

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
held on Tuesday 24th November 2020 at 14.00**

Present: Mr Aidan Cross (Student Governor), Mr Dan Lodge (Principal), Ms Lorna Macrae (Student Governor), Dr Grant Powell (Governor), Mrs Clare Ruaux (Staff Governor), Dr David Skipp (Chair of Governors), Mrs Helen Smith (Governor), Mr Dominic Wakefield (Parent Governor)

Apologies received: N/A

In attendance: Mr Rob Hussey (Vice Principal – Curriculum), Ms Andrea John (Vice Principal – Pastoral), Ms N Whitehead (Clerk)

Chair: Dr David Skipp

The Chair explained that the agenda had been designed to allow a focus on a small number of key strategic items with no consent items. Members were content with the information received and what was being asked of them.

1. **Declarations of interest:** There were no declarations of interest.
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 17th June 2020** were approved.
3. **Matters Arising**

Item 6: WFH Policy: Mrs Smith confirmed the difficulty she had envisaged in sharing training materials which were part of a subscription service.

Item 7bi: Safeguarding: The Clerk reported on the Summer Inset Days held on Zoom which several governors had joined and from which the recordings now available on SharePoint. All governors had taken part in the Safeguarding and Prevent training at the start of the Autumn term and EDI training was included in the Planning Day agenda on 1st December. Governors had also been invited to join the SFCA governance webinar programme to which the College had once more subscribed, which included, for example a session on governors' role in relation to Mental Health and Wellbeing.

4. **KPI Health check report: Education**

Paper: KPI Health Check- Education November 2020

The VP(Curriculum) explained the **Principal's initiative in dividing the College KPIs clearly between Business and Education to match both Committee and SMT remits.** This served to provide greater focus and clarity on the core indicators that reflect **student progress in terms of achievement of high grades (A*-B) and value added, alongside attendance and retention** that provide an insight into curriculum and support provision. The KPI document aimed to provide **a clear colour coded health check of the curriculum and support components of the college at three points in the academic year** that coincided with Progress Review grades being issued in each subject to students. This allowed for discussion and planning for students and staff in good time to promote improvements.

Looking at the first set of results for 2020/21, **Academic (A-level) and Vocational (BTEC + EYE Dip.+ Music Practitioners) high grades** were slightly down on 2019/20 data but within tolerance given the pandemic and adaption to blended learning made by both students and staff. With only a

light decrease in these high grades, this **provided assurance on the quality of the blended learning** provision.

The **transition programme** high grades were of more concern although the smaller cohort did distort the statistics looking year-on-year. A higher number of students had joined Level 3 courses than previously – in common with the sector as a whole - with the College conscious of the additional support which might therefore be required and the possible implications for progression. **Maths and Biology GCSEs** had both reported particularly promising anticipated grades of 4 or above relative to 2019/20 with **English GCSE** very much in line with the strong 2019 and 2020 final outcomes. In response to questions, The VP confirmed that Year 1 students were generally achieving similar grades in their progress reviews as in previous years. Governors asked whether they might in future also see the Year 1 high grades data across all course types within the KPIs (**Action: VP (Curriculum)**).

Looking at **Value added (VA)** for A level and Vocational courses (calculated using the national data set from summer 2019 results), **A-level value added for PR1 2020/21 was positive at 0.24**, and though lower than for the same period in 2019/20, was comparable to final outcomes in 2018 when Collyer's was placed 6th best sixth form nationally. This was encouraging given the additional challenges for both staff and students during the pandemic but supported the aim of returning to 100% on site teaching at the earliest opportunity. Vocational VA was strong with **L3 BTEC students making significantly better progress in 2020/21 than in 2019/20**.

