

Minutes – Digitech Studio School Academy Council

Meeting Date: Thursday 6 July 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	✓	
Vacancy	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		
Sally Apps (SA)	Executive Principal	✓	
Invited attendees			
Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk	✓	
Simon Jones (SJ)	Vice Principal	✓	

Matters Arising:

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

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	RG opened the meeting and welcomed those present. 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. CB confirmed the school has built some further relationships with some of their business contacts and have worked with some charitable organisations. A lot has been done with the new parent cohort too and the school continues to promote an awareness of the Academy Council and vacancies that exist. AM suggested the trust could talk to businesses about staff development and encourage them to engage with that. RK	

	suggested Academy Councillors could attend parents evening to talk to the families present and raise the awareness of the role of Academy Councillor.	
4	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
4.1	The minutes of the meeting of 2 May 23 were confirmed as a true record.	
5	Matters Arising	
5.1	The action table above has been updated.	
6	Academy Council Report	
6.1	<p>CB provided the following Y11 update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was a successful exam series this time round with a prepared and organised cohort. • Very few pupils refused to go into sit their exam. • Access arrangements were in place for all students that needed them. • No malpractice paperwork needed to be submitted for this exam series. • Students reported feeling confident coming out of the exams. • The Raising Attainment strategy that the school put in place was successful. • The school changed the timetable to ensure students had time with subject teachers the night before, or the morning, of the exam. • A lot of work was done around exam technique. 	
6.2	Questions from the Academy Council	
6.3	Did staff have a view on the content of the exam papers?	
6.3.1	They felt they were fair. The team were happy with the English paper and students were well prepared. The Computer Science paper had a harsh question, and this was noted by the examining body. The team were happy with the content on the whole. There was a lot of talk about revision and how to build revision strategies, on the lead up to exams. Students were very focused. ACTION: CB to provide headline figures to the Academy Council as soon as they are available for release.	CB
6.4	Was there any one particular thing that stood out as a change this year, that helped the process and supported students?	
6.4.1	We were very clear around our expectations for all students and started the process shortly before the end of year 10. We made it more routine and held mocks under exam conditions. Overall ,there was more consistency in the routines. SLT also worked effectively with the SENDCo and pastoral team around exam access arrangements.	
6.5	Destinations	
6.5.1	Governors noted the destinations data included in the HT report. There are 3 students without confirmed destinations that are at risk of being NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). The report includes analysis of where students are going and the type of course they will be studying. Almost 50% are going on to Level 3 courses, and a good proportion have indicated DSSB as their first choice for sixth form study.	
6.5.2	Questions from Academy Council	
6.5.3	What do students need to get on to a level 2 course? Do they always need English and maths?	
6.5.4	Not always, however, generally if they don't have those qualifications, they are invited to re-sit.	
6.5.5	If students know they are going on to a level 2 course, and may not need maths and English, does this sometimes prevent them from stretching themselves to do their best?	
6.5.6	In some cases, in can a little. We focus on raising aspirations throughout their study at DSSB and aspire to them to go on to Level 3 courses if possible. There is a cultural challenge at DSSB, where some students are happy to follow the routes of family members and do not necessarily believe they can achieve all their goals.	
6.5.7	What constitutes a positive destination and what steps are you taking where there are students at risk of being NEET?	
6.5.8	Any area of education, employment or training is included as a valid destination. We are trying to increase the number of students entering level 3 pathways whilst also ensuring it is the correct	

