

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee held
on Wednesday 24 February 2021**

Present: Mr B Armstrong (Chair)
Ms T Aust (Principal)
Mr J Bolt
Ms C Singh
Ms B Sandhu
Ms Laura Weatherill (For part of the meeting)
Mr A Smith
Mr W Tyrell
Ms L Gomes

In Attendance: Mr J Allen (Clerk)
Ms S Davies (Interim Vice Principal)
Ms M Gajewska-Kopczyk (Curriculum Director - For part of the meeting)
Mr R Singh (Curriculum Director - For part of the meeting)
Ms M Halpin - Observer

The meeting commenced at 16.00.

WELCOMES, APOLOGIES & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. There were no apologies. The Chair informed the meeting that Ms Maggie Halpin was observing the meeting as part of her governor induction prior to the Corporation being asked to approve her appointment. As and when appointed Ms Halpin would become a member of this Committee.

2 There were no declared interests against any of the agenda items.

MINUTES

3 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 07 October 2020 be confirmed as a correct record of the meeting (Paper 1).

4 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the SAR validation meeting held on 18 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record of the meeting (Paper 2).

SUMMARY ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING

4. The “*Summary Action List*” was received (Paper 3) and the following updates were noted:

MIN REF	DETAILS OF RESOLUTION/ACTION POINT	COMMENTARY / UPDATE MADE AVAILABLE
4(ii)	Risk 42 - a failure to improve achievement in English & maths qualifications - to review the risk score when validated results have been confirmed. It was confirmed the risk will be reduced at the next	Agenda item

	review, as achievement results are good, but final validation of the results has yet to be confirmed.	
6	To receive a short summary on how the curriculum is being shaped in response to student destination and curriculum data in general.	Agenda item
17	Proposed self-assessment 'Grade 1' for Science: It was agreed to defer this back to the Senior Management Team and Curriculum Director for further review. The outcome of the review, along with the proposed grade and the reasons for recommending the grade, to be confirmed to the Chair.	Chair was informed that the proposed 'Grade 1' was the final agreed self-assessment grade for Science

DATA DASHBOARD REVIEW

5. It has been agreed for the Data Dashboard to be the first main agenda item at all meetings of the Committee and for the meeting to review in detail those KPIs that fall under the Committee's remit, these being:

- Attendance
- Achievement
- Deep Dives
- Learning walks

(Ms M Gajewska-Kopczyk and Mr R Singh were in attendance to present this agenda item)

(i) Attendance:

6. It was confirmed attendance remains a strategic priority for the College being one of the Leadership and Management issues arising from the last two Ofsted inspections.

7. In response to the COVID-19 situation in September 2020, the College adopted a blended learning model for curriculum delivery whereby students have some face-to-face delivery (on-site) as well as remote delivery each week. This has been combined with an in-house and external communication strategy to reassure students and staff about the measures put in place to prevent the spread of the virus.

8. Regardless as to the form of attendance, the West Thames College Attendance Toolkit insists on high attendance for all students from the outset of the course and includes the 'Standards for Success' initiative. This sets out an ever-increasing level of intervention by key staff in the form of texts, telephone calls, letters, student contracts and meetings with parents/carers and managers to address student non-attendance.

9. 'Live' data drawing from register marks shows the overall College attendance rate for 16-19 study programmes for the year to date (currently 87%). Remote attendance is marked on the registers with 'Q' and this enables staff to check student compliance against their timetable.

10. Currently, YTD attendance for all learners is 88%, compared with this year's target of 87% and last year's outturn of 87%. The Committee received assurances that the focus on the importance of attendance is being relentlessly sustained and

will remain a top priority for all staff.

(ii) Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TLA) - Learning Walks

11. As previously reported, there have been 117 learning walks completed up until the end of term one and the analysis of these were subject to review at the December Corporation meeting. As reported in December, 68% of the learning walks were rated as 'Green', 26% rated as 'Amber' with 6% rated as 'Red'. When compared to the same period last year, there has been an increase of nine percentage points for green rated lessons, a decrease of eight percentage points in the proportion of amber lessons and a one percentage point decrease in the proportion of red lessons. There were 35 more observations completed this year when compared to the same period last year.

12. Learning walk one was completed in all curriculum areas as planned, between September and December 2020. A small number of teachers had their learning walk one postponed due to the pandemic. Learning walk two, planned to start in January 2021, has now been postponed due to the current situation with alternative arrangements in place.

13. Following the conclusion of a learning walk, teachers are set clear targets in an improvement plan (TIP) whether sessions were graded as green, amber or red. For amber and red sessions, appropriate support has been put in place at an individual teacher level and carefully monitored.