Turning to the **attendance KPIs**, members noted that the methodology had remained unchanged and **full registration in distance learning weeks provided additional assurance on comparable participation year on year which was holding up well**. One student governor commented on the regrettable loss of social interaction with not being 100% on site and the challenge of adapting to the new way of working but that online lessons had been excellent. For the other, the reduced burden of travelling was welcome, as was the increased independence in learning. The staff governor commented on the **clear development of distance learning to recreate the dynamic in the classroom and add additional features** (such as the use of chat forums) **to help with teaching and assessment**. Looking ahead, the Principal commented that the **Learning Walk in February** was intended **to focus on distance learning and give governors insights into lessons online**.

With regard to **retention**, the VP (Pastoral) explained some changes in recording agreed at the first meeting of the Education Committee. The College was **recording from the first day of teaching in September to help keep track of first year students in those early stages, not least as a gauge of the effectiveness of the advice and guidance and induction activities**. (NB the date used for funding was at an enumeration point later in the term and could therefore be expected to be lower.) **Retention was higher across all pathways but particularly so for the transition programme. Additional monitoring also sought to track progression from the first to second year** more closely. Retention of those moving from IL to 1A and from 1A to 2A was up, owing in part perhaps to the absence of exams during lockdown. Some students had since gone back to 1A to a programme best suited to their current needs and some similar change might yet be expected. Retention overall, however, was generally very positive.

Members welcomed the new KPI format which they had found more accessible and informative (subject to the action point above) and looked forward to the emerging picture over the year.

5. Strategic Plan 2020-23

Paper: Strategic Plan 2020-23

The Principal explained that the new three-year Strategic Plan aimed to provide a clear direction against which to set the college QIP and further strategies such as Student Support and Enrichment. It was intended for the first time to be an outward facing document, hosted on the

college website, and to be aligned with the new SMT roles for both ownership and professional accountability.

In examining the document, questions were raised concerning the hierarchy of the description of the College as international and yet founded in the local community though others liked this ambitious outreach reflective of the intended growth in international students (albeit in a clear minority to local students). The Principal agreed to bear this in mind in communications and highlighted the intention next year to review the mission and values. Looking at the strategic context, members noted where consultation with staff and the student governors had led to enhancements to the original draft, for example in encouraging aspiration and clarity on the balance of the curriculum. Questions were posed on the aims and objectives including the (manageable) rate of growth (p.9) and the distinction between higher level apprenticeships, T levels and BTECs. The VP (Curriculum) explained the intention to retain a balance in the College's technical and vocational offer which met students' needs. Members noted that the Business and Community sections had been examined in detail by the F&GP Committee, whilst recognising the inevitable read-across of issues such as IT. They welcomed the opportunity to consider the curriculum and pastoral sections in particular prior to approval by the Governing Body.

6. College Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020-21

Paper: Draft College Self-Assessment Report 2019-20 and College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020-21

The VP (Curriculum) explained that the SAR provided a summary of progress against previous targets and comments were particularly sought on the forward plan contained in the QIP. He explained the introductory text and data in reflecting the success of the College and its students in the previous year and particularly in overcoming the challenges in the summer term as demonstrated by results and value-added. In addition to the L3VA data covered in the KPIs, the Alps figures reflected 2020 data and put the College in the top 10% nationally. Student satisfaction remained high with 95% of students satisfied with their courses although there had been a dip in 'strongly agree' possibly reflecting uncertainty as the country went into lockdown. The HESA statistics on achievement of Collyer's students at university were strong with, for example, over 93% of those at Russell Group universities achieving a first or 2:1, higher than the performance average across both the state and independent sectors. The higher attendance figures provided further confidence in the accuracy of the College's CAGs and results for 2019/20.

