

Annual Report from Braunton Academy Chair of Governors 2020-21



I have pleasure in submitting this report to the trust. This report covers the significant milestones, achievements and concerns for the academic year 2020 - 2021.

1/. Context

There have been three developments during the year which were not entirely on our 'radar', this time last year. These are worth highlighting:-

a/. Yet again this has been a challenging year for us all. Within the education sector, the unrolling of the pandemic over a significantly longer period than originally expected has had a deleterious effect upon the service we provide to our young people and their families. The school managed the situation with a high degree of professionalism with a particular emphasis upon our more vulnerable children. Through student voice activities it was apparent that the majority of students appreciated the support they were giving - both academically and in terms of their wellbeing by school staff. The school prepared itself for a return to the new 'normal' in September - with plans in place for the curriculum to acknowledge both the gap in learning and the new national assessment frameworks (at KS4). Since the beginning of the new school year we have experienced significant disruption with many children and members of staff succumbing to the virus. The school has ensured the safety of all those who work here by rigorously complying to government guidelines regarding masks, hand sanitising, distances (where appropriate) and Covid testing.

b/. While welcoming Mick Cammack to the board of trustees - this simple statement recognises his decision to retire from Headship at the end of the summer term. We are delighted to have his experience and insight with us as a board member. We need to acknowledge that his tenure in leading the school has been an amazingly successful one. I often quote this statistic when talking about Mick. It is a sort of shorthand for what he has achieved but sums up so much of what he achieved during his 7 years service at Braunton Academy. That first choice admissions (yr7 September entry) to the school has doubled during this time with over 200 families prepared to commit their children to the 5 year journey of their secondary education. This speaks volumes for the respect the school has in its community....and further afield. Of course - all well and good, but not when we only have the capacity to admit 150!! (More on the 'bulge' below).

At the same time Meriel Frost also retired - she had devoted many years to the school and worked with five Heads. Her intellect, judgement and hard work was a significant driver for the school. She will be missed.

Governors, supported by staff and with advice from Devon CC took to the task of appointing a new Head. I was delighted when Fay Bowler accepted the post. She came with significant leadership experience and showed us that her vision for the school was ours. She was the stand out candidate and has proved our confidence in her - managing a fast moving agenda, with interim leadership structures during the Autumn term. This term she has led the process of appointing both Meriel Frost's and Robert

Horton's replacement. Rather a clean sweep of the senior management of the school - but it does allow Fay to restructure her team and guide their approach to leading the school.

c/. As alluded to above - we have had to address the pain of oversubscription. Our euphemism has been 'managing the bulge'. During the spring and summer term governors and SMT spent much time in considering our options, but in 'cutting to the chase', we decided that the prudent response was to maintain the character and intimacy of the school as it is. While there were some attractive offers being made regarding capital builds, the overall feeling was that to accept more children on to an already crowded site would not be advantageous for either present or future students. Of course the downside is that a number of children that attend catchment schools (schools which are part of the Braunton Learning Co-operative Trust) have not received places. This has been quite traumatic for these families who now face long commutes to other schools who are under subscribed.

2/. Academic Attainment

	2019	2020 (CAGs)	2021 (TAGs)
Basics (incl E & M)			
>L4	68%	75%	78%
>L5	31%	44%	53%
P8 ALL	-0.39	0.24	0.38
P8 PP	-0.86	-0.18	0.15
A8 ALL	46.53	50.55	52.02
A8 PP	39.18	42.62	47.56
APS ALL	4.67	5	5.21
APS PP	3.91	4.32	4.7

3/. Key priorities

The Academy has identified 4 key priorities for the coming year:

Key Priority 1- Reconnect with all aspects of Quality First Teaching and Learning that have been compromised as a result of Covid-19 measures.

- Refresh understanding and implementation of the three phases of the 21st Century Trivium.
- Review the sequence of learning to ensure that core knowledge and key concepts are mastered in KS3 with learning gaps identified and addressed.
- Re-establish a wide range of assessment for learning practices in the classroom including live marking, questioning, student talk etc.
- Enhance opportunities for active participation and independent learning that increases student engagement, including questioning, paired and group work.
- Re-emphasise the importance of subject literacy and basic literacy skills across the curriculum.

- Re-establish metacognition strategies and self-regulated learning techniques.
- Re-establish the regular cycle of departmental review to identify strengths, areas for development and opportunities for sharing good practice. This will include lesson observation and work scrutiny routines.

Key Priority 2 – To reanimate the wider curriculum of the Academy so that students have wider opportunities to ‘Aspire & Achieve’ beyond the classroom.

- Develop and engage with the core meaning of ‘Aspire & Achieve’.
- Re-establish the sense of belonging that comes with assemblies, House activities, school events.
- Re-establish reviews of the work of tutors and pastoral support systems through the annual pastoral review.
- Relaunch clubs and extracurricular activities.
- Restart opportunities for students to work in roles such as Reading Partners, Peer Mentors, Prefects, Sports Leaders etc.

Key Priority 3 – Mitigating the risks to learning created by Covid-19.

