

**WALSALL COLLEGE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD ON MONDAY 3 JULY 2023 AT 0930 HRS
VENUE: A339 (BOARDROOM, WISEMORE CAMPUS)**

Attendance Present: Attendees
Paul Averis - Chair
Heather Lodge
Mary Mahoney
Jat Sharma - Principal

Together with: David Turner - Assistant Principal Quality and HE
Richard Brennan - Assistant Principal Curriculum
Jennifer Clarke - Careers Co-ordinator
Jo Lewis - Functional Skills Coordinator for Apprenticeships
James Norris - Assistant Principal Commercial Development
Helena Platt - Head of Student Experience
Victoria Lynn-Robinson - HE Development Manager
Rachael Smith - Director of Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning
Lesley Venables - Interim Head of Governance

Apologies: Rani Sahota
Sam Jarvis
Linda Enow

Item	Subject	Who
35.23	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Rani Sahota, Sam Jarvis, Linda Enow	
36.23	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no declarations relating to any agenda items.	
37.23	MINUTES Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 15 th February and 3 rd April 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
38.23.1	MATTERS ARISING Governors received for information a progress report on the actions identified at the two previous meetings and noted that the majority of these had either been completed or were featured on the agenda.	
38.23.2	It was agreed that the table recording governor challenge would be updated to reflect actions to date.	AP Quality & HE/Head of Gov
38.23.3	Information on any areas for improvement identified would be ‘drip-fed’ to the Board and at Committee meetings, as part of the preparation for Ofsted.	Exec Team
39.23.1	CAREERS EDUCATION The Head of Careers Education gave a presentation on this area of provision and plans for further development. Governors were advised that 94% of feedback from students was positive and a total of 3050 students had attended employability sessions during the year. The team continued to work successfully with partner organisations such as the National Careers Service and the Initial Advice & Guidance partnership hub.	

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39.23.2	A governor asked about the impact careers education had made to the College and the proportion of students who had secured employment as a result. It was noted that accurate information on destinations was difficult to obtain, with some external agencies reluctant to share data that would enable the College to measure effectiveness. Tracking of students had now commenced and in future the College would be expected to collect data on salary uplifts and promotions obtained by students as a result of their training.							
39.23.3	The College was engaging with more reticent students through tutorials, advertising careers advice services, sharing good practice between staff, self-referrals and individual student reviews.							
39.23.4	In response to questions the Committee was advised that marketing and curriculum staff worked closely together to maximise any alumni links.							
	Jennifer Clarke left the meeting.							
	QUALITY ASSURANCE & PERFORMANCE DATA							
40.23.1	The Assistant Principal Quality & HE reported that all quality reviews had now been completed, the gradings for which were:							
	<table> <tr> <td>Outstanding</td> <td>4 areas (previously 2)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>24 areas (previously 14)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Requires Improvement</td> <td>4 areas (11 in term one)</td> </tr> </table>	Outstanding	4 areas (previously 2)	Good	24 areas (previously 14)	Requires Improvement	4 areas (11 in term one)	
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Requires Improvement	4 areas (11 in term one)							
40.23.2	A total of 7 areas for improvement had been identified in the Quality Improvement Plan for 2023/2024 (compared to 13 in 2022/2023). There had been a distinct rise in the teaching quality over the year, but staff still needed to continue to use a less didactic approach.							
40.23.3	Retention levels had increased substantially to 92.7%. There were no significant gaps in the retention data relating to groups with protected and other characteristics, with the exception of 16-18s compared to adults. This was due to a high proportion of short courses being included in the latter figure which impacted on overall retention.							
40.23.4	Attendance levels for 16-18s had improved to 83.5% which management felt was a good outcome against the background of a national crisis in mental health issues amongst this cohort. The NART data (which included Maths & English) was 79% for 2021/2022 and predicted achievements for 2022/2023 were 84.4% (an increase of 5.2% compared to 2021/2022).							
40.23.5	A governor asked about the 15% of students who had not had a 1:1 advice and guidance session during last term. The Principal reported that resourcing of this provision was expensive and sometimes difficult to access. The careers team had had to introduce multiple interventions throughout the year and this has been embedded across the curriculum, with further work targeted for 2023/2024.							
40.23.6	The Committee was advised that the momentum driving areas from 'red' to 'amber' had been easier due to higher levels of buy-in from the management team, evidencing the culture shift in the organisation this year.							

