

**Minutes of the College Governing Body Meeting held
on Monday 6th February 2023 at 5.30pm
in the Redwood Suite, Richard Huish College**

Present: **College Governing Body Members**
Barbara Barratt (Chair) - BB
Dave Tomaney (Vice Chair) - DT
Anna Gabriel (*Via Teams*) - AG
Mark Deakin - MD
Ian Brown - IB
Nic Blunsum - NB
Joel Fowler (Student Governor) - JL
Hollie Wilkins (Student Governor) - HW

In attendance:
Gemma Lyons - GL
Richard Jones - RJ
Tara Flanagan - TF
Martin Wren – Assistant Principal
Joe Bennett – Assistant Principal
Julie Skinner – FE Consultant

Senior Leadership Team
Emma Fielding – Principal
Dan Mann – Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality
Becky Flower – Vice Principal: Student Support

Clerk
Hannah Clunie

Apologies: Moira Reynolds
Matt Morgan (Staff Governor)
Matt Nolan – Director of Student Support

Not present: Aaron Reid

Items marked with * had a paper previously circulated.
Item marked with + was a verbal update or presentation.

MINUTES

SECTION 1 – ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed the CGB that Gemma Lyons was to be appointed by the Trust Board as a new Staff Governor and would be attending today as an observer, governors were asked to introduce themselves.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made in connection to items on the agenda.

1.3 Minutes of previous CGB meeting held on *Monday 5th December 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 5th December 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record.

1.4 Matters arising report

All in agreement that matters arising were on today's agenda, scheduled for later in the year or had been dealt with.

Becky Flower to distribute Student Executive video to governors.

ACTION BECKY FLOWER

Terms of Reference – Finance Committee to be scheduled for the May 2023 agenda.

3.7 Destinations report – Richard Jones and Tara Flanagan

(This item was brought forwards to the start of the meeting)

Governors noted the report.

A governor commented that it was surprising how consistent the report was, and it reflects the support the students receive from the College. Governors noted that gap years remain popular and that the geographical spread of students moving onto university largely remained in the South West. This appeared to be a continued characteristic of South West students wishing to stay in this area of the Country.

Governors also questioned the percentage of disadvantaged students taking a gap year had increased from 14 in 2021 to 22 and do we track whether this is the case after they have left. Governors were advised that Y2 students are contacted in advance to discuss their gap year plans however this was not currently specifically targeted at disadvantaged students, but this was something that could be looked at going forwards. Students can be tracked via UCAS and have to show a firm future plan and/or deferred University placement.

Q: What are the changes being put into place for work ready students?

A: More employers were visiting the College, especially for vocational courses and students had also been on work placements. The College had employed the services of a company called 'Unloc' who would be visiting the College for a day to deliver a series of workshops including self-employment and entrepreneurship. This would also help students with career guidance, CV's, mock interviews and giving them tools to be successful in their careers.

Tara spoke to the governors about her role at the College which started off by helping students with UCAS/personal statements, helping students identify their skills, mock interviews and giving feedback. This also now includes assisting with the Course Quality Reviews by receiving feedback from students about their courses and ensuring students are on the correct study programmes.

The Chair thanked Richard and Tara for their report.

Richard and Tara left the meeting at 17.57pm.

SECTION 2 – STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

2.1 Principal's update

Industrial action had so far taken place on 30th November 2022 and 1st February 2023 with further strikes scheduled to take place on 2nd, 15th and 16th March. Approximately 50 teaching staff in the NEU took industrial action on 30th November and 1st February. The College remained open to students. Governors were reassured that the strikes were in response to the Government and not a reflection of the College.

The principal informed governors that in January 2023 the Government had made a U-turn on vocational courses. There were currently 134 general qualifications that were available to young people, this will now significantly reduce with 75 of these no longer being funded. This would affect approximately 25% of students at the College and impact disproportionately on disadvantaged

students. Throughout this process there would still be students enrolled on these courses at the College and it is important that these students are fully supported.

