

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on Monday 9th October 2023

GOVERNORS Ben Owen (chair)
PRESENT: Andrew Cropley
Andrew Spencer
Spencer Moore
David Gillies
Jane Peacock

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement and Student Experience
Diane Booth, Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Phil Clark, Assistant Principal: Construction
Nikki Slack, Assistant Principal: Health, Education and Service Industries
Sarah Morley, Assistant Principal: Quality and Standards
Kirsty Walsh, Assistant Principal: Engineering
Jane Fishwick, Assistant Principal: Academic, Creative, Community, Digital and Professional Studies
Amaya Waddingham, Student Governor
Morgan Williams, Student Governor
Megan McQueen, Trainee Teacher: A-Level Law and Politics (observer)
Eloise Hopkinson, Clerk to the Corporation

		ACTION by whom	DATE by when
-	<u>APPOINTMENT OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIR FOR 2023/24</u> The committee was made aware of the fact that Angela Newton-Soanes has resigned from the board and, therefore, is no longer chair of the Standards Committee. The committee were asked to approve the appointment of Ben Owen, formerly the vice chair, as chair of this committee. The committee agreed unanimously to this appointment. AGREED: To appoint Ben Owen as chair of the Standards Committee for 2023/24.		
1	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on agenda items to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.		
2	<u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>		

Signed :  _____ Chair

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Apologies for absence were received from Scott Smith. Megan McQueen was welcomed as an observer of the meeting in her capacity as the mentor to the student governors.

The committee was notified that Kate Truscott has resigned from this committee. This leaves a vacancy which, subject to approval from the board, it is suggested that the committee seeks to fill.

AGREED: to recommend to the Corporation Board that the college seek to recruit an additional governor to join the Standards Committee.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH OCTOBER 2023

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th October 2023.

There were no matters arising.

4 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

The committee were happy to note the content of the update provided.

5 BALANCED SCORECARD REPORT AND ANNUAL KPIS – 2023/24

The vice principal: curriculum and quality informed the committee that the two red RAG-rated items from the balanced scorecard are covered within items 7 (attendance) and 16 (English and maths).

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience provided a verbal update in terms of the LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund). Notification has been received that the D2N2 colleges' bid for funding has been fully agreed and the full amount the college asked for has been awarded. A note of caution was given in that a portion of this funding needs to be spent by March 2024, which is a tight deadline. A launch meeting has taken place, led by the three operational leads from the D2N2 colleges. The vice principal, the principal and the finance director are currently liaising in relation to spending the revenue, and governors will receive updates as this matter progresses.

AGREED:

1. To note the content of the update provided.

6 SAR 2022/23 AND SUMMARY OF POSITION STATEMENTS

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented her detailed report, and key matters highlighted were:

- This is the first draft of the SAR. The document will be ratified firstly by Matt Vaughan (Lincoln College) as a critical friend and then by Exec.

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- The final position statement validations have taken place – these have involved critical friends from Lincoln and the City of Wolverhampton Colleges, as well as exec and assistant principals and, for some meetings where availability allowed, governors.
- A few of the grades within the position statements have been changed since August – this is as a result of apprenticeship data as there is still a way to go in relation to outcomes:
 - Construction has been reduced to ‘requires improvement’ as a result of outcomes data linked to the decision not to deliver electrical apprenticeships due to staff churn. These apprentices were transferred to JTL, which was the right decision and enabled the college to prioritise quality but will have an impact into future years.
 - Another impact was caused by the decision not to move forward with health and social care apprenticeships as these were not meeting the need of employers or helping learners to obtain jobs. Again, this was the right decision for the college.
 - Without the removal of electrical and health and social care apprenticeships, the college would have been in the 60% for outcomes. Nonetheless, the vice principal believes that teaching and learning is better and is continually improving.
 - Historical issues and length of stay in some areas have resulted in more rollovers than anticipated. Apprenticeships data is better now but will still need to be ‘requires improvement’ within the SAR, unfortunately.
- Adult data is slightly lower but, when dissected, this is as a result of some skills academies, particularly where delivery has been via a virtual classroom (however, if this option were not available, many of these students would not have been able to access learning). A large proportion of these latter are ESOL learners, and these are now being put on longer lengths of stay to support their success. The decision was taken to stop enrolments to one of the skills academies from March 2023 due to quality concerns. If it hadn’t been for this, adult achievement data would be 2.5% above the national rate of 86.2%.
- The college now has three ‘outstanding’ departments – hospitality and catering have been graded ‘outstanding’ for the third consecutive year; e-sports was delivered for the first time in 2022/23 but achieved very good pass rates and high standards; early years now has 58% high grades. Areas on the cusp include performing arts, media, art and design, and animal care. Areas where there have been staffing issues, e.g. construction, engineering, motor vehicle, and fabrication and welding, have proven to be weaker.

