WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 16 October 2024, 17:00, Room G01,
University Road campus

Members of the Corporation in attendance:
Philip Parkinson (Chair), Frances Bettsworth, Joyce Black, Tia Brookes, Ibrahim Fadiga, Shamir Ghumra, Bernadette Green, Neil McGhee, Nikki O'Brien, Jim Phillips, Alison Stone, Sarah Thomson, Paul Wilson, & Jimmy Zachariah

Others in attendance:
Carolyn Davies, Sarah Oldfield, Tim Rogers, Donna Trusler, Rachel Middleton

Apologies:
Sofie Dadge, Andrew Jackson, Neil McGhee, Tia Brookes

MINUTES

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence**
   The Chair welcomed all attendees to the first face-to-face Corporation meeting of the academic year. Apologies were received from Sofie Dadge, Andrew Jackson, Neil McGhee and Tia Brookes.

   The Chair thanked members of the Corporation for their attendance at the kickstart meeting. The feedback from this meeting was very positive and it provides a blueprint for future years.

   The Corporation was asked to note that Orhan Ahmed's tenure as a Governor concluded on 19th August 2024.

   The Chair outlined that policies would be approved by default, subject to a fortnight period in which any queries could be raised directly with the policy author.

   The external assessment reports were included on the agenda for reference by the full Corporation but had been considered at length by the Audit & Risk Committee.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   Jimmy Zachariah has an interest in agenda item 11 relating to subcontracting. Jimmy agreed to step out of the meeting when this agenda item was discussed.

3. **Minutes and matters arising** – Paper 001
   The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 26 June 2024 were approved as a correct record (Part 1). There were no actions outstanding.

   3.1 Approval of minutes from the Closed Governors meeting on 26 June (Part 2) (by advance circulation to eligible Governors) The minutes were approved.

GOVERNOR BRIEFING AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

4. **Safeguarding and PREVENT** (Presentation)

   Donna provided a comprehensive presentation to Governors. Governors will pursue follow-up training online.

   Donna Trusler

   > **4.1 Safeguarding Annual Report** - Paper 002a– *For information and questions*
   >
   > **4.2 Safeguarding Information Handbook** – Paper 002b – *For information and questions*

   Governors noted the annual report and the handbook.

5. **PREVENT**

   Donna Trusler

   5.1 Risk Register – Paper 003a – *For information and questions*

   5.2 PREVENT Action Plan – Paper 003b – *For information and questions*

   Governors noted the PREVENT Risk Register and the PREVENT Action Plan.

6. **Update on prevention of sexual abuse action plan** - Paper 004 – *For information and questions*

   Donna Trusler

   Governors noted the action plan.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

7. **Feedback from the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group and headlines for 2023-24**

   Bernie Green & Tim Rogers

   Tim reported that:

   - Entry and Level 1 outcomes have improved dramatically
   - There have been achievement gains at Level 3, mainly with gains in vocational qualifications
   - Achievement at Level 3 in academic provision fell slightly, but by less than the gains in vocational provision, with a positive net impact at Level 3 overall. The achievement in a small number of Level 3 academic subjects is lower than had been expected.
   - There were improvements in the achievement of Looked After Children and a narrowing of a number of other key characteristic groups

   The Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group looked in depth at areas where there was underachievement as well as at the performance of marginalised groups.

   Bernie reported on the discussion held at the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group meeting held on Tuesday 8th October 2024:

   Headlines

   Increase in overall achievement rate, highest post-merger

   L2 Vocational increased markedly, as did L1 and entry achievement

L2 Maths and English high grades (grades 4-9) also improved again from an already very high base and were markedly above national averages.
Pass rates in L3 academic courses and vocational are slightly down, though retention gains outweighed these in vocational provision.
20% students who failed a qualification had less than 75% attendance
Concerns about STEM, including Psychology, as they have large enrolments and consequently had impact on the A level headline achievement.
    The gap between male and female achievement is growing even though male achievement grew. The gap is now 5.7%.

Outcomes v targets
The achievement target was 86%. Actual was 84.1%. Would have been better had Maths, Chemistry and Psychology performed better. These subjects account for 1,000 starts.
Pleased with increases for L1, which are now at 84.4%.
L2 GCSE Maths and English are both above Post-16 benchmarks.
L2 Vocational saw a huge increase from 69.3% to 89.2%.
Some discussion followed about the M/F gap and potential reasons for this.

