

Present: Sean Devlin (*joined at 6.03pm*), Ed Senior (Principal), Rubia Amin, Kat Bashar (*joined at 5.51pm*), Emma Bridges, Alex Gwinn, Sheena Payne-Lunn, Cathy Scott-Burt, Wendy Pickess

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

College closure due to COVID-19 meant that the Committee meeting was conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams. Due to technical issues Sean Devlin was initially unable to join the meeting. The Committee duly appointed Sheena Payne-Lunn as chair for the meeting.

The new Parent Governor, Wendy Pickess, was welcomed to the meeting.

1. Apologies: Sarah Turner.

2. Standing Items

- (i) There were no declarations of interest.
- (ii) Those items referring to individual members of staff or students were identified as confidential.
- (iii) No urgent business was identified.

3. Minutes

(i) Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee: 5th February 2020

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

4. Principal's Reports

(i) Response to COVID-19 and closure

The Principal presented his report and noted the following:

- The College already had a plan to respond to a pandemic which was updated annually. This ensured that the College was in a good position to respond as the situation developed and to plan for closure.
- Planning was effective, however, there was some difficulty in purchasing enough hand sanitiser;
- The need to get students on the foreign exchanges was stressful, but well-handled and the parents were happy with the decision making process and felt well-informed;
- There was some feedback which suggested that the College needed to improve its parental communication. The current crisis provided an opportunity to address this and subsequent feedback was overwhelmingly positive about communications;
- Teaching staff had completed the Centre Assessment Grades which had now been submitted to Six Dimensions who would report on value added on the basis of these scores and enable moderation of these prior to submission to the exam boards. The efforts of teachers in completing this in addition to remote support of students was highly impressive;
- Details on how applied qualifications would be awarded had not yet been confirmed;
- It was felt to be important to retain a sense of College community in addition to supporting the wider community;

- The Bishop of Worcester and a local MP, although not the MP for Worcester, had responded with messages of encouragement;
- Parents were largely supportive of arrangements for remote learning although made useful suggestions in relation to increasing the use of virtual/online lessons. A College wide approach will be agreed and training provided to support staff in this;
- Plans for reopening were ongoing and were being updated based on new government guidance. It seems that year 12 students were bracketed with primary schools and could return as early as 1st June. This was causing anxiety amongst some staff. Plans for reopening had been shared with staff and feedback invited. It was noted that teaching unions were oppositional to a return before the summer break;
- At most the College would have 40% of its student number returning which offered the ability to limit class numbers to 6 which was a step further than the government guidelines outlined. Other measures were being taken to ensure the safety of staff and students whilst at College;
- Social distancing measures on public transport would clearly impact on students' ability to get to College. This would be particularly problematic if measures extended in to the new academic year;
- Plans for reopening would be shared with the Finance and Resources Committee given the obvious health and safety and potential resource implications.

In response to questions and comments the Principal advised that:

- There had been no clarity in relation to how the option to resit exams in September would operate. It was believed that resits would be restricted to those students who had not achieved a successful progression aim e.g. not been able to gain a place at university. It is also the case that not all exams would have a resit opportunity e.g. Music;
- It was uncertain how much support the College would be able to offer to students who enter for a resit;
- Students who had not achieved the required grade in Core Maths in year 1 would be able to enrol on this in their second year to resit the exam.

The Committee **noted** the information provided. Governors' formally acknowledged the tremendous effort of all staff particularly in light of an increased workload and often difficult personal challenges to navigate e.g. balancing working from home with childcare and home schooling responsibilities. The Committee also acknowledged the clear, reassuring and honest ongoing communication with all stakeholders and the work to support the community.

(ii) Student Recruitment 2020-21

The Principal presented his report and noted the following:

- Applications were positive and approximately 120 higher than the equivalent time last year;
- Only on the basis of this and the potential for a larger second year, a target student number of 1400 was proposed;
- It was difficult to know how applications would translate into enrolments particularly given the impact that the pandemic might have on applicants decisions to stay at their 11-18 high school;
- Efforts were continuing to encourage year 11 students to apply with a postcard due to be sent to them shortly and a letter sent to their parents. Marketing materials focused on the ways in which the College was supporting remote learning and the wellbeing of students and how this support would continue into next academic year in the event of prolonged disruption.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and commented that it was positive to see that there were a good number of applications from Ridgeway Academy given it was their first year 11 cohort. The Committee **agreed to recommend** the admissions target of 1400 to the Local Governing Body for approval.

