

MINUTES OF THE QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30TH NOVEMBER 2023 AT 5PM AT KINGSWAY CAMPUS

Present:	Katie Anderson	External Governor
	Michele Bacon	External Governor
	David Copeland	Staff Governor
	Tom McInerney	External Governor
	Sarah Worsley	Student Governor
In Attendance:	Thalia Bell	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)
	Alan Brown	Assistant Principal (Quality)
	Chris Jones	Independent External Board Reviewer
	Katie Peacock	Head of Student Services <i>Agenda Item 6</i>
	Catherine Shaw	Clerk to Governors

The Clerk welcomed all attendees to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to Chris Jones.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted for Karen Banks, Jayne Edwards and Lucy White. The meeting was quorate.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

David Copeland and Sarah Worsley declared an interest in agenda item 11.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR 2023/2024**

Michele Bacon was appointed as Committee Chair in accordance with procedure.

4. **MINUTES** *(previously circulated)*

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th June 2023

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting.

Resolved - The minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2023 were **approved** as a correct record.

5. **MATTERS ARISING**

To review the action log and to consider any matters arising from the minutes *(previously circulated)*

The action log and any matters arising were considered by the Committee.

Resolved - The Committee **noted** that all actions had been completed.

Katie Peacock, Head of Student Services joined the meeting.

6. CURRICULUM PRESENTATION

Katie Peacock, Head of Student Services delivered a presentation on 'Careers Advice and Guidance' focusing on the College's recent re-accreditation of the Department for Education's (DfE) Matrix Standard. She advised that this was a three-yearly assessment process where the quality and delivery of information and advice was assessed. The Head of Student Services highlighted the following aspects within her presentation:

- Previous assessments had focused on four key elements. The revised assessment process consisted of seven elements: purpose, resource, offer, delivery, outcomes for individuals, impacts for organisations and continuous improvement.
- There was a greater focus on (i) health and wellbeing and (ii) equality and diversity.
- Process – meetings took place with 35 members of staff across Higher Education (HE), Adults, Programme Management, Apprenticeships and Admissions. Meetings also took place with 16 learners and 3 randomly selected stakeholders. Feedback from the various meetings was very positive; examples were shared with the Committee. The assessor commented that the 'support for students, including those who were vulnerable, was beyond anything that he had seen before.'
- Development outcomes and next steps – these included meeting the demand of Gatsby Benchmark 8. The Head of Student Services advised that the number of Career Advisors had increased from 2 to 3 giving greater capacity to achieve this aim.

A discussion took place with several questions being raised and responded to. The Head of Student Services explained ways in which the approach was managed across all sites, given the differences between academic and vocational programmes of study. In response to a question raised, it was confirmed that plans were in place to further develop the advice and guidance provided to learners within Foundation Studies. This was to take place in collaboration with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) specialists. There had been a slight delay in implementing this due to challenges with staff recruitment. The Head of Student Services confirmed that the learners who met with the assessor either volunteered or were asked to participate, dependent upon timetables and the assessor's availability.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair congratulated the team on achieving this accreditation and the positive feedback received was commended.

Resolved: The Committee

- (i) **noted** the contents of the presentation
- (ii) **requested** that the slide deck be circulated to all Board Members

The Head of Student Services was thanked for her very informative presentation and she left the meeting.

7. SAFEGUARDING

To receive a report on safeguarding matters in 2023/2024 to date

The Deputy Principal presented a report on safeguarding issues and drew the Committee's attention to the following key aspects:

- Health and Wellbeing – 602 referrals in total had been made with areas of concern encompassing anxiety/low mood, bereavement, eating disorders, learners subject to multi-agency involvement and responsibilities associated with being a young carer.
- Safeguarding – 276 referrals in total had been made with areas of concern including suicide ideation/attempts, domestic abuse, child on child abuse and sexual harassment.
- Local and national risks - these included IT/cyber incidents, neglect, deprivation, terrorist/extremist behaviours, knife crime, child exploitation, mental health issues, transition from some Alternate Provider Schools, multi-agency process and procedure. In relation to IT/cyber incidents the Deputy Principal provided an overview of the filtering and monitoring systems at the College which were constantly being updated to safeguard learners. She also provided additional information about Smoothwall and Ripple in connection with digital safety.
- The RAG-rated College action plan was presented with assurance being given that this was subject to continuous monitoring.