Retention, Pass, Achievement
Overall retention is up at 89.6% and A Level retention is now exceptionally strong. Achievement Rate also up at 84.1%, as some pass rate dips were outweighed by stronger retention.
Pass rate across all provision is 93.9%
Noted the importance of data and its integrity which is critical so that analysis is accurate and rigorous. Strengthening of systems and use for dashboards for improving this noted.
Why are there problems in STEM if retention is so strong?- Staffing issues and disruption. Issues with standardisation and quality of assessment likely to be linked to results being below those expected in these areas.
Are there examiners on the staff? The Principal confirmed there were significant numbers of staff who were examiners and considered it was an action to identify potential gaps where opportunities to promote this further may exist.
Questions about support for students now that the Covid funding has stopped and the principal confirmed that the college already complemented the ESFA funds through additional resource, but noted this would be increasingly challenging to resource separately. Staff are offering support where possible but differences between areas suggested there were opportunities to strengthen this and that separate targeted interventions are secondary to this first line of support and intervention.
Very positive story for Entry and Level 1 achievement which saw a huge increase in achievement. Same for Level 2 where now approx. 70% of those students are on L3 courses -138 students. Slight increase in L3 achievement.
High grades at GCSE 4-9 saw an improvement from 42.6% to 48.9%. English stands out at 61.3%.

Achievement rates shared in the 9 curriculum areas as asked for by Governors- most had improved except STEM. Health and Sport stands out.

Value Added

Uses grades for completers, so deflated by the combination of much higher retention, being slightly offset by lower pass rates.

Main categories were all negative with the largest A level provision being -0.29. In vocational provision value added was better on the smaller sized programmes than those which were larger, with Diploma's being of greatest concern.

So, although achievement overall has improved, there is more to do to improve progress and higher grades. However, it was noted that assessment and prior achievement issues for all post covid and reliability of data meant measuring Value Added reliably was still challenging, and events had not necessarily impacted students and areas evenly. In that context, the importance of high staff expectations was considered key.

Sub-groups

All key headline groups within 4% points of whole College figure. Some groups do need a focus at tiers beneath the headline and the College was analysing, and aware of these, including where combinations of characteristics highlighted greater achievement risks. For example, Male/black, Social and Emotional needs, Mental health. Concerns around retention and achievement.

Subjects

Previous subjects causing concern were reviewed with some significant gains.

L1 IT has improved and had been subject to significant leadership intervention and redesign of the programme, which was leading to greater success

GCSE Biology huge improvement in pass rates as decisions on taking the right papers was having positive impact, but concerns about progress and higher grades remained within this.

L3 Creative Media improved

Applied Law saw another decrease, though legacy retention issues were a factor.

L3 Diploma and Ext Cert Sport both up

Best practice in Health and Sport was identified as an opportunity for sharing.

Concerns: A level Biology, Chemistry, Maths and Psychology. Will be a clear focus on achievement and value added. Using an external consultant now, frequency and reliability of assessment and tracking will be critical going forwards.

Key groups where CPD to help staff adapt teaching would be beneficial: social and emotional, mental health, autism, black males, mixed males white female other.

Priorities/Targets

Achievement target is 87%

Assessment and tracking of progress

All students pass and reach MEG to have impact on Value-added

STEM improved achievement rates

Tracking all students who are near miss or more marginally qualified to share where teacher support strategies had positive impacts and to offer proactive support earlier

Increase staff levels of ownership with data. Tim Rogers confirmed there will be quality and performance meetings more regularly with staff to achieve this more consistently in 2024/25

External consultant to support the SAR and QIP process

Range of actions and support for STEM

Development and use of pastoral dashboard to identify late enrolling, near miss students and learning improvement plans for students

Plans continue for teaching, learning and assessment- the bedrock of improvement

Governors were invited to attend SAR validation team events.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

8. **Capital programme and feedback from the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group meetings**
   Carolyn Davies

   Carolyn provided the Governors with a presentation summarising discussion held at the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group meetings over the last 3 months and post-meeting updates including the scope change request submitted to the DfE. Carolyn confirmed plans for the demolition works, taking place over half term.

   Governors asked questions about classroom capacity within a revised project scope, potential for growth in student numbers and the focus of ongoing discussions with the DfE

   The Corporation noted the approvals already given for fee commitments and gave their agreement for the revised Phase 3 project to continue to be progressed within the existing budgeted College financial commitment.

