

Preston College

Redacted and Abridged¹ Minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee Meeting held on 29 February 2024 at 5.30 pm, Boardroom

Present:

Mrs Laura Mason (Chair)	
Miss Aoife Cullen	
Mrs Jane Hilton	
Mrs Sally Little	Until Minute 5
Mr Robert Marshall-Slater	Until Minute 9
Mrs Lynda Mason	
Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez	Until Minute 5
Mrs Jen Walters	From Minute 5

In attendance:

Ms Marie Haworth	Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support
Professor Ron Hill	Stone King
Mr Mick Noblett	Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning
Mrs Clare Rayner	Clerk to the Board
Ms Rachel Robson	Stone King

1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including:

- Miss Aoife Cullen to her first meeting of the Committee since her appointment as student governor (16-18);
- Mr Jose Sedano Martinez and Mrs Sally Little who would attend for item 5;
- Professor Ron Hill and Ms Rachel Robson from Stone King who would observe the meeting as part of the College's external governance review.

The Chair encouraged Miss Cullen to ask questions and ask for clarifications as required.

The Clerk reported that Mrs Walters had technical difficulties and would join as soon as possible.

It was noted that a quorum was present.

¹ 1 Please note that any matters which the Corporation is satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis have been removed from these minutes.

The Chair explained that due to the length of the agenda, and to allow more time for questions, reports would be taken as read and only key matters would be highlighted by presenters.

2. Declaration of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting

A member referred to a typographical error at Minute 7 and suggested that clarify was amended to clarity. With this amendment, the Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 as a correct record.

Resolved: Subject to the amendment agreed, the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the Matters arising report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Matters arising report.

5. Curriculum and Skills Update

The Chair explained that this item would provide the first opportunity for Curriculum and Skills Link Governors to give verbal reports on their Curriculum and Skills Link Governor activity to date.

Mrs Lynda Mason gave a verbal report on her meetings with Ms Sam Mckenna, Head of School for Business, Health and the Uniformed Services. She reported that on a number of valuable meetings she had with the Head of School and in particular she was interested in the pharmacy business links the College was building which could lead to further opportunities for learners going forward.

The Chair gave a verbal report on her meetings with Mr Mark Taylor, Head of School for Construction and the Built Environment. She reported that she had been on a tour of the construction department and had met with members of the team and discussed: the curriculum and how this met local needs, the demand for places on courses and within the construction sector and how this context presented challenges for staff recruitment and learner retention and that, due to the increased demand, a number of new tutors had been appointed. The Chair highlighted that she was particularly interested in how the School integrated the green skills agenda into the curriculum.

Mrs Little gave a verbal report on her meetings with Ms Jane Tudor, Head of School for Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) and Digital. She reported that she had met with the Head of School on two occasions to find out more about the curriculum and had toured the College's VPA facilities. She had also watched two learner performances. She reported that the Head of School was a great advocate for the College's VPA provision and that she had been particularly interested in the new E Sports qualifications which were underdevelopment.

Mr Sedano-Martinez gave a verbal report on his meetings with Mr Mark Taylor, Head of School for Science, Engineering and Automotive Technologies. He reported on the meetings he had held to date with the Head of School on curriculum and the reason he had been unable to attend in College to date. He reported that at future meetings he would find out more about the Sector Advisory Groups which would provide feedback to the College on emerging trends, skill gaps and challenges and opportunities which would help shape the School's curriculum offer.

Mrs Jen Walters joined the meeting.

Mrs Jen Walters gave a verbal update on her meetings with Ms Fiona Birchett-Sharpe, Head of School for Service Industries and Ms Rachel Watkins, Head of School for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Community, maths and English. Mrs Walters reported that both Heads of School were grateful for the support provided by the Executive Leadership Team on strategic planning and day to day operations. Mrs Walters reported on a number of meetings she had held covering: the skills needs, the challenges faced in the Schools and their development plans for attendance and for teaching, learning and assessment.

Mrs Walters undertook to update her notes which she would send to the Clerk so they could be shared with the Committee via the Governors' Portal.

