

WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29 JUNE 2022 AT 1630 HRS
VENUE: BOARDROOM (A339), WISEMORE

PRESENT:	Paul Averis Mary Mahoney Heather Lodge Rani Sahota	Chair
TOGETHER WITH:	David Turner Richard Brennan James Norris Jenny Clarke (Item 30.22) Kevin Grindley (Item 30.22) Rachael Smith (Item 33.22) Victoria Lynn-Robinson (Item 35.22) Alison Buick	Assistant Principal Quality and HE Assistant Principal Curriculum Assistant Principal Commercial Development Careers Coordinator Consultant – Student Services Director of Apprenticeships and Workbased Learning HE Development Manager Head of Governance
APOLOGIES:	Malissa Clarke	

25.22 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. The efforts of the staff in producing a comprehensive set of papers were noted.

The Chair noted his recent attendance at the college end of year awards event, which had been very enjoyable.

26.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Malissa Clarke.

27.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations made. The Chair reminded Governors that he was Principal Designate of a new school opening in Birmingham in September.

28.22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2022, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved. The use of the challenge and impact table at the end was discussed.

29.22 MATTERS ARISING

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

Item 13.22

The Curriculum Conference would be held on 4 July and Governors had been invited.

Item 18.22

The Careers presentation was on the agenda for this meeting.

30.22 CAREERS PRESENTATION

The Careers Coordinator and Consultant for Student Services attended to give a short presentation.

It was confirmed that there were three advisors in college for around 5000 students, and there were partnerships with external organisations as well. The range of services offered and number of students supported were noted, as outlined in the written report. The pandemic had necessitated a different way of working and given an opportunity for reflection. Some changes were being proposed.

There were several ways in which the quality of the service and its impact for students were checked.

The Chair asked what areas the staff would like to develop further. The Careers Coordinator responded that the level of resource from a student's initial contact via the website onwards needed to provide an excellent service. There were some areas for improvement. There were good relationships with most curriculum areas but a small number where the service to students needed to be more joined up with the central team. It was recognised that it was not possible to provide a comprehensive service to all age groups with the resources available.

The stakeholders involved in careers advice were discussed. The importance of providing information for parents was agreed. There was a parents section on the college website and this was being reviewed with the Marketing team. A parent survey was planned.

Governors discussed the resources and space available for careers work. It was agreed that the service needed to be aspirational for students and Governors were supportive of this aim. The careers team was a vital service for students as it supported the college aim to provide a 'line of sight to work' for students. Not all students had the same level of need for careers guidance. There was a role for careers staff to be involved in transition meetings with students wishing to change course early in the year, and this had been effective.

Staff were thanked for their presentation. It was suggested and agreed that an update would be brought back to the committee in summer 2023.

In addition, the Chair would contact the Careers team to arrange a visit.

31.22 DATA REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on his report which contained key data on retention, KPIs and other areas. It was important for Governors to have a view of current performance.

It had been a challenging year and not all KPIs had been met. Attendance was below target, including in Maths and English. There had been increases in the number of students RAG rated as red and in the number of disciplinaries.

Questions and comments were invited.

Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HR

Chair

Governors asked about any apparent trends in the reasons for students with red RAG ratings. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE stated that there were multiple factors. At the start of the year, the scale of student anxiety and mental health/wellbeing concerns had not been clear and therefore had been underestimated. This had impacted on some enrichment time, which had been needed for additional teaching. Staff had had much to catch up on due to missed learning in Covid. As a result some teaching practice had been less innovative and student led, which may have affected engagement and attendance.

The Chair commented that Covid was no longer seen as a reason for low attendance, so messages on this needed to be clear for students. Some of the KPIs needed to be reviewed. The Assistant Principal agreed that staff understood the importance of the KPIs but that priorities had changed in year. For example, student needs had been put ahead of industrial upskilling. On a positive note, destinations data was improved and levels of student satisfaction were high.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum explained the hard measure used to record student attendance in 2021/22. This had helped to identify gaps, which was important. National data was not available, but anecdotally, staff were aware that there was lower attendance across the sector.

Governors asked to what extent industry restrictions had prevented staff from doing upskilling. Staff explained that there were various ways of doing upskilling, including online training, reading and professional development, so staff did not necessarily need to go out into their vocational field. It was felt that there was more CPD taking place than was actually recorded.

There was a discussion about the KPI relating to having an employer in every classroom. There was more work to do, and Curriculum Managers were working on this.