9. **Monthly management accounts** – Paper 005– *For information and questions*
   Carolyn Davies
   Governors noted the accounts. The Corporation asked questions about the outturn compared to the forecast, exam fees, the cost versus benefit of GCSE delivery and the underspend on the tuition fund.

10. **Audit & Risk Committee recommendations**
    Joyce Black
    Joyce provided an update from the September 2024 Audit & Risk Committee. Joyce drew attention to the external assurance reports considered by the Committee, tabled on this agenda. She asked the Corporation to accept three recommendations from the Committee:
    - To re-approved Neil McGhee as the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee for 2024-25
    - To approve a recommendation that the Audit & Risk Committee members should undertake some core training modules relating to finance and risk offered through the ETF.

- To reapprove the Committee terms of reference for the Autumn 2024.

The Corporation approved the Committee's recommendations.

Joyce explained to the Corporation that the Committee had discussed the MyCompliance tracking report and planned to monitor future reports in terms of volume of actions being logged and the time taken to address these actions. The Committee agreed that it would alert the Corporation if anything materially significant arises as result of ongoing tracking.

Joyce asked the Corporation to note that the Committee will consider ramifications from the revised Procurement Act at a future Committee meeting. The Corporation noted that the Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire will come to the December meeting for approval, having been considered in-depth by the Committee.

The Committee flagged a matter relating to the possibility of Governors receiving phishing emails as part of the external assurance programme and this will be given consideration.

Joyce thanked the Committee for their contributions and support.

11. **Sub-contracting and supply chain - Provider Review, Assurance and Compliance Declarations** - Paper 006
Tim Rogers
Governors noted the report.

EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

12. **Recommendations from 02 October Governance & Search Committee**
Sarah Thomson
12.1 Revised Governor role profile – Paper 007
Sarah asked Governors to consider ongoing how they could remind themselves of their responsibilities as Governors. This role profile will feature in the new professionally published Governor recruitment materials.

The role profile was approved by the Corporation.

12.2 Revised governance model and meeting planner 2024-25 –Paper 008
Sarah talked Governors through the model which was highlighted at the recent Governors' kickstart meeting where the Corporation retains strategic oversight and existing and new Committees consider matters in more granular detail. A Governor noted that she was familiar with the governance model being proposed and that this will work successfully if Governors ensure they are committed to attending Committee meetings. The existing Committees will remain: Audit & Risk, Governance & Search

and Remuneration. Two new Committees will be formed: Finance & Resources and Curriculum, Student Experiences and Outcomes.

The new governance model was approved and will be implemented from 1st January 2025.

The Corporation agreed that Committees could meet face-to-face or online and that the format will be at the Chair's discretion.

Governors noted the revised meeting dates for Jan 2025 to June 2025. The meeting dates for 2025-26 remain provisional pending confirmation after the January to June 2025 pilot phase of the new governance model.

12.3 **Re-approval of all terms of reference for Autumn 2024** – Paper 009
All terms of reference were re-approved for the autumn term.

13. **Policies**
    13.1 Admissions Policy (DT) Paper 010
    13.2 Curriculum Policy (AJ)– Paper 011
    13.3 Recruitment & Selection Policy & Procedure (SO) – Paper 012
    13.4 Safeguarding Policy & Procedure (DT) - Paper 013
    13.5 Subcontracting & Supply Chain Policy (TR) – Paper 014

    All policies were approved by the Corporation.

14. **External assurance reports 2023-24** – *For Information*
    14.1 Latest phishing report – Paper 015
    14.2 ILR – mock funding audit work – Paper 016
    14.3 Action Plan following staff survey/Thrive at Work accreditation – Paper 017

    Governors noted the external assurance reports.

15. **Any Other Business**
    A Governor asked whether the College received many Freedom of Information requests. The Principal confirmed that these were relatively rare, but had increased, and that these were managed in accordance with our procedures. Governors asked whether a change in government had impacted on the defunding of qualifications. Stakeholder consultations are now underway. The College has been invited to a digital consultation.

16. **Confidentiality**
    Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered the presentation about the capital project to be confidential.

17. **Next Meeting**
    Wednesday 13 November 2024, 17:00, Room G01, University Road campus.

Action List

Task	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Standing item	**Who is responsible?**	**Date for completion**
To refer any matter which could be externally assured to the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee	All Governors	

The meeting closed at 18:52.

Signed: …………………………………..
Chair of the Corporation

Date: …………………………