

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 1630 HRS
VENUE: VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT:	Alan Woods Paul Averis (from 1730 hrs) Jo Hughes Mary Mahoney Jaswinder Dhillon	Chair
TOGETHER WITH:	Jat Sharma David Turner Richard Brennan James Norris (Item 24.21) Jo Moore (Item 22.21) Helena Platt (Item 23.21) Victoria Lynn-Robinson (Item 25.21) Jo Broderick (Item 24.21) Jackie Bradnick (Item 27.21) Alison Buick	Principal Assistant Principal Quality and HE Assistant Principal Curriculum Assistant Principal Commercial Development Head of Curriculum Cluster Health and Public Services Head of English and Maths Curriculum Manager, HE Interim Head of Apprenticeships Work Experience Coordinator Clerk to the Corporation
APOLOGIES:	None.	

16.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.

17.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

18.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alan Woods declared his employment as Chief Executive of an awarding body and that there was a small contract in place between his organisation and the college. Full details had been included in his declaration made in July 2020. He was also Co-Chair of the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

Jaswinder Dhillon made her usual declaration relating to membership of local educational organisations.

19.21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

20.21 MATTERS ARISING

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record for Learning and Quality Committee and noted the following:

Item 27.20

The Freedom of Speech Policy had been drafted and shared with Jaswinder Dhillon as agreed.

Item 08.21.1

The Quality Cycle information had been provided as agreed.

Item 08.21.2

The Principal had been in discussion with Mary Mahoney. Further information about partnership working would be brought back to a future Governor Training day.

Item 10.21

The Head of English and Maths had met with Paul Averis, Link Governor.

21.21 DATA REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on his report, which showed data for the academic year.

Of particular note were:

- Retention, which was high;
- The challenges of engaging students in learning from home for an extended period of time;
- That apprenticeships were on target for 74% achievement by the end of the year;
- the current position against term one targets, with a brief summary explanation of the main KPIs and comparison to the previous academic year's final outturns. Performance was some way off target in several areas, due to the impact of the pandemic. SMT had discussed at length whether expectations and targets for the year should be lowered, but it had been agreed overall that ambitions for students should remain high.

Governors were pleased that retention was high, considering all circumstances, and agreed with the SMT view that targets and ambitions should remain high. If targets were not met at year-end, narrative explanations could be used to explain why.

The Chair asked if there were any concerns about English and Maths. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE reported that there was usually a gap between attendance at English and Maths compared to vocational subjects, but that pre Covid this had started to close. The gap was now beginning to widen again. However, Pastoral Officers were working very proactively to chase up attendance.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum added that college had run a campaign with students and parents to raise awareness of the importance of English and Maths, as sufficient engagement was needed to allow an assessed grade to be provided at the end of the year.

The need to sustain efforts to support students to catch up was discussed. The Principal reported that the Finance and Resources Committee had also had a discussion on this earlier in the week, and was keen to ensure that resources were made available. With emerging DfE guidance on catch up and funding, there was much planning to do to deliver the rest of the academic year and to plan for next year. It was agreed that further details of the catch-up plans would be brought back to the next meeting in June 2021 and also to Corporation. If additional budget needed to be allocated for catch-up work, Governors were happy to give this further consideration and support.

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The Staff Governor commented on the need to balance additional delivery with staff wellbeing. Staff were committed to ensuring student success, but there was a risk of burn out for already tired staff who had not received a pay award this year. The Chair agreed the need for sensible and sensitive discussions on this. One option would be to ask staff to volunteer for extra hours where they felt they had capacity and were willing.

A Governor suggested that an interim expenditure plan for catch up be brought to each Corporation meeting to allow Governors to monitor this more clearly. This was agreed.

Principal

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Data Report.

22.21 T LEVELS

The Head of Curriculum Cluster Health and Public Services attended to give an update on the roll out of T Levels. She was one of three Heads whose Cluster was involved in this to date.

A presentation was shared on screen and the following were noted:

- all three delivery areas in Wave 1 were going well so far. For education and healthcare, ten students had been recruited against a target of 20, and all had been retained. In Construction, Engineering and Science, 16 of the original students were still on programme. Two had left to take up apprenticeships. In Business and Computing, nine of the ten students recruited had been retained;
- the impact of Covid-19 on work placements was a concern, and this meant that some re-modelling of delivery for year 2 would be necessary to allow all students to achieve all elements and hours required;
- more specialisms were being added to the available T Levels at the college from September 2021. Some estates and development work would be needed to allow for the facilities necessary, eg a health and medical suite for healthcare science. Expansion already planned at Green Lane would allow for further T Level delivery;
- some decisions remained to be made on areas to offer, Plumbing being one. It was possible to work in Plumbing without a T level, so the demand for this qualification may be low;
- entry requirements to enrol on T levels were higher than for other general vocational qualifications offered, and for health-based T Levels would require Science GCSE at grade 4+. Additional staff would need to be recruited to support the science elements of the courses;

- There were further areas likely to be offered from September 2022, such as Accounting and Finance, but these were at the early stages of planning;
- Bids for funding to deliver T Levels were being submitted with deadlines in March. Outcomes were not expected until July, which meant a lot of preparation work to do over the summer;
- The Minister for Skills, Gillian Keegan MP, had recently recognised the work undertaken at Walsall on T Levels, which was a very positive accolade for the college.

