

Minutes of the Standards Committee Meeting held via MS Teams on Wednesday 15th September 2021 at 3pm

Present: Christine Bampton (Committee Chair)
 Mark Aberdein (Independent Governor)
 Michelle Brabner (Principal)
 Anita Holt (Associate Governor)
 Suzanne Knowles
 Kathy Passant (Chair of the Corporation) (From Item 7.2 Onwards)
 Susannah Porter

In Attendance: Lisa Farnhill (Clerk to the Governors)
 Maura Cummins (Deputy Principal)
 Stephen Musa (Asst. Principal Student Experience and Welfare from item 8)
 Victoria Wickington (Assistant Principal Teaching, Learning and Quality)
 Heather Austin (Student Governor)
 Tom Rowe (Staff Governor)
 Paul Newton (Student Governor)

Apologies: Katy Robinson (Independent Governor)

Absent:

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S.22.24 OPEN AND WELCOME

The Committee Chair opened the meeting, welcoming new Board Members to the Committee meeting. Paper authors were thanked for their work in providing information to the Committee, and the Clerk for collating and distributing the papers.

S.22.25 ITEM 1: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from Katy Robinson were accepted by the Committee.

Item 1 – Resolved: *Members accepted the apologies as provided above.*

S.22.26 ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Clerk declared an interest in relation to her employment at St Mary's College, as the Clerk to the Board of Governors and as a Governor at St Barnabas Primary School, Darwen.

Item 2 – Noted: *The Committee resolved to note the declaration.*

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S.22.27	<p>ITEM 3: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 15TH SEPTEMBER 2021</p> <p>Members gave their approval for the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair invited members to raise any additional matters not included under item 4 or elsewhere in the agenda, none were raised.</p> <p><i>Item 3 - Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2021.</i></p>	
S.22.28	<p>ITEM 4: MATTERS ARISING / ACTIONS SUMMARY</p> <p>The Clerk summarised the report, highlighting the importance of the action summary in demonstrating the impact of the Committee.</p> <p>The Clerk clarified the need for ongoing dialogue between Committee members and the SLT to ensure the right information is received, noting a plan for the Chair, VC and Principal to meet with the Clerk in the new year to undertake a full revision of the report schedule, policy schedule and strategies. The Clerk noted an observation that members are asking for less paperwork but more detail, with a need to find a balance and solution.</p> <p>The Committee Chair informed the Committee that this had been discussed with the Deputy Principal, with a solution proposed to have a scrutiny group made up of SLT and Governors to look at in depth data for areas of concern, with this fed back to the Committee. The Committee Chair invited members to express an interest in being a part of the group, confirming she had agreed to be a member.</p> <p>The Committee Chair proposed to further reduce meeting packs, policies with minimal changes did not need to be included in the pack, suggesting only the executive summary, detailing the changes for approval is included in with a link provided to the current version on the College website. This was supported by members.</p> <p><i>Item 4 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept the report, supporting the proposal for more detailed insight to be reviewed by a scrutiny group to ensure areas of concern are reviewed in a timely manner without overburdening the Committee with excessive information.</i></p>	<p>Members</p> <p>SLT</p>
S.22.29	<p>ITEM 5: CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS</p> <p>No items within the minutes or on the agenda were considered to be confidential.</p> <p><i>Item 5 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to approve the minutes for publication. The Committee confirmed they did not need any items on the agenda to be reviewed confidentially.</i></p>	
S.22.30	<p>ITEM 6 SAFEGUARDING UPDATE</p> <p>The AP Student Experience and Welfare provided the Committee with a verbal update, highlighting the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There continued to be an increase in the number of cases of mental ill-health, with 1600 interventions in the last academic year and already 815 year to date (September to November) 	

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- There had been 45 external referrals year to date for mental health issues and to children's services.
- An update to the structure of the Safeguarding team will ensure increased knowledge in each area, with each member undertaking focused training in a specific area of need
- The team is working towards the AOC mental health charter and will undertake a self-assessment to highlight areas for increased support and training
- External support and collaboration with agencies continues to expand, with the team now working with Merseyside police and a drama based theatre company
- Following further training on the KCSIE update, further enhancements will be made to the safeguarding policy

The AP Student Experience and Welfare was thanked for the update, with the Committee Chair as Safeguarding Link reiterating the need for the policy to be a live working document, encouraging updates where necessary which would be reviewed ahead of being presented for approval.