14. Since January 2021, due to the national lockdown, the College has moved into online delivery. Learning Walk two has been postponed and, in its place, a framework for supportive observations of online teaching has been developed. Online observations have been completed in all curriculum areas, with focus on supporting staff in delivering remote lessons. Since September, there has been significant improvement in the use of Teams to deliver live lessons in all areas. In all live lessons observed teachers effectively used common features of Teams, such as managing online meetings, uploading files, sharing screen, presenting, using chat, audio and webcams.

15. The Chair sought feedback from the two student governors as to how they found on-line learning during the College closures. Will Tyrell indicated conducting practical elements of his sports course via on-line learning was difficult during the first College closure, so the emphasis then was on delivering theory learning. During the second closure, more focus was on 'activities' and 'practicals' with innovative use of on-line learning. Overall, there was a positive feeling that students were doing the work that was set, with full engagement in the learning process. Lavanya Gomes reported that there were no issues with on-line learning but students were looking forward to returning to the college for face-to-face learning and to meet in person with their fellow students.

16. The Chair thanked the student governors for their positive comments.

(iii) Achievement:

17. Achievement rates for 2019-20 are very high with overall achievement at 92% compared with the 2018-19 National Achievement Rate (NAR) of 86%. It was confirmed a full analysis and breakdown of achievement data is a later agenda item.

18. The first round of predicted achievement is currently work in progress and due to be completed by February half term. The working draft of the predicted achievement activity indicates that the College is largely on track against the targets set. However, once completed, a fuller analysis of the data will be carried out and shared with Governors. In the meantime, the Principal's Performance Review Meetings are taking place to monitor progress against targets in real time.

Deep Dives:

19. The deep dive is a process that follows the Ofsted criteria for the quality of education. Evidence is gathered from a range of activities such as lesson observations which involve discussions with students and teachers; meetings with managers to discuss the intent, implementation and impact of the curriculum; reviews of marked work to evaluate the quality of the assessment process; an observation of the student learning advisor to assess the effectiveness of tutorials; observations of students with high needs and standardisation of learning walks. Standardisation involves selecting one observation and evaluating whether or not the observer is accurate in their judgements; reviewing the learning walk form and observing the feedback.

20. The deep dive process was refined over the summer and there is more emphasis on gathering student feedback from every single lesson, a targeted and more comprehensive review of marked work, and an evaluation on the manager's observations. In addition to this, there is an observation of the Student Learning Advisor and each area has a specific action plan which is monitored by the Heads of TLA and Head of Quality. These action plans have actions with deadlines and identify the person responsible.

21. To date the College has completed deep dives in the following areas: Maths, ESOL (Adult and Threshold combined), Health and Care and Performing Arts. Business & ICT (combined) Travel, Sport & Public Services (combined), English and Construction. The Engineering deep dive is underway and close to completion.

22. All areas in which a deep dive has been completed have had their feedback and the reports which include the action plans have been issued. These will be monitored and reported in accordance with the deadlines. There is a greater emphasis for managers to resolve swiftly any issues arising from a deep dive. Actions are focused around improving the teaching and assessment within areas.

23. All deep dives were scheduled to be completed by the February half term, but have now been postponed, due to the current situation.

24. For the deep dives completed in the autumn term, progress against targets in action plans will be monitored and reviewed in accordance with the deadlines and signed off following the next round of PPR meetings.

25. The College will complete deep dives for all areas and produce reports with action plans which are all focused on a continuous improvement cycle which will be reviewed and then fed into the self-assessment process for each area. This will then inform the College self-assessment report.

26. The staff governor welcomed the 'Deep Dives' as this gave an opportunity to staff to promote their work and achievements. It was also useful preparation in advance of the inspection.

(Ms M Gajewska-Kopczyk and Mr R Singh left the meeting at this point)

PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT (DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOALS 2 AND 3)

27. The Committee received for review the Development Plan which was covered in detail during the review of the Data Dashboard. In addition to the review conducted, the Committee noted the following points:

- 2.1: Employer engagement – Work experience has been greatly impacted by the pandemic. To address this, virtual work experience opportunities have been set up with innovative work experience made available to over 200 students.
- 2.4: Student recruitment and enrolment – current external applications are much higher compared against this time last year. Three reasons for the improvement were noted – improving demographics, impact of the pandemic and effective marketing strategies especially through the use of social media.
- 2.5: Commercial income – this remains “amber’ due to the negative impact arising from the pandemic.
- 3.1: Staff health & well-being: The Principal reported a significant amount of work has been done to support mental health and well-being of staff. The key task has been to share and promote the support that is made available and to communicate this effectively to all staff. Support will continue to be made available when staff return on 08 March. The Committee asked what support was being made available to the Executive and it was confirmed the Executive can, and have, accessed the same support which is made available to staff. The key message from the Executive was that they and all staff were looking forward to the ‘norm’ when students return to attend College. The staff governor confirmed to the Committee that the level of well-being support made available was phenomenal. Staff feedback was sought on what support they felt was needed and, the suggestions they made, were promptly introduced.

