



Accountability Review & Challenge Group (ARC)

Colchester Academy

Minutes of ARC Meeting – 9th November 2016

Date & Time	Wednesday 9th November 2016 at 9.00am	
Venue	Colchester Academy, Hawthorne Avenue, Colchester, CO4 3JL	
Participants Role		
Richard Bassett	RB	Independent Chair
Mary McKeeman	MM	Director of School Improvement – Bright Tribe Trust
Jeremy Rowe	JR	Executive Principal
Fiona Pierson	FP	Principal – Colchester Academy
Simon Evans	SE	Bright Tribe Trust
Nigel Shaddick	NS	Bright Tribe Trust
Jack Minto	JM	Clerk to the ARC Group

1 Welcome Introduction & apologies.

Richard Bassett (RB) (Independent Chair) welcomed those present. There were no apologies.

RB summarised the Terms of Reference of the Accountability, Review & Challenge (ARC) Group, and how its primary functions are to monitor the performance of each academy and to provide both support and challenge to each academy's leadership team so as to achieve rapid school improvement.

RB outlined that the relevant discussion documents (i.e. in respect of each school) for the ARC meetings are (i) the Principal's Report in respect of the Rapid Improvement Group (RIG), (ii) the school's Self-evaluation Form (SEF) and (iii) the school's Academy Improvements Priorities (AIP) plan and (iv) such other supporting documents as may become relevant from meeting to meeting.

RB noted that (i) the ARC group reports to the Bright Tribe Trust Board and to the Bright Tribe Trust Operations Board and (ii) Colchester Academy is part of ARC Group Region 2 and (iii) this is the initial ARC meeting and that (so as to achieve optimal effectiveness) the format/content of the meetings can be expected to evolve over time.

RB emphasised that subsequent ARC meetings would prioritise reviewing achievement/progress in respect of "agreed action items" from meeting to meeting.

2 Safeguarding.

MM asked for an update on safeguarding (specifically as to (i) date of most recent safeguarding audit and (ii) is safeguarding considered to be effective?). Response by FP - most recent audit was conducted in the summer term. All safeguarding policies are up-to-date and there are no areas of concern. All safeguarding systems are regarded as “secure and robust”.

RB sought a fuller discussion about Prevent training – FP advised that Prevent training courses were run every half term to ensure that all staff (including new/temporary staff) were able to be so trained asap.

MM sought a fuller discussion about any individual “problem” children. After a general discussion, FP noted (i) that (essentially) only one pupil came into this category and (ii) record-keeping on this aspect had been improved (but was not yet fully systematised).

Action Item. FP to review safeguarding record-keeping and statistics and report back at next ARC (January 2107) meeting.

3 Review of 2016 Data

RB requested a general update (and postulated that an overall rating of “2” was “ambitious”). RB noted that there were some significant “drops” in the statistics. After a general discussion, RB noted that the school needs to be able to demonstrate (i.e. in view of any Ofsted inspection) that (i) predicted outcomes are being improved and (ii) the school has a specific plan in place for achieving further improvements.

Action Item. FP to report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting to (i) report on the actions being taken to be able to demonstrate that predicted outcomes are being improved and (ii) outline the school’s specific plans for achieving further improvements.

RB requested a discussion in respect of Year 11 (pupils overall and disadvantaged pupils in particular) statistics (and the apparent “dip” in these). FP reported that the dip in these statistics could be attributed to (i) staffing issues and (ii) a reliance (unwarranted) on past year’s good statistics and (iii) monitoring (throughout the year) of the statistics should have been more robust.

RB noted that there was a need to more proactively monitor (i) these statistics per se and (ii) changes in such over time. RB noted that (i) the school should be dissatisfied with these statistics and (ii) there is a clear need to improve the statistics (particularly per “disadvantaged” pupils).

Action Item. FP to take account of the above and report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting per the actions being taken to improve Year 11 statistics.

RB sought fuller discussion about English statistics generally (and about why these appeared to be dropping). RB asked for an update on what steps were now being taken to improve these statistics. FP reported that a new senior staff team (to support the English teachers) had been put in place. FP noted (i) that not all individual teachers could be categorized as “good” (but teaching standards were generally improving) and (ii) it was expected that the English department would be able to be categorized as “good” by the end of the current year.

Action Item. FP to report back at next (January 2017) ARC meeting with (i) current English statistics and (ii) an update as to progress being achieved in respect of the various steps being taken to improve these.

RB sought fuller discussion about Maths statistics generally (and about why these also appeared to be dropping). RB asked for an update on what steps were now being taken to improve these statistics. FP reported that (i) a new team leader (focused on Maths alone) had been put in place and (ii) the school was confident that the Maths department would be able to be categorized as “good” by the end of the current year. RB asked for an update

on what steps were now being taken to improve these statistics. FP reported that the department head was now “more focused” and was “managing better”.

Action Item. FP to report back at next (January 2017) ARC meeting with (i) current Maths statistics and (ii) an update as to progress being achieved in respect of the various steps being taken to improve these.