Item 6 – Resolved: *The Committee noted the update.*

S.22.31

ITEM 7: MARKETING STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE

The AP Student Experience and Welfare summarised the report, which outlined achievement against the strategic objectives by department and brand.

Open events were described as successful with a significant increase attendees from year 11, considered to be a result of activities run by the liaison and curriculum teams. Applications were up 28% compared to the previous year, with caution advised, with the impact of the Pandemic still uncertain in terms of conversion. Activities to support enrolment were outlined, with some postponed by schools in light of advice around the variant of concern. Members discussed the accessibility of some activities due to extracurricular activities, with assurances provided over the range offered, including in College and in school activities at a range of times. Members questioned the drop in applications for Christ the King, with discussions held regarding the potential reasons, noting a significant increase the previous year. Measures to support increased applications were detailed, whilst highlighting the significant increase in applications from Meols Cop.

Members queried the value of the overall attendance figures for open events, noting a high number of younger students in attendance. The Committee was advised that this had been analysed with attendees asked to specify at registration their year group, with the majority of attendees being year 11 students and some attending their second open event, considered a positive signal of interest in enrolment. Members were advised that full attendance was included to ensure comparisons were accurate, with members asking for year 11 figures to be included for future reports to enable more accurate conversion data to be calculated.

AP SE &
Welf.

Members provided details of inaccuracies on the website, including a lack of information on alternatives where courses had been withdrawn and limited information, instead asking potential students to ring for information, considered an unnecessary barrier. Comparisons were made to the websites of other college's that had a more user friendly interface and presentation of information.

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	<p>Members requested action is taken to update out of date areas of the website, suggesting marketing should be responsible and take ownership, collaborating with curriculum staff to ensure accurate information is presented with more consistency. Members suggested including student profiles on courses to indicate the type of student that may be interested and progression and career paths opened up by the course.</p> <p>Members highlighted concern over HE recruitment, with marketing described as more difficult with a less captive audience. The Deputy Principal advised that the offer would be reviewed to ensure it remained competitive, with a member suggesting this critical review required governor involvement, proposing a task and finish group is set up for this purpose. Members discussed the value in using current students to support marketing with the Committee assured students were actively involved wherever possible and when restrictions allow, however, the Pandemic had restricted the ability for staff and students to interact for marketing purposes.</p> <p>The Committee members were informed that a 3 year curriculum planning process had begun, incorporating the views of curriculum leaders and heads of faculty, with exciting ideas coming from areas on how best to progress marketing and curriculum planning for their areas. Members were assured that the plan will ensure adult courses offer progression paths mapped into the HE offer with innovative advertising including at parents evening and incorporated into the Christmas Fair.</p> <p>The AP Student Experience and Welfare was thanked and complimented on the concise and informative report.</p> <p><i>Item 7 – Resolved:</i> <i>The Committee resolved to note the report whilst requesting accountability and ownership is taken for the accuracy of the website and for future reports to highlight the year 11 attendees at open events.</i></p>	AP SE & Welf.
	ITEM 8: EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	
S.22.32	<p>8.1 Semester 1 Committee Update</p> <p>The Head of Student Support and Inclusion summarised the data, key activities from the last term and actions for the coming term, including reducing attainment gaps and opening up more opportunities to support students, including breaking down barriers for those not declaring a LDD status, or declaring LDD and declining support.</p> <p>The Head of Student Support and Inclusion was thanked for the extensive work and concise summary, suggesting the number of students is included for context where high percentage attainment gaps are caused by small numbers of students.</p>	Head of Stud. Sup. & Incl.
S.22.33	<p>8.2 Annual Report 20/21 and planning for 21/22</p> <p>The Head of Student Support and Inclusion drew out key points from the report and annexes, including achievement rates, Ofsted comments, awards, support during the Pandemic and kite marks achieved.</p> <p>Members highlighted the staff survey outcomes, with significantly lower percentages of staff stating that Equability and Diversity was embedded in</p>	

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college lessons, asking if this had been looked into further. The Committee members were assured that although contextualised against lower scores throughout the survey, actions were in place to review the reasons and improve staff understanding of how equality and diversity is embedded and can be further improved. Concerns were raised as to how accessible online lessons were for some learners during the closure, with it expected to have contributed to the low score. Focus groups were already set up and staff training planned, confirming there would be an update in the next report.