- Preparing for all eventualities with fully formed contingency plans.
- Create an assessment strategy that supports the process for external examinations and/or teacher assessed grades for the Class of 2022/23.
- Continued focus on closing the gap in progress for disadvantaged learners, and those impacted disproportionately by Covid-19, through effective use of Pupil Premium and Catch-up funding.
- Strengthen the remote learning provision by creating and implementing a new ICT Development Strategy that supports the increased use of digital technologies.
- Launch the Mental Health Policy to further support student and colleagues wellbeing.
- Continue with the communication strategy with students, parents and colleagues relating to the ongoing changes caused by Covid-19 and seek opportunities for consultation to review changes that have to be implemented to minimise the impact on the pandemic.

Key Priority 4 – Successful recruitment and development of the Academy’s senior Team

- Successful induction of the new Principal.
- Appointment and successful induction of the new Vice Principal.
- Appointment and successful induction of the new Assistant Vice Principal Inclusion.
- Review and restructure of the current senior leadership team to increase capacity and ensure greater opportunities for effective strategic development.
- Provide effective leadership development for senior and middle leaders.

- Review of current inclusion and curriculum structures to ensure effective strategic development and operational management of the academy.

4/. Governance

Governors continue to work within portfolio groups that align with OFSTED judgement categories. We welcomed 2 new governors during the year. They have sought training and have been successfully inducted into governorship.

The Braunton Learning co-operative trust has continued to be mutually supportive of its 6 constituent schools, in spite of the pandemic. Heads found the ease of communication between themselves incredibly helpful. The group has returned to ensuring that student-student and teacher-teacher activities are at the forefront of the co-operatives work. As an example - governors (in particular chairs) are going to visit other schools FGB to share practice and glean ideas around good governance.

Governance at the school is strong. The governing board is able to support and challenge the work of the school. Most governors were involved in the appointment process for the new Head - possibly the most important decision governors make.

The governing body remains without a vice chair and some concerns exist regarding succession planning for the Chair.

5/ Finance

Despite the impact of Covid 19, the continued financial uncertainty and turbulence in government funding, years of real terms cuts to school funding and a funding formula that disadvantages schools with a similar profile to Braunton Academy, the Trustees are content that the Academy is in a strong financial position due to a culture and history of prudent financial management and governance. The Trustees remain committed to ensuring that any funds expended, will impact positively on the teaching and learning of our students.

Restricted funds:

Over this reporting period, the Academy Trust received a General Annual Grant of £3,881k (including the Teachers' Pay and Pension Grants) which is the core funding for the school's objectives. The Academy spent £3,675k on the primary educational operational expenditure together with a transfer of £158k from GAG.

The transfer of funds included £76k to cover the catering deficit which was significantly impacted by Covid 19 with a notable reduction in income generated, due to periods of the school being in shutdown, and year group 'bubbles' having to self-isolate at home. £79k to cover the cost of LED lighting installation and £3k to the Tennis and Athletic track sinking funds to support future works.

Overall the Academy is carrying forward an increase in the GAG balance of £48k through to the next period. This was a direct impact of Covid 19, as the Academy had a reduction in costs budgeted in areas such as utilities, building maintenance, Exams and external vocational providers.

With the requirement of students to complete home learning, the Academy received a grant of £8k from Fullabrook, a local CIC, and donations of £7k from Braunton Academy Parent Partnership to purchase additional laptops to support our students.

With the 3G pitch coming to end of its life, the Academy awarded a contract to Charles Lawrence for the replacement of the carpet and enhanced fencing at a cost of £186k. The enhanced fencing was required to protect the 3G Pitch in addition to preventing access to school facilities which are situated behind this facility. Due to the impact of Covid 19 and Brexit, the work was only 20% complete at the financial year end. The cost of the works being covered by the 3G Pitch sinking fund of £105k, grants awarded from two local charities, Fullabrook £20k and Vivienne Moon £15k, £5k from Braunton Football Club, with the remaining funds to be covered by the school funds (40k).

Restricted Fixed Asset Funds:

During the period, the school has seen significant investment in Capital projects both through investment directly from the school and devolved capital funds with additions of £200k.

Unrestricted funds:

The Academy trust brought forward an Unrestricted Fund balance of £438k. During the reporting period incoming resources associated with Canteen Income, Traded activities and donations amounted to £85k and the cost of generating such income was £150k. Catering Income and Lettings being significantly impacted by Covid 19.

6/. Appointment of external auditors

Thompson Jenner remain the Academy external auditors.

7/. Going Forward

It goes without saying that the school continues to thrive. It is confident about what it provides to its students and their families. Fay's appointment will certainly amend management style but not our commitment to self-regulated learning and meta cognition (the Trivium).

The school's mantra of aspire and achieve is apparent in all we do. We remain committed to equipping our young people for the ever changing adult world. We have so much to celebrate and be proud of. It is a privilege to be your Chair - and I commend this report to you.

Mark Juby
Chair of Governors and Trustees
to Braunton Academy
November 2021