



**ST MARY'S COLLEGE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY 18TH MARCH 2021 AT 4PM VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

- Present:** Mrs A Francis (20/21 Committee Chair) (AMF)
Mr C. Beesley (from item 5) (CB)
Mrs E. Best (Interim Principal) (EB)
Ms P. Lightbown (Staff Governor) (PL)
Mr P. Moore (20/21 Vice Chair) (PM)
- In attendance:** Mrs L. Farnhill (Clerk to the Board) (LF)
- Staff:** Max Makda (up to item 11) (MM)
- Apologies:** Kelly Sharp (DSL - invited to be in attendance but unavailable) (KS)

OPEN AND WELCOME

Chair AMF welcomed members and attendees to the meeting, thanking them for giving up their time to attend.

ITEM 1 - APOLOGIES

The clerk confirmed that governor CB was having difficulty in connecting to the meeting. EB notified the Committee that KS was unable to be in attendance, therefore had provided detailed reports with points highlighted for EB to deliver.

Item 1 - Noted: The committee noted the apologies from KS and agreed to continue with the meeting whilst the clerk made further attempts to provide alternative access for CB.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Interim Principal, EB declared a standing interest, married to a member of staff, Howard Best, the Director of Curriculum. LF and AMF declared that they were both employed at Southport College.

Item 2 – Noted: The declarations of interest were noted.

ITEM 3 - APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD BY VIDEO CONFERENCE ON 9TH DECEMBER 2020

AMF invited members to review and note in any inaccuracies in the minutes, advising the Committee that she had already reviewed them with the Clerk having made the recommended amendments ahead of general circulation. **A member commented** on how detailed they were, thanking the clerk and noting they had no corrections.

AMF asked if all actions and matters arising were included within the agenda or documented under item 4, with no corrections or additional matters arising, the minutes were approved without amendment.

Item 3 – Approved: The Committee approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee held on 9th December 2020.

ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING ON 9TH DECEMBER 2020

AMF invited MM to provide an update on progress against the learning walks. MM informed the Committee that deep dives had been planned in for the period of January to March which could not be undertaken due to the national lockdown. As an alternative, virtual learning walks, in the format of ‘peer pods’ were conducted. MM explained that this involved staff being grouped in pods of their choice to observe two other staff and be observed by two staff. This process was underway with completion due in the following week. MM notified the Committee that feedback to date had been positive, with the process well received. MM added that staff appreciated having the opportunity, to observe and develop best practice around working on virtual platforms and live streaming. MM informed the Committee that the deep dives may be revisited later in the year. MM also notified the Committee that Teacher Assessed Grade processes were being finalised with a report to the Committee in July on this. **A member asked** if there was an opportunity on the agenda for the Committee to be given assurance about how the college would approach this, with the clerk confirming this was not on the agenda but could be done as ‘any other business’.

Item 4 - Noted: The Committee noted the update on deep dives and learning walks and agreed to defer a full formal update report to the next meeting of the Committee.

ITEM 5 - APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE (EFFECTIVE FROM 20TH MARCH 2021)

The clerk advised the Committee that due to her relocation, AMF could no longer maintain her position on the Board of Governors. The clerk confirmed that following the announcement, she had invited applications and nominations for the posts currently held by AMF as Vice Chair to the Board and Chair of the Quality Committee. The clerk confirmed that member CB had self-nominated for the post of Committee Chair and asked if any other member wished to self-nominate or nominate another member. Member PM seconded the nomination of CB as Committee Chair and this was approved by the Committee, with CB thanked and congratulated on his appointment.

Item 5 - Approved: The Committee approved Chris Beesley as Chair of the Quality Committee.

ITEM 6 SAFEGUARDING UPDATE - TO INCLUDE COVID-19 (STANDING ITEM)

EB delivered the report provided by KS, noting the overall number of students on the safeguarding register had reduced, with the register having been reviewed in preparation for the lockdown. EB informed the Committee that mental health continued to be the highest category of need with 42 students on the register under this category of need.