**Head of
SS and
Incl.**

A member shared in the meeting chat a useful resource for improving accessibility for different student groups.

S.22.34 8.3 E&D Policy

The Head of Student Support and Inclusion summarised the changes to the policy, highlighting how it had been cross-referenced to relevant legislation and best practice.

With no questions or comments, the policy was recommended for Corporation approval.

Item 8 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to accept the termly update and agreed to recommend the annual report to the Corporation for essential information and the policy for the approval of the Corporation.*

S.22.35 ITEM 9: STUDENT FEEDBACK SEMESTER 1

The AP Teaching, Learning and Quality provided the Committee with a verbal update of the information to date, advising that the full report would be provided in March. The Committee were advised that the report was delayed as the survey closing date had been extended to gain additional responses following limited responses.

Participation rates were described as low at 50% even after the extension, with limited time for data analysis, however, initial review highlighted lowest rates of return in health, business and across adult courses. The Committee were informed of the intention to separate out the adult learners for future surveys to allow for more bespoke and relevant questions for the adult cohort.

Obstacles to completion were discussed, including unnecessary barriers accessing the survey, requiring separate log in details and lack of support from curriculum staff in encouraging completion.

The Committee were assured that despite the low response rate, data would still be analysed and responded to. Members thanked the AP Teaching, Learning and Quality for her work towards improving the process, and insisted that a rate below 85% was not acceptable, indicating that this had been consistently achieved in the past. Members advised previous return rates were improved by progress tutors supporting and encouraging completion, suggesting it could be put into progress hours and schemes of work. Members insisted that staff should be responsible for and accountable for supporting completion, suggesting student governors could also provide support with reviewing questions and suggesting ways to engage students in the process.

Members considered how changing the format and questions to improve responses and gain more meaningful feedback, would result in a loss of comparative data, however the Committee were assured that as an alternative, national benchmarks could be utilised, and work could be done

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	to cross reference to similar themes and questions from previous surveys to maintain some comparative analysis to track improvements and impact.	
	<u>Item 9 – Resolved:</u> <i>The Committee resolved to note the verbal update, supporting the overhaul of the questions and process to ensure the response rates return to 85%.</i>	
S.22.36	<p data-bbox="328 472 858 499">ITEM 10 DEEP DIVE IMPACT REPORT</p> <p data-bbox="328 506 1323 600">The Committee Chair introduced the item, complementing the AP Teaching, Learning and Quality on the quality of the report, asking that the actions are reported on at the next meeting to demonstrate impact.</p> <p data-bbox="328 640 1323 770">The AP Teaching, Learning and Quality confirmed an action plan template and process for internal review had been implemented to track progress and this could be provided to the Committee and could be incorporated into the reporting on Strategic Objective one to reduce the number of reports.</p> <p data-bbox="328 810 1323 938">The Committee members were informed of the triangulation of the information from the deep dives with data and learning walks, with members questioning the disparity between departments, with assurances that this was being managed and supported through training and additional resources.</p> <p data-bbox="328 978 1323 1173">Members raised concerns over staff resignations, asking how this would affect progress, in the departments concerned, with the Committee assured of work by the HR team to secure a replacement, with the impact limited by practical elements having been front loaded. Members considered the benefits of staff turnover in areas that required improvement, with staff changes bringing renewed enthusiasm and new ideas.</p> <p data-bbox="328 1214 1323 1408">The Committee received information relating to areas for development that were highlighted throughout the deep dive process, as incorporated into the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan, which included concerns over attendance and retention, with plans to review these in detail with SLT and governors at Scrutiny Group meetings to ensure staff are accountable for progress in their areas.</p> <p data-bbox="328 1449 1323 1543">The AP Teaching, Learning and Quality concluded the summary by assuring the committee of the induction process for new staff, with observations and support provided irrespective of the level of experience of new staff.</p> <p data-bbox="328 1583 1323 1644"><u>Item 10 – Resolved:</u> <i>The Committee resolved to accept the report and monitor progress through subsequent action plan reporting.</i></p>	AP T, L & Qual
S.22.37	<p data-bbox="328 1715 820 1742">ITEM 11 ASSESSMENT STRATEGY</p> <p data-bbox="328 1749 1323 1843">The Deputy Principal advised the Committee that only minimal changes were recommended to the strategy, with a wide range of challenging assessment methods used across the college.</p> <p data-bbox="328 1883 1323 2047">The strategy and perceived benefits were summarised, with the Committee informed that the diagnostic assessments were considered key following the disruption to the education of the current cohort, to ensure knowledge gaps could be identified and addressed, with this as important for those in year two as those starting in the college.</p>	

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Formal examination preparation support was detailed, reminding the Committee that some students had not sat formal exams for a number of years if at all, with staff providing feedback within 15 days of assessments, focusing on areas for development to encourage students to improve their results.

