

Present: Sean Devlin (Chair), Rubia Amin, Kat Bashar, Sheila Boniface, Emma Bridges, Alex Gwinn, Sheena Payne-Lunn, Cathy Scott-Burt Ed Senior and Sarah Turner.

In Attendance: Ruth Scotson (Deputy Principal), Jo Payne (PA to the Principal/Clerk to the Local Governing Body)

1. Apologies: None.

The Chair welcomed Rubia Amin and Emma Bridges to the meeting in their respective new roles of student and staff governor.

2. Standing Items

- (i) Sheila Boniface declared that she was also a Trustee of Heart of Mercia MAT.
- (ii) No items were identified as confidential.
- (iii) No urgent business was identified.

3. Minutes

(i) Minutes of the Quality Committee: 6th November 2019

The minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting were **confirmed** as a correct record. An update was received on the action points arising from the minutes.

In response to matters arising from the minutes it was confirmed that:

- The target student number had been exceeded;
- The College's ALPs score for A Level provision was 5 (40th – 60th percentile) which meant that students made acceptable progress;
- The premium for high value courses had been confirmed and would potentially have a significantly positive impact on funding, however, the longevity of such additional funding was unknown beyond the spending review. It was noted that additional funding linked to particular subjects made planning more difficult;
- The Deputy Principal had followed up on the comment by a Student Governor that homework was not regularly set in a particular subject and was satisfied that this had been addressed.

In addition, the Chair of the Committee confirmed that he attended part of the Department Moderation and was confident that the process was rigorous.

In relation to the action points the Principal advised that:

- A letter will be prepared ready to send to students who leave in the summer and report that they are taking a gap year. The letter would be sent in October/November and offer support for those wishing to submit a UCAS application etc. Tutors would then follow this up and contact individuals after Christmas. At this point in the year, as the UCAS deadline has been missed, the College intends to write to approximately 40 students on a gap year to find out what they plan to do and, where they are unsure, offer further careers advice and guidance;

- A proposed addition to the risk register in respect of effective leadership and governance had been drafted and would be considered under item 7(i).

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

4. Quality Assurance

(i) Self-Assessment Report

The Deputy Principal confirmed that the Self-Assessment Report had been completed. She presented the key judgements, strengths and areas for development and explained that the SAR followed the new Inspection Framework. Areas for development had been incorporated into the College's Quality and Development Plan to ensure consistency.

The Committee considered the summary and suggested some minor amendments to wording e.g. in relation to relationships with parents, as the Principal had identified at the governors' conference that communication with parents was an area where the College could do more. The Deputy Principal explained that in one-to-one situations, the College had strong relations with parents, however, general communication and information giving could be improved. The Parent Governor echoed these sentiments and felt that one-to-one involvement by the College where there were any issues was excellent, however, with the loss of the College app, she did not feel that parents received much by way of communication. It was acknowledged that the app was an effective way of notifying parents of events and letters etc, but it was noted that it was not compatible with the new MIS system.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and, subject to minor changes, **agreed to recommend** to the Local Governing Body that the Self-Assessment Report for 2018-19 be approved.

(ii) Quality Assurance

The Deputy Principal presented the key aspects of her report and highlighted the following:

- The Quality Improvement Plans shared with the Committee had received ALPs grade 8 and were being supported by member of the Quality team as part of the Quality Improvement Review. The same member of the Quality team had undertaken lesson observations in the subject area and had spoken to groups of students;
- Teaching questionnaires were currently live and the results would be reported to the next meeting;
- The College had not yet been able to access its Ofsted IDSR and it was believed that this was due to the College's change of Unique Reference Number (URN) at the point of academisation;
- The increase in the number of students applying to HE was pleasing after a decline in the previous year. 84.5% of students accepted a place at their first choice university compared to 74% nationally. The Ambition focused efforts on informing students about Russell Group universities;
- Work was ongoing to account for the destinations of all students and subject areas had this information;
- It had been more difficult to track attendance in the first few weeks of the academic year due to the new MIS system. Tutors lacked an oversight of attendance patterns which had assisted in increasing attendance rates in recent years. Whilst attendance was slightly down, reports could now be run allowing tutors to chase absences. There was also a daily message where a student had missed 50% of lessons in that day and similarly a weekly report;

- Students defined as economically disadvantaged did not perform as well as other students. There was previously uncertainty about for disadvantage was defined but this had been clarified to advise that any student who had been in receipt of free school meals at any time in the last six years came into this category. The College would monitor a wider group including those defined as being at risk of becoming NEET and those in receipt of financial support at College.