28. The Committee asked about the arrangements for September 2021 starters to support those students whose academic progress has been greatly affected by not being able to attend face to face learning during the pandemic. The Principal acknowledged the College will be facing a different situation in September compared against previous years and it will be some time before we fully realise the true impact. However, in September 2020 we experienced some of this with the lost learning from the first pandemic. We did have to make adjustments and we will use this learning to inform our future plans. The key will be ensuring a robust initial assessment process is followed for each student and to access the additional support and funding being made available by the Department of Education to support the return of students.

POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN (DEVELOPMENT PLAN GOAL 1)

29. It was noted the actions and resulting impact summarised in the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) were covered in detail during the review of the Data Dashboard.

30. The Principal brought to the attention of the Committee the significant negative impact on apprenticeship provision as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The good progress that was being made on improving achievement rates (as evidenced in 2019-20 achievement rates) will be greatly affected in achievement rates for 2020-21 with many Apprentices having been furloughed and therefore unable to complete their programme. The strategic decision was taken to focus apprenticeship provision on logistics, a key employment sector in the local area with the links to Heathrow Airport. However, this sector has been disseminated by the pandemic and this has had a direct impact on our apprenticeship provision, which is currently incredibly small.

ACHIEVEMENT RATE REPORT - FINAL COLLEGE ACHIEVEMENT RATES 2019/20

31. Final achievement rates for 2019-20 are now complete and were summarised in the report (Paper 7). Unlike previous years and, as a direct result of the pandemic, there are no Qualification Achievement Rates (QAR) produced for 2019-20 and no National Achievement Rate Tables (NART). National Rates (NR) used in the report were the latest available NR, covering the period 2018-19.

(i) College headline data for 14-16, 16-18, Adults and High Needs Students (HNS)

(Green indicates improving and above National Rates; Amber indicates in line with National Rates)

2018-19 College Data	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	National Rates (NR) 2018-19 (timely)	Comment
14-16	95% →	95%	98%	N/A	Stable and high
Overall 16-18	90% ↑	86%	81%	83.1%	4% increase on last year
Level 1	87% ↑	85%	82%	81.8%	2% increase
Level 2	94% ↑	87%	79%	82.3%	7% increase
Level 3	92% ↑	87%	88%	85.4%	5% increase
Adults					
Overall 19+	93% ↑	92%	88%	88.6%	1% increase on last year
Level 1	94% ↑	93%	90%	91.3%	1% increase
Level 2	92% →	92%	84%	85.9%	Stable and high
Level 3	89% ↑	86%	87%	80.2%	3% increase
College Overall	92% ↑	90%	85%	85.9%	2% increase on last year
Level 1	91% →	91%	87%	88.0%	Stable and high
Level 2	93% ↑	89%	80%	84.1%	4% increase
Level 3	91% ↑	87%	88%	84.6%	4% increase
(HNS)	97% ↑	92%	94%	N/A	5% increase

(ii) English and Maths Achievement Rates for 2019-20 as at 10th February 2020:

2018-19 College Data	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18	NR 2018-19	Comments
Overall Functional Skills (FS)	82% ↑	78%	69%	Not available	4% increase on last year
Entry FS					

Entry English	87% ↓	94%	93%	Not available	5% decrease in retention (96% to 91%) during March to June lockdown 2020
Entry maths	93% ↑	92%	95%	Not available	1% increase
Level 1 FS					
Level 1 English	74% ↑	50%	52%	43%	A significant increase of 24% and this was a key area of focus for 19+ students
Level 1 maths	73% ↑	65%	59%	49%	8% increase
GCSE					
Overall GCSE	93% ↑	87%	83%	83%	6% increase on last year
GCSE English	92% ↑	86%	82%	83%	Overall improvement of 9%
*4-9 high grades	39% ↑	31%	40%	25%	8% increase
GCSE maths	95% ↑	87%	83%	82%	Overall improvement of 8%
*4-9 high grades	38% ↑	28%	27%	19%	10% increase

(iii) Apprenticeship Achievement Rates as at 10th February 2021:

College Data	2019-20	2018-19	2018-19 NR	2017-18	2016-17	Comments
Timely	59.4% ↑	48.7%	59.9%	51.2%	46.1%	
Overall	69.5% ↑	51.4%	66.7%	69.2%	60.7%	
Leavers	2019-20	2018-19		2017-18	2016-17	
Timely	32	76		172	228	
Overall	59	107		185	239	

32. As summarised in the PIAP, the Committee noted the following key areas being actioned to improve performance:

- Entry Level English provision requires improvement
- Sustain work done to strengthen L1 English and Maths and FE provision
- Bring any underperforming courses up to the required standard and monitor the performance of these through the quality assurance processes.
- Continue to increase Timely Achievement rates for Apprenticeships.