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- These grades and the SAR will be validated by the Corporation Board in December.
- In relation to vulnerable groups, there is still an achievement gap between LAC learners and their peers, although this has more than halved since 2018/19 and is now 6%. The achievement gap for BAME learners has increased slightly, but these learners did stay in learning as well as their peers.

One member of the committee remarked on how positive it is to see so much peer review and input from governors. However, a challenge was whether colleagues can look to work with 'outstanding' colleges to push this even further. The vice principal agreed that she would be happy to look at this for next year to support the college's ambitions to work towards 'outstanding'. She explained that the reason for picking Matt Vaughan from Lincoln College this year was that he has recently worked at West Nottinghamshire College and, formerly, for Ofsted. It is also worthy of note that colleagues have engaged with a lot of 'outstanding' colleges to observe good practice.

VP: C&Q

Sept
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AGREED: to recommend that the Corporation Board approve the SAR 2022/23.

7

QIAP – 2023/24 PROGRESS UPDATE

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented her detailed report, and key matters highlighted were:

- Attendance for classroom-based learning, including maths and English, is 2.5% better than term 1 last year.
- English attendance is 1.8% better than the same point last year. Maths attendance has improved by 2.4% on last year.
- While not in the 90%s, attendance still shows improvement on the previous year and strategies are in place. These include phone calls; a dedicated email address for students to contact; heads of department escorting students to class; the exec team 'adopting' classes to support where attendance is more problematic. Attendance is a key topic in all curriculum and quality meetings and departmental meetings with staff. There are now also reward tokens to give to students, which can be spent in college canteens.
- Attendance for apprentices is 88.76%, which is an improvement on last year but is lower than pre-pandemic levels. Overall retention for 2023/24 is 72.4% and there are currently no concerns for future years. Exec monitoring is still taking place and, as the college has now flagged in four areas on the accountability framework, the vice principal is meeting with all heads of department and assistant principals to look at all learners beyond 90 days. There are some genuine reasons for this, such as cancelled EPAs (which are now being monitored). The vice principal indicated that the college is in a strong position to show how it will move forward and improve.

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In reference to the accountability framework, one member of the committee questioned what sort of attitude the Department for Education is taking at the moment and whether the red flags are causing any issues. The vice principal indicated that she has been expecting a call since February and started increasing monitoring from then. The accountability measures do say that the level of intervention will be less for 'good' or better colleges and colleges where the DfE has confidence. The college was honest with Ofsted in relation to the expectations around decisions made in electrical and health and social care, and the vice principal suggested that this level of honesty and scrutiny at inspection has been a factor in avoiding a call so far. She is confident that, if a call is received, a strong explanation can be provided.

One member of the committee asked whether it might be possible to look forward and benchmark the improvements – it is acknowledged that there will be some lag, but this would provide reassurance. The vice principal: curriculum and quality indicated that this is possible and she has already been working with the MIS team on this to pre-empt flagging against the measures. Colleagues have also been predicting month-by-month achievement by department and overall, and this is discussed in the three-weekly monitoring meetings. Furthermore, managers focus on learners past 90 days in 1:1s. There is now also a dashboard which shows how close learners are to gateway and how many learners are in gateway. The vice principal will present these predictions and the data at the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

The principal indicated that apprenticeships at WNC have been on a journey and the progress made is positive compared to the situation at the start of his tenure. There have been two very positive apprenticeships monitoring meetings so far this term, and he hopes the next will be more positive still. Assistant principals and heads of department are now more ahead of the game in terms of making sure apprentices are learning well and the college is supporting those who are falling behind. He advised that members of the Executive team are meeting with the DfE contact team later this month, and he expects soft challenge there; however, he there is confidence that the college can respond to this well.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

8

SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT – EXCEPTIONS REPORT 2023/24

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented her detailed report. Key matters highlighted were:

- The college has seen an increase in concerns received through CPOMs, and this is primarily due to staff using the system to raise concerns around attendance. There were 148 of these concerns as at the end of October, compared to 63 the previous year.

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Guidance is now being issued to curriculum staff to explain that CPOMs should only be used where there is a safeguarding issue.