Questions and comments were invited.

Progression routes were discussed. These needed updating on the website. It was confirmed that there were transition courses into T Levels.

Governors asked if there was a need for further staff recruitment to deliver T Levels. The Head of Cluster confirmed that there would be in some of the more specialist areas. There were already existing staff with some skills.

Governors were reassured to see the positive feedback on the delivery to date, and the ministerial recognition of this.

23.21 ENGLISH AND MATHS REPORT

The Head of English and Maths attended to present her report, which covered the following:

- Enrolments in English and Maths, which had declined but remained high;
- The impact of breaks in face to face learning, which were a concern;
- The delivery model to support and differentiate between learners;
- Synchronous and asynchronous learning;
- Attendance, which was highest at face to face sessions;
- That all delivery had been moved to synchronous during lockdown;
- New centre assessment guidelines for GCSE in 2021 were expected from DfE later this week;
- Staff were proving more feedback this year, following complaints last year that parents did not know their child was not on target to achieve;
- Results of November re-sits. 174 more grades 4 to 9 had been achieved;
- Adult enrolments had been affected by Covid-19 and there had been far fewer Job Centre referrals. It was hoped that this would improve when the college was fully re-opened and through the summer term;
- Contact was being maintained with those adults already enrolled;
- Functional skills exams were continuing. 326 student achievements had been recorded in the year to date;
- £519k of National Tutoring Fund had been allocated to the college and plans for this were explained;
- The actions in the post Ofsted action plan, which were ongoing;
- There was a regular focus on cross college delivery of English and Maths, with the Quality team having completed a 'deep dive' into the area. Staff development was key to some of the improvements that were needed.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Link Governor for English and Maths noted his recent link visit and commented that the delivery response to Covid had been robust in his view. The National Tutoring Fund would mean schools and colleges chasing staff and resources to deliver the catch-up work needed, which would be challenging.

The Head of English and Maths confirmed that no additional online resources were being purchased, that one new full-time staff member would be recruited, but that other hours would be made up from existing staff that were either part time or under-utilised.

Governors asked about planned staff CPD. The Head of English and Maths responded that she had put together a tutor guide. New staff had completed a micro teach as part of the recruitment process, were reviewed weekly and were working alongside vocational staff.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the English and Maths Report.

24.21 APPRENTICESHIPS AND COMMERCIAL REPORT

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development and the Head of Apprenticeships presented their report.

The report covered:

- (a) Projected final year end outturn for Apprenticeship provision;
- (b) Update on progress of impact of improvements in apprenticeships through recent surveys;
- (c) Update on College Sub-contractor activity in 2020/21;
- (d) An update on the impact of COVID-19 on Apprenticeship provision;
- (e) An update on strategy for learning walks and staff development for apprenticeship delivery teams in 2020/21;
- (f) An update on Employment Gateway activity in light of COVID-19.

The main target was to outturn with 74% achievement at year end.

At present there were delays to end point assessments for apprenticeships, but those that had been completed had high pass rates and many high grades. The first cohort of carpenters in construction had recently completed with a very pleasing set of results.

Retention of adults was higher this year than previously. There were 91 apprentices with an agreed break in learning, of which 49 were due to Covid-19 reasons. Learners were expected to return as lockdown was eased.

The Head of Apprenticeships commented on learning walks and student surveys. Changes to processes were starting to have positive impact. Most teacher learning walks had been completed but there were still a significant number of trainer assessors to complete. The survey had been updated to include questions about progress and impact. Over 200 responses had been received and results were positive, as shown by the details in the written report. 98% would recommend the college.

There were no concerns to report on subcontracting or Employment Gateway.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair commented on the comprehensive and positive report and asked about plans for CCM.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development responded that the apprenticeships element of this was under review and data was being gathered to inform this. The full cost offer would also need review.

It was suggested and agreed that some graphical representation of data for this area would be helpful. The QAR dashboard and Pro Achieve data could be used for this.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Apprenticeships and Commercial Report.