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40.23.7	There was a clear link between retention, behaviour and the level of student support provided. Governors questioned whether there were particular areas for improvement in terms of behaviour and were advised that a substantial amount of work had been undertaken at the Green Lane Campus, including 2 days of staff observations together with CPD sessions on improving student behaviour. An overview of this activity and the outputs would be reported at the Curriculum Conference in July 2023. Additionally, a CPD package had been purchased that enabled staff to follow students through their College journey and employer engagement activities.	
40.23.8	It was agreed that a further input would be provided to a future Committee meeting on issues relating to behaviour such as retention, student and teaching staff needs and mental health. This would enable governors to understand the approaches being utilised and their implications on resourcing.	AP Quality & HE
40.23.9	The Principal commented that the behaviour strategy and its link to retention/achievement needed to be woven together and brought back to governors with illustrated examples of the impact it had made.	Principal
40.23.10	A proposal for consideration would be submitted to the Executive Team shortly on a recent Education Training Foundation programme which included appointing expert trainers and the timescales for each stage of the process.	
40.23.11	Governors thanked the management team for the sizeable amount of work undertaken on aspects of the QIP and noted the greater degree of confidence in the teaching team compared to the same point in 2022.	
STUDENT VOICE & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT		
41.23.1	The Committee received a report from the Head of Personal Development on activities relating to the student voice and engagement. An earlier agenda item had highlighted that this area had improved from a Grade 3 to a 2 in 2022/2023. Enrichment activities during the year had been a combination of external events and centrally-hosted workshops.	
41.23.2	A total of 5 key themes had been identified against which sessions were delivered. Examples of topics included a safeguarding refresher programme, training to combat misogynistic behaviour and bullying in the workplace, which had engendered a good response and a high level of maturity in the debates.	
41.23.3	Students were asked to reflect on their own behaviour and progress at 9 points during each academic year, which were measured as part of their Individualised Learning Programmes.	
41.23.4	Student Voice activities for 2023/2024 were currently being reviewed with a plan to include items such as travel to College, student engagement, physical and mental health campaigns and advice/support on bullying and harassment.	
41.23.5	Governors received a summary of the outcomes of the latest student survey and were advised that only one item raised previously had not been addressed – feeling safe in and around the town, which would be a key priority in 2023/2024. A new Student Voice Strategy was also being prepared.	

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41.23.6	In response to governor questions about future plans, the Head of Personal Development reported that the aim was to become 'outstanding, building on higher levels of consistency and quality achieved this year, whilst increasing the vibrancy of the student experience and variety of activities. The Principal commented that the focus on personal development in 2022/2023 had created a real momentum, but it was recognised that further resourcing was required to address all requests and concerns.	
41.23.7	It was agreed that governors would receive a briefing note on student voice activities and outcomes, as part of their Ofsted preparation.	AP Quality & HE
CURRICULUM UPDATE		
42.23.1	Following a request at the previous meeting the AP Curriculum presented information on the College's V6 and STEAM curriculum areas.	
42.23.2	Attendance for V6 students was tracked robustly on a weekly basis and was currently at 80% overall. Retention was 88%, which was an improvement of 6.1% from the same point in 2021/2022 and staff were continuing to monitor individual student progress over the remaining weeks of the academic year to maximise achievement rates and high grades.	
42.23.3	Including Maths and English, the Faculty was predicting an 80.8% achievement rate, which would be an improvement of 10.1% compared to 2021/2022.	
42.23.4	In relation to STEAM programmes, current applications were in line with the previous year's recruitment but there were some concerns about the number of students not attending booked interview slots and the impact of the disruption to the building and car park access at Green Lane.	
42.23.5	The achievement level was predicted to be 81% which was a 3% increase on 2021/2022.	
42.23.6	There was a high volume of students and it was difficult to process such a large number through their assessments on the first attempt.	
42.23.7	Work continued on maximising the College's claim under the National Tutor Fund. A total of 1,129 distinct 16-19 year olds had been engaged as part of this project, to support their progress and achievement this academic year. Recording of activity needed to improve further in future years and additional support provided if the student continued beyond their qualification end date.	
42.23.8	Enrolments on T Level courses was increasing, but there were no plans to introduce any new qualifications in 2023/2024, as the Department for Education had deferred the implementation of courses in Hair & Beauty, Hospitality & Catering and Media. The Assistant Principal reported that it was difficult to secure suitable placements for students on T Levels particularly amongst smaller employers, which needed to be between 45 and 60 days.	
42.23.9	Management proposed that the College's A Level offer should be extended for 2023/2024 to provide a full suite of programmes. Discussions were underway internally as to how these would be delivered and marketed.	