The Committee challenged whether 50% was too low a threshold before the automated attendance alert was issued. The Deputy Principal explained that this was the threshold inherited from Hereford Sixth Form College with the new MIS system. The Committee asked the Senior Leadership Team to review the arrangements and thresholds for alerting parents to absence and to decide what was sensible.

The Committee considered the Quality Improvement Plans for Modern History, Geology and Music Technology. It was felt that the actions identified in the Music Technology were not appropriate in some cases and did not identify clearly how student outcomes would be improved. It was noted that the mid-year review had not been carried out in Music Technology. The Deputy Principal provided some context to some of the more administrative actions and said that she would feedback the Committee's comments to the Head of Department and Senior Leader involved in the Quality Improvement Review. The Committee requested feedback on what task Music Technology students had completed for the recent mock exam and how students had performed.

The Deputy Principal advised that consideration was being given to the timing of the second year mock exam to ensure that there was sufficient time once results were known to make interventions and bring about improvement.

The Student Governors reported that students were known to sign in to Core Support/Supervised Study but then leave. It was also suggested that teachers should be clearer when a piece of work would contribute to the Summary Assessment grade as it was felt that students would work harder if they knew. The comments were welcomed by the Principal and Deputy Principal who advised that there were plans to address the issue in relation to Supervised Study and ensuring that students remained for the timetabled slot.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and thanked the Deputy Principal for her report.

(iii) Quality and Development Plan

The Principal outlined key areas of the plan and advised of the following:

- It was hoped that all students would take some form of enrichment. It was intended that more Heads of Department with remission would go some way to making this possible, however, more had used the time for supporting student which was clearly also important;
- There were currently seven teachers who were timetabled for 5 ½ block of academic teaching. It was intended to provide these teachers with ½ block of enrichment rather than academic teaching as it was felt that this was a first step towards reducing staff workload;
- The removal of adult provision had been recommended by governors and staff were currently being consulted on this;
- An MIS Manager had been appointed and would start at the end of March.

The Committee **noted** the Quality and Development Plan for 2019-20 and the update provided. In response to the point on governance structure, the Clerk confirmed that governors would be asked to reflect on the current sub-committee structure in the summer term.

The Principal brought to the Committee's attention the expectation that contextual safeguarding be considered where significant decisions were being made as to whether a student remained at College. He explained that there had been two recent incidents involving misuse of drugs, one resulted in

exclusion and one in a formal written warning. In the instance where the student was excluded it was not felt that the College could do anything further to support the student that had not already been attempted whereas in the other instance it was felt that more support could be provided. The Principal said that in the past, governors had been clear that the College should have a zero tolerance approach to the misuse of drugs and, therefore, he wanted assurances that governors approved of this subtle change in policy. There was a general consensus that consideration of the wider context was a suitable approach for the College to adopt.

(Alex Gwinn left at 6.35pm)

Marketing Update

The Clerk, in her role as Marketing Co-ordinator, reflected on some of the developments last academic year including the launch on the new website, in-house management of social media campaigns, increased utilisation of Eventbrite and personalised letters to applicants from schools with sixth forms. She outlined some of the new initiatives this year such as Google Adwords, the engagement of a media company to assist with video production and a letter from the Principal congratulating applicants on being offered a place at College. Other activities were ongoing, one of the most effective being the direct mailing to the county's year 11 cohort. This would be extended to the parents of these young people ahead of the forthcoming Open Event with a booklet outlining the ways in which the College supports its students.

The Principal referred to the updated Growth Strategy and raised the following points:

- The College's approach to enrolling students on a Foundation course would be reviewed as it was felt that too many were enrolled on a GCSE only programme. Enrolling more of these students on an applied programme would provide better and clearer progression opportunities at Level 3;
- The GCSE offering would be reviewed with the possibility that Sociology would be withdrawn and a creative and media option introduced. The Parent Governor offered to share information about the Arts Award with the Principal for consideration.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and thanked the Marketing Team for their efforts.