EB provided a detailed update of the CIN cases, including those that had left or become dormant, advising that the case now dormant with children's services continued to be monitored by the safeguarding team within SMC.

EB updated the Committee on the criminal investigation, advising that it was expected that the case would be adjourned.

EB informed the Committee of the extensive work undertaken by the team to support the overall wellbeing of staff and students, which included a weekly bulletin, dedicated wellbeing hub and personalised postcards issued to students and to staff during the lockdown to show support and appreciation. EB added that these had been well received, having had many positive comments following their distribution.

EB provided the Committee with a detailed update on staffing within the safeguarding team, both to support KS whilst she covered the additional role of COVID-19 coordinator and to ensure sufficient support in her absence. EB outlined the skills and experience of those covering, providing assurance to the Committee that the College safeguarding team remained suitably resourced.

EB notified the Committee that the College initiated a student wellbeing survey in January, which had received a great response with only 2 students failing to respond. EB explained that in addition to seeking to establish which students needed emotional support; it also ascertained the number of students without access to suitable equipment for facilitating online lesson delivery, both those without devices or sharing devices between multiple siblings. EB advised the Committee that responses to the survey were analysed, with one to one individualised support put in place for those flagged as having a wellbeing need, and 30 laptops lent to students with no or shared access.

EB summarised the COVID-19 rates, highlighting the low rates with no evidence of internal transmission despite the high rates within the local community.

A member commented on how comprehensive the report was, thanking EB for the delivery, noting that the information had left them with no further questions.

Another member added that they wished to note that the college response to the pandemic including their risk assessment was reflective of the care and attention the College had towards its staff and students, further evidenced by the safeguarding report which demonstrated how wellbeing remained central to the College's thought processes. The **member asked** that their gratitude was passed on to all involved.

Item 6 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 7 - EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN/ STRATEGY IMPACT UPDATE - TO INCLUDE TARGETS

LINKED TO KPI'S

EB advised the Committee that she would deliver the update on behalf of KS. EB thanked the Committee for their input at the previous meeting, confirming that the recommendation to incorporate College KPI's into the strategy had been completed.

EB offered her support to KS relating to the progress against the action plan, informing the Committee that there had been considerable additional work undertaken by KS in her capacity as DSL during the lockdown as well as undertaking the role of COVID-19 coordinator. EB informed the Committee that the uplift of the SENCO officer from 0.7 to full time would support work against the equality and diversity action plan, noting that some actions had already been undertaken including a policy refresh and implementation of thematic weeks embedded into the tutorial program, with other areas to be completed within the spring term.

A member commented that EB was right to support KS, acknowledging the additional work required in relation to both the DSL and COVID 19 coordinator roles.

Item 7 - Noted: The Committee noted the update.

ITEM 8 - IN YEAR RETENTION, ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWALS

MM provided an overview of the content of the report, highlighting that attendance was in line with the college target of 93%, advising that data collection was suspended during the lockdown period and highlighting that the 19+ figure of 83% related to only one student.

MM described the retention data as positive, with all areas above the retention target, noting an overall figure of 94.3%, which was above the previously released national average data. MM informed the Committee that there was no change in student numbers recorded from January to February.

MM provided a breakdown of the destination information of the students that had left, noting the majority had moved onto next steps, although 5 were excluded. MM indicated that he expected most students currently enrolled to now stay to the end of the academic year, with retention supported by the use of TAGs. MM stated that the work to support students with personal issues and maintain contact throughout the pandemic resulted in good retention, evidenced by the student survey outcomes, where students confirmed that they felt supported, and were pleased with the provision.

A member indicated that they felt assured from the information presented that the remote learning offer combined with effective mechanisms for student support were implemented effectively as evidenced by the retention and attendance data, **asking** how the college had transitioned back to onsite learning.

