, they have been in post for 2 weeks and early signs are positive. They have been working with the EWO already and has some good existing connections with parents and people in the community. There will be some focus on those students in the middle band, with attendance of 70 to 90%. | |
| 6.17 | Behaviour and Exclusions | |
| 6.17.1 | CB reported that there has been one permanent exclusion, for a single outrageous act. The panel upheld the decision to exclude. | |
| 7 | SEND Review / Update – DSSB Carlyne Goh | |
| 7.1 | CG provided the following information about SEND at DSSB: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSSB are attracting more students with SEND. • In Year 10 there are 8 students with an EHCP, and 29 that are SEN K (potentially up to 47 SEN K, which would be 53%). • SEN K are students that are being monitored, may have a diagnosis, but do not need interventions or access arrangements at present). • In Year 11, there are 2 students with an EHCP and 34 SEN K. • In year 12, there is 1 student with an EHCP. • There are currently 11 students across Digitech with an EHCP. • Next year there are currently up to 7 students that will join DSSB next year that have EHCP applications and a further 21 that have disclosed SEN K. There are also usually a number that join with undisclosed SEND. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means next year there will potentially be 24 EHCPs and it is predicted that up to 65% of the total cohort will have some SEND need. • If they have an EHCP, a student should have a level of top-up funding. • When consultations take place with the local authority, the school will draw up a provision map to show where the school can meet the needs of the students and what that provision will cost. • Where the school cannot meet the needs of the student, they inform the local authority of this; sometimes, due to parental preference, the student still ends up attending Digitech. • This year the total top-up funding is around £136k. • This was spent on TA support (there are 7 TAs in total, equivalent to 5.5 FTE), IT equipment, revision materials, ALP and external agency support. • TAs can be shared between students in lessons where appropriate. • The number of SEND students across each of the CLF schools was shared. The national average is 14.1% and Digitech is at 37%. • Digitech attracts SEND students due to it's small nurturing setting, in particular, those students with ADHD and autism. • The SEND audit has been completed and shows what is going well and what needs to be addressed. • What is going well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers know the students well; ○ There are a range of interventions; ○ Access arrangements are in place; ○ Student and parent voice is positive; ○ Digitech has a good reputation in the local community; • Focus for next year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruitment of high-quality TAs to ensure a consistent approach; ○ Further opportunities to develop quality first teaching, using strategies that benefit everyone; ○ Earlier identification of students that need additional support; ○ Intervention integrated into the curriculum offer – e.g., functional skills or life skills; ○ Addressing EBNA nurture provision (Emotionally Based Non-Attendance). | |
| 7.2 | Questions from the Academy Council | |
| 7.3 | You have a higher proportion of SEND students than many other CLF schools. Are you developing skills in conjunction with the higher level of funding? | |
| 7.3.1 | It is about knowing the students and honing those skills, and ensuring appropriate interventions are used. As a trust, we have for some time looked at everything through the lens of the disadvantaged and we now need to ensure we look through the lens of SEND too. | |
| 7.4 | Are you struggling to attract high quality TAs, or are there just no TAs available? | |
| 7.4.1 | We have a fantastic team of TAs, and they all bring something different. There is a national recruitment challenge in that there is a shortage of TAs generally. | |
| 7.5 | Does SEN K come with funding? | |
| 7.5.1 | No, it is an indicator that we need to monitor the student, who may have a minimal or significant SEND need. | |
| 7.6 | What kind of need would be considered minimal? | |
| 7.6.1 | It could be social anxiety, where a student might need a smaller, safe space at break and lunch time. We are tracking a lot of SEN K students; some are very minor, and some are very complex that may need an EHCP. | |

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| 7.7 | Who makes the judgement that a student is SEN K? Is that your judgement? | |
| 7.7.1 | Yes, it is a school judgement. It is a constantly debated subject. Some of it is to do with information sharing to ensure people are aware the students might need some extra support. It is used for transition, so that future schools and colleges are aware of those needs. You need to be cautious when adding a student to the SEND register; students should not be on there if they do not need anything additional or something different from the majority of students. | |