During discussion with management and the Clerk the Committee noted:

- that the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee and the Clerk had presented at an Association of Colleges (AoC) Governance Conference on the College's introduction of Curriculum and Skills Link governors;
- that other colleges had expressed an interest in the College's introduction of Curriculum and Skills Link governors;
- how the Curriculum and Skills Link Governors' feedback would inform the College's next Accountability Statement;
- the importance of arranging opportunities for the Curriculum and Skills Link Governors to provide feedback to the Board. The Committee noted that plans were already in train for this;
- the value of employers coming into College to talk about the staffing needs of their industries and that there would be opportunities for link governors to observe future Sector Advisory Group meetings going forward as they demonstrated how the College responded to local skills needs;
- that curriculum planning would continue to be informed by discussions with Heads of School at Business Planning sessions.

The Chair thanked members for their feedback and thanked Mr Sedano-Martinez and Mrs Little for their attendance at the meeting.

Mr Sedano-Martinez and Mrs Little left the meeting.

6. Performance against KPIs 2022/23 Outturn

Mr Noblett, Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning, presented the Performance against KPIs 2022/23 Outturn presentation. He reported on:

- interventions in year, including the introduction of Attendance Officers on fixed term contracts as a pilot;
- that attendance interventions included adult learner attendance;
- the increased presence of student managers in the evenings and the extension of pastoral support to adult learners or any learners attending evening courses;
- the positive feedback from staff and learners to date on the interventions with an overall positive impact on the College environment.

The Committee discussed the report with management.

In response to queries on the increased number of looked after children at the College and the impact of this, the Committee noted that the number of looked after children had increased significantly in recent years and a high number were unaccompanied asylum seekers. Ms Haworth, Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support, confirmed that to date, the additional costs had been covered by the Tuition Fund. However, there were uncertainties regarding this funding for 2024/25. The Committee also noted:

- the challenges of supporting looked after children as some had never had formal schooling and were unable to read or write in their own languages;
- that some learners did not have Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) in place but still required high levels of support;
- there were also a high number of higher needs learners.

In response to a query on funding the Attendance Officers and progress to date, it was noted that two full time, term time only Attendance Officers had recently been appointed and would start in the coming weeks and that the posts were fixed term so that management could review the impact before deciding whether the posts should be made permanent. The Committee noted that the costs had been included in the budget for 2023/24.

A member shared some ideas on attendance, including different approaches to recording attendance, that they were currently considering at his College. During discussion, Ms Haworth provided information on how the College recorded absences of apprentices that could not attend College due to work commitments.

Members commented positively on the plans to extend the remit of Student Managers to include evenings and that it was evident that College Schools shared best practice on ideas to improve learner attendance.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Performance against KPIs 2022/23 Outturn report.

7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Update

Ms Haworth presented the Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) Update. She reported:

- on the introduction of a new learning walk model and that observations to date had been positive;
- that informal learning walks were ongoing throughout the year;
- on a focus on behaviours outside the classroom, particularly in relation to social media.

The Committee discussed the update with management. In response to queries and comments from members, the Committee noted:

- confirmation that the staff rota had been changed so that there was an enhanced number of staff on duty in key areas of the College;
- that the five staff currently undertaking supported mentoring had been identified from learner walks. However, staff could self nominate if they felt they had a development area which required more support.

In response to a request, Ms Haworth undertook to review:

- providing the Committee with a more detailed report on the outcomes of learner walks at the next meeting;
- increasing the number of reports to the Committee on Teaching, Learning and Assessment during the academic year.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee reviewed the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Update.

**Actions: To add a further update on learner walks to the next agenda.
To include two reports per year on learner walks to the Committee's Forward Work Programme for 2024/25.**

8. Progress and Performance Against the Quality Improvement Plan

Ms Haworth presented the Progress and Performance Against the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). She reported:

- on the eight key areas of the plan;
- that the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP), following the Ofsted inspection in January 2023, had been incorporated in the QIP.

The Committee discussed the update with management. In response to a question on the monitoring of performance and whether this related to TLA or wider issues, Ms Haworth explained that this related to observations on learning walks and also attendance and behaviour of learners. She reported on the introduction of Quality Practitioners (QPs), who would support staff and learners. Ms Haworth confirmed five members of staff were currently being mentored.