EB informed the Committee that the College had reviewed its risk assessment and COVID-19 safety measures ahead of reopening, with these agreed by the health and safety team at the local authority and the ESFA. The College then reopened for staff on 8th March, with students continuing with online learning whilst attending the site for 2 tests, completed on an appointment basis. EB confirmed that on 15th March, students returned to the blended learning time table with 66% of learning taking place face to face onsite, whilst undertaking their 3rd test and being provided with their home test kits to continue testing twice weekly from home, with the staff having already transitioned to the home testing process.

EB was thanked for the update, with a **member commenting** on how they felt reassured by the safety measures detailed and the approach to learning.

Item 8 - Noted: The Committee noted the update on attendance, retention and withdrawals and noted the verbal update on the reopening of the College.

ITEM 9 - STUDENT CROSS COLLEGE SURVEY RESULTS

AMF invited MM to summarise the report and noted that the information within the context of the pandemic and announcement of the College closure had been reassuring to the Committee.

MM informed the Committee that the survey scheduled for January went ahead despite the lockdown announcement and concerns on the impact this would have on the responses. MM notified the Committee that the survey was done on MS Forms, with a text messages sent to the students with a link to the survey, with 73 students in year 12 and 103 in year 13 completing the survey.

MM summarised the responses, informing the Committee that outcomes across the two year groups had been similar, although the year 13 results had been slightly more positive with overall satisfaction of 88% in year 13 against 86% in year 12, with 12 of the 14 questions receiving over 80% satisfaction for year 13 against 10 questions for year 12.

MM summarised the comments, noting that the favourable comments related to support and some named teachers, however, indicated that there had been some unfavourable comments, although less in year 13, there was still some dissatisfaction. MM highlighted that half of the negative comments related to issues around online lessons, considered to be a concurrent theme through all surveys, including the parent survey. Some students had also indicated that they did not like doing the same lesson for a full day, with some year 13 comments indicating that they felt that the DILA activities were not effective.

MM informed the Committee that the length of lessons and maintaining engagement were the main issues, with actions undertaken to provide support to staff in this area. This had been provided through internal and external training at inset and the 'peer pod' lesson observations, with further training given on the setting of effective DILA activities. MM also conveyed actions undertaken to reassure students about why the timetable was structured with full days of the same lesson, reminding students of the need to minimise mixing to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19, in the interests of their own safety.

A member asked if the level of satisfaction was linked to the projected outcomes of the learners, indicating that those that were dissatisfied were often the ones underperforming and generally less engaged. MM advised that this was considered as a possibility, with this correlation noted in the subject area surveys, however, the correlation could not be verified in the year group surveys as these were completed anonymously.

A member added that overall the responses provided useful insight, stating they felt reassured that timely actions were undertaken to respond to areas for improvement.

Item 9 - Noted: The Committee noted the content of the report.

ITEM 10 - PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

MM summarised the report, highlighting the high response rate, with 454 responses that achieved overall satisfaction of 92% with 70% of the comments being favourable.

MM advised the Committee that parents comments indicated they were satisfied with the support provided by the College and the rapid responses received to queries, with many saddened by the news of the closure, noting that for some families, there had been an affiliation with the College for a number of generations.

MM summarised the negative comments, with parents unhappy with the length of online lessons, with some stating they found it difficult to communicate with teachers, with issues addressed through inset training.

MM noted that the question asking parents if they would recommend SMC to others had received some negative responses, however, this was due to them being unable to recommend the College as it was due to close, indicating that this question should have been removed from the survey and would not be included in future surveys.

A member indicated that removal was the sensible course of action, agreeing that a parent could not recommend a college that was not enrolling new students. **Another member indicated** that the responses to this question could be discounted and may offer even more favourable overall results.

A further member comment was made that highlighted the high level of engagement with the surveys was further evidence of the high engagement with the college overall, noting it was indicative of effective communication between the college and parents. The member reiterated their earlier point, regarding the positive retention data, with learners remaining engaged during the lockdown and expressing their views positively as evidence that the college was reading and responding to student needs effectively.