| 7.8 | Do you ever have feedback from parents, who say that their child has an EHCP and additional funding, but that feel their child is not getting that additional resource? | |
| 7.8.1 | Yes. If the child needed the support, they would receive it. The provision map is the evidence we need to show we are meeting the requirements of the EHCP. The LA is less likely to specify exactly what support is needed in terms of the TA; it used to quantify the number of hours that a TA should be provided for, but it no longer does that. Sometimes students do not get funding for a whole TA, so it is pooled. Where there is an EHCP, we endeavour to meet the needs stated, and if we cannot, we advise the LA of this. | |
| 7.9 | When completing a provision map, and costing it, how often do you get the funding you ask for, and what is the implication of not getting it? | |
| 7.9.1 | We rarely get what we request; it is a challenge across the local authority at the moment. The system is different now, the local authority used to look at the provisions and link the level of funding to it. They now look at the needs. A huge number of provisions are costly, and we are not getting the funding to support these provisions. Most schools have seen a drop in the level of funding they are receiving. During the annual review we make it clear what we can and cannot do. We do the best we can with the funding we receive. Generally, the only time we get the funding we have applied for, is where a student has been out of school for some time, or where the local authority has struggled to find a provision for the student. | |
| 7.10 | Is there a SEND gap? | |
| 7.10.1 | Yes, there is. ACTION: SEND gap to be discussed at next meeting. | CB RG WH |
| 8 | Bristol School of Acting - Sam Bridges – Course Leader | |
| 8.1 | <p>SB provided the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSA were part of Boom Satsuma for some 5 or 6 years and became a separate entity last year. • SB has therefore been linked with DSSB for at least 5 years, and formerly worked at JCA, so has strong links with the trust. • BSA is a 16 to 18 extended diploma course based in the centre of Bristol. • BSA was created to provide drama school opportunities for Post 16 students. • The first cohort have now finished their subsequent 3-year drama school course. • Options are Acting and Dance – there are 93 students on roll across both courses. • There is only one teacher at BSA, everyone else is an industry professional. • Auditioning training is part of the course; one of the tutors is on the audition panel at RADA. The people tutoring them let the students know what they need to do the job. • BSA is a distinction-average school across the Dance and Acting courses. • On average students do about 3.5 days a week. Days are structured to that of the industry. • This year BSA have 2 dancers going to Northern Contemporary, 2 going to Shock Out and 1 to Ivy. In terms of acting, BSA students are going on to the Royal Welsh, Guildhall, Central, and Drama Studio London. (6 out of 33 students). • Over 200 applicants were made last year for 36 places. • BSA also offer degree courses. | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every student at BSA is proud to be there and this is showing in the outcomes. | |
| 8.2 | CB noted that BSA is an incredible environment for learning, as a vocational provision. The focus now is to look at how the pathway into BSA from DSSB can be further developed. | |
| 8.3 | Questions from the Academy Council | |
| 8.4 | Does having industry professionals create timetable issues? | |
| 8.4.1 | Yes, the timetable changes every term. However, the challenge is outweighed by the students working with professionals. BSA now attracts professionals that want to support drama students. We have a different approach to how drama works. | |
| 8.5 | In terms of your links with Digitech, what is it that you value or need from the staff there? | |
| 8.5.1 | As the only teacher at BSA, I feel very well supported. I do not liaise with examination boards or cover attendance or SEND; those are not my specialisms, but I do have support for those areas from Digitech, in terms of SEND needs, support for GCSE resits and safeguarding. CB and I have a discussion each fortnight. CB has completed two or three visits, and these included talking to students and obtaining feedback. Students now feel like they have more of a link with the school. At the end of the first year, BSA students put on a show which is toured around all Bristol schools and will include Digitech. | |
| 8.6 | Who teaches the resit subjects for those that need that at BSA? | |