- There is additional resource in place to support with attendance chasing (where there are no safeguarding issues).
- There are currently 15 students on a child in need plan and 11 young people on a child protection plan. These are unprecedented numbers – for example, there were only four young people on a child protection plan this time last year. This indicates the level of complexity attached to some of these young people.
- In terms of incidents, the college is dealing with a number of concerns, particularly at Derby Road where there is some gang-related activity. The college has withdrawn a number of students in connection with this.
- There have been no safeguarding concerns from partner providers.
- The vice principal was part of a roundtable to look at recommendations emerging from the Manchester Arena bombing. One of these recommendations was particularly around information sharing for schools, colleges and universities, as it was found that there had been missed opportunities to share concerns that may have been an indicator to the fact that the perpetrator of the bombing was vulnerable to radicalisation. The DfE has now been recommended to consider whether greater information sharing between schools and colleges – and colleges and universities – is practical and how this might work, particularly in relation to behavioural issues. The vice principal feels that this will be quite challenging due to GDPR, and she also indicated that it is difficult for colleges to get this information from schools. Furthermore, the same rules do not apply once students are adults, so it will be even more challenging to share the information with universities. This has been fed back to the roundtable, and there is another meeting planned for the spring.
- The government has undertaken a review of the Prevent duty and how this is working, in practice. This has resulted in a change to the statutory guidance, which will come into effect on 31st December. In terms of what the college might need to do in response, this is actually very little as slight changes had already been put in place by the college. However, one change is that the guidance now enables colleges to replace their existing Prevent-specific risk register with a much broader, general safeguarding risk register. The vice principal feels that this is a positive move and will allow focus on more of the college's key concerns, and she would appreciate having the committee's endorsement to implement this change. Governors indicated that they are in support of this suggestion.

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One governor asked whether there are any common factors in relation to escalations and increasing numbers of concerns, e.g. whether this is somehow associated with the pandemic or whether it is something wider. The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience is of the opinion that there is still an element of influence from the pandemic –last year’s data around online issues saw the balance tip from online safety to behavioural (abuse, bullying, unprofessional behaviour), and this pattern is being repeated. She feels there is a piece of work to be done not only around online safety but also around online behaviour and conduct. Another trend in this vein is that there have been more issues this year to date around a low-level ‘lack of kindness’ towards each other and a lack of maturity seen in how students are relating to each other. The vice principal feels that this is a hangover from COVID where these young people were not exposed to social situations for a portion of their formative years. Furthermore, another unusual issue seen this year is that parents are sometimes not setting the best example in terms of relating to each other, in that they are getting involved in disputes between students. As discussed previously, some students are getting drawn into gang-related activity, and it is worrying that they see this lifestyle as glamorous or attractive.

The assistant principal: engineering informed the committee that, in her experience, young people involved in city-based gang activity are often actively dispersed into the county and placed in the quieter towns. Where those young people are still unable to disengage themselves from the gang-related activity, this will have the gradual effect of spreading it into these areas. The vice principal confirmed that some of the young people recently withdrawn from the college have come to the area from the city and had relocated as a result of gang-related activity. On the other side of this, the college is working closely with one young person who was subject to criminal exploitation and county lines activity, and this young person is doing brilliantly within the college.

A staff governor asked whether the college is well informed in advance of this sort of involvement, and it was confirmed that there are usually tight processes in place, and the college has good partnerships with youth justice organisations who will usually pass this information on. For example, colleagues have been working well with the police in relation to the young person discussed above, and there are frequent ‘team around the child’ meetings in relation to him. Adult learners are asked for a self-declaration and are put on a probation period, and the vice principal confirmed that there is a risk assessment process. Overall, it was discussed that violence and unkindness do seem more prevalent now, and the college community is a microcosm of this.

One member of the committee indicated that the safeguarding training given is well-rooted in occurrences within the college and is tailored to the current year to keep people interested. The governor then raised the matter of the increasing level of need, and a question was asked how in

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relation to how the team is coping. The vice principal indicated that her concern is that the complexities and vulnerabilities seen in the college are not getting any easier. The other side of this is that the external services which the college might have previously relied upon to provide support (e.g. social care, CAMHS, and adult mental health services) are also under pressure. Their staff work very hard but these services are stretched, leaving the college's teams holding the risk. The vice principal feels that the team copes admirably with the level of concern, but this does take its toll on staff wellbeing. This struggle is felt by safeguarding, welfare, and the teachers who have these young people in their classes. The college is mindful of the toll this takes on wellbeing, and there are regular check-ins with teams, and formalised debriefs take place following serious incidents. Governors acknowledged this and indicated that it is about how much these staff can be supported – colleagues need to be able to support one another through these difficult times.

The chair indicated that he is getting a bit concerned in relation to the policy and strategy space and putting the onus on the sector (e.g. in terms of sharing information, as discussed earlier in the meeting). There is also a quality impact in terms of lower grades coming in, access arrangements around exams, etc. It is positive that the vice principal is on the national roundtable where she can have a voice. The chair agreed that it would be good to see an extension of the Prevent risk register into a safeguarding risk tab within the college's risk register. This will provide something for the Standards Committee to monitor to ensure that they support staff and that there are resources and recognition in place for staff doing a difficult job. The chair extended the committee's thanks to teams for the work they do, and he acknowledged that this will only increase year on year.

The chair is concerned to see that some behaviour is leaking from cities into counties, and he would like more detail on this within a future meeting.

AGREED:

- to note the content of the update provided
- that the vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience work to include a safeguarding risk tab within the risk register to replace the Prevent tab.