Item 10 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 11 - PROGRESS AGAINST QIP AND PROGRESS AGAINST IMPLEMENTATION PLAN WORK-STREAM

MM noted the difficulty in updating the QIP and completing actions due to the college closure, advising the Committee that plans for reporting had been changed to with SLT members informed of the updated requirements for reporting with a full update to be completed after Easter and presented at the next Committee meeting.

MM advised the Committee that any gaps in column two were due to being unable to carry out actions during the closure. MM notified the Committee that a full complement of guided learning hours had been delivered, highlighting that these had all been live lessons, even during the closure, using MS Teams and not pre-recorded lessons. MM expressed pride in the college's commitment to maintaining full lesson delivery for their students, with an expectation of attendance even when attendance data was not recorded.

MM summarised the information provided within the safeguarding report of the IT audit undertaken, notifying the Committee that all staff and students were supported and given the relevant hardware and software to ensure the success of the online lesson delivery.

MM summarised the participant rates with online platforms, with the College's online VLE, PearlTress having a high level of usage with over 80% of students using it, with analysis showing that those not using it were due to the nature of the subject, where Google classroom or MS teams was more appropriate, with 100% of students using MS teams. MM advised the Committee that the audit had also found that some students preferred online learning and wanted this to continue even when face to face learning resumes.

MM advised that it was difficult to report on discipline with non-engagement being the key issue during the closure. MM confirmed that there had been little change from November reporting through to the report drafted in February, highlighting that most contracts were issued to level 2 learners with monitoring provided by KS and her team.

MM advised the Committee that the virtual parents evening had been very successful with very positive feedback from parents and staff on the effective facilitation through MS Teams.

MM informed the Committee that following the summer assessment and mock exams, further information could be reported to the Committee, with the focus over the previous two months having been on engagement, risk assessments and facilitating a safe return to onsite working including the roll out of the testing regime.

A member noted that the document was detailed and clearly evident as a working document, indicating that this evidenced a continued focus on improvements irrespective of the current situation, with actions moved on where necessary, with alternatives undertaken where possible, thanking MM for the detail provided.

A member indicated that the next quality focus would be the TAG's, including how SMC compares within the sector, with learners continuing to make the best progress that they can.

The clerk recommended MM providing the update that had been scheduled for 'any other business' ahead of moving on to the HE reports.

Item 11 - Noted: The Committee noted the detail of the report.

ITEM 14 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

MM informed the Committee that the SLT had been working on provision for mock exams to be undertaken in May. MM added that following the release of the DfE TAG guidance, the SLT were working closely with the exams officer whilst waiting for resources and further information from the exam board, with provisional plans for mocks already in place for May.

MM confirmed that the mocks would contribute significantly to the TAG's, with different weighting applied to different assessments taken over the 2 years. MM noted that the testing would only cover what had been delivered in lessons and were being carefully timed to avoid religious festivals and other events that would impact on the ability of students or staff to prepare and participate in the exams.

MM informed the Committee that there had been 3 termly assessments, 1 completed in year 12 with 2 done in year 13, with the mock likely to carry a more significant weighting. MM described the likely evidence to proportionately make up the TAG including coursework, which would be marked and quality assured internally. MM notified the Committee that the staff forum would feed into the process, having provided positive feedback on the plans to date.

MM confirmed that information regarding the mock exams would be cascade in the coming week, followed by further information relating to the TAG's to be cascaded after the Easter break once the process was finalised and the weightings decided. MM assured the Committee that students would be kept fully informed and stated that the quality assurance process would be as robust as had been used for the CAG's in the previous year, reminding the Committee of the process used. MM advised that 2 year data would be provided to staff, allowing them to compare the results to previous years so that any outlying data can be challenged or supplemented with additional supporting information, with evidence stored securely to ensure that grades can be justified and the quality assurance and communication strategy in place to minimise and appeals.