Vocational course managers are understandably concerned about the recent developments and are being encouraged to engage in their networks and forums. Strategy meetings will take place from next term with staff gathering as much information as possible.

The Sixth Form Colleges Association, including Richard Huish, are asking for this to be delayed for another 12 months until September 2026 and wish to continue delivering a diversity of options for the local community via the breadth of courses currently available.

There were currently 3 vacancies in MIS at present. Roz Abbott had taken on the role of Trust MIS Manager whilst the Trust work to gather additional resources. The principal would update governors further at the next CGB in March.

ACTION – PRINCIPAL TO UPDATE ON MIS VACANCIES AT NEXT CGB

The Chief Inspector for OFSTED, Amanda Spielman, would be attending the College on Monday 13th February for a tour of the college and to have lunch with students. Principals from across the South West had also been invited to attend.

A governor commented that this was brilliant news and publicity for the College.

SECTION 3 – ACADEMIC REPORTS

3.1 Headline data

Governors noted the data report.

Attendance was currently 1-2% lower than 2021-22 with disadvantaged students 3-4% lower. The various reasons for this included floods, teacher strikes and transport strikes. This has left a number of students accessing learning remotely on occasions. Despite this, attendance tracking is the most thorough it has ever been with pastoral staff meeting fortnightly and supporting students with attendance below 80%. Some information had been collated from other Sixth Form Colleges and showed a similar picture of being roughly 1% lower due to similar reasons.

Governors were advised that the data is from September 2022 and does not report the 2 year A-level linear retention. The data shows retention is currently 1% higher than February 2022. Level 2 is significantly higher than February 2022 (12.5%), this is largely due to the cohort being bigger.

A new learning support manager had been looking at the retention of EHCP students to ensure the College is providing the required support.

The Upper 6th progress was from November 2022, in class assessments had taken place which Governors were informed are not nationally standardised. Students who were more than 2 grades below the expected level were being identified and invited to academic tutoring sessions and an invite only parents evening.

A governor questioned whether the progress reports were anticipated to be higher from November 2022 to February 2023 as it had only risen from 44% to 45%, it was noted that ideally it would be higher and that further comparisons could take place with March data.

A governor questioned the purpose of the data, whether it's for staff or is also a benefit for students, governors were advised that the data is used for multiple reasons including progress reviews for individual students and subjects.

Following a November 2022 progress review, it had been agreed that no current working grade for the Level 2 A-Level and Vocational students. Teaching staff had been asked to grade their independent learning level and commitment to their studies.

Admissions

Becky Flower, VP of Student Support, advised governors that a hall had been booked in Minehead to meet with students. The College had received significantly more applications compared to 2022. Language, Computer Science, Music and Criminology continued to be popular.

The previous Year 10 experience day had a positive impact on applications, following this a Year 10 experience day has already been agreed for 2023 with 2000 already booked to attend. This would be taking place on 19th April if governors wish to attend.

Q: When do you expect applications to peak?

A: We don't know, as applications are regularly coming in.

Governors discussed that it is important they can always accommodate the students that apply to attend the College.

The Principal was currently meeting Head teachers of regional schools and an evening had been scheduled in March for independent school students to attend with their parent/carers.

3.2 Course quality review week summary

Governors noted the report.

A governor asked for more detail around the process as they found the report very informative.

Governors were advised that over the course of the week, staff start by meeting with the team of a particular course and continue with lesson observations and work scrutiny, checking that what is being said is being followed through in their teaching. The week then ends with a wrap up session with the course manager to discuss what is working well and what requires improvement. It is a good opportunity for staff development.

3.3 Finalised SAR and QIP

Governors noted the SAR and QIP.

Learning culture, vocational strategy and work readiness were all areas to work on.

Governors were informed that a Quality Committee had been set up which consisted of Barbara Barratt, Dave Tomaney and Anna Gabriel to meet with the Assistant Principals. The first meeting had been scheduled for Monday 3rd April. This will be a good opportunity to discuss in more detail in-year data and progress.