MM (i.e. in respect of English and Maths statistics generally) asked (i) if FP had been surprised at the deterioration in these and (ii) what immediate steps had been taken to address such. FP responded that (i) she had indeed been surprised and (ii) the underlying issue had been identified as weak/poor team leadership. FP further reported (i.e. as per above discussion) that specific steps were already being taken to address the matter. Among such steps are using CPD, PiXL, SLT input and enhanced internal review meetings.

MM noted her continuing concern (particularly in respect of English) as to whether all possible/appropriate steps were indeed being taken to achieve improved statistics. RB summarised all of the above and (after a wider discussion) the following (i.e. with respect to both English and Maths - and with a particular focus on “disadvantaged” pupils) was decided.

Action Item. FP to report back at next (January 2017) ARC meeting with (i) current Maths and English (as per above action items) statistics. BTT (MM to action) to arrange for external verification to be obtained as to progress being achieved with regard to such statistics.

RB led a fuller general discussion on the school’s SEF and speculated that SLT needed to reassess such (and thus be more realistic with regards to whether a rating of a “2” was indeed appropriate).

Action Item. FP to reassess SEF with SLT and report back at next (January 2017) ARC meeting.

RB sought a discussion on the extent to which Colchester Academy had been collaborating with Alde Valley Academy (AVA) with regard to sharing good practice in respect of English/Maths/Science. FP noted that there had been minimal interaction with AVA on this. RB emphasised how valuable/effective such inter-school collaboration between BTT/ALAT schools could be. See action item below.

Action Item. FP to explore how best to collaborate with AVA with regard to sharing good practice in respect of English/Maths/Science. JR to facilitate this. To be reviewed at next ARC meeting.

RB sought an “overview” discussion in respect of expected 2017 statistics. FP summarised such and indicated expected statistics of 61% for maths and 52% for English. RB noted that these should be regarded as “preliminary” targets (see also action item below). RB noted that (i) 2015 statistics were “acceptable” and (ii) 2016 statistics were “poor” and it was therefore very important that 2017 statistics were not again “poor”.

Action Item. FP to prepare updated 2017 targets for review at the next (January 2017) ARC meeting.

4 Attendance

RB sought a discussion about attendance statistics (generally and in respect of pupil premium children). FP noted (i) that overall school attendance was 95,6% - but such for pupil premium children was markedly lower and (ii) that various actions were being undertaken to improve the latter.

Action Item. FP to prepare updated attendance statistics (and particularly define “lates”) for review at the next (January 2017) ARC meeting.

RB noted that attendance statistics in general were much better than for the previous period.

5 Behaviour

RB sought a discussion about behaviour. FP noted that (i) performance in this area was now generally good – and that no exclusions were currently anticipated but (ii) there had been three permanent exclusions in the past

year. After discussion, RB noted that all efforts needed to be made to ensure that the current statistics did not deteriorate.

Action Item. FP to prepare updated attendance statistics for review at the next (January 2017) ARC meeting.

6 Teaching and Learning

RB led a general review on this topic (and in particular in respect of a “2” rating being justified). After discussion, noted that more (and more specific) “action items” in the school SEF are needed so as to achieve improvement in this area. Agreed also that it would be the school’s objective to achieve a “2” rating on this topic in the coming year.

Action Item. FP to prepare an updated plan to achieve such. This to be reviewed at the next (January 2017) ARC meeting.

7 Staffing

RB sought a discussion about staffing matters. FP noted that there were no formal issues to be addressed.

8 Pupil numbers

RB led a discussion on pupil numbers and noted the need to increase such. FP summarised the various initiatives being taken in this area currently.

Action Item. FP to prepare an updated summary of (current and proposed) initiatives for how to increase pupil numbers – such to be reviewed at the next (January 2017) ARC meeting.

MM noted the capabilities in BTT to assist the school with media and marketing support.

Action Item. MM to arrange for such support to be made available from BTT. SE to liaise with FP to review the various options.

9 Any Other Business

No items from FP or JR on this.

SE noted that there are noteworthy differences in the various pupil statistics when comparing (i) the general pupil body and (ii) “disadvantaged” pupils – and wanted to know what steps were being taken to address such. FP noted that a range of specific actions were in place for each individual (disadvantaged) pupil. RB noted the need to monitor performance of this (disadvantaged) pupil group across all year groups.

Action Item. FP to prepare a summary report on how the school’s plan for supporting “disadvantaged” pupils is developing - such to be reviewed at the next (January 2017) ARC meeting. JR to contribute personally to this topic.

RB noted that that it would be appropriate if JR were to spend more of his available time supporting Colchester Academy. Such acknowledged and agreed by JR.

Action Item. JR to spend more of his available time supporting Colchester Academy.

RB summarised the key aspects of the meeting and emphasized the need for Colchester Academy to (i) keep its Self-evaluation Form (SEF) and its Academy Improvements Priorities (AIP) plan under regular review and (ii) to ensure involvement of SLT in such (using a methodology of (i) target setting and (ii) establishing actions required to achieve that target and (iii) nominating who to be responsible for implementing such actions).

Action Item. FP to address this topic - such to be reviewed at the next (January 2017) ARC meeting.

RB thanked all participants for their contributions. Meeting ended at 10.30am