

MINUTES OF SPECIAL LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3RD JUNE 2025

Members:

Mary Mahoney
Adam Comery
Barbara Van Der Eecken (Interim Chair)
Heather Lodge
Jat Sharma
David Wheeler

In Attendance:

Kirsti Lord, Deputy Principal Curriculum, Innovation & Student Success
Lesley Venables, Head of Governance
Richard Brennan, Assistant Principal Curriculum
James Norris, Assistant Principal Adults & WBL
David Turner, Assistant Principal Quality

	Apologies for Absence	
146	Apologies for absence were received from Paul Averis.	
	Declarations of Interest	
147	Adam Comery declared an interest relating to any data under discussion for his curriculum department.	
	APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR	
148	Resolved – That Barbara Van Der Eecken be appointed as Chair for this meeting only	
	PREDICTED ACHIEVEMENT 2024/2025	
149	The Chair reminded the Committee that the purpose of this special meeting was to provide information on predicted achievement levels for 2024/2025 and to ensure that governors were aware of any emerging issues or trends, together with possible intervention strategies.	
150	The Deputy Principal and Assistant Principals presented the current data on predicted achievements.	
	English & Maths Term 3 GCSE	
151	The predicted outcomes were in line with the narrative discussed by the Committee earlier in the academic year.	
152	In terms of assessment, the number of grade 4s required for the College to attain the FE benchmarks of 14% (Maths) and 20% (English) were 218 and 270 respectively. The Deputy Principal advised that the College had opted to use a different examination board this year, which had impacted positively on performance levels, with English for real life taught and used in the exam questions.	
153	Maths tutors were marking in a more consistent manner but for English the marking scheme was much more nuanced. It was felt that all tutors needed a greater time period to become accustomed to the marking requirements.	
154	Targeted support had been provided for each cost centre to work towards the target. Termly monitoring took place at individual learner and intervention level. A total of 210 students on English GCSEs had been targeted for extra support, 98 of whom had engaged within the first 4 weeks, together with an additional 17 who joined later. This equated to 35 classes and 13 tutors.	

155	For Maths a total of 186 students had ben targeted, 69 of whom had engaged with additional support sessions initially and a further 11 in later weeks. This equated to 31 classes and 12 tutors.	
156	In-house tutors had been engaged to support students in their preparation for exams, with one-off overtime payments to teaching staff. This strategy would be evaluated at the end of the year to determine its success and whether the timing was optimum for students.	
157	Governors were advised that overall attendance for English exams (Paper 1) was 92.4% (an increase of 1% on 2023/2024) and 93% for Maths (Paper 1, a 1% increase). There had been an upward trend over the last 3 years and it was noted that attendance levels should rise further in Maths due to students sitting 2 papers rather than 3 this year. Attendance levels were closer to those for students' core programmes, but there was still some work to be done.	
158	In terms of predicted achievement for English, 16% were working at grade 4 (compared to the target of 20% and last year's figure of 15%). The Assistant Principal Quality felt that staff were under-marking at the moment due to the lack of familiarity with the new exam board's requirements. A total of 20% of students were making progress equivalent to at least one grade. Attendance was a key indicator as to whether exam performance was improving.	
159	A governor queried whether there was evidence of increased value added in 2024/2025, but management felt this was broadly the same as in the previous year.	
160	In terms of predicted achievement for Maths, 21% of students were working at grade 4, compared to the target of 14% and last year's figure of 9%. However, management felt that some marking required moderation as it was over-ambitious.	
161	A number of areas of concern had been identified, including possible changes to the grade boundaries by the examination boards during the summer and performance on Level 1 Maths 16-18 courses particularly in Construction. There had been some adverse publicity recently about Educas on grade inflation, which meant there was liable to be a higher level of scrutiny for exam results within the education sector.	
162	Students were in a cohort where a high proportion would be undertaking Maths and English re-sits, which contrasted to the position in schools where this was comprised mainly of Year 11s.	
163	Overall there had been improvements in English and Maths on attendance (including at exams) and assessment. Greater consistency of marking and the centralisation of this provision for 2025/2026 would enable predicted achievement levels to increase further.	
164	In 2025/2026 there would be greater standardisaton of Functional Skills, together with improving quality processes. It was noted that the College's English & Maths team did not currently include staff who delivered this provision to apprentices but worked closely in this area.	