In response to a query, Mr Noblett confirmed that the Parent Portal was live and the feedback to date had been positive. He confirmed that the Employer Portal would be launched next week and engagement plans were in place.

The Chair commented positively on the number of 'green' actions in the QIP and the successful integration of the PIAP into the QIP.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Progress and Performance Against the Quality Improvement Plan.

9. Curriculum Strategy Update.

Mr Noblett presented the Curriculum Strategy Update. He reported:

- that the Board had approved the curriculum strategy in 2023 and his report provided an update on progress to date;
- on the launch of direct apprenticeship delivery in Building Services Engineering. This represented a large market in Lancashire;
- that the College was currently in the curriculum planning phase and the rationale for plans to divest the Aeronautical Engineering programme. He explained there were ongoing staffing issues with this provision and it did not feature in the future T Level curriculum. He confirmed that the College's existing engineering provision would be adapted to ensure that the College could continue to meet the needs of local employers such as BAE Systems. He reported that this change would continue to be discussed by the Executive Leadership Team and Heads of School, including the impact on learners;
- on the Market Share Snapshot Report at Appendix A.

Mr Marshall-Slater left the meeting.

The Committee discussed the report with management. In response to queries from members the Committee noted:

- the progress of the Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology (L&CIoT). Mr Noblett reported that the College had set prudent learner number targets and was performing well and there were no concerns regarding achieving the targets for Year 2. The Executive Leadership Team would continue to carefully monitor year on year. The Principal and Chief Executive reported that at present it was difficult to ascertain if learners would have joined the College in any case. However, the College would continue to use its membership of the L&CIoT to grow provision. Mr Noblett reported that the L&CIoT had not formally launched as yet and that all members contributed to a marketing budget;
- the first meetings of the Sector Advisory Groups had gone well and would support the College's curriculum planning. He reiterated that link governors were welcome to attend as observers;
- the College continued to work towards a "1" Ofsted grading for its Provision for Learners with High Needs and had introduced a new system to record incremental progress of high needs learners. Members noted that there were challenges as many learners joined College with out of date EHCPs;
- that Ofsted inspectors had attended the College recently at their request for their own Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the feedback to the College had been positive, particularly the experiences the College shared on the current challenges with apprenticeships.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Curriculum Strategy Update.

10. Safeguarding and Support for Learners Update

Ms Haworth presented the Safeguarding and Support for Learners Update report. She reported:

- staff continued to support learners with safeguarding concerns;
- staff could make mental health referrals;
- that many aspects of the report had been discussed under other items at the meeting.

Mrs Mason gave a verbal update on the recent meeting she had held with Mrs Haworth on Safeguarding and Prevent matters. She referred to the positive impact of the College's mental health work.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Safeguarding and Support for Learners Update report.

11. Student Council and Learner Voice Update

Mr Noblett presented the Student Council and Learner Voice Update. He reported that in response to feedback from learners, management had taken action in relation to bus services, increasing staff presence at lunch times and providing additional social spaces and smoking shelters.

Miss Cullen, Student Governor 16-18 and Chair of the Student Council, commented that the buses continued to cause issues for learners and reported positively on the other changes made in response to learner feedback.

Mr Noblett reported that Preston Bus had agreed to trial an additional bus service which would start w.c 10 March.

Mr Noblett reported that he had attended the Student Council to discuss possible changes to the College timetable. Miss Cullen, student governor, commented that learners would welcome the introduction of more breaks during the College day, rather than movement time.

Mrs Hilton, Staff Governor (Academic), commented that in recent interviews with potential learners, she had been asked many questions about the College timetable, whilst in previous years this had not been a common question. She commented that it was apparent that new learners needed lots of reassurance.

Mr Noblett thanked members for their feedback. He reported that the College were working on increasing enrichment opportunities to support learners transitioning to College and that the ongoing impact of Covid remained apparent.

The Principal and Chief Executive reported that changes to the timetable, including shorter lessons, would simplify the timetable, making it easier to understand.