Members discussed at length the need for flexibility with contingency plans added into the assessment policy, with the Pandemic considered an ongoing issue. Members highlighted the need to prepare students for different assessment methods, noting previous discussions in relation to a standardised approach to in-year assessments, to ensure that if challenged, the College can demonstrate consistency and provide evidence of students' capabilities irrespective of changes to national examination processes.

DP

Members received details of queries and appeals following the TAG process, with only one appeal indicating that the assessment grades were accurate, however, the Committee insisted the assessment policy needed to reflect the possibility that the processes may need to be adapted to include TAG or other alternatives as deemed necessary, dependent on the guidance at the time.

Item 11 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to approve the policy subject to the inclusion of a paragraph outlining circumstances under which alternative assessment methods may be invoked in line with local or national guidance.*

S.22.38 Item 12: CURRICULUM REPORT

The Deputy Principal advised the Committee that the report reflected on term one, assessing local and regional needs to ensure the curriculum is reflective of demands and requirements.

Changes to the curriculum were outlined, including courses merged or closed following low uptake and the introduction of new adult and 16-18 courses, with new online courses described as successful. HE was considered to be a challenging environment, with improvements focusing on providing the right access courses and improved marketing, with a full review of the provision and the local market underway.

Plans to review and invest in art and creative subjects with a two year plan to improve innovation and creativity were well received.

The Committee was updated on placement activity including preparation for T Levels, meeting with the ESFA to ensure all requirements are met.

The Committee were advised that the new manager responsible for MIS and Apprenticeships was due to commence their role in the new year, to support improvements in both areas.

Actions and progress around retention were outlined, with the target considered challenging, set at 88% with retention already at 89%. Members discussed the ongoing impact of COVID on retention locally and nationally, with a wider impact on mental health, opportunities and the labour market.

A member outlined Kick Start opportunities at their employer, with details added to the Committee Meeting Chat to be shared with students.

New opportunities and ideas, including skills boot camps and meeting local skills needs were summarised, linking in with the Town Deal.

Issues relating to accessing timely and accurate data were summarised, with the new line management structure and AP appointment expected to result in improvements in the new year.

Item 12.1 - Progress Against The English And Maths Attendance Plan

The Deputy Principal described issues with attendance and engagement as challenging, with tracking and monitoring used to support the high target of 90%. Curriculum staff were supporting attendance and progress, with one to one support for students where attendance begins to drop.

The Committee were informed of timetabling issues in the early part of term, which had been resolved, along with plans to move the department into a more central part of the College, to provide easier access to the curriculum team.

Other ideas, including catch-up sessions with free pizza were outlined. The Committee was informed that the tuition fund would be used provide support to students from areas of deprivation that need additional English and maths support, with additional time table slots allocated for small groups of no more than 5 students.

Members agreed for detailed scrutiny of progress to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Group to ensure sufficient analysis of improvements without detracting from other areas the Committee is responsible for.

Item 12 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to note the update and to delegate detailed reviews of areas of concern, including attendance to English and maths to the scrutiny group, with brief summaries of scrutiny group outcomes to be reported to the Committee.*

S.22.39 ITEM 13: SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020/21 AND QDP FOR 2021/22

The Committee Chair introduced the report, describing it as well written, reminding the Committee of the importance of the item, to be presented by the Committee to the Corporation for approval.

The Deputy Principal was invited to summarise the key points, confirming that the grades for approval remained the same as the previous year, with all areas graded as good, with the exception of apprenticeships, graded as requires improvement, with key concerns for apprenticeships summarised.

The Committee were advised that the SLT had reviewed the document in detail, however, validation still needed to be undertaken, with the Committee agreeing to approve the document subject to validation, delegating the approval of changes to the Committee Chair.