Governors all agreed that this would be a great way to monitor and compare data throughout the year.

3.4 Vocational Level 3 update - Assistant Principal – Martin Wren

Governors noted the report.

The current vocational students were not making as much progress as previously with the benchmark data showing they are below the national average. Upon looking into the data, RQF had made a more academic approach which was assessment driven, this was having an impact on staff and pupils lacking aspiration.

Staff have been dismayed by the recent developments around vocational courses but the focus is to support these students who will continue on these courses for the next 3 years. The 3 main objectives are learning culture, progress and work readiness.

A governor questioned the links between the College and the community as the working links are critical within these subjects and can take a lot of organisation. Governors were informed that another full time member of staff had joined the College careers team to help with administration and had put a programme into place to guide and assist with outside community links.

A governor suggested the College looking into various professional bodies/institutions to potentially help vocational students with their career options. Everyone agreed that this would be beneficial and a good idea for the students when looking at their future career choices.

A governor asked if more information could be provided regarding learning culture and what it meant for each course. Governors were advised that this would be covered in more detail in the Quality Committee and information could be fed back to the CGB.

3.6 Apprenticeship and AEB update – Julie Skinner (joined via Teams) *(This item was brought forward due to Julie joining the meeting at 7pm).*

Governors noted the report.

Governors discussed with Julie the most significant points from the paper. Julie noted that the challenges continue to be faced around data and interaction with the CIS team and the accuracy and availability of data is important.

The Chair thanked Julie and the apprenticeship team for their work despite the challenges they are facing.

Julie left the meeting at 19.07pm.

Anna Gabriel left the meeting at 19.10pm.

3.5 Level 2 update – Assistant Principal – Joe Bennett

Governors noted the report.

The recent government announcement regarding vocational qualifications means that a more substantial review will be required next year in readiness for the September 2024 intake. The likelihood going forwards would be a more GCSE based approach or a mixture of level 2 and 3 qualifications over a 3 year programme.

Q: Are behavioural issues improved if the students have a busier timetable?

A: Yes, this is also being looked into further in the summer alongside behaviour management to support student's successful progression onto level 3.

Martin Wren and Joe Bennett left the meeting at 19.18pm.

SECTION 4 – GOVERNANCE

4.1 Safeguarding – Lead Governor Update – Ian Brown

Governors noted the report.

Ian stated that he currently meets once a term with Matt Nolan, Head of Safeguarding. The College Safeguarding Team are frequently exposed to a multitude of safeguarding events and with the expansion of the team and support of Becky Flower, the team can support each other effectively.

Ian advised that the minutes of the safeguarding meetings could be shared with the CGB to give them a better understanding, Becky Flower was in agreement that this could be beneficial for the governors.

ACTION IAN BROWN

The Somerset County Council Safeguarding Audit 2022-23 had been completed and shared with governors who noted that it was reassuring to have an external report ensuring that the College was compliant with Safeguarding.

The governors wished to express their thanks to the Safeguarding team who continue to do an excellent job.

4.2 Governance update

The governors were informed that Ian Brown would be transferring from a Parent Governor to a Community Governor, pending approval from the Trust Board.

There were currently adverts for 2 Student Governors, 2 Parent Governors and 2 Community Governors, updates on these roles would be provided at the next CGB.

SECTION 5 – OTHER MATTERS

5.1 Any other business

The Chair informed governors that the CGB due to take place on Monday 8th May would need to be rescheduled due to the King's coronation. The date was suggested to be moved to Monday 15th May and the Clerk was to circulate this to all governors.

ACTION CLERK

Governors were informed that the next SFCA Governance Webinar was taking place on Monday 28th February and to see email from Clerk regarding registering.

The Chair informed governors that the CEO, John Abbott and Dan Maycock would be attending the next CGB meeting. Any questions were to be sent in advance to Barbara.

Governors were informed that the wellbeing team had completed a new questionnaire and the results would be shared at the March meeting.

Meeting end 19.33pm.

These minutes were approved by the College Governing Body on Monday 20th March 2023.