(iii) Admissions and Fitness to Study Policy

The Principal outlined the proposed changes and made reference to the following points:

- The policy was amended to reflect the withdrawal of 19+ provision from September 2020;
- It was also proposed that the College no longer admit students under the age of 16 and, if approved by the Local Governing Body, the changes to the policy reflect this;
- Whilst the College only admits a very small number of students aged 15 each year (two in the current academic year), Ofsted place significant focus on this area of provision and the College cannot be confident that it could continue to meet the legislative requirements, particularly in respect of providing a broad curriculum.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and **recommended** that the College no longer admit students under the age of 16. The proposed changes to the policy were **approved** subject to the endorsement of the afore mentioned recommendation.

(iv) College Mission Statement and Strategic Aims

The Principal explained that only minor changes were currently proposed to the College Mission and Strategic Aims to remove reference to 14-16 and adult provision. It was hoped to propose a more drastic overhaul of the Mission in due course and when there had been time to consult stakeholders on this.

The Committee **recommended** that the proposed changes be approved by the Local Governing Body.

5. **Quality Assurance**

Quality Assurance

The Deputy Principal presented her report and highlighted the following:

- The Committee had requested more information about the Quality Improvement Reviews – the subjects chosen and the reasons behind this. An attachment to the report provided more clarity on this;
- The updated Music Technology Quality Improvement Plan was included as the committee had requested that some of the actions in this be strengthened;
- Quality assurance processes for 2020-21 were outlined;
- The measures taken to support students remotely with their learning during lockdown were outlined and the response from parents to the support offered by the College was overwhelmingly positive;

In response to questions from governors, the Principal and Deputy Principal advised that:

- The QIR was intended at offering immediate support after the release of data in the summer. An assigned member of SLT worked with the subject leader and Head of Department to offer support. This form of intervention was more structured than in previous years;
- The percentage of students on/below track in the February 2020 would not be reflected in the awarding of Centre Assessment Grades as the guidance endorses a holistic approach taking account of a range of evidence, in particular, the rate of improvement and how the student had responded as a result of a poor mock exam grade;
- Mock exams were one piece of evidence and other significant forms of assessment were considered in agreeing the CAG. Teachers were expected to make a professional judgement on what a student would be expected to get in June;
- GCSE achievement would not be taken into consideration. The prior achievement of the College's cohort overall might be taken into consideration, but not on an individual basis;

- Colleagues had worked hard to get the rank order correct taking into account the relative strength of the cohort and its pattern of achievement. Grade inflation would be moderated if beyond a level of tolerance;
- The College did not expect to receive any feedback from Ofqual after the submission of the Centre Assessment Grades;
- The College had been notified to embargo student results until 7am on 13th August (A Level) and 20th August (GCSE). It was felt that this information would not be shared with universities prior to this;
- An appointment was made for a Music Technology teacher and the Principal and Deputy Principal were confident that this was a very strong appointment. This was an example of the College responding in a robust way where concerns had been raised;
- The College was also successful in appointing a full-time Subject Leader and teacher of Biology. Significant time would be made available on the timetable to enable students to receive additional support after concerns and disruption over recent years.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and were particularly pleased at the successful appointments in Music Technology and Biology.

(iii) Quality and Development Plan

The Principal advised that the Quality and Development Plan had been updated since the last meeting. The Committee **noted** the Quality and Development Plan and the update provided.

6. Curriculum

The Principal presented his report and highlighted the following:

- The finances for next academic year were positive partly due to an increase in the base funding rate, but also in increase in student numbers and some additional funding for high value courses;
- This positive outlook enabled the College to take steps to mitigate workload and address the need to support students e.g. additional teaching capacity in Biology;
- There was a national shift in the subjects being studied and it was disappointing to see that fewer students were studying English. It was felt that this was a direct consequence of changes to the English Language GCSE;
- Paul Morris, Head of English, Film and Media was retiring after an esteemed teaching career. It was hoped that Paul would return to deliver some Ambition Programme sessions and perhaps some English teaching;
- With great sadness it was noted that the Head of Science had lost his wife. Whilst he intended to return next year, he intended to relinquish Head of Department responsibilities for the year;
- The new MIS Manager had made an extremely positive start, particularly given the work created by Centre Assessment Grades.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

7. Governance

The Clerk presented her report and outlined the following points:

- A recent letter from the FE Commissioner was included for information;
- The Committee were invited to reflect on the governance structure after having operated with the current structure for the first year after academisation;
- Kat Bashar's term as student governor was due to end in July and the vacancy would be advertised in the autumn term;
- Whilst the two external vacancies were, however, there had not yet been any interest. It was felt that the current closure and national lockdown was a factor in this;
- The Committee reviews its terms of reference and cycles of business annually and no changes were proposed.