(Sarah Turner left at 6.45pm)

5. Governance

The Clerk outlined the following in respect of governor vacancies and appointments:

- Gill Slater and Phil Douce had decided to step down as Trustees of the Heart of Mercia MAT Board and remain as local governors. Gill Slater, as Chair of the LGB, would be invited to attend Trust Board meetings;
- Sheila Boniface and Toby Hooper had resigned from the LGB, effective from the respective February Committee meetings, and would remain as Trustees of the Heart of Mercia MAT Board with Toby Hooper assuming the role of Vice-Chair;
- Sarah Turner had advised of her intention to resign at the end of the academic year and Angela Davies had resigned with immediate effect due to spending prolonged periods abroad. Both were highly regarded and experience governors as were Sheila and Toby and their resignations left four vacancies;
- The Clerk to the Trust advised that whilst the Local Governing Body can have up to 20 members, there should not be fewer than 12. The Committee, in its search capacity, was asked to consider the skills that were being lost with the confirmed resignations and which were the priority skills to be replaced.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and **agreed** that two positions should be advertised in the first instance – one with legal and another with a quality assurance background.

The Committee **reviewed** the confidential minute register. There was discussion as to whether the decision of governors in 2011 to keep the salaries of senior post-holders confidential was still valid. The Clerk advised that the Finance and Resources Committee annually considers senior staff salaries against national and local benchmarks, therefore, it was **agreed** that this confidentiality should be maintained.

6. Policy Reviews

(i) Whistleblowing Policy

The Principal advised that the proposed changes to the policy ensured that it was consistent with the Heart of Mercia MAT approved Whistleblowing Policy. It proposes that if there were concerns about the Principal then these should be raised with the Executive Principal or the Clerk to the Trust Board.

The policy was **approved** with the changes as proposed.

(ii) Governor Appointment Policy

The policy was approved with the minor changes proposed.

(iii) Access to Meetings Policy

The policy was approved with the minor changes proposed.

(iv) Tabling of Papers Policy

The policy was approved with the minor changes proposed.

7. Closing Standing Items

(i) Risk Management

The Principal circulated a draft risk relating to ineffective leadership and governance with proposed internal, management and external assurances. The Committee **agreed** that this was a sensible addition to the risk register and also felt that it was appropriate for external assurance to be requested from Hereford Sixth Form College in relation to the management structure.

The Principal outlined the updates to the register and advised that:

- Applications for the MAT Accountant role, to be based at the College, had been received and interviews would take place next week;
- An MIS Manager and Cover Supervisor had been appointed. It was hoped that the Cover Supervisor would enable the policy of not cancelling lessons and students completing meaningful work during staff absence would be more manageable. The Principal thanked the Deputy Principal for her extremely hard work in overseeing cover arrangements;
- Carl Rusby, Senior Leader for Quality Assurance had assumed responsibility for the College's IT network and was enthusiastic about the role;
- An audit of the network had made recommendations around improving back up arrangements and identify how to identify any individual user of the College Wi-Fi should there be misuse. It was also suggested that the College did not have the right balance of staff at the right level of expertise. All aspects of the audit will be considered and appropriate actions put in place to address;

- An audit of health and safety had awarded limited assurance. The full report would be considered by the Finance and Resources Committee, but the Principal assured the Committee that he had already met with the Premises Manager to identify immediate actions and priorities;
- A site security audit had also been undertaken with the report to be considered by the Finance and Resources Committee;
- SLT were involved in interventions with students who had underperformed in more than one subject in the recent mock exams.

The Committee **noted** the revisions to the Risk Register.

- (ii) Impact: The Committee reflected on their discussions and noted their challenge of the quality improvement actions in the Music Technology QIP to ensure that they would bring about an improvement in student outcomes. The Committee scrutinised the key strengths and areas for development proposed in the Self-Assessment Report and agreed that the College should do more to communicate general information and updates with parents more frequently.
- (iii) Any Urgent Business: No items were raised.
- (iv) Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 13th May 2020

The meeting finished at 7.13pm.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Sheila Boniface for her dedication and contribution to the Committee and Local Governing Body over the past four years, initially as a Parent Governor and then as an External Governor.

Signed:.....
Sean Devlin (Chair)

Date:.....

CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 5TH FEBRUARY 2020

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
C&Q/05.02.20/4(ii)	Review arrangements and thresholds for attendance alerts to parents to ensure these are satisfactory.	EYS/RJS	13.05.20	
C&Q/05.02.20/4(ii)	Provide the Committee with feedback on the nature of the mock exam in Music Technology and how students had performed.	RJS	March 2020	
C&Q/05.02.20/5	Advertise governor vacancies as agreed by the Committee.	JJP	ASAP	

ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
C&Q/06.11.19/5(iii)	Consider how to maintain contact with students who take a gap year and offer support as required.	EYS/RJS	February 2020	✓
C&Q/06.11.19/8(i)	Add risk to governance arrangements to the risk register in light of the decision to allow a College to join the MAT and the condition that trustees cannot sit on Local Governing Bodies.	EYS	ASAP	✓