33. In conclusion, the Committee welcomed the positive news contained within the report but sought assurances from the Executive that they have full confidence in the data. In response, the Principal confirmed there was indeed confidence in the reliability of the data presented to Governors as the College has been scrupulous in the application of the internal verification processes, and the data for 2019/20 continues the year-on-year improvements over the last three years.

34. The Committee placed on record its thanks to all the staff for overseeing the year-on-year improvements over the last three years culminating in the excellent data for 2019/20. The Principal confirmed she would inform College staff accordingly.

RECRUITMENT OF VICE PRINCIPAL

35. The Principal reported on the recent recruitment process for the position of Vice Principal and confirmed the appointment of Ms Marta Gajewska-Kopczyk.

CURRICULUM PLANNING

36. The Committee received for review a brief case study on how the Art & Media Curriculum Team made changes to their curriculum offer in response to student destination data, curriculum data in general, the changing economic landscape and the changes in employment opportunities associated with this sector (Paper 4). The Team recognised a change was required and that there was a need to modernise and update the curriculum offer by creating a clear line of sight into art and design related jobs and employment. Particular focus was given to digital skills.

37. The impact of the changes made has resulted in an increase in student numbers, an increase in achievement rates and high grades, with significant progress made in progression rates, both internal and external progression (Higher Education and employment).

38. The Committee welcomed the process followed and the resulting positive impact arising from the changes made to the curriculum offer. The Committee asked if all curriculum areas followed a similar process? In response, the Principal reported that it was a useful exercise in writing the case study and, as a result, a template following a similar process has been made available to Curriculum Directors. Curriculum Directors continue to review and amend their curriculum offer in line with industry expectations and innovation.

(Laura Weatherill joined the meeting at this point)

GOVERNOR 'VIRTUAL' LINK VISIT UPDATES

39. Due to the Covid pandemic and resulting closure of the College during the Spring term, governor link visits in person had been deferred to the summer term. As an alternative to conducting a visit, Governors were invited to make contact with their respective governor link member of staff by arranging a video-conferencing call. Ms Laura Weatherill reported very positively on the conference call she held with members of staff from the Creative Industries curriculum area, these being:

- Katrin Lehmann, Director of Creative Industries and HE
- Janna Cooper, CQTM in Arts and Media
- Kate McGill, CQTM in Hair and Beauty
- Pauline Hudson, CQTM in Performing and Production Arts

40. It was reported the Chair of the Corporation held a conference call with Mr Ranjit Singh, the Curriculum Director responsible for Health & Social Care.

RISK REGISTER

41. The College report '*Risk Register*' was received (Paper 5), highlighting the areas of focus relevant to the Committee. The Audit Committee requested that each Committee be asked to review whether there were sufficient and robust sources of 'Independent Assurances', against each risk, that fall under the terms of reference of the Committee, and whether identified 'Governor Oversight' arrangements are adequate and are fit for purpose.

42. It was noted and welcomed that the risk score for 'Risk 42' has been reduced from a score of 25 (Red) to 15 (Green) following a significant improvement in achievement rates for English & maths qualifications.

43. The Committee asked why the score of 20 for '*Risk 12 – Failure to improve attendance in line with College targets*' remains the same high-risk score after taking into account mitigation actions and with current attendance data broadly in line with College targets as reported during the review of the Data Dashboard. In response, the Principal stated the College would review the scores for this risk towards the end of the academic year before any final judgement is made on attendance. In addition, the expected Ofsted inspection next term would also provide the opportunity for external validation on student attendance. The Principal concluded that after the inspection, all risks in the Risk Register associated with curriculum delivery would be subject to further review.

44. It was agreed no new risks had been identified at this meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

45. The safeguarding governor gave the Committee an update on the outcome of the meeting with the College's safeguarding officer that was held prior to this meeting.

46. Following the return of students at the end of the previous lockdown and re-opening of the College, there was a spike of safeguarding referrals made and the expectation is for there to be another increase in referrals following the return of students from 08 March.

47. All 14-19 students on their return have to be Covid-19 tested by the College three times over a short period of time and, following the three tests, students will then be issued with home testing kits and to conduct tests themselves twice a week. The College is in the process of putting in place the necessary arrangements to meet the new requirements.

48. The Principal reported St Mary's University this week asked for the College to agree to sign a Memorandum of Agreement that will set out how the College and University can work together in a more formal way. The Principal confirmed there are no costs involved and the Committee supported the proposal.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

49. The meeting closed at 18.00

Signed: _____

Date: _____