25.21 HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

The report was presented by the Curriculum Manager for HE, and gave an update on key aspects of the provision:

- An HE Grow steering group had been set up to work on a number of initiatives for growth in this area, including Aspire HE;
- The HE Academic Board was continuing to meet termly and the outcomes from the November and January meetings were noted. These included fee changes from 2022/23 and results of HE student surveys;
- The OfS Access and Participation plan;
- The replacement of the Erasmus scheme with the Turing project;
- Possible impacts of the recently published Government White Paper.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor commented on the Uni Connect project, referred to in the written report. This would complete in July 2021 and be replaced with the Outreach Hub. There were several bids for funding and some research projects to look at the impact of Covid-19 on ways of working.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Higher Education Report.

26.21 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report. The following aspects were drawn to Governors' attention:

- Retention was high, which was positive. The college staff were reluctant to exclude students that may have low engagement due to being disadvantaged in working at home;
- The attendance at synchronous learning was lower than usual for this time of year, currently standing at 78.5% against the stretch target of 90%;
- Many electronic devices had been issued to students;
- Some analysis of the engagement by ethnicity had been completed. This showed that black students appeared more disadvantaged in lockdown;

- There were currently 496 students with RAG rating 3, this being the highest level of concern about engagement. This was approximately double the level for the time of year in normal circumstances;
- Quality summits for term 1 had been completed on line. Those planned for term 2 were being postponed to allow for adequate preparations in return to full opening from 8 March. Governors would be notified of new dates when agreed. In the meantime, the Quality team would complete a desktop review, details of which would be shared with Governors in due course;
- The learning walk programme was progressing. It had been decided to link the learning walks programme to performance management if staff had not engaged with their feedback by year end;
- The student induction survey results had been analysed and were very positive. Agreed actions had been added to the Student Voice action plan for monitoring;
- A remote education survey, to focus on the quality of education was being launched.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors discussed attendance and punctuality to synchronous learning, and noted that there were no national comparators or benchmarks. The engagement with vulnerable students was questioned.

The Assistant Principal Quality commented on strategies for engagement with vulnerable students. This had recently been discussed with Curriculum Managers. Support needs were being identified.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum added that staff were holding regular case conferences to discuss students with the highest RAG rating to understand issues as far as possible.

Learning Walks were also discussed. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE was reviewing options for making recordings available for Governors, so this would be shared once tested and operational.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Quality Assurance Report.

27.21 CURRICULUM REPORT

The Assistant Principal Curriculum presented his report, which gave updates in the following areas:

- Provision for young people;
- Provision for adults; and
- Work Experience.

Work Experience

The Work Experience Coordinator attended to give a presentation on work in this area. The presentation was shared on screen and covered the following:

- Ofsted inspection feedback, which had included to increase and improve the quality of work experience across Clusters so that it had better impact;

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- That 302 students had completed or had confirmed work experience for the year, which was around 50% of the same time last year. Taking Covid-19 into consideration, this was felt to be reasonable;
- Of the students that had completed a survey, 93% reported that their work experience had been positive;
- 2,672 study programme students had been invited to 'My week of work' virtual industry placement over the rest of the year. Some major employers were involved in this. There were a significant number of hours within this, including 15 of live employer led interactive sessions. The approach was fully compliant with Gatsby requirements. Feedback showed that students were finding it valuable.

It was agreed that the presentation slides would be circulated to Governors for information. Governors were pleased to note such excellent progress in this area, and expressed thanks to staff. It was recognised that the impact of the pandemic on the ability of employers to offer work experience had resulted in challenges for the college.

Clerk

Provision for Young People

The impact of the post 16 Level 3 qualifications review was noted. Further discussions would be needed on this, but it was possible that a vocational A Level offer may need to be considered.

The Chair suggested a working group to look at this, which the Principal would consider. Governors expressed interest in being part of this.

Principal

Provision for Adults

Performance in recruiting adults this year had been very strong in some areas but weaker in others. This pattern of recruitment meant that there was a risk of underperformance in the AEB budget. Corrective actions were being considered and the curriculum offer updated. The threshold value for AEB funding had not yet been confirmed. The situation would remain subject to close monitoring.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Curriculum Report.

28.21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 1630 hrs.

There was a discussion about the structure of the agenda, with a suggestion that it be split into items for decision and items for discussion, with decision items being higher up. The Chair agreed that this would be looked at and further discussed.

Chair/
Assistant
Principals

The meeting ended at 1930 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College
21.21	Noted the need to have a balance between catch up	

	support for students and wellbeing of staff.	
26.21	Asked about engagement with vulnerable students.	
27.21	Discussed whether agenda format/ordering should be changed.	