



Accountability Review & Challenge Group (ARC)

Alde Valley Academy

Minutes of ARC Meeting – 9th November 2016

Date & Time	Wednesday 9th November 2016 at 11.00am	
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 – Alde Valley Academy
Mike Wilson	MW	Principal – Alde Valley 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) Alde Valley 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.

RB congratulated MW and JR on the excellent overall performance achieved by Alde Valley Academy in the past year.

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 MW - most recent audit was conducted in September 2016. Safeguarding had been a priority item immediately upon the appointment of the new leadership. All safeguarding policies are now up-to-date and there are no areas of concern. A second SLT member now participates in safeguarding matters.

RB sought a fuller discussion about Prevent training – MW advised that Prevent training for all staff (including new staff members) is current and up-to-date.

3 Review of 2016 Data

RB requested a general update. MW summarised all statistics. Noted in particular that (i) current P8 score is +0.07 and (ii) statistics for “disadvantaged” pupils are markedly lower and (iii) girls continue to outperform boys in general.

Action Item. MW to report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting in respect of the actions being taken to be able to demonstrate that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are being improved.

RB requested a review of 2017 targets. After a general discussion on this topic – noted (i) that new/updated targets were appropriate and (ii) the focus should be on progress towards achieving such.

Action Item. MW to report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting to report on (i) updated targets for 2017 and (ii) the school’s specific plans for achieving these.

RB congratulated MW the excellent outcomes achieved at Alde Valley Academy in the past year.

4 Pupil Premium students

SE asked what was specifically/currently being done to address the “performance gap” in respect of disadvantaged pupils. MW noted that (i) outside-school-hours programmes were in place and (ii) expenditure on support material was being made and (iii) the needs of each child were being addressed individually and (iv) management of this was in the hands of one particular SLT member.

RB noted that the P8 score for disadvantaged pupils was an area to be focused on. MW noted that Alde Valley Academy regarded itself as having a “school within a school” approach to this topic.

Action Item. MW to report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting in respect of the actions being taken to be able to demonstrate that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils are being improved (see this action item also in 3 above).

5 Student Roll

MM requested a review of this topic. After a general discussion, MW noted that no increase in the overall student roll was currently predicted. See also item 10 below.

6 Attendance

NS sought a discussion about pupil attendance statistics (generally and in respect of pupil premium children). MW noted (i) that overall school attendance for 2015/16 (at 96,6% overall and 94,6% for pupil premium students) was excellent and (ii) current year statistics were at “best ever” levels.

RB requested an update on teacher attendance. After a general discussion, MW noted that there was relatively high non-attendance by teaching staff. RB noted the need to monitor this.

Action Item. MW to report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting to report on (i) updated teacher attendance statistics and (ii) plans for improving these.

7 Behaviour

RB sought a discussion about behaviour and (i) noted that such was now excellent (and continues to be so) and (ii) congratulated MW and JR on this. MM noted that the “sharing of good practice” (both generally and particularly in respect of behaviour) by Alde Valley Academy with other Bright Tribe Trust schools was excellent and highly valued. JR noted that this practice by Alde Valley Academy was not restricted to Bright Tribe Trust schools.

8 Reports and documentation

RB sought a discussion about this (particularly in light of a future Ofsted visit) and noted (i) the statistics presented by Alde Valley Academy are generally excellent (in content and presentation) and (ii) a “2” rating across all of the school’s SEF appeared to be warranted.

RB noted in particular that Alde Valley Academy should adopt a “forward looking” strategy for setting future performance targets. In practice this should be regarded as the school having two versions of its SEF – such being (a) a “current/realistic and readily achievable” SEF and also (b) a separate SEF that would comprise targets that were “more ambitious/aspirational”.

Action Item. MW to produce the next SEF(s) on the above (two versions) basis.

9 Staffing

RB sought a discussion about staffing matters. After a general discussion (noting that staffing was now much improved) MW highlighted that Alde Valley Academy remained exposed to the underlying risk of “continuity and stability of staff”.

Action Item. MW to report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting with an assessment/review of all current members of staff

10 Finance

RB sought a discussion about finance (and pupil numbers). After discussion, MW noted (i) the school is currently in surplus and (ii) 2016-17 projections are for a balanced budget. RB emphasized the need however to build up student numbers.

Action Item. MW to report back to the next (January 2017) ARC meeting with a summary of the possible steps to be taken to increase student numbers.

11 Support from Bright Tribe Trust

RB sought a discussion about what areas of support from Bright Tribe Trust needed to be reviewed/addressed. After discussion, MW noted (i) IT support needs to be improved (and made more “learner-focused”) and (ii) various premises matters (although general maintenance is satisfactory) need review and (iii) the school canteen needs a general review.

Action Item. MM to address the above items with Bright Tribe Trust.

12 Any Other Business

MM noted that (Sixth Form) student numbers were decreasing and highlighted that Alde Valley Academy’s Sixth Form strategy needs to be reviewed.

Action Item. JR to prepare an appropriate proposal (for submission to MM) asap.

Mrs N Wedekind (NW) - (currently Science Technician at Alde Valley Academy – and previously a member of teaching staff at the school) joined the meeting (and was welcomed by RB).

RB asked NW to summarise what she saw as the most significant changes at Alde Valley Academy since the school became part of Bright Tribe Trust. NW noted (i) the transformational change in leadership (i.e. particularly per MW role as Principal) and (ii) how maths teaching had been transformed.

RB asked NW for her interpretation of what the pupils would have to say about Alde Valley Academy today. NW noted (i) that pupils would now “see the need for learning” and (ii) that pupils were now more “aspirational”.

RB asked NW to identify any aspect of the school that still needed improvement. MW noted that no particular item could be highlighted (but that some aspects of the school’s buildings could be improved).

RB asked MW to give her view of how the local community now perceived Alde Valley Academy. MW noted that she believed that the school was now “viewed as being a success”.

MM asked MW to give her assessment as to how Bright Tribe Trust was perceived (by the school and in the community). NW noted that Bright Tribe Trust was generally seen as “having a low profile”.

Action Item. MM thanked NW for her comments and undertook to ensure that Bright Tribe Trust would respond/act in respect of her comments.

RB (i) thanked all participants for their contributions and (ii) noted that MM would be seeking review/comments from ARC participants as to how the ARC meeting process might be re-shaped/enhanced going forward. Meeting ended at 12.30pm