| 8.6.1 | At present, it is taught through Boomsatsuma, however, it is changing from September when BSA (who are a sub-contractor) will not be able to sub-contract that teaching to BSA. | |
| 8.7 | What does that mean for BSA students? | |
| 8.7.1 | It is hoped that there are enough students to make it financially viable to engage a tutor for the GCSE resit subject. This might be financially challenging. | |
| 8.8 | How do you quality assure the work going on at BSA? | |
| 8.8.1 | The biggest indicator to use is the outcomes; strong outcomes indicate the quality of provision is excellent. When I visit BSA I get a sense of the pedagogy there and student engagement is strong. We make sure we are quality assuring the statutory areas such as safeguarding and attendance. | |
| 8.9 | BSA relies on Digitech for the wider school infrastructure. Is that right? | |
| 8.9.1 | Yes, I am head of safeguarding and we have a member of staff that comes in every Wednesday. There are three members of staff that are safeguarding trained. We were hoping to recruit a safeguarding and wellbeing person from September, but this will now depend on the budget, so we need to think creatively about how this works going forward. In addition to the internal structure, we also work with external organisations including Brook, Off The Record and Babbasa. | |
| 8.10 | Is it a challenge that most of the intake are girls? | |
| 8.10.1 | It fluctuates. It is a bit girl heavy at present but less so from September when it will be more like 60/40 girl boy split. The challenge is finding the scripts we need, when most of the plays are not female heavy; many of the classics are written for men. | |
| 8.11 | RG thanked SB and he left the meeting. | |
| 9 | Safeguarding | |
| 9.1 | RG reported that he met Tom Pratt to review the term 3 report. The term 4 report has also been produced and will be shared in due course. The data is fairly stable; there is a reduction in the number of bullying incidents. The safeguarding self-audit has been completed and is very positive. | |
| 9.2 | Questions from the Academy Council | |
| 9.3 | How good is the standalone safeguarding at Boomsatsuma and BSA? | |
| 9.3.1 | Boomsatsuma and the Robins have people in role to oversee safeguarding and it is working well. We have regular meetings with those colleagues and have access to CPOMs. We need | |

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| | to ensure we support BSA well to ensure SB has the capacity he needs to ensure safeguarding is robust. | |
| 10 | Finance, Health and Safety and Estates | |
| 10.1 | Nothing further to report. | |
| 11 | Staffing and Wellbeing to include staff voice | |
| 11.1 | ACTION: Staff and Wellbeing will be carried over to the next meeting. | RG CB WH |
| 12 | Student Voice | |
| 12.1 | Nothing further to report. | |
| 13 | Policies | |
| 13.1 | There are no policies to review for this meeting. | |
| 14 | School Day Timings | |
| 14.1 | CB advised that from September 2023 academies have been directed to offer 32.5 hours per week. Currently Digitech offer 31 hours and 40 mins. The rest of the schools in the CLF offer 32.5 hours. Digitech now have a duty to review the situation and ensure it is meeting the required number of hours. Following discussion with ST and SA, it is proposed that an additional 50 minutes is added across the week. This will provide some flexibility as to when tutor time takes place. It is proposed that the school day will start at 9am and end at 3.30pm. The school doors will still be open from 8.15am to allow time for pastoral check-ins and for those students that need breakfast or other support. Tutor time will be extended to 30 minutes to support some of the academic intervention alongside the tutor programme. | |
| 14.2 | The Academy Council are asked to approve the proposal. CB will then consult with parents, other stakeholders in the local area and with public transport providers. The consultation is concerned with the timing of the school day only; it is a statutory requirement to add the additional 50 minutes each week. Once feedback has been collated and considered, a final decision will be made. | |
| 14.3 | The Academy Council approved the proposal. | |
| 15 | EDI | |
| 15.1 | Nothing further to report. | |
| 16 | Matters for the attention of the Board | |
| 16.1 | Nothing further to report. | |
| 17 | AOB | |
| 17.1 | ACTION: There will be an update at the next meeting on the impact of the new student counsellor. | CB RG WH |
| 17.2 | The meeting ended at 19.05hrs. | |

Actions carried forward.

| Date/No | Action | Owner |
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| 02.05.23 01 | Year 10 will be a focus for the next agenda. | RG CB WH |
| 02.05.23 02 | SEND gap to be discussed at next meeting. | RG CB WH |
| 02.05.23 03 | Staff and Wellbeing will be carried over to the next meeting. | RG CB WH |
| 02.05.23 04 | There will be an update at the next meeting on the impact of the new student counsellor. | RG CB WH |