	Governors expressed their thanks to the Director of English & Maths and her team for the work undertaken in 2024/2025.	
165	Predicted Achievement – V6 Performance had improved by 7.1% in 2024/2025 compared to the previous year. Retention on Health & Social Care programmes was good, however, a considerable number of students had failed their exams twice last year. For 2024/2025 there was a cohort of students who narrowly failed their courses and had mitigations from other levels/qualifications.	
166	The January 2025 exam results had been much higher and there was a strong indication of improvement (but this would probably not reach 21%). Intensive support had been provided for students and, following a change in teaching style, it was anticipated that outcomes would improve.	
167	Travel & Tourism and Sport courses had predicted achievement rates of 98% and current retention of 99.4%. Governors were advised that some Level 2 provision was being restructured so that there could be incremental progression of learning.	
168	A governor asked how retention compared to 2023/2024 levels and was informed that there had been an overall improvement. However, it was noted that retention was not captured at the same points in 2024/2025 as for 2023/2024. It was unlikely that there would be a high number of withdrawals at this stage in the academic year and the data was currently being 'cleansed' by MIS to eliminate any errors before the final figures were reported.	
169	Further enquiries were made as to whether internal or external benchmarks were set for the courses outlined above. The Deputy Principal responded that, as part of the revised quality framework, internal targets for 2025/2026 would be set during the first Quality Review of the academic year, once the final outturn for 2024/2025 was confirmed.	
170	Data from the DfE's National Achievement Rate Tables would be considered when target-setting and used to compare performance. Areas with poor levels of retention and achievement would be highlighted in the Quality Improvement Plan for 2025/2026.	
171	Predicted Achievement – STEAM The performance level for STEAM programmes was 83.1% overall. Faculty managers were currently reviewing the predictions to ensure that the rationale was based on sound principles.	
172	Functional Skills Maths Level 1 delivered at the Green Lane Campus was a concern and was having a negative impact on overall achievement for Construction and Motor Vehicle courses. Further work on this data would be undertaken.	
173	Governors noted that information on T Level performance was not included in the report. A separate item would be submitted to the Committee's next meeting.	KL/DT
174	Retention levels were high in some areas, for example Computing (95%).	

175	A governor queried whether there was a link between success levels and external examinations. The Assistant Principal Quality reported that externally-set exams were often a challenge for students and there were inconsistencies between different departments – Travel & Tourism students had no exams, but the opposite was true for Computing. Level 2 programmes tended to have fewer exams than Level 3, due to their relative complexity. In more creative areas students built a portfolio of work throughout the year rather than undergoing a formative final assessment.	
176	Predicted Achievement – Adults & Community The overall predicted achievement level was 89.2%, with increases in most curriculum areas with the exception of Access to Higher Education (72% due to low retention) and Distance Learning (where achievement levels were below the equivalent in-house provision).	
177	Following questions about the College's plans for distance learning the Deputy Principal advised that the current portfolio of courses were for 30 hours each and only generated a small amount of fee income. Traditionally, the College had used this provision to address any gaps in AEB, however, it was now being challenged on the validity of such programmes, as the CA would only fund courses that aligned with its strategic priorities. The Combined Authority was also attempting to tighten the rules on students attending in person.	
178	The addition of the Adult Learning Centre provided an opportunity to refresh the College's offer. Access courses had been problematic in terms of planning in 2024/2025. Distance learning this was a vital way of encouraging learners who found it difficult to come into College. Governors asked that clarity over the value of including this provision within the overall portfolio needed to be set out.	
179	In response to questions about the Access programme the Assistant Principal Quality reported that enrolments had been lower in 2024/2025. Staffing challenges and a lack of consistency of teaching had impacted negatively. A revised Access and Pre-Access programme had been developed for 2025/2026.	
180	Performance had improved in the areas of ESOL, Community, Professional Services and Achieving Together. However, Supported Learning predicted achievement was lower than in 2023/2024.	
181	It was agreed that a report that brought together the data on all Access programmes would be submitted to the Committee's October 2025 meeting.	KL/DT
182	The overall level of predicted achievement was 87.6%, compared to 87.3% in 2023/2024, which was felt to be realistic given the projections on retention. It was noted that the national average was 85.5%. James Norris joined the meeting.	
183	Predicted Achievement – Apprenticeships The Assistant Principal Adults & WBL reported that predicted achievement levels for 2023/2024 had been 57.5% against the national average of 60.5%. This had improved to 62% for 2024/2025, despite the hard line taken on the robustness of data on the MIS. The best case scenario was	

	approximately 70%, but this was subject to all current learners remaining on programme, achieving in-year and not changing jobs. Retention was currently 77.1%.	
184	Governors noted that these levels of predicted achievement exceeded the targets within the College's Accountability Framework and would move it into the next category.	
185	There had been some legacy issues on the AAT programme, but these had now been addressed. A higher number of students had completed HGV apprenticeships, but there were still staffing challenges in this area.	
186	A governor questioned whether there were any lessons from the improvement in predicted achievement of B93 that could be applied to B92. The Assistant Principal advised that the Level 3 apprenticeship standard and the delivery model had been changed.	
187	Performance levels within the directorate varied, with the predicted outturn for traditional WBL courses at 80.3%.	
188	An update on sub-contracting performance was provided at every Committee meeting and it was noted that there would be no further engagement with Learning Curve, due to quality concerns. A total of 90% of the contracts with 3EEs and Embark had been delivered with no issues raised in terms of achieving the quality and financial targets.	
189.	There were issues nationally with the availability of end point assessments, which meant that students had to wait upto 7 weeks in some cases.	
190	The Chair thanked all staff for their work on improving predicted outcomes, particularly for English & Maths.	
DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS		
	1st July 2025	