A member asked if the earlier results days had been factored in to staff schedules and leave patterns, asking if enough staff would be available to support students.

EB informed the Committee that the SLT and executive would usually be on hand for the results days, with staff due back on 18th August, with a day in lieu offered in return. EB advised that although not formally communicated, staff were aware of the dates and plans were in place to reach out to staff to confirm their availability for the 10th and 12th August.

The Committee Chair, AMF personally thanked MM for all of the hard work and effort, commenting on his attention to detail and commitment to quality. MM returned the sentiment, thanking AMF for her support and guidance throughout her time as a governor, offering his best wishes for her future.

Item 14 - Noted: The Committee noted the verbal update of the process for the TAG's, with a formal paper detailing the final process and weightings to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

MM left the meeting after this item.

ITEM 12 - HE UPDATE

PL summarised the data from the report, informing the Committee that feedback, retention and attendance had been good during the reporting period.

PL reminded the Committee that the profile of the students that attended HE courses at SMC meant that they had considerable external pressures, including work and childcare, with them disproportionately affected by the lockdown. PL advised that despite this, retention remained good, with students having deferred assessments, with the College developing a student support plan to implement over the summer to ensure that students complete their studies within the intended timeframe.

PL advised that she had highlighted students considered to be at risk, as although continuing to engage, had underlying issues that caused the department to consider whether they would continue on and may affect retention in the coming year. PL explained that indicative retention issues would normally be highlighted by low grades and attendance, however, the online delivery and deferral of assessments meant that this information was not currently available.

PL confirmed that overall student feedback was generally positive, with some concerns noted regarding the online learning and effectiveness of it. It was noted that the sector and the students had to adapt and quickly, which they had managed to do well under circumstances, again reiterating that the cohort were students that had been out of education for some time and would normally have significant additional support which had been difficult given the circumstances.

A member commented on how helpful the 'rag' rating was, making it easy to understand areas of concern, thanking PL for the report.

Item 12 - Noted: The Committee noted the content of the report.

ITEM 13 - OFS ON-GOING CONDITIONS QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT (INCLUSIVE OF JAN 2021 CONSUMER PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS)

PL informed the Committee of the OfS requirement to assure governors that the College has met the consumer protection requirements throughout the Pandemic. PL informed the Committee that a review had taken place to assess compliance, reviewing the previous term and considering if the course had been delivered as outlined, and whether there was any risk in the future term of failing to deliver the content in the format which had been outlined at enrolment.

PL stated that upon review, she was confident the College had addressed all requirements, with evidence in the narratives from student communications provided in the report appendix. PL informed the Committee that communication had been consistent, with as much time as possible provided for any changes and concerns addressed in a timely way. PL advised the Committee that the report remained in draft format, with additional information including links to the information on the website to be provided in the final version alongside the details from LHU. PL advised the Committee that SMC would be included in the LHU report as part of the Network of Hope provision with parity against the information to be detailed in the SMC report.

A member asked the Clerk if this needed to be approved, with the Clerk advising that the Governors needed to be informed and assured of compliance, with timely notifications to the OfS if any concerns were raised, however, there was no need to approve or submit the report to the OfS if there are no concerns.

Item 13 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to note the information from the draft report, concluding that based on the evidence presented, the College complied with the OfS regulations in relation to consumer protection and student communications.

Ahead of closure, Interim Principal EB took the opportunity to thank AMF for all she had done for the College as a governor and the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee. EB noted that AMF had supported the College through challenging times; helping staff to grow into their roles. EB added that the College would not be in such a positive position in relation to quality without her support. This was reiterated by members, concluding that she was going to be difficult to replace. AMF thanked EB and the Committee for their kind words, expressing her love of the sector and confirming her enjoyment of her time on the Board of Governors at SMC, indicating that all successes were a credit to the full team, stating that if she had helped, it had been both a pleasure and a privilege.

The meeting closed at 5.10pm.