There was some discussion about the governance structure and the role of sub-committees. It was felt that some clarity was initially needed in respect of the role of governors in making financial decisions in a MAT structure, but this had become clearer. The Principal said that he felt both challenged and supported by governors. There was a consensus to retain the current structure for the foreseeable future.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and thanked Kat for her significant and valued contribution as Student Governor. The Committee agreed to **recommend**:

- That the current sub-committee structure be retained;
- The committee terms of reference, cycle of business and draft schedule of meetings for 2020-21 of reference for approval;

8. Student Council

(i) The Clerk advised that the Student Council Liaison Officer prepared the report. The Student Governors were invited to speak to the annual report.

The following points were made:

- Membership of the Council did not get off to the best start due to the new MIS system and the names of those who had expressed interest in joining as part of the application process not being immediately available;
- It was felt that more could be done at the end of the first year to encourage those returning for their second year to join;

The Committee **noted** the information provided and commended the Council on their achievements.

9. Policy Reviews

(i) Complaints Policy

The Principal outlined proposed changes to the policy which reflected staffing changes and the way in which complaints against the Principal would be managed in a MAT structure.

The Committee was invited to review the complaints' register. The Principal commented that the new bike compound offered improved security and there had been no thefts since its installation.

The Committee **noted** the register of complaints and **approved** changes to the policy as proposed.

(ii) Safeguarding Policy and Annual Review

Sean Devlin, Safeguarding Governor, referred to the safeguarding annual report which was prepared by the Senior Leader for Student Wellbeing/DSL, and made the following observations:

- The report was extremely thorough and reflected the attention to detail and level of care that Julie Ferman, the safeguarding team and all College staff gave to the welfare of students and staff;
- The COVID-19 annex was very comprehensive and outlined the support offered by the College at this traumatic time.

In response to questions the Principal confirmed that arrangements were in place to replace the counsellor who was leaving College. He added that he recognised the importance of staff who were dealing with the most significant safeguarding issues, being fully supported by the College. Sean Devlin formally acknowledged that the Senior Leader for Student Wellbeing valued the Principal's support. It was suggested that there might be opportunities to recruit volunteer counsellors, obviously subject to relevant qualification and checks, from the local volunteering bureau.

The Clerk referred governors' to the proposed resolution which they were asked to recommend for approval. Whilst governors would continue to review the policy on an annual basis, SLT could agree changes to the policy in-year as required without the need to await approval.

The Committee **noted** the annual report and extended thanks to the Senior Leader for Student Wellbeing for producing it. Proposed changes to the policy were **recommended** for approval by the Local Governing Body. The Committee also **recommended** that governors' endorse the resolution to enable SLT to make changes to the policy in-year without governor approval.

10. Closing Standing Items

(i) Risk Management:

The Principal outlined the highlighted changes to the Risk Register and Assurance Map and the impact this had, if any, on the scoring of the risk. The following points were raised in relation to the revised Risk Register:

- The current pandemic significantly increased the risk of reduced operational effectiveness and it was likely that teachers and other key members of staff might not return when the College reopens and this could extend into next academic year;
- Sally Johnson was a co-opted member of the Senior Leadership Team this academic year, but had been interviewed and appointed as Senior Leader for Teaching and Learning with responsibility for staff development and high school liaison. It was added that Sally is an excellent, hardworking and innovative member of staff;
- Whilst there were significant concerns going into the period of closure around IT systems given the significant disruption over a two week period, the system had been stable and the IT team worked hard to ensure this was the case. New servers had been purchased and were ready to be installed with additional fibre optic cables being installed to further improve resilience of the IT systems;
- The actions identified in the health and safety audit had been implemented, however, during the period of closure these had not been further verified;
- Progress with site security arrangements e.g. turnstiles, had been stalled by the closure.

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

(ii) Impact: The Committee considered that all aspects of the discussions and noted that their challenge as to whether the response to underperformance was sufficiently focused would ensure the best quality of provision for students. Scrutiny of staff recruitment and the support and well-being for students generally and during the pandemic were also noted as having an impact.

(iii) Any Urgent Business: No items were raised.

(iv) Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 4th November 2020 (subject to approval by the Local Governing Body).

The Committee thanked Sarah Turner for her valued contribution to the Committee since 2011 (initially a co-opted member of the Performance and Planning Committee). The Principal commented that Sarah was an extremely strong governor who offered excellent advice and support to the College, particularly in relation to quality assurance.

The meeting finished at 7.10pm.

Signed:.....
Sheena Payne-Lunn (Chair for the meeting)

Date:.....

CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 13TH MAY 2020

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
C&Q/13.05.20/4(i)	Plans for reopening to be shared with the Finance & Resources Committee.	EYS	20.05.20	
C&Q/13.05.20/4(i)	Thank staff on behalf of governors' for their efforts and hard work in difficult circumstances.	EYS	ASAP	

ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD

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	

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
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	✓