

MINUTES OF THE QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20TH JUNE 2023 AT 5PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:	Michele Bacon	External Governor (<i>Chair</i>)
	Karen Banks	External Governor
	Megan Burns	Student 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)
	Sarah Le-Good	Head of Foundation Studies
	Catherine Shaw	Clerk to Governors

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted for Jayne Edwards. 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 13th March 2023

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting.

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2023 be **approved** as a correct record.

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.

Resolved - The Committee **noted** that all actions had either been completed or were in progress to be completed.

5. **CURRICULUM PRESENTATION**

Sarah Le-Good, Head of Foundation Learning and Additional Learning Support delivered this presentation on 'Inclusion and Learning Support' and highlighted the following

aspects:

- Requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan – impact for the College, its relevance to local area inspections and the expectation to receive annual input from a Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) SEND specialist for all learners with SEND and/or Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs)
- OFSTED Inspection Framework relating to Intent, Implementation and Impact/Data – evidencing what was taught at the College, how the College applied the framework and the benefits for learners
- College Inclusion Team – an overview of the plans to relaunch this team
- Successes – these included students’ progress, the highly favourable outcome from the recent internal audit on ‘Additional Learning Support and High Needs Students’ and implementation of an improved inclusion transition process
- Neurodiversity priorities for 2023/2024 and an overview of any anticipated challenges

The presentation generated a discussion with numerous questions raised by Governors and responded to by the Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal. In response to a question raised by a Governor, it was confirmed that subject to any data protection implications, as apprenticeships were nearing completion the College worked closely with employers in its aim to fully support the learner on their onward journey accessing work opportunities. The Head of Foundation Studies also confirmed that case studies were available for scrutiny by external regulatory bodies. In response to a question raised in connection with the AP, the level of support for disengaged learners was explained.

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 Foundation Studies was thanked for her very informative presentation and she left the meeting.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT 2023/2024

The Deputy Principal referred to the Accountability Statement for 2023/2024 and its importance in relation to future funding to enable the College in continuing to support local, regional and national skills needs. The Clerk advised that a written resolution was satisfactorily sought from Board Members on 22nd May 2023 to ensure that the Statement was submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by the required deadline of 31st May 2023. Formal ratification of the written resolution was to feature on the Board’s agenda at its next meeting on 3rd July 2023.

A discussion took place with several questions being asked by Governors and responded to by the Deputy Principal. A Governor referred to the Government’s announcement in January 2023 regarding the ‘study of Maths to age 18’ and in relation to this asked how the College envisaged the recruitment and retention of quality Maths teachers. The Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal acknowledged this concern and provided a detailed response which included an overview of (i) the College’s ‘Multiply’ programme, (ii) the re-launch of the ‘Why Maths Matters’ programme and (iii) the 3-4-4 Maths Model. The timing of the next UK General Election was considered during this

discussion and potential implications dependent upon the outcome. A Governor commented upon the importance of a subsequent review taking place to evaluate the impact of provision in meeting local needs.

The Committee commended the extensive work that had been undertaken in the production of the required Accountability Statement for 2023/2024.

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

7. SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding Update 2022/2023

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

- Welfare and Concern Referrals – these stood at 925 to date, compared to 921 in 2021/2022.
- Safeguarding Referrals – out of the number of welfare and concern referrals 546 of those resulted in escalation to the safeguarding level, compared to 425 in 2021/2022.
- An area of outstanding practice – in response to a previously identified area of concern an increased level of support had been made available to students who were experiencing mental health issues which included conditions such as stress, anxiety, depression, social isolation and poor self-esteem. To date, the College had dealt with 84 cases of attempted suicide or ideation. The College continued to work as a valued multi-agency partner in cases of a complex nature.
- An area of concern – as the number of students experiencing mental health issues continued to rise, this was having an adverse impact on attendance, achievement and retention. There had also been an increase locally in the number of 'county lines' cases being reported and related instances of criminal exploitation.
- Recommendations – these included: (i) additional training for the Health and Wellbeing Team relevant to individual experience and current skills set, (ii) continued engagement with Cheshire Police to reinforce dangers around exploitation for young people and (iii) raising aspirations of the young people coping with trauma.

A discussion took place which primarily focused on the harrowing data relating to suicide ideation, both from a student and staff member's perspective; numerous questions were raised and responded to. The Committee received assurance that there was a Student Death Policy in place, that the College continued to work with multiple agencies such as Winstons Wish, Papyrus, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Halton Alliance. The Deputy Principal referred to the outcome of the Safeguarding internal audit that had taken place and reported to the Audit Committee in June 2022, whereby substantial assurance was provided that the areas tests were designed and operated effectively with no recommendations for improvement having been made.

Resolved: The Committee **noted** the contents of the report and commended the excellent work that continued to be undertaken by the Health, Wellbeing and Pastoral Teams in handling highly complex and challenging situations in the best interests of students.

