Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday 30 April 2024
Location: In person, DSSB
Time: 5.00pm

AC Members		Attended	Apologies
Rob Gillman (RG)	Sponsor 1 **(Chair)**	✓	
Russ Gallon (RGA)	Sponsor 2		APOLOGIES
Antony Merritt (AM)	Sponsor 3		APOLOGIES
Rebecca Kemp (RK)	Sponsor 4	✓	
Lewis Wild (LW)	Sponsor 5	✓	
Stephanie Martin (SM) TBC	Sponsor 6	✓	
V Balasco (VB)	Support Staff Councillor	✓	
Vacancy	Student Advocate		
Vacancy	LA Representative		
Vacancy	Teacher Councillor		
Chris Ballard (CB)	Principal	✓	
Matt Pincott (MP) TBC	Parent Councillor	✓	
Vacancy	Parent Councillor		
Kath Cooper (KC)	Senior Principal	✓	
Invited attendees			
Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk		APOLOGIES
Simon Jones (SJ)	Vice Principal	✓	
Gareth Williams (GW)	Associate Assistant Principal	✓	
Colleen Litchfield (CL)	Subject Leader English	✓ part	
Trish Brabham (TB)	CLF Deputy Head of Governance	✓	

Matters Arising:

Date/No	Action	Owner
07.12.23 003	RGi and CB will create a schedule of Subject Leaders to invite to AC meetings. This action is complete and is now regularly happening. **Closed.**	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. **Ongoing**	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. This item is complete and can be **closed.**	KC PW
20.02.24 003	The Year 11 mock data will be reviewed at the next AC meeting. This item will be discussed on this agenda and can be **closed.**	CB

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	**Introductions, Administration, Apologies**	
1.1	RG opened the meeting and welcomed those present. SM and MP introduced themselves as the new Academy Councilllors. Apologies are recorded above.	

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2	Declaration of Interest	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	**Academy Council Membership**	
3.1	Governor vacancies were discussed. Vacancies remain for a Student Advocate and Parent Councillor	
4	**Minutes of Previous Meeting**	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting of 20 February 2024 were confirmed as a true record.	
5	**Matters Arising**	
5.1	The action table above has been updated.	
6	**Curriculum Presentations - English**	
6.1	**Presentation on English: Teaching/Outcomes/Resourcing**	
6.2	CL provided the following update on Year 11: - CL joined DSSB from CAB approximately 8 weeks ago, following the previous English subject lead leaving the trust. - The Year 11s had just completed their mocks and these were marked by CL, who had no knowledge of the students and this meant there was no bias in the marking and the usual moderation and standardisation also took place. - CL and GW meet weekly to talk about Raising Attainment and the crossover students were identified. - Additional support for English is provided for those crossover students by a Post 16 teacher on a Wednesday afternoon. Support is specifically targeted around the English Language paper one, and paper two (question 5); these are each worth 50% of the exam. - There are also students receiving intervention on a Tuesday and Thursday. - CL has put together a booklet covering English Language and English Literature for all students so that they can work through that when they have free time, now that exams have started and some of the lessons have finished. - CL is working closely with the other English teacher to make sure she feels secure and confident about what is happening each week. A lesson-by-lesson plan is now in place for the period between now and up to the exams. - Students are also expected to complete revision at home and the success of that is more variable which is disappointing. - In order to ensure students are secure with characters and plots within the English Literature texts, they are able to watch the film versions of A Christmas Carol and Macbeth during lunch breaks. - In terms of current predictions, English Language last year was 41.7% for 9 – 4, and the prediction for this year is 68.7%. For English Literature the prediction is 67%. The focus is on getting as many students a grade 5 as possible, as this opens up their options for further education.	
6.3	**Questions from the Academy Council**	
6.4	**How many English classes are there at present?**	
6.4.1	There are 4; one is quite a strong set, there are a further two classes and then one very small class that are completing functional skills.	
6.5	**Do you have adequate TA support for the classes?**	
6.5.1	The TAs we have for English for Year 11 are superb. They work with identified students in the classroom or take them out for bespoke intervention. For Year 10, as we move into the summer exam period, we will have some additional capacity to use in year 10 for interventions. The approach we take at DSSB is that we do not scaffold things too much for students so that they can work independently and be successful in their exams.	
6.5.2	CB noted that outcomes are a real challenge at Digitech for a variety of reasons. CL has joined the school and has looked at what is currently happening in English lessons and made sure that	