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42.23.10	Engaging adult students in personal development sessions had proved to be difficult, however, some curriculum areas had seen positive improvements this academic year.	
42.23.11	Discrete SEND provision was good overall, but cross-College delivery needed further improvement and was a key priority for 2023/2024.	
42.23.12	Attendance at the GCSE examinations had been higher than in previous years. It was agreed that the report on the outcomes in August would include information on high grades.	AP Curric
42.23.13	Governors were advised that levels of resilience amongst Access students had fallen dramatically since the pandemic. However, staff were skilled in addressing behavioural issues with this cohort and supporting them through initiatives such as greater flexibility in delivery, attendance patterns and marking arrangements. A governor commented that the workforce of the future would expect employers to adapt their practices to staff, rather than vice-versa, so it was important to discuss these issues at an early stage.	
42.23.14	Governors discussed the provision of careers education in schools which tended to be tailored to the institutions' expectations rather than those of the individual pupils. This impacted negatively on career changes and decisions made later in life to return to education.	
42.23.15	The Local Skills Improvement Plan sets out how adults will be able to access education and training through multiple channels. This meant that the future curriculum should be modelled on student needs and not those of the staff teaching College programmes.	
APPRENTICESHIPS & WORK-BASED PROVISION		
43.23.1	The Director of Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning presented a report on current issues,	
43.23.2	Apprenticeship retention was above the College's year end achievement outturn of 67%. However manual calculations indicated an overall Apprenticeship success rate of 59.8%.	
43.23.3	A total of 19% of apprentices were classified as 'Out of Funding', which was 4% above the College target. The increase since the last Committee meeting was due to the number of apprentices waiting to undergo their End Point Assessment. There were also some delays with processing these individuals as a result of staffing shortages in the Examinations Department, which had resulted in some late claims being submitted to the ESFA.	
43.23.4	There were no concerns with sub-contractor performance as at R10 and success rates at all sub-contractors were likely to exceed the target and meet their maximum contract values (MCVs).	
43.23.5	A full external review of apprenticeships had been undertaken recently, accompanied by College staff as a CPD activity. Feedback had been well-received and aligned to the areas for improvement identified in the faculty Self-Assessment Report. The quality of teaching, motivation of apprentices, outcomes and the investment in facilities were all highlighted as strengths. The main areas for improvement had been identified as increasing attendance	

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	levels, particularly for Functional Skills programmes, personal development, learner voice, and knowledge of safeguarding and British Values.	
43.23.6	Jo Lewis reported on the recent deep dive into apprenticeships. This had highlighted a number of recommendations for further development – timetables should be accessible for all staff and learners and produced in a timely manner, more effective communication with vocational coaches, progress tracking needs to be more robust and systematic and diagnostic assessments were required for students, both on entry and at key points in their course.	
	HIGHER EDUCATION	
44.23.1	Governors received for information a report on higher education activities in 2022/2023.	
44.23.2	A total of 199 applications had been received for HE courses for 2023/2024. This cohort has been static for some time and a growth plan was being prepared to increase the College’s HE provision, which would include feedback from current and potential students.	
44.23.3	The Office for Students was currently undertaking an investigation of the accuracy of Individualised Learner Records returns over the last 5 years. The College will be required to produce an action plan and evidence that any issues have been addressed (otherwise it would be in breach of its registration conditions). An update on progress will be provided shortly.	Head of HE
44.23.4	The College continued to participate in the Aspire to HE initiative and various outreach activities had taken place in 2022/2023 to promote this area of provision. A full-time partnership officer had been appointed recently to support the work of the College.	
44.23.5	A grant had been received for developing Digital and Construction pathways into HE with effect from September 2023. Further bidding rounds would be held shortly which would impact on the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 academic years.	
	COMMITTEE’S SELF-ASSESSMENT 2022/2023	
45.23.1	The Interim Head of Governance presented a draft Self-Assessment for 2022/2023, which measured its performance against each paragraph of the terms of reference. One area for improvement was noted in relation to ensuring the quoracy of the Committee at each meeting. This was being considered alongside recent appointments of governors and associate members of the Corporation.	
45.23.2	The Committee was advised that this exercise could be simplified and focused on key elements such as attendance, work covered, membership, training undertaken/identified, strengths and areas for improvement.	
45.23.3	Resolved – That the Committee’s Self-Assessment for 2022/2023 be approved	

Item

Subject

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27 September 2023

Who

Item	How governors challenged management

Item	Impact of meeting on college