8. CURRICULUM REPORT *(previously circulated)*

8.1 To receive a monitoring report on performance

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 referred to the revised format of the report which included (i) an area of outstanding practice, (ii) an area of concern and (iii) next steps for further improvement. The following aspects were highlighted within the report:

Progress and attainment (comparative data 2022/2023 and 2021/2022)

The Committee considered data relating to attendance and retention across the each campus. As previously requested by a Governor, the data was presented as both a percentage and number of students within each cohort to avoid any mis-interpretation and skewing of data.

Student Behaviour/Suspensions

- High standards and expectations were made clear from induction and embedded throughout the student journey
- Staff development sessions had taken place on ways to appropriately challenge students who were failing to comply with College standards
- Numerous enrichment activities had served to raise morale and had contributed positively towards an improvement in overall wellbeing
- Vaping remained an ongoing concern
- Some instances of having a low level of resilience alongside complex mental health concerns had an adverse impact on attendance, punctuality and overall progress. A resilience strategy was to be implemented in the next academic year to help address these issues in supporting students.

Student Recruitment 2023/2024

- School leaver offers had increased by 368 compared to at this point in 2021/2022.
- Adult applications had increased by 55 compared to 2021/2022.
- Higher Education offers had increased by 26 compared to 2021/2022.

Adult Education

- The breadth of Adult courses continued to increase in line with local skills needs. All construction courses were oversubscribed with waiting lists in place.
- Recruiting a greater number of specialist construction staff remained a challenge which mirrored the regional landscape.
- A positive progress report was presented in connection with the three Hydrogen-related courses which were to be funded by the Liverpool City Regional Combined Authority (LCRCA).

Apprenticeships and Employer Engagement

- A successful Apprenticeship Wellbeing Conference had taken place.
- An overly complex and time consuming enrolment process had been identified as an area of concern. Coupled with this, all apprenticeships had to be individually costed per apprentice; a matter which had been raised with the Association of Colleges (AoC), Department for Education (DfE), Gatsby and Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (iFate).

- An employer news bulletin was to be sent to all employers on a half termly basis to update them on activities such as wellbeing conferences, awards evenings and wellbeing topics. The College remained committed to work alongside employers to address any potential gender bias in the workplace by promoting women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). The College remained committed to supporting employers with any challenges experienced through a change in culture.

Higher Education

- In April 2023 the 5-year partnership review had taken place with the College and Staffordshire University (SU); this related to the College's delivery of Foundation and Bachelor degrees. The review resulted in an extremely positive outcome with many commendations made by the Board and for the partnership to continue. Whilst the Committee was informed that there were no formal conditions attached to the continuing partnership, an action plan had been formulated to further enhance the level of careers support offered. In conjunction with SU, the College was to explore the use of alternative software and resources to help maximise the provision offered.

High Needs and Education Health Care Plans

- An independent internal audit had recently been completed which provided College management and the Audit Committee with substantial assurance that that the tests carried out during the audit demonstrated that processes were designed and operated effectively with no significant weaknesses. Two recommendations of a low level nature had been made.
- The number of exam arrangements continued to increase which placed pressure on the Exams Team and wider staff. This had been further impacted upon by a growth in curriculum areas requiring examinations; this presented some challenges and continued to be closely monitored.

Levels 1 and 2 Curriculum Reforms

An overview of the proposed reforms was provided, together with the Government's anticipated time frame for implementation.

A discussion took place with numerous questions being raised and responded to throughout each section of the report.

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

8.2 **Bursary Categorisation 2023/2024** *(previously circulated)*

The Deputy Principal advised that Government guidance had recently been updated which provided colleges with some discretion in how it administered bursary funds and she referred to the documentation which had previously been circulated detailing the College's proposals. Approval was sought in connection with eligible financial support based upon set criteria, namely (i) the distance between the student' home and the College, and (ii) the number of siblings living in the family home.

Resolved: The Committee **recommended approval** of the proposal to the Board.

9. **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

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

The Assistant Principal provided an update on progress that had been made within the individual curriculum areas that were subject to the close monitoring process. Part of this agenda item was classified as confidential and reserved for Part Two of the meeting. The Assistant Principal was pleased to report that progress had been made in respect of all five curriculum areas, albeit at differing levels. This information was triangulated with the positive comments submitted via the recent student survey (agenda item 9.2) and outcomes from recent focus group meetings. Clear and ambitious strategies remained in place for the minority of curriculum areas where challenges continued to be encountered which had resulted in slower progress having been made.

A discussion took place. Clarification was sought and provided regarding the attendance data and 3 year trend for 19+ and HNF. The Committee concurred with the concerns raised regarding the use of vapes which had become an issue of national concern. Governors acknowledged the challenges faced by the College and commended its continued relentless efforts to effectively address this.