	there is a well sequenced curriculum with the right amount of support for every single class. CL has ensured that the other English teacher knows exactly what she has to do lesson by lesson all the way up to exams; so very precise planning is in place. This has meant that staff have been able to focus down on an individual student level to give them what they need. There will always be a case for having more TA support; the school is well staffed compared to some other schools but there are a higher-than-average number of students that have additional SEND needs.	
6.6	**Have you had any challenges with the web-based revision booklet you mentioned – in terms of students that cannot access it, or maybe don't learn in that way?**	
6.6.1	Not as yet. We have gone through the booklet with students in class, and explained how they can use it. When staff drop in to see how students are using it, they will be looking to make sure the students are not just doing the bits they feel comfortable or confident with; we have advised them to start with the areas where they are least confident. This happens across all subjects, not just English. We advise students not to revise the stuff they know; but to focus on the things they find challenging.	
6.7	**Is the support from CL short term, due to the mid-year change in staffing? What is happening going into next year?**	
6.7.1	Yes it is short term. We have recruited a permanent substantial leader of English starting in September.	
6.8	**What learning have you taken from this approach of supporting students with interventions in this way?**	
6.8.1	The lessons are 50 minutes at DSSB. At CAB they are 55 minutes and it is amazing the difference the extra 5 minutes make. The exam papers are 1 hour 45 as a minimum (the literature paper is 2 hours 15 minutes) so students need to do as many 'big writes' as possible, whereby they are writing sustainably for at least 50 minutes. Currently Y11 have 5 English lessons a week; it is hoped that next year there might be the possibility of having a double lesson in the timetable to allow that extended piece of writing to happen consistently. We also need to consider Year 10. They currently have English in the afternoons. Once the Year 11 exams are over we will flip the timetable and have the Year 10s in the morning and this should have a positive impact. We will also be considering a double lesson for them next year, to allow that extended writing as early as possible.	
6.9	End of Questions	
6.10	CL provided the following update on Year 10: • There are now three classes in Year 10 (one has been combined). • CL and the other English teacher are a tight team and know exactly what is being taught every week in every lesson. • Year 10 will sit mocks again in week 4 of next term and will focus on Macbeth and A Christmas Carol, as well as the language paper. • There are a number of students with strong reading ages but some are below their chronological age and are being supported to access the texts. • There has been a lot of staff CPD around how to make texts accessible; a CLF staff survey has been devised to go out to teachers to test how confident they are with their own literacy; the results will be used to inform further CPD where needed. • The SPAG marking process needs to be revisited to ensure it is in line with expectations.	
6.11	GW provided the following update on the Year 11 mock outcomes: • Basics 9 – 5 were 19% last year; current results are 19%. • Basics 9 – 4 were 32% last year; current results are 32%. • With the increase yet to come between the T4 result and the exams, the results are likely to be improved compared to last year.	

	• In English and maths, DSSB is in a strong position this year, and already ahead of the results from last year; the results last year were disappointing, but gains have already been made to those results. • Focused work is taking place with the crossover students to ensure they get a grade 4 in these subjects and avoid the need for a resit. • The basic measures are really important for a studio school because they are the only applicable measure – the school is not Progress 8 compliant. • A lot of work has taken place this year on the strategies around how to increase attainment across the school. • The current Y11 cohort is lower on entry than previous cohorts; progress and attainment looks stronger despite this. • In terms of Progress 8, most students do not follow a compliant curriculum, with the relevant subjects; we do a double science, not three sciences, so most students will be a whole subject away. However, our goal is to get to zero progress (ie national average); it is an ambitious goal when there are only 7 subjects that count. • PP students (31% of the cohort) are already doing as well as year-end last year; so, a similar pattern to whole school results. • Currently we are predicting that higher proportion of PP students will achieve basics this year with 30% 9-4 (+5%) and 15% at 9-5 (+5%). This is still lower than non-PP students by around 20% and 14% respectively. Progress of PP students remains an area of concern. • There are some subjects with significant gains this year, including computer science and art and design. Graphic design and photography are strong; sport is doing fairly well. • Traditionally, Digitech has followed a vocational business course, but this year all CLF schools changed to a different course; it has been more challenging and it might not be continued next year, but it has allowed some higher grades for more able students. • IT is looking relatively good; it is the first year of teaching the course, so there is some caution around the predictions. • The final two courses are quite unique to Digitech; these are courses in games, media and social media and grades are looking strong compared to last year.	
6.12	**Questions from the Academy Council**	
6.13	**The data shows the Best English at 70.5% and Best Maths at 55.8%; does this mean there is more vulnerability in maths?**	
6.13.1	With predictions, we tend to be a little more conservative in maths and then make more progress than we think we will, in the last term.	
6.14	**Do you adopt really specific disadvantage strategies at Digitech?**	
6.14.1	All the teaching is aimed at disadvantaged students. All our routines, our teaching practice and CPD has a focus on PP students and on rising progress and attainment for PP students; in doing this we raise the progress and attainment for non-PP students too. Research shows that the biggest influence on PP students is quality first teaching. We look at everything across the trust through the lens of the disadvantage; so, it is not just a Digitech initiative but is of the CLF as a whole.	
6.15	**When you produce your data and analyse it, you might see outliers in the class. What are your strategies where most of the class are on track, but one or two are pulling the data down?**	
6.15.1	When we analyse the data, the line managers will sit with the Heads of Faculty and with teachers and go through the class, looking at the weaker students but also looking at which topics or area are generally weaker. We break it down by PP and SEND and then put in place specific plans for how we are going to support each of those students in and beyond the classroom, but also the class as a whole, where there are themes or trails.	
6.16	**You referred to the business course being tougher, is that due to the introduction of an externally assessed exam?**	