In response to a query on the support for dance learners, following HE Learner Voice feedback, Ms Haworth confirmed that the new Student Managers would provide support for HE learners.

A member commented on the high number of future actions arising from HE Learner Voice, some of which were large projects. Ms Haworth reported that the HE Manager was developing a HE Action plan and undertook to share further details. Ms Haworth reported Level 4 and Higher Apps were both now part of HE.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Student Council and Learner Voice Update report.

Action: Ms Haworth to share more information on the HE action plan.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Learner Review

Ms Haworth presented the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) – Learner Review. She reported:

- that the report showed there were either no or small achievement gaps with regard to protected characteristics or socio-economic background which was testament to the teaching and support of staff;
- that the College performed higher than national benchmark levels;
- that the outcome for Irish travellers was skewed as percentages were used and there were only two learners.

The Committee discussed the report with management. In response to queries from members, the Committee noted:

- that 42% of learner were from deprived communities, an increase on previous years;
- that national outcomes for accountancy were very low and the College was ahead of this benchmark.

Members commented positively on the report and the evidence that the College's teaching and support for all learners continued to have a positive effect.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Learner Review.

13. Draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the draft EDI Strategy at Appendix A. He reported that:

- the College had EDI objectives, a policy and action plans in place but did not currently have an EDI strategy;
- the College's EDI Policy would be reviewed to ensure it aligned with the new strategy and to incorporate the College's new values which were approved in 2023;
- he planned to consult with the Student Council on themes of the strategy;
- the draft had been reviewed by the Resources Committee meeting and some changes had been suggested;

- the final draft would be considered by the Board on 4 July 2024 and actions plans would be developed.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred members to the DfE consultation: Draft guidance Gender Questioning Children at Appendix B. He reported that the draft guidance had been cautiously welcomed by principals. However, the guidance was primarily aimed at schools and it was more challenging for colleges to implement as they could not liaise with parents without a learner's permission.

The Committee considered the draft EDI strategy. The Chair referred to the EDI training the Board had received which included the concept of equity. The Chair suggested that it would be helpful to consider including reference to equity alongside equality, diversity and inclusion, to reflect the College's support for less advantaged learners and learners that required additional support. She offered to share equity resources. The Principal and Chief Executive undertook to include references to equity in the draft.

A member suggested that Learner and Apprentice Equality Objective 2 could be clarified that this referred to engagement with the Student Council.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy and the DfE consultation: Draft guidance Gender Questioning Children.

Action: The Principal and Chief Executive to review the draft strategy in light of feedback.

14. Complaints and Compliments 2023/24 to date

Ms Haworth referred members to the Complaints and Compliments report for Term 1 of 2023/24 to date. She referred to the complaints and compliments and highlighted that a number of complaints from the first term related to staff shortages in the Engineering department.

In response to queries Ms Haworth provided additional information on the support and training provided to a tutor following a complaint.

The Chair referred to the number of compliments on College open days and ask for the Committee's thanks to be passed on to all teams involved.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee reviewed and noted the Complaints and Compliments 2023/24 to date report.

15. Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure Update 2023/6

Ms Haworth presented the Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure. She referred members to the proposed amendments to the policy which were shown in track changes at Appendix A.

The Committee noted the report and approved the Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure for recommendation to the Board.

Resolved: The Committee approved Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure for recommendation to the Board.

16. Higher Education Update

Ms Haworth presented the Higher Education (HE) Update. She reported on:

- access and participation;
- extenuating circumstances;
- HE learner voice;
- the development of an HE Stakeholder engagement plan.

In response to a query, Ms Haworth undertook to add how many learners started each course to the non-continuation table to provide context.

The Committee discussed with management the challenges faced by tutors joining the College from industry in completing their PGCE qualification and the support available at the College, including reduced teaching timetables to allow time for study and lesson preparation.

The Committee discussed the report with management.

Resolved: The Committee reviewed and noted the Complaints and Compliments Procedure Update 2023/6.

Action: Ms Haworth to update the HE Update for the Board in light of the discussions at the meeting including adding starting learner numbers to the non continuation table.

17. Date of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 20 June 2024.