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

9.2 **Learner Views from Student Survey May 2023** (*previously circulated*)

The Assistant Principal reported that second survey of the year had taken place in May and provided a summary of the results. He highlighted the following key aspects:

- 1819 responses had been received against a target of 1500
- Results remained positive and each of the overall satisfaction levels had improved in comparison to the results from the first survey undertaken earlier in the academic year.
- The results had been analysed relating to the respective programmes, ie, A Level, Vocational/Adults and Apprenticeships

The Assistant Principal confirmed that the results had been disseminated to the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Heads of School (HoS). Action planning was currently taking place and focus groups would be established where any significant issues had been identified.

A discussion took place with several questions being raised and responded to.

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

9.3 **Complaints** (*previously circulated*)

The Assistant Principal provided the Committee with a summary of complaints received in 2022/2023 to date. Five official complaints had been received and following rigorous investigation processes, none had been upheld. In response to a question raised by a Governor, the Assistant Principal provided an anonymous overview of the nature of complaints that had been categorised under the heading of 'other.'

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

10. **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) UPDATE** (*previously circulated*)

The Deputy Principal presented this progress report which provided an overview of the EDI retention data in the academic year to date, together with areas of outstanding practice, areas of concern and areas requiring further action.

Retention data evidenced areas of outstanding practice in respect of (i) Learners with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), (ii) 16-18 and 19+ retention compared to this point in time in 2021/2022, (iii) Looked After Learners and Care Leavers, (iv) Learners self-identified as being transgender, (v) Learners who identified as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and (vi) Learners who identified as being Young Carers.

Some minor concerns had been identified which related to a small, though unfavourable differential in (i) learners who required inclusive support, (ii) learners who self-identify as have a learning difficulty or disability, (iii) learners from a widening participation background, and (iv) where female learners outperformed their male counterparts.

The Deputy Principal provided an overview of staff training that had taken place, together with development action plans to address any areas of concern.

A discussion took place.

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

- 11. **POLICIES** (*all policies previously circulated*)
- 11.1 Complaints
- 11.2 Data Protection
- 11.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- 11.4 Higher Education Bursary
- 11.5 Student Disciplinary and Suspension Procedures

The Committee reviewed the individual policies within agenda items 11.1 to 11.5 (inc), noting proposed amendments, where applicable.

Resolved: The Committee **recommended approval** of the above policies to the Board.

12. **GOVERNANCE – COMMITTEE MATTERS**

12.1 **Meeting Schedule 2023/2024** (*previously circulated*)

The previously approved meeting schedule was reviewed and there was a consensus that the start time of 5pm remained suitable for Committee Members. There was a request for the meeting in November to be re-arranged to 30th November 2023 which was agreed.

Resolved: The Committee **noted** the report and **recommended to the Board** that the Quality and Standards Committee in November be re-arranged from 21st November to 30th November 2023.

12.2 **Curriculum Presentations 2023/2024** (*previously circulated*)

The Committee discussed thematic proposals for the termly curriculum presentations to be delivered at Committee meetings in 2023/2024.

Resolved: The Committee **agreed** for the following presentations to be delivered

- 30th November 2023 – Careers, Advice and Guidance for All
- 5th March 2024 – Rosenshine Principles, Follow Up
- 18th June 2024 – Student Voice

12.3 **Training Schedule 2023/2024** *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk advised that at its first meeting in the 2023/2024 academic year, the Search & Governance (S & G) Committee would be considering the training schedule for subsequent Board approval. An opportunity was provided for the Committee to identify any training needs for future consideration by the S & G Committee. The Clerk advised that there would be a further opportunity to discuss training needs at the individual Governor review process at the start of the 2023/2024 academic year.

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

12.4 **FE Governance Guide Update** *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk advised that an update to this guide had been published on 2nd March 2023 and outlined the requirements in respect of the appointment of a SEND Link Governor and its importance in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion-related strategy. Any Governors interested in the SEND Link Governor role were requested to contact the Clerk in the first instance.

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

12.5 **AoC Committee Chairs Network Meeting**

The Chair reported that she had recently attended an on-line forum which had been very informative. She had gained assurance that the Committee continued to demonstrate outstanding practice, in line with other colleges who had an 'outstanding' OFSTED grading. Key areas under discussion had included:

- streamlining executive reports, wherever possible
- the critical importance of 'student voice' reports and the benefits of extending the terms of office of the student governor(s), wherever possible
- SEND and AP Framework

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

13. **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 3rd July 2023:

- Safeguarding Update
- Policies for Approval

14. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

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

- Board – 3rd July 2023 at 4.30pm, at Cronton College
- Quality and Standards Committee – 30th November 2023 at Riverside College

In line with usual practice the Deputy Principal advised that several questions had been raised by several 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. She extended special thanks to the Student Governors for the valuable insight that they had provided to the Committee during their tenure. The meeting was closed at 6.39pm.

Signed: Office copy signed by Michele Bacon

Chair of Quality and Standards Committee

Date: 30th November 2023