With regards to multi-agency procedures the Deputy Principal outlined challenges where there had become an expectation that the College would lead on intervention plans, despite instances where social services were key partners and likely to be better placed to co-ordinate delivery of the overall action plan.

The Committee considered risks and impact on the College. Governors remained concerned about the number of referrals, level of complexity and seriousness. A discussion took place with numerous questions being raised and responded to. During the debate the Deputy Principal advised that staff continued to work extremely well in response to the increased workload and confirmed that some staff members were specifically trained when dealing with cases of suicidal ideation. The Student Governor enquired about the capacity to support the increasing number of referrals and the viability of counselling students being able to assist. The Staff Governor reported that vulnerable students continued to engage with their programme of study wherever possible, however at times attendance could be significantly effected due to the nature of well-being/safeguarding life events. A Governor commented on the increase in looked after children (LAC) and enquired as to whether the College had received any additional support for these students. In response, the Deputy Principal advised that there was support available via ‘virtual schools.’ Despite the national picture of this cohort of students not achieving aswell as their peers, the Deputy Principal made reference to some very good outcomes at the College.

Resolved: The Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

7.2 **Safeguarding Policies**

7.2.1 **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** *(previously circulated)*

7.2.2 **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults** *(previously circulated)*

The Committee reviewed the College’s safeguarding policies and the proposed amendments. From a diversity perspective, a Governor commented on the all-female team of Safeguarding Officers detailed within para 3.2 of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This was acknowledged by the Deputy Principal and assurance was given that efforts were being made to include a male staff member to this list.

Resolved: The Committee **recommended approval** of the (i) Safeguarding Children's Policy and (ii) Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy to the Board.

8. CURRICULUM REPORT (*previously circulated*)

To receive a monitoring report on performance

The Deputy Principal provided an update to the Committee consisting of key performance indicators (KPIs), curriculum priorities and recruitment to date in respect of the current academic year. She advised that KPIs from 2022/2023 were cross-referenced in agenda item 9. The Committee was informed of anonymised data with regards to:

- Learner numbers – there was an overall increase of 82 learners compared to 2022/2023
- Learner attendance and retention – strong indicators in both aspects with 90% attendance and 100% retention.
- High Needs learners – in 2023/2024 the College had 167 high needs funded learners against 144 places (plus an additional 10 places for subcontractors) and 186 students had Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) across the three campuses.
- Potential vulnerable learners – there was a slight increase in the number of potentially vulnerable learners in the current academic year. This included learners identified as being either a looked after child, care leaver, young offender, young carer or a transitioning learner.
- Open Evenings – an increased number of visitors had attended Open Evenings compared to this point in 2022/2023.
- Bursary applications – the Board had approved the College management request to increase the bursary threshold level and criteria to ensure all steps were taken to reach and support disadvantaged learners. As a result, the College had seen an increase of 514 applications relating to Bursary 2 (vulnerable students) which evidenced that the new criteria was more inclusive to students' needs.
- Industrial placements and work experience – 285 placements had taken place against the capacity and delivery (CDF) target of 300 in 2022/2023. An overview was provided as to the identified barriers to placements.
- Maths and English updates – English as a Second Language (ESOL) pathways had been created. This was in response to learner demand and offered opportunities to develop vocational skills at the College.
- Destinations – positive across the College (all ages) at 92.2%.
- Apprenticeships and work-based learning – Riverside College was one of thirteen organisations selected to be given a 'mark of excellence' to act as ambassadors for the apprenticeship programme in a one year trial.
- Higher Education – excellent National Student Survey (NSS) results received with an overall average rating of 94.3%
- Curriculum changes and additions – uncertainty regarding future of T level courses following the announcement of the Advanced British Standard (ABS) qualifications. The number of English and Maths GCSE resits in 2023/2024 had increased by 19% compared to 2022/2023.