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

32.22 CURRICULUM REPORT

The Assistant Principal Curriculum outlined the highlights of his report:

- Admissions for young people in September looked healthy. Adult enrolments would continue throughout the year;
- A more stringent admissions process was in place, to ensure that the prior qualifications, commitment and parental engagement were strong enough to complete the course. It was hoped that this would improve the overall customer experience;
- Some analysis had been done to look at the use of resource in particular curriculum areas and how it was split between different levels and types of course. All Curriculum Managers were being asked to review their offers in light of the Level 2 and 3 qualifications reviews being done by Government. Defunding could have a major impact on the college in future years. There were some concerns about the ability to switch students on to T Levels from applied general qualifications due to the need to secure work placements and the ability of employers to offer these;

Governors discussed the impacts of the Government reforms. There was a concern that there would be many people that fell through gaps in the offer

and that there could be a shortfall of people qualified to work in certain areas, such as social care. It was also expected that organisations would have a finite capacity to take work placements, especially in areas like health where there would be many education providers looking for placements across clinical and other areas.

- Walsall was the largest T Level provider in the West Midlands. The Ofsted T Level review earlier in the year had gone well and positive feedback had been received;

Governors were pleased with the feedback and acknowledged that T Levels were a good option for the right students, but were not suitable for all.

The Chair commented that the Assistant Principal had presented on teaching strategies and approaches at the last meeting, and asked how this was going. The Assistant Principal responded that there would be discussion and further development at the curriculum conference on 4 July. It was expected that there would be further changes in the next two years. Following the conference the Assistant Principals would collate and use the feedback to inform the curriculum strategy update. The strategy had been updated prior to the Ofsted inspection in March 2020 so was due a refresh.

The Chair asked that an update on progress with the curriculum strategy be brought to the next meeting. The Assistant Principal did not expect the work to be completed, as the conference on 4 July may be the first of several meetings. However he was happy to provide a progress update.

Governors looked forward to hearing feedback from the conference and seeing the strategy update progress at the next committee in September. It was suggested that some illustrative examples of the changes in one or two areas would be helpful.

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

33.22 APPRENTICESHIPS AND COMMERCIAL REPORT

The Chair reported his visit to the college to discuss apprenticeships after the last committee meeting in February.

The Director of Apprenticeships and Workbased Learning presented her section of the report.

Governors noted that:

- The predicted achievement rate for the year was 70.3%, which was better than last year's actual of 63% and higher than national, but below the college target;
- Swap and boot camp activity was explained. DWP referrals were low and the recording of job impacts needed to be improved;
- 33 learning walks had been completed in year, including at CCM. This was 61% of eligible activity;
- Grade profiles were included in the written report. The college had received a C&G award in recognition of EPA services;
- Progress against KPIs was explained, with verbal updates for those that had changed since the report was written. Particular issues preventing some students from having EPAs were outlined;

Assistant
Principal
Curriculum

- Out of funded learners and other issues were reviewed weekly at meetings with Apprenticeship Sector Managers;
- Planning was ongoing for next academic year.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development presented the remaining sections of the report, which covered:

- Subcontracted provision, where both contracts were performing well and there were no concerns;
- Contracts for AEB in the new year, which had been agreed with WMCA and approved at the recent Finance and Resources Committee meeting;
- The Subcontracting Policy and Procedure, which was provided for information and would be on the college website. A change had been made to incorporate a recommendation from a recent KPMG funding assurance audit. This had also been approved by the Finance and Resources Committee.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors asked how many out of funded learners there were and it was confirmed that there were around 250 at present. This was above the college target of 10%. The reasons were often related to certain sectors such as health and construction and due to work pressures for employers that delayed assessments.

There was a discussion about achievement rates, including comparisons to last year's actual and national data. The Minister had set a very ambitious target for 2024.

A Governor asked how much of the work in this area would be reflected in the updated curriculum strategy. It was confirmed that staff would be involved in the curriculum conference on 4 July, so would have input.

The Chair asked if there were any new areas that staff wished to move into for next year. The Director of Apprenticeships and Workbased Learning outlined national priorities that were being considered, such as accountancy and sign making. However, expansion required staffing. Another area was moving from carpentry to furniture making, for which there was local demand. It was agreed that any changes needed careful planning and resourcing. A more rounded offer of work-based learning, not just apprenticeships, was needed.

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

34.22 QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report, with a focus on the Quality Improvement Plan, Learning Walks and assessment update.

83% of planned Learning Walks had been completed to date, which was a marked improvement on previous years. The Learning Walks process was explained. The Staff Governor commented that staff feedback was generally positive. The Chair wished to ensure that the process was fair, and not adding to staff stress and workload, so was pleased to hear the Staff Governor's feedback.