6.16.1	Yes, the previous business course was all coursework and students were able to get to a pass mark relatively comfortably. There is still a large coursework component, but also the exam component. It means students that are good at exams can boost their grades, but students that struggle with exams do not have the back up being able to work methodically through the coursework and make improvements. Every year when we review the curriculum we consider what the trust is doing and if it is right for Digitech. In this instance we think this is maybe not the right course for our students, based on the data so far.	
6.17	**Bristol School of Acting presentation update**	
6.17.1	**ACTION: This item will be carried to the next meeting.**	**CB**
7	**Academy Council Report**	
7.1	There have been three audits: attendance, safeguarding and SEND and there is some crossover.	
7.2	**Safeguarding Audit**	
7.2.1	This was an internal audit to the trust, carried out by Steve Bane, the trust DSL. The questions are either yes or no, and so are RAG rated green or red. The score was 66.8% (green) compared to 67% last year. Some of the items that were not compliant could not actually be completed until later in the year (such as the LA S175 safeguarding audit). The items RAG rated red have now been put on an action plan and will be monitored by SLT but also by the whole AC and through Link Councillor monitoring. Comparatively, the safeguarding audit result is very strong.	
7.3	**Attendance Audit**	
7.3.1	SJ advised that the Attendance Audit took place over two days, looking at all attendance processes in place. A similar RAG rating was used and the score for Digitech was 80% (green). The areas identified as needing improvement include a number of small things. One of the relatively bigger areas to consider is the attendance process in the mornings. It has been tweaked slightly to make it more robust, and some work is underway with the Post 16 partnerships too to share best practice and ensure consistency across the sites. The welcome packs have been updated, to provide a better transition for students.	
7.3.2	A relatively new initiative is flexi-schooling. Digitech is considering its position with this; it is a regulated area but it does have some advantages. Much like a parent can elect to home educate a child, they can now request a flexi school option where the child is part time in school and part time home educated. The trust is working on a draft policy to set out the CLF approach to this. Currently the Digitech position is that as a mainstream school, full time provision is offered.	
7.3.3	Cumulative attendance is around 84% which is a few percentage points less than mainstream secondary schools in the trust. This is due, in part, to the nature of the cohort and the challenges they bring. The attendance processes have been discussed regularly in AC meetings, and the AC are confident in the way they are carried out.	
7.3.4	A large percentage of the cohort that joined in September last year were previously home educated. This year the school will admit over PAN (90) accepting around 100 students and 17% of those have had a period of home schooling prior to Year 10.	
7.4	**SEND Audit**	
7.4.1	The SEND Audit is not RAG rated in the same way as Safeguarding and Attendance. A number of areas were identified as strengths and as areas of development. Strengths that were recognised included the relationships between staff and students, and student voice. Students were positive about the support they received. Key recommendations include the need to build capacity to ensure access arrangements are in place, for examinations and transition, and in ensuring that interventions in place across the school were impactful and measured. There is a new trust wide SEND action planning tool in place. ACTION: SENCo to attend to talk to the AC about the new SEND action planning tool at the next meeting.	
7.4.2	In terms of building capacity, a new T and L Leader has been recruited (as a maternity cover) and will be working closely with the SENCo focusing on SEND in the classroom and mapping interventions and their impact.	
7.5	**Behaviour and Exclusions**	

