

## MINUTES OF THE QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2023 AT 5PM AT THE KINGSWAY CAMPUS

<b>Present:</b>	Michele Bacon	External Governor (Chair)
	Karen Banks	External Governor ( <i>remote attendance</i> )
	Megan Burns	Student Governor ( <i>remote attendance</i> )
	David Copeland	Staff Governor
	Jayne Edwards	External Governor
	Tom McInerney	External Governor
	Sarah Worsley	Student Governor
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Thalia Bell	Deputy Principal (Curriculum)
	Alan Brown	Assistant Principal (Quality)
	Jenni Roe	Head of Pre-Advanced English and Maths
	Catherine Shaw	Clerk to Governors

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting with a warm welcome extended to the new Staff Governor.

### 1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None, as all members were present and the meeting was quorate.

### 2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None declared that were additional to the annual declaration of interests recorded at the start of the academic year.

### 3. **MINUTES** (*previously circulated*)

**To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting.

**Resolved** - That the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 be **approved** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 4. **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. The Deputy Principal provided an update regarding the unconscious bias training that was to be delivered by the Head of Foundation Studies. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the agreed two-part delivery could no longer take place as planned and alternative arrangements were to be made. A discussion ensued with Governors confirming their preference for a hybrid approach to this training.

**Resolved** - The Committee **noted** the progress made on all matters contained within the action log.

## 5. CURRICULUM PRESENTATION

Jenni Roe, Head of Pre-Advanced English and Maths delivered a Maths presentation with a focus on the progress that continued to be made since August 2022 and subsequent impact. She highlighted the following aspects:

- After effects following the disruption caused by Covid which included managing some behavioural concerns relating to a number of students.
- Implications arising from some over-inflated teacher assessment grades (TAGs) at other institutions prior to enrolment at Riverside and Cronton.
- Challenges with the subject due to the breadth of skills that needed to be taught and at times a general perception about Maths, that was either a subject that a student 'could do or could not do.' Pastoral support and encouragement were also provided to those students where it was evident they lacked confidence in their ability in this subject; this was having a positive impact by providing a safe space to air concerns and make progress.
- A department handbook has been published, together with an improved Scheme of Work (SoW). Greater cohesiveness and vision within the teaching department was also reported.
- The Committee was assured that baseline assessments took place at the start of the course, with further assessments taking place at various points throughout the year to ensure the course was right for the student.

The presentation generated a discussion with numerous questions raised by Governors and responded to by the senior college managers. The Committee explored in detail the decision-making process regarding the most appropriate route for students upon enrolment with regards to Entry Level study or GCSE.

A Governor had personal experience of undertaking functional skills in Maths to enable progression onto a higher education programme of study. The Governor provided positive feedback based upon first-hand experience and this further strengthened the Committee's level of assurance.

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

*The Head of Pre-Advanced English and Maths was thanked for her very informative presentation and she left the meeting.*

## 6. SAFEGUARDING

### **Safeguarding Update 2022/2023**

The Deputy Principal presented a report on safeguarding issues and drew the Committee's attention to the ways in which the College (i) identified risk, (ii) helped learners and (iii) managed risks. She drew the Committee's attention to the following key aspects:

- Statistical data relating to the number of (i) health and wellbeing referrals and (ii) safeguarding referrals that had been made since the start of the academic year.
- At the request of the Department for Education (DfE) the College had met with the Senior Policy Advisor for the Prevent Policy and Delivery Unit to review a case that the College was involved in last year that resulted in criminal charges being brought against a former student. The meeting had been described as

'helpful, informative and much appreciated.' As a result, College Managers had been asked to meet with the wider Prevent Policy and Delivery Unit Team to share the College's good practice.

- Survey Outcomes – following a survey undertaken in December 2022 the College had identified an increasing number of young carers which had enabled the College to offer support to a larger cohort of learners that could be life-changing for some individuals.

A discussion took place. In response to a question raised concerning the administration of free meal entitlement, the Deputy Principal advised that there was no flexibility to provide a cash alternative to students to enable them to purchase meals, despite the likelihood that this may remove the perceived stigma that can be associated with eligibility for free meals.

Enquiries were made regarding staff wellbeing given the nature and seriousness of some of the safeguarding concerns that they were dealing with. The Deputy Principal confirmed that staff were handling some serious matters and were doing so in a very professional manner. She advised that the wellbeing of staff remained of paramount importance in line with the College's Wellbeing Strategy and this continued to be monitored. The Committee was assured that whilst the number of referrals was high, this reflected the national picture which had been confirmed via college management network meetings. The Committee also considered that the increased number of referrals demonstrated the high level of trust that students placed in the team.

The Chair provided an opportunity for the Student Governors to offer their views on the support available at College with both Governors advising they were aware the process to be followed, if required. They informed the Committee that Well-Being staff were visible around the College and regular class check-ups were undertaken by them.

Additional assurance was provided by the Safeguarding Link Governor who liaised directly with the Deputy Principal on safeguarding matters throughout the academic year. In his related professional capacity working with other educational establishments across the borough, the Link Governor commented favourably on how safeguarding was managed by College leaders and the level of support offered to its learners.