A discussion took place. A Governor commented on the drop in 19+ recruitment rate and reasons for this were given by the Deputy Principal. Apprenticeship provision was discussed in detail within the context of the national landscape. The Committee was pleased to note that the College had been named as an expert apprenticeship provider

by the Department for Education (DfE) for a 12-month pilot programme, A Governor raised a question regarding any potential vulnerability for the College given the uncertainty of the T Level position. In response, the Deputy Principal reported that whilst this was being closely monitored, the College was protected to an extent given its delivery of A Levels, BTECs and various other qualifications.

Resolved: The Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

9. COLLEGE'S SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2022/2023

To recommend approval of the SAR 2022/2023 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2023/2024 to the Board (*previously circulated*)

The Assistant Principal presented a comprehensive report and highlighted the following aspects:

- Grade – overall grade remained as outstanding.
- Achievement rates 2022/2023 – despite a decline, College results remained above the national average.
- The College's vision, values and strategic aims, performance data in each subject, quality assurance processes, equality and diversity key performance indicators, safeguarding provision and financial health.

In conclusion of the SAR, three areas for improvement were identified and formed the basis of the QIP. These were to (i) to further improve the quality of education for learners in the Foundation Studies Department and to ensure the more confident learners made rapid progress, (ii) further improve the quality of education for the small minority of course/apprenticeships that were not yet outstanding and (iii) monitor the retention on two-year programmes to ensure an increase in achievement rates.

A lengthy and detailed discussion took place with a focus on the decline in achievement rates. Governors were informed that the College was awaiting further benchmarking data in order to undertake a more detailed analysis. For a more in-depth data analysis to Scrutiny to date indicated that the decline was largely due to a drop in retention on two year programmes, as opposed to a drop in teaching, learning and assessment standards. The Committee explored possible reasons for the fall in retention on two year programmes. Recovery post Covid-19 were considered, the effects of which may have adversely impacted on mental health and resilience, limited examination experience, previous teacher assessment grades and lack of social interaction. The Committee received assurance that College had a laser focus on monitoring attendance and retention with future updates to be provided to the Committee and also within the Principal's termly report to the Board. A Governor commented on the pleasing 19+ achievement rate and it was noted that unlike GCSE and A Level students, 19+ cohort had not been subject to teacher assessment grades during the disruption caused by the pandemic. The Committee was very pleased to note that recruitment on the English as a Second Language (ESOL) course had been buoyant and the potential benefits in terms of diversity at the College across many courses at the College. The Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal provided examples of the many initiatives being implemented to ensure the student experience was further enhanced for all learners at the College. Dependent upon appropriate advice and guidance, ESOL students were encouraged to consider additional programmes of study and take part in the enrichment provision offered.

In respect of the QIP, the Assistant Principal responded to a question raised by confirming ways in which the improvements were to be measured to ensure objectivity.

Resolved: The Committee **recommended approval** of the SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024 to the Board.

10. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) ANNUAL REPORT RELATING TO STUDENTS *(previously circulated)*

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum) delivered a presentation to complement her written report in which she highlighted the following aspects:

- The five objectives from the previous academic year had successfully been achieved, namely:
 - inclusion support had been implemented and progress made across both Foundation Studies and the wider college,
 - the achievement rate gap had been closed between females from a widening participation (WP) background and females from a non WP background,
 - the achievement rate gap between WP and non WP learners had significantly reduced from 5.5% to 1%,
 - achievement rate of 19+ WP adults increased by 7.7%,
 - Young carers cohort had increased its achievement rate by 23%.
- The Action Plan 2023/2024 was to continue to:
 - close the gap for white British males and all WP learners
 - promote that all teachers were teachers of SEND, with a focus on inclusionary practice
 - lobby on behalf of learners to ensure that new qualifications were inclusive in their creation and content
 - drive cultural capital across all programmes to give learners the skills to achieve and thrive

Resolved: The Committee

- (i) **noted** the contents of the report and presentation
- (ii) **requested** that the slide deck be circulated to all Board Members

Katie Anderson left the meeting.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE

To receive a report on curriculum areas subject to closer monitoring *(previously circulated)*

The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that in total seven curriculum areas were subject to close monitoring by College management in 2023/2024. Evidence to support this level of intervention resulted from issues such as poor retention rates, some disappointing examination outcomes, student feedback and concerns regarding the pace of improvements.

A discussion took place. The Committee was pleased that progress was evident across all curriculum areas, though expressed concern where pace had been slow to deliver improvements. Reasons for this slower pace were explored by Governors and provided by the Assistant Principal. The Committee acknowledged instances where there had been staff recruitment challenges and the length of time taken when formal capability procedures had to be initiated in line with College policy.

Resolved: The Committee **noted** the contents of the report.

12. COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

The Assistant Principal presented a report which informed the Committee of the number, type and outcomes of the complaints received in 2022/2023. A five-year trend was included in the report for illustrative purposes. The Assistant Principal provided an overview of the process from an initial concern being raised to escalation of an official complaint. The Committee noted that one complaint had been partially upheld. In response to a question raised by a Governor, the point at which a concern became an official complaint was clarified. The Committee received assurance that should complainants be unhappy with the outcomes of College investigations, they were notified of their rights of further escalation. In response to a further question raised by a Governor regarding the complaint that had been partially upheld, the Assistant Principal confirmed that processes had been implemented to reduce the risk of re-occurrence.

Resolved: The Committee **noted** the contents of the report and commended the College on the relatively low number of official complaints.

13. POLICIES

Teaching, Learning and Assessment (*previously circulated*)

The Committee considered the proposed amendments to this policy since its last approval.

Resolved: The Committee **recommended approval** of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy to the Board.

14. COMMITTEE SELF-EVALUATION 2022/2023 (*previously circulated*)

The Clerk referred to the draft Committee self-evaluation of performance which provided a narrative on the following aspects of its performance:

- Attendance levels were reported at 86%, against a target of 80%
- Membership details
- Terms of Reference
- Summary of Committee activities during 2022/2023
- Suggested areas for development

The Committee reflected on its performance throughout the 2022/2023 academic year. Suggested areas for development were considered and it was agreed to (i) include a review of the impact resulting from the Committee's decisions within the annual self-assessment, (ii) enhance reporting relating to the student/employer/stakeholder voice, and (iii) to ensure via Committee reports that the Board had a full understanding of the EDI strategy.

Resolved: The Committee **approved** the self-evaluation of the Audit Committee's Performance in 2022/2023.

15. ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD

Resolved – in addition to a summary report the following items were to be presented to the Board at its next meeting on 11th December 2023:

- Safeguarding and Student Wellbeing Update
- Student Attendance and Retention 2023/2024
- College’s Self Assessment Report 2022/2023 and Quality Improvement Plan 2023/2024
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2022/2023 relating to students
- Policies – (i) Safeguarding and Child Protection, (ii) Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, and (iii) Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

16. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved - The Committee **noted** the following meeting dates:

- Board – 11th December 2023 at 4.30pm
- Quality and Standards Committee – 5th March 2024 at 4.30pm

The meeting was closed with the Chair thanking all attendees for their participation.

Signed: ...Office copy signed by Michele Bacon...

Chair of Quality and Standards Committee

Date: 27th February 2024
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