7.5.1	**ACTION: Behaviour and Exclusions will be covered at the next AC meeting.**	RGi CB
8	**Safeguarding**	
8.1	This has been covered in part within the AC report. RK provided an update on her meeting with the DSL. A general discussion had taken place about progress since the start of the academic year and where the academy is in relation to safeguarding. The safeguarding data was reviewed. The number of referrals has reduced; PDS has settled in well and has been able to address concerns in a more proactive way. RK and PDS will have a regular meeting in the diary going forwards.	
8.2	Due to the rise in knife crime across the city, there has been a lot of work across the trust in this area. The school has written to parents and put on additional sessions within the PHSE curriculum to allow staff to talk to students about how to stay safe in the community and what to do if they are concerned about people that may be carrying knives. Work is also taking place with parents and families in order for them to be aware of signs that indicate students might be groomed into gangs or exploited in some way. Parents are provided with signposting in order that they can get extra help where needed. The next big focus will be on the national issue whereby young people are extorted due to images being shared across the internet.	
8.3	The Post 16 partnerships are having a separate safeguarding audit in the coming weeks. **ACTION: A report on the Post 16 partnerships safeguarding audits will be provided at the next meeting.**	**CB**
9	**Finance, Health and Safety and Estates**	
9.1	Nothing further was reported.	
10	**Student Voice**	
10.1	Nothing further was reported.	
11	**Policies**	
11.1	The Academy Council noted the Complaints Policy.	
12	**Governance**	
12.1	TB provided a brief update on Governor Hub, a platform that will replace Teams as a place to store and share meeting papers and to use as a communication tool. It will make things simpler for Councillors who will be able to log in using their own email address. For Digitech Governor Hub will be rolled out on 24 June and several training sessions for Councillors have been planned.	
13	**EDI**	
13.1	An EDI update is included in the AC report. CB highlighted that the recent work has been focused on unconscious bias and the use of language across the staff body. In addition, work has been taking place around gender and gender identity and the school's practice around that subject which is quite relevant to the cohort at Digitech. A lot of work has taken place within the EDI working group and the external agencies including Off the Record. There have been some pauses along the way, due to a change in government legislation that was due to be rolled out but was delayed. Digitech have put their own process in place to support students going through gender identity issues or trying to identify what their sexuality is. Training was provided to staff during the April inset day. Currently, there is not a written policy in place (following legal advice received by the trust) but local procedures are in place.	
13.2	The student voice programme has been relaunched and has a strong EDI focus to it. There is a generic student council made up of lots of students, and beside this there are various branches that focus on specific areas such as LGBTQ+, disadvantaged students, neurodiversity and mental health.	
13.3	The Academy Council had a discussion about the admissions process and the challenge of increasing diversity in the student body when the school is situated on the edge of Bristol, en route to Bath. Alternative tie breakers were discussed. CB confirmed that a lot of marketing materials were focused to East Central Bristol schools. The Academy Council also discussed the potential barrier caused by travel and the cost of transport across the city.	
13.4	**Questions from the Academy Council**	
13.5	**When you are looking to recruit to roles, do you use positive discrimination?**	

13.5.1	No, but we do actively encourage applications from students, and from people from minority groups; we want to have a representative staff body and a representative Academy Council.	
14	**Matters for the attention of the Board**	
14.1	No matters for the board were raised.	
15	**AOB**	
15.1	It was noted from the AC report that there is going to be a change in the curriculum for digital media and that a reserves request has been submitted to secure funding for an additional IT suite. CB advised that the reserves request was looked at quite favorably; an official outcome has not yet been received, but it has been followed up. A decision is fundamental and will impact the curriculum offer from September. If things are not in place for September, there is a back up plan that will see students working off laptops temporarily for a 6-to-8-week period until the work is done.	
15.2	No further business was raised. The meeting closed at 7.10pm.	

Action Table

Date/No	Action	Owner
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. **Ongoing**	AM JM
30.04.24 001	Bristol School of Acting update will be carried to the next meeting.	CB
30.04.24 002	Behaviour and Exclusions will be covered at the next AC meeting.	CB
30.04.24 003	A report on the Post 16 partnerships safeguarding audits will be provided at the next meeting.	CB