	pathway for them. We have some further work to do on the Gatsby benchmarks, including having more contact with employers and universities; the pandemic caused some slippage here and we need to ensure we are getting a variety of providers into school and in front of the students.	
6.6	Y10 update	
6.6.1	RGi noted the analysis of the mid-term mock data had been completed at the last meeting.	
6.6.2	<p>CB provided the following update:</p> <p>Mocks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The year 10 mocks have just finished. • Students approached them very well with the majority of them sitting all summer mocks; this was an improvement on the mid-term mocks. • The process was well run, with the same rigor as the Year 11 exams. • Teachers are now marking the papers and results will be available in the next couple of weeks. <p>Work Experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 10 work experience takes place next week with the majority of students out on placements. • There are around 19 students on site. Approximately 5 or 6 have already completed work experience at a different time of the year due to the requirements of the placement. The remainder were unable to secure a place or were too anxious to complete work experience. • Those staying on site will have a week of activities including enterprise and art projects, careers information and PE. 	
7	Progress against AIP	
7.1	Questions from Academy Council	
7.2	The three main strands of the AIP were outcomes, teaching and learning and attendance and curriculum offer, and leadership were additional trails. Given that you do not yet have summer outcomes, what have you achieved against the AIP and what do you intend to retain or change for next year?	
7.2.1	The majority of the success is down to where we had capacity and were able to consistently lead an area well. Of the remaining items that are not yet green, this is due to the lack of capacity at senior level. We have achieved quite well against the plan; the outcomes will play an important part of this. Next year's plan will have similar themes and areas; what we have in place needs to be well embedded and continue to improve over time. An additional area for the AIP will be Quality Assurance. Some structural changes have been put in place to allow it to happen next year if staffing remains stable.	
7.3	Curriculum and leadership were appended after the AIP was finished. Do you have anything specific to add around that?	
7.3.1	We have been successful in developing the curriculum offer and the number of student applications, particularly at KS5 is testament to that. A lot of work has been done around planning and research and putting the infrastructure in place. We have ensured the curriculum grows at a pace where the course offer is good, and all students have a good education experience. E-sports at KS4 has been a good addition and there have been over 50 applications for 18 places.	
7	SEND Review / Update	
7.1	This item will be carried forward to the next AC meeting.	
8	Pupil Premium	
8.1	<p>RGi reported that he has met with the school's PP lead and provided the following update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core strategy to support PP students is quality first teaching; research shows this is the best thing to improve progress. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PP students suffer more from poor teaching than their non-PP peers, this is sometimes, in part, due to not having a strong support system at home. • In 2022/23 a whole raft of strategies and interventions have been put in place, and a huge amount of CPD undertaken. • Voice 21 has been working with the school to support the oracy strategy and the project is coming to the end of its second year; it will continue into next year. • The school does a good job of ensuring a sense of belonging for all students and prioritises PP students whenever necessary. • There is some evidence still of PP students de-selecting themselves for some learning or activities and this can be due to a lack of confidence. • No PP students are doing the Duke of Edinburgh Award. • The majority of PP funding is spent on teaching staff and there is around £15k that is spent in a discretionary manner on things such as revision guides, Sparx maths and reading age assessments. • Attendance for Y10 PP students is in line with non-PP students but is low at 83%. Likewise, there is no discernible difference for attendance between Y11 PP and non-PP. • There is significant effort on the part of staff to ensure that parents and carers of PP children are included and involved in their child's education. <p>In conclusion, the school has a multi-pronged plan that includes a huge number of strategies and a high level of engagement with families.</p>	
9	Safeguarding	
9.1	<p>RGi reported that he has met with the school's safeguarding lead, who is leaving the organisation. The handover to the new safeguarding lead was discussed. The three main challenges in terms of safeguarding are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of safeguarding for Post 16 partners. • Maintaining the triage system between safeguarding and SEND for difficult cases. • Providing mental health support where possible. 	
9.2	<p>CB reported that a counsellor is now in place; there are a large number of students joining in September with mental health issues. With the safeguarding lead leaving, it has brought into focus the needs to ensure succession planning is in place for all key roles like the DSL and SENCo.</p>	
10	Finance, Health and Safety and Estates	
10.1	Nothing further to report.	
11	Staffing and Wellbeing to include staff voice	
11.1	<p>Recent staff survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CB reported that there were 6 responses to the most recent staff survey; this is 37% of staff. Anecdotal feedback is that the surveys are too frequent and also followed a trust-wide survey. • The survey results provide some helpful feedback on some things; however, the lower response rate makes the data less reliable. • There was some feedback around communication; this was one member of staff who was not receiving all key messages, where they were not in the main staff briefing. This affects staff that do not work full time, and this is being addressed. • Overall, the majority of feedback received was positive. 	
12	Student Voice	
12.1	Nothing further to report.	
13	Policies	
13.1	N/A	
14	Outlook for next year	
14.1	CB provided the following update:	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a small amount of staff turnover and a curriculum lead for Arts and Business Enterprise has been recruited as well as one further curriculum leader, however, that person has decided not to take up the post. • Adverts have been placed to try to re-recruit to that role. • The teacher due to teach E-sports has secured a secondment in another trust school at short notice; however, another leader for that course has now been found. • Recruitment is also underway for a number of TAs to support the increasing number of students with SEND needs and EHCPs next year. Two TAs have been successfully recruited in the last few months; the school may need another 3. This will be determined by the end of term. • The DSL is leaving, and an experienced DSL has been recruited. <p>CB confirmed that 98 students have accepted a place for September in Year 10. The PAN is 90 and it is expected that this number will be reached even with a 10% drop off rate.</p>	
14	Governance	
14.1	Nothing further was reported.	
15	EDI	
15.1	RGi thanked CB for the EDI update included in the HT report and noted there is now an EDI co-ordinator employed by the trust. RGi asked if they visit the school to support with the EDI strategy. CB advised the school is working with Saima Ahktar, the EDI lead. A lot of work had taken place this year around gender identity and how to include the trans community as part of that policy as it was not on the initial EDI statement. SJO reported that DSSB is very inclusive and that the parent and student feedback is positive.	
15.2	RGi acknowledged that TP had sent a note describing the Young Carers initiative. The school is hoping to achieve the bronze award. CB advised that when he joined the school, there were no young carers, or none that had been identified. TP has done a large piece of work on that and there is now a member of staff acting as Young Carer Lead and a Young Carer's group is in place.	
16	Matters for the attention of the Board	
16.1	None	
17	AOB	
17.1	The CLF conference takes place on 7 July. The Board and AC results review meeting takes place on 27 September from 5 – 8pm online.	
17.2	RGi thanked everyone for their hard work and commitment to DSSB this year. The meeting ended at 6.40pm.	

Actions carried forward

Date/No	Action	Owner
02.05.23 02	SEND gap to be discussed at next meeting. Deferred to September. Ongoing	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.	CB