

**Minutes of the Local Governing Body Meeting held on Wednesday, 27th November 2024 at
5.30 pm**

Governors Present: Sean Devlin (Chair) Sheena Payne-Lunn
Matthew Adams Wendy Pickess
James Adnett Ed Senior
Phil Douce Caroline Shaw
Andrew Forth Larik Voitenko
Tom Gregory

In Attendance: Jane Jenkins (Vice Principal)
Jo Payne (Clerk to the Local Governing Body)
Wisal Bashar (Student Governor elect)
Elle Beale (External Governor candidate)
Grahame Davies (External Governor candidate)
Chantal Pottage (External Governor candidate)
Paul Rushton (Parent Governor candidate)
Sheila Boniface (HOM Trustee – in attendance as an observer)

1. Apologies: Sam Lifford

Appointments

The Clerk outlined the proposed new governor appointments and the following was **approved pending ratification** by the Trust Board:

- The appointment of Elle Beale as External Governor, designated Safeguarding Governor and member of the Curriculum and Quality Committee for a four-year term;
- The appointment of Grahame Davies as External Governor and member of the Curriculum and Quality Committee for a four-year term;
- The appointment of Chantal Pottage as External Governor and member of the Finance and Resources Committee for a four-year term;
- The appointment of Paul Rushton as Parent Governor and member of the Curriculum and Quality Committee for a four-year term;
- The appointment of Wisal Bashar as ‘Student Governor’ and member of the Curriculum and Quality Committee;
- The appointment of Caroline Shaw as the SEND link governor for a four-year term.

2. Opening Standing Items

- (i) There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda.
- (ii) No confidential items were identified.
- (iii) No urgent business was identified.

3. Training: Narrowing the Disadvantage Gap

The Vice Principal delivered training on the College focus on narrowing the disadvantage gap and how the impact of any identified strategies were being monitored. The key points were as follows:

- The DfE define disadvantage as young people in receipt of free meals at school or college or Children Looked After. The College was looking to broaden this definition to identify any students with barriers to learning;
- National data indicates that students defined as disadvantaged perform less well in terms of attainment and also have less aspirational progression outcomes;
- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have lower prior attainment and more were likely to take an applied route which is why the possible defunding of applied courses would negatively impact the social mobility and attainment of disadvantaged students;
- Teachers are also taking account of narrowing any attainment gaps identified between students from different ethnic backgrounds and between the genders and there has been a focus on adaptive teaching more generally to respond to students' individual needs;
- 16% of the College's students are in receipt of free College meals and this compares with between 12% and 38% in the Worcester high schools;
- Attendance and retention of disadvantaged students compared with those not in these categories is lower, however there has already been evidence of College strategies having an impact, in particular, on the attendance and retention of level 2 students;
- There has also been some evidence of success in terms of attainment levels with an increase from 66.4% achievement in 2022-23 compared to 75.2% in 2023-24;
- The College has already identified that in the current academic year, students in receipt of free College meals are not attending as well so the approach was being adapted to focus on the interventions for this group of students.

In response to challenge, the following points were noted:

- There was a particular focus on level 2 students last year with changes to programmes of study so that they were on clear pathways with identified progression from level 2 to level 3 and subsequently a higher proportion did progress onto level 3 study this year;
- Students are not aware that they are classed as being in a disadvantaged group so as not to create a stigma around this, however, they are aware that on the application form they are asked to self-declare if they would be the first in their family to go to university, for example;
- There has been an increase in students from ethnic minorities, however, as has been evidenced elsewhere in the country where there has been more significant migration, these students perform well;
- The exams and mock exams does impact the availability of learning support assistants to help other students as they are supporting other students with access arrangements and there has been a significant increase in the number of students requiring this type of support.

The Local Governing Body thanked the Vice Principal for her presentation and **noted** the contents provided.

4. **Minutes**

(i) Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday, 11th September 2024

The minutes were **confirmed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair and an update was provided on the action points.

5. **Management & Strategic**

(i) Trust Update

The summary of the most recent Board meeting was received and the contents were **noted**.

(ii) Principal's Update

The Principal outlined the key points from his report which were as follows:

- The lack of optimism in relation to student numbers for this year and the expected decrease was unfounded. The student number for funding purposes was likely to be around 1764. Whilst the same number of students enrolled this year compared to last, more had been retained in the first six week. There was also improved progression from Level 2 courses onto Level 3 and from year 1 to year 2. With an anticipated increase in the county cohort, it was possible that the College could experience growth of approximately 50 students next academic year;
- Finances looked positive. To plan for next year when the College would not benefit from the increase in funding as a result of significant growth in numbers, savings were identified this year in the form of timetabling efficiencies which results in a decrease of 5 FTE teaching staff. This has, however, also led to an increase in the average class size to 18.8;
- The College repaid all of the Trust investment in phase 2 of the science centre and was determined to repay the remaining £438,000 for phase 1;
- Whilst the College had received additional funding from the government to support a 5.5% pay award for teaching staff, unlike the schools in the Trust, this has not yet been paid due to ongoing negotiations of the SFCA and unions to get the government to award funds to standalone sixth form colleges. Current indications suggest that the government might award a small grant, but not enough to fund 5.5%, therefore, it was possible that the collective agreement would be for less than 5.5% for teaching staff. It was noted that support staff in schools had settled for a 2.5% increase. An offer has been made to colleagues facing financial difficulty to speak to the Principal. The MAT CEO has also offered reassurance in that the matter is being raised with the SFCA and that any agreement should be fair;
- Any increase to support staff pay in order to maintain the national minimum wage results in pay points being removed and differences in pay for differing levels of responsibility being minimal;
- In a staff satisfaction survey, teaching staff were less positive in relation to their perception that their workload is considered in decision making. The Principal is in the process of meeting with HoDs to identify solution focused responses and setting up a possible working group to consider the College calendar.