The College **SAR clearly evidenced a highly successful year with a number of key themes** emerging to be taken forward in the QIP. In relation to **curriculum**, these included:

- "One grade higher" initiative, further encouraging aspiration in respect of A* to B grade students (and particularly those capable of an A* where there might be less incentive to exceed an A) so that this cohort achieved the same levels of outstanding VA performance as those at the lower grades;
- Consistent very strong performance across all subjects in the communication of assessment criteria;
- A common approach to Progress Review data to help students have realistic but motivational expectations. One student governor commented that a more conservative forecast did not concern him personally so long as accompanied by feedback on how to improve. Members agreed that a culture of a natural journey of improvement was the objective;
- Responsiveness in relation to the technical and vocational offer;
- Quality of distance learning during the pandemic. The change had meant a colossal learning curve for staff and students. Whilst a 50/50 approach had helped with limiting the wider impact of the College's few cases of Covid, there was consensus on the desirability of returning to 100% on site.

Turning to **pastoral issues, the VP (Pastoral)** Pastoral explained that the SAR review had been helpful in providing perspective on the team's considerable achievements in a challenging environment. Going forward, she was conscious of the need to:

- Continue to monitor the student experience of blended learning, particularly for those to whom it presented additional challenges so that they were not disadvantaged;
- Further embed the new structures with development of a formal and sustainable Student Support Strategy;
- Encourage consistent student engagement with the wide range of enrichment opportunities available including work experience and ensure appropriate tracking with support from a new Navigate tool to record development activities;
- Review the Progression offer to ensure its continued success as a new area of her remit.

Members asked questions in relation to the recent loss of the Employability Programme co-ordinator, Business Enterprise and the appointment of a careers adviser and work experience co-ordinator. This would be a priority in the New Year taking account of affordability and the best fit with the College cohort. A review of work placements for T levels would also be necessary to take account of the impact of Covid on the ability of local businesses to take on Collyer's students

In looking at the **business and community sections** considered also by the F&GP Committee, members noted in particular the need to continue to outperform the competition with the quality of the offer to students, provide additional social space (both in response to the pandemic and longer term) and ensure that the IT infrastructure could facilitate effective teaching and learning.

In reviewing the development of the QIP in response to the SAR, members welcomed the introduction of late January exams in supporting students' confidence in the absence of Summer 20 exams and uncertainty as to Summer 21 which the students governors stressed was very unsettling. The Principal sought to reassure them of the lobbying being undertaken by the representative bodies in seeking clarity with the Government continuing to favour traditional approaches. Members recognised too, however, that blended learning had brought some advantages which might bear fruit for the future, for example, in terms of flexibility of access to digital materials for revision.

In bringing the discussion to a conclusion, the Chair thanked the SMT, and particularly the VP (Curriculum) as SAR/QIP lead and new in post, for their help in keeping governors well informed and their forensic search for areas for further improvement. The SAR reflected a huge level of achievement in the previous year and further ambitious plans for 2020/21.

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the College Self-Assessment Report 2019/20 (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020/21 at its next meeting.

7. Examinations Review of Marking Report

Paper: Summary of enquiries about results

The VP (Curriculum) explained that the usual review of national exam marking report was not applicable in 2020. In its stead he explained the challenges presented by the awarding of CAGs, both in digesting the guidance issued in May and developing an IT system to ensure consistent reporting and conclusions, building on an established structure of clear progress reporting which provided confidence in the security of the assessments. Approximately 150 enquiries had been received following the Government's U-turn but the College had been able to support their grades with clear evidence in all cases. Members agreed this was a credit to all the staff involved.

In response to questions on progression, the VP (Curriculum) explained that 91% of students had gone to their first choice of university with a small number disadvantaged because the universities had been full by the time of the U-turn. There had been some volatility in Oxbridge success which was not unusual

and also reflected student choice. Work continued in this area through, for example, a link with fellow Mercer institution, St Paul's, which helped to inform choice and foster self- belief.

8. Any other business None

9. Meeting Assessment

Members commented that the meeting had enabled members to be assured that the College's self-assessment processes remained robust. They welcomed the clear identification of priority themes and clear targets which would in turn facilitate effective tracking.

10. Date of the next meeting: Tuesday, 9th March 2021 at

Meeting ended at 16.24

Chair

Date

NCW 1-12-20