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

## 7. **CURRICULUM REPORT** *(previously circulated)*

The Deputy Principal provided an update to the Committee on all areas of the curriculum which incorporated key performance indicators, where applicable. The Deputy Principal highlighted the following aspects from her report:

- Learner Attendance and Retention – percentage attendance for 16-18 year olds and adult learners were 88% and 84% respectively; both being slightly lower in comparison to this point in the previous academic year. The current retention rate was 97.3% across all ages, which was slightly higher than the recorded level at this point in the previous academic year.
- Curriculum Planning 2023/2024 – this had commenced and was broadly in line with the current offer, subject to the changes that were being introduced following the Level 3 reforms. The Deputy Principal provided the Committee with detailed information regarding the potential impact that the Level 3 reforms could have on

the College. College Managers were concerned that the changes could result in a drastic reduction in 16-18 year old students being able to learn and achieve at Level 3. Based upon an impact analysis exercise that had been undertaken it indicated that 24% of this student cohort might not have a qualification to work towards. In view of these serious issues, the Principal had written to the Rt Hon Robert Halfon (Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education), Derek Twigg (MP for Halton) and David Hughes (Chief Executive, Association of Colleges) expressing the scope and scale of concerns. There was also a collective decision from all colleges to highlight their serious concerns regarding the Government changes and the defunding of some Level 3 programmes.

- Additional Learning Support (ALS) and High Needs – a substantial number of assessments had taken place regarding support needs, Inclusive Teaching Plans and Exam Access Arrangements (EAA). There has been a delay in some schools providing relevant evidence for learners to enable timely assessments to be completed at the College. The Committee was advised that a cross Halton Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENDCO) group had been established with positive feedback being received to date.
- Adult Enrolments January 2023 – this had been successful. Popular curriculum areas included Hair & Beauty, Basic Skills and Business Development courses.
- Apprenticeships – attendance and achievement rates were highlighted. The Committee was advised of the areas of concern, though they were not unique to the College and were largely national challenges.
- Higher Education – recorded at 90% attendance and 98% retention respectively. Final pass rate for 2021/2022 was 99.4%, compared to 96.6% in 2020/2021.
- GCSE Re-Sits – the Committee was informed of the achievement, attendance and retention rates.

A discussion took place with numerous questions being raised and responded to. The Committee enquired into options relating to vocational routes from Level 2 to Level 3 and T Levels. Following a lengthy discussion, the Committee remained very concerned about the Level 3 qualification reform and the potential impact for learners.

**Resolved:** The Committee

- (i) **noted** the contents of the report
- (ii) **recommended approval** to the Board for it to write to the Rt Hon Robert Halfon in support of the concerns raised by the College Management Team relating to Level 3 qualification reform.

## **8. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **8.1 To receive a report on areas subject to close monitoring 2022/2023 (previously circulated)**

The Assistant Principal advised the Committee that one of the curriculum areas subject to closer monitoring had been removed from the process due to satisfactory progress having been made. An update was provided in respect of the four remaining curriculum areas. Whilst some challenges remained, the Assistant Principal informed the Committee that progress had been made across the four curriculum areas. A discussion took place and the Committee acknowledged the challenges relating to staff recruitment in certain subjects.

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

8.2 **To receive a report on the outcomes from the Aspire week in November 2022**  
(previously circulated)

The Committee received an overview of this programme which took place twice yearly and its holistic aims to:

- Help learners develop employability skills with a focus on right behaviours
- Provide learners with an opportunity to reflect on their progress against targets and support with identifying career goals/pathways to higher education, apprenticeship opportunities and ultimately employment.
- The variety of activities that were offered to learners which included input from a number of external speakers from a broad spectrum of sectors.

A Student Governor had participated in ASPIRE week and responded to a question raised by a Governor to provide an overview of her experience. The Governor informed the Committee of a very positive experience and amongst many favourable aspects highlighted the relevant timings of ASPIRE weeks in November and March, the quality of external guest speakers, the holistic programme of events and the dedicated one-to-one sessions with tutors. It was a well-planned event and opportunities were maximised particularly in identifying career goals and associated pathways.

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

9. **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY UPDATE**

The Deputy Principal presented this progress report relating to the five equality, diversity and inclusion objectives identified for 2022/2023 and that the following areas were to be measured against retention at the mid-year report. The objectives were:

- Inclusion support and progress within the wider college and Foundation Studies.
- Achievement of females, especially those who are from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Achievement gap between widening participation (WP) and non-WP learners.
- 19+ learners receiving financial support.
- Achievement and retention of young carers.

The Committee received updates in respect of each objective and the respective RAG ratings.

A discussion took place. In response to a question raised, the Deputy Principal confirmed the number of students that had been subject to (i) disciplinary procedures, and (ii) exclusions. The Committee was pleased to note that the number of disciplinaries had decreased compared to the data at this point in the previous academic year. Data relating to those 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) was also discussed in the context of borough-wide figures.

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

10. **POLICIES**

10.1 Teaching, Learning & Assessment (previously circulated)

The Committee reviewed this policy.

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

**11. ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD**

A discussion took place.

**Resolved** – in addition to a summary report the following items were to be presented to the Board at its next meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023:

- Safeguarding Update
- Curriculum Reports
- Level 3 Examination Reforms and recommendation for the Board to write to the Minister of Skills, Apprenticeships and Further Education.
- Unconscious Bias – Training Update

**12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

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

- Board – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- Quality and Standards Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023

The Deputy Principal advised that several questions had been raised by some Governors prior to the meeting and the Deputy Principal had incorporated responses within her commentary on the relevant agenda items.

The Chair thanked all attendees for their attendance and contribution at the meeting. There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 6.30pm.

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

**Chair of Quality and Standards Committee**

**Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023