In response to challenge, the following was noted:

- The College had made a commitment to pay the national living wage and there would be no intention to deviate from this;
- Some staff are experimenting with AI to assist with marking, but there was not a consistent approach or strategy in this respect.

The Local Governing Body thanked the Principal for the update report and **noted** the contents.

(iii) Strategic Development Plan

The Principal advised that the context in relation to the College's percentage share of the cohort, curriculum offering and progress against the estates strategy had been updated. The progress update report identified how the College had responded to last year's aims and what the next steps were. The Local Governing Body **approved** the Strategic Development Plan.

(iv) Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Clerk advised that the College is required to have a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy which outlines the whole College approach both in terms of student and staff wellbeing. The DfE guiding principles were used and the College has identified its aims in relation to each of these and identified an action plan. The Local Governing Body **approved** the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

(v) Accountability Agreement

The Clerk advised that the Curriculum and Quality Committee had considered the updated Accountability Agreement which outlines how the College curriculum and engagement with stakeholders responds to the local skills need and recommended its approval. The Local Governing Body **approved** the Accountability Agreement.

6. Finance and Resources

(i) Finance & Resources Committee minutes: 13.11.24

The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes and reported that there had been challenge around cyber security and the College's resilience in this response. It was confirmed that the Wi-Fi that is accessed by students and guests is entirely separate from the College network.

The Local Governing **Body** approved the Student Union annual accounts.

7. Quality Assurance

(i) Curriculum & Quality Committee minutes: 06.11.24

The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes and reported that the Committee had recommended governor performance targets for approval. The Local Governing Body **approved** the performance targets for its own performance for the current academic year.

(ii) College Self-Assessment Report

The Vice Principal presented the summary of the key strengths and areas for improvement identified in the College SAR. It was noted that the section on Leadership and Management had been shared in full and the SAR in its entirety would be uploaded to Governorhub.

The Local Governing Body agreed with the judgements reached and, therefore, **approved** the College SAR.

8. Governance

(i) Stakeholder Feedback

- The Chair provided feedback on the half-termly safeguarding visit and was assured by the ongoing work to support students, the training that had been completed, the single central record and the safeguarding considerations in relation to work experience. Governors noted that the training delivered by the Safeguarding Officer as a voiceover of the training delivered to staff was excellent.
- The Mental Health and Wellbeing lead governor advised that she had met with the DSL and Safeguarding Officer for an introductory meeting and this would be followed up with a more in-depth meeting to consider the College's mental health strategy.

(ii) Trust Governance Documents

The Local Governing Body **noted** the changes to the Trust and Local Governance Operating procedures and Code of Conduct.

9. Closing Standing Items

(i) Chair's Action: No Chair's action had been taken since the last meeting.

(ii) Health and Safety: No items were raised.

(iii) Risk Management: The consideration about larger average class sizes on student experience and staff workload were identified. The student governor point in relation to reduced learning support capacity during exam series was noted.

(iv) Impact: Governors' focus on how the College was intending to narrow the disadvantage gap and monitoring the impact was noted.

(v) Any Urgent Business: None.

(vi) Date of Next Meeting: 5th March 2025.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Phil Douce for his support and commitment as Governor over the past eight years now that he had reached the end of his terms of office.

The meeting closed at 6.39pm.

Signed:
Sean Devlin (Chair)

Date:

LGB ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 27TH NOVEMBER 2024

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
LGB/27.11.24/3	Continued tracking of disadvantaged student progress with further updates to be shared with the Curriculum and Quality Committee.	JLJ	February 2025	

ACTION POINTS BROUGHT FORWARD

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
LGB/11.09.24/5(iii)	Share more detail on the number of students demonstrating improvement in the September resit.	JLJ	November 2024	✓
LGB/11.09.24/6(ii)	Request relevant ILT and Estates strategic plans from the Trust.	JJP	September 2024	✓
LGB/11.09.24/6(iv)	Prepare and share an outline of College events with governors.	JJP	September 2024	✓
LGB/11.09.24/6(v)	Produce a crib sheet for staff ahead of the open events e.g. travel support.	JJP	October 2024	✓

* Denotes amended action point.