The Assistant Principal's report had highlighted what went well in learning walks and what areas there were for improvement.

As part of the journey to outstanding work, Predicted EIF SAR Grade Pie Charts had been created for each manager to populate with an estimate of their position against each category. This produced a visual representation that was helpful to staff. Examples were shown to Governors.

Governors commented on the report.

A suggestion was made to add a 'what now' column to make actions clearer. The Assistant Principal confirmed that actions had been agreed and would look again at how they were presented.

It was agreed as not practical to work on all actions at once and that priorities needed to be set. Associated risks should be taken into account when reviewing the priorities. Innovation, teachers being able to observe others with excellent feedback and sharing of good practice was also essential. Benefits of technology that had been used in the pandemic needed to be retained and evolved.

There was a discussion about staff wellbeing and acknowledgement that some staff remained anxious and were less confident being back in college.

The role of middle leaders in owning and being accountable for the quality of teaching and learning was considered. Impact needed to be demonstrated. The EIF was far less compliance based than the CIF. Management felt that the middle managers needed a better understanding of the increasing complexity of the FE sector and were working to develop this. Governors agreed this was necessary for the staff to be able to deliver the college's vision. It was also agreed as a strength of this committee that a range of managers came to present on different topics. A suggestion was made that other of the Assistant Principal Quality and HE's managers attend to present at future meetings.

Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE

A Governor asked about the number of missing register marks noted in the report. It was confirmed that this was individual marks and not entire registers. It was also the case that where lessons had been covered, the cover tutor may not have had access to the register, and this had caused delays in completion. The Chair re-iterated the importance of registers to ensure students whereabouts was known, and therefore that they were safe.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on the QIP, which was the Executive level view. 13 items were being tracked.

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

35.22 HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

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

- A further submission of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) to the OfS was in progress. Some of the challenges in preparing this were explained;

It was noted that OfS had a sharp focus on attainment at present. There were particular gaps in this in Walsall which appeared very early for many of the cohort and were apparent as they progressed through school. The four priorities of the OfS were noted. The college APP needed to reflect these priorities when submitted.

- An update on the Aspire to HE outreach activity, which was increasing. A further staff member would be employed from September as additional funding had been secured;
- New Higher Technical Qualifications, which would include Digital, Construction and Health & Science from September 2023;
- The range of HE partnership activities taking place. The ITT programme at BCU had recently been subject to Ofsted inspection, and the report was awaited;
- The results of the HE Teaching and Learning survey. Although the number of respondents had sharply declined, the satisfaction rate remained high;
- An HE Deep Dive was planned for September 2023;
- The HE Strategy was to be discussed at the curriculum conference on 4 July and refreshed over the summer;
- HE data was noted, as set out in the written report. Retention was high and 90% of destinations were positive;
- There were some new FE Technical Programmes with the Open University;
- OfS EDI data was noted;
- The Government had published its response to the 2019 Augar Report. In addition to introducing changes to the student loan system, the government had also opened a consultation on further changes to the system including on the introduction of a minimum eligibility requirement for access to student loans. The stated purpose of this policy would be to ensure that 'students undertaking degree study have attained the baseline skills required to engage with and benefit from the course';
- There had been a refreshed approach to HE student voice this year and it was hoped to maintain this.

Questions and comments were invited.

There was a discussion about the reasons for the APP needing to be re-submitted. The college's concerns were noted.

Governors were pleased to note the positive HE student voice feedback.

The general HE offer and planned changes were considered. It remained very important for the college to have an offer that took into account local demand.

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

36.22 SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

The paper was introduced by the Head of Governance and comments were invited. It was noted that the report format this year was unchanged and included specific comments on the ways in which the Committee had fulfilled each of its terms of reference in the year to date. The RAG rating of

each element, introduced last year, had again been included. No particular concerns were noted and Governors agreed with this view.

The Governors' request earlier in the meeting to have more middle managers attending to present reports was noted. The Head of Governance commented that in previous years a 'speed dating' activity had been included in Training days to allow Governors to meet middle managers. Consideration could be given to repeating this.

Head of
Governance
/Principal

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Self-Assessment Report.

37.22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 28 September 2022 at 1630 hrs.

The meeting ended at 1915 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
30.22	Asked what areas the Careers team wished to further develop.		
32.22	Asked for an update on the teaching strategies as discussed at the last meeting.		
33.22	Asked if there were areas of workbased learning that staff wished to consider adding in future.		