Members acknowledged the barriers to validation, including the AOC conference, asking for the cycle to be reconsidered and adjusted for the 2021/2022 SAR to ensure earlier validation, with the Committee assured that this was already being revised.

Members reviewed and challenged some areas, requesting the inclusion of additional information ahead of recommendation for approval. Members asked for the SAR to reflect improvements needed in leadership and management for failing to have an impact in areas that continued to require improvement, including apprenticeships.

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Members were assured it had been considered but not included under the context of the Pandemic. Members further challenged this as these issues predated the Pandemic and therefore it needed to be addressed in the SAR, noting the QIP had been ineffective in improving these areas, indicating improvements were necessary in leadership and management. Members also asked for wording to be corrected in one area and for targets to be specific and SMART.

Members were asked to highlight any further queries ahead of approval, to be sent to the Clerk or Chair for forwarding and inclusion in the final draft.

Item 13 - Resolved: *The Committee resolved to recommend the SAR and QDP to the Corporation for approval subject to making the amendments outlined and subsequent to validation, with the approval of any amendments delegated to the Committee Chair.*

S.22.40 ITEM 14: HE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020/21 AND QDP FOR 2021/22

The AP Teaching, Learning and Quality summarised the report, noting it had been drafted by the previous post holder, with some points of clarity required over reference numbers in the final table, which had been pasted from another document with the formatting having not followed through.

Members noted that this had not been as comprehensive and detailed as other reports for the meeting, requesting information and data pulled from other sources should be relevant and presented in a meaningful way for the audience, however agreed amendments were not required for this year ahead of Corporation approval.

Item 14 - Resolved: *The Committee resolved to recommend the SAR and QDP to the Corporation for approval.*

S.22.41 ITEM 15: REPORTING AGAINST STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ACTION PLANS

The Principal confirmed that the new way of reviewing actions against strategic objectives had been approved by the Corporation in September, with the Committee confirming it was a well-received useful summary.

SO1 - To provide excellent teaching, learning and support:

The AP Teaching, Learning and Quality was complemented on the presentation, with members confirming they were assured by the progress to date as clearly evident from the report.

SO2 - To meet the needs of the community and contribute to the local and national economy by offering a carefully considered diverse range of professional, technical, and academic programmes:

The AP Student Experience and Welfare summarised the actions to date, adding that focusing on meeting the needs of the community would drive up recruitment and have a positive impact on income. The Committee noted their appreciation for the clear presentation of the targets and timescales.

SO3 - To facilitate students and apprentices achieving the highest possible outcomes to progress on to ambitious destinations:

The Deputy Principal reassured the Committee that the curriculum planning work continued to ensure that the College was meeting local and national needs with curriculum planning and innovation to be revisited regularly.

Item 15 - Noted: The Committee resolved to note the update.

S.22.42 ITEM 16: MEETING IMPACT

The Clerk reminded the Committee that it had been proposed at the meeting on 9th June that the Committee should reflect at the end of each meeting on the impact of their actions, clarifying that this was in addition to the circulation of a confidential feedback survey.

The Committee concluded that their impact had been strategic focus and targeting of key areas for development through continued improvements to data and information. This was achieved by challenging management to ensure focused and targeted reporting incorporating more relevant and accurate data. The Committee added that this was further supported by initiating the setup of a Scrutiny Group to further target areas of need.

Item 16 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to acknowledge the continued impact of their actions on improving the quality of education.

S.22.43 ITEM 17: ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE CORPORATION

The Clerk summarised the resolutions and recommendations to be presented to the Corporation as follows:

- E&D Policy (for approval) and the Annual Report 20/21 and planning for 21/22 (for information)
- SAR and QDP (for approval)
- HE AMR and QDP (for approval)

It was agreed that in addition to circulating the reports as outlined above, the Committee should also provide a verbal update to the Corporation on continued work to improve reporting and a request for any members from outside the committee to join the Scrutiny Group:

S.22.44 ITEM 18: ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions, reminding members that the Vice Chair to the Committee post remained vacant, encouraging members to contact the Chair or Clerk for more information.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as March 9th 2022, with the Committee Chair confirming that this was the last Committee meeting for the Corporation Chair, Kathy Passant thanking her for all of her contributions and wishing her well for her future.

The meeting ended at 4.55pm.