VP: CESE

January
2024

9 STUDENT PROGRESSION – 2023 INTERNAL

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented her report. She explained that it shows an analysis of learners progressing within the college from 2022/23 into 2023/24. She clarified that the numbers within the report reflect only those learners who progressed, not the entire cohort. Key matters highlighted were:

- Proportionately more learners moved to a programme of study at a higher level linked to their course, whereas proportionately

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fewer moved to a different curriculum area. The proportion of learners who repeated a level remains largely similar to the previous year; however, proportionally more progressed to study a course at a lower level.

- Of the 94 learners who dropped to a lower level, 15 of these had been withdrawn in-year and so would not have completed the level they were originally enrolled to; two of these 15 returned to study part-time evening or community courses.
- Of the 79 learners who completed their programme of study but then returned on a lower level, 39 of these completed a Level 3 programme in 2022/23. Of these 39, six returned to community or part-time provision and 29 returned to a programme of study where the maximum level at which a student can start is Level 2 (such as hairdressing or plumbing). This leaves four learners outstanding, which the vice principal will work through to identify reasons for them having dropped down.
- 11 learners progressed from Level 1 to a lower level of study. Of those, nine progressed to Project Search or Boost – this would actually constitute positive progression for these learners. Again, in relation to the remaining two of the 11, the vice principal will work through to identify reasons for them having dropped down.
- 29 completed a Level 2 programme in 2022/23. Of these, four moved to community-based provision. The remainder moved to Level 1 programmes in a different curriculum area. The vice principal is focusing her efforts on investigating the reasons for this.
- 181 learners progressed to the same level of study. Of these, 19 progressed from foundation studies to core voc provision, which is considered to be positive progression. Of the remaining 162 learners, 10 withdrew midyear; 28 moved from one Level 3 qual to another; 75 repeated Level 2 (and 34 of these had moved to a programme where Level 2 was the highest entry point). Again, the vice principal is starting to work through the 41 learners that remain, in order to ascertain why they have not moved up a level.
- The vice principal is attending the curriculum and quality meeting to go through this detail with assistant principals.

A question from the committee was whether this is a trend that the college is concerned about, especially in terms of the impact of grade boundary shifts. The committee asked whether the numbers of students progressing to lower and the same level of study is starting creep up and whether this will continue due to the challenges students are facing. The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience indicated that some young people don't know what they want to do when they first join the college, and it may take longer than six weeks for them to work this out. In these cases, the vice principal feels that it is better for these students to then repeat a level than to become NEET. Where there might be an issue in the future is around the ability for

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colleges to enable young people to do this post-curriculum reform. The vice principal also informed the committee that there are a lot of technical quals now, and these are very challenging. Learning is linear with synoptics and external exams at set windows during the year. Governors were informed that the national pass rate for technical electrical was only 48%, and the Association of Colleges has even put out some resources to support with this. Overall, it seems that the government's aim is to make qualifications more difficult, and this will create challenges and will mean that more young people will be entering work with a Level 2 qualification. On top of this, there is a general election looming and, overall, the college has a real set of challenges in terms of ensuring good outcomes for young people in the local area. The principal agreed – the college is very ambitious for young people to progress, but assistant principals then need to think of the classroom dynamic and the dangers of having too many young people in a class who are struggling. It is necessary for colleges to balance being ambitious for their learners and being realistic about what teachers are facing.

The assistant principal: engineering indicated that the college needs to look at more creative ways to progress students – e.g. '.5' courses, where learners do not yet have the skills to move to the next level but should still be engaged and challenged to improve. It is necessary to look at different kinds of career that might be more achievable for learners in the short-term to get them into employment. Colleagues are looking at all of this in their business planning sessions, and they are also looking at trying to work with employers more to ensure courses meet their needs. There are a lot of students who are capable of completing one level but then the gap between that and the next is so large that they would only fail if they progressed – the college needs to put something in place that can bridge this gap.

The assistant principal: health, education and service industries has found that the content of the T Levels is at least a 'Level 3.5'. Where alternative Level 3 quals are being defunded, this is automatically leaving a large gap for learners progressing from Level 2 to a T Level, as they are effectively going to have to step up another half-level. This is particularly problematic for health and social care, where curriculum colleagues are going to have to make some sort of Level 3 offer that creates a pathway into work.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

10 **CURRICULUM – QUALIFICATION REFORMS**

The vice principal: curriculum and quality drew governors' attention to the report and indicated that:

- The college has welcomed its first cohorts on T Levels this year, and these are going well. Early years learners are already out on placement; engineering learners have undertaken visits into

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industry; and there are now employers wanting to take on construction learners for visits.

- The college had planned to deliver the digital T Level this year but had no interest from applicants, and the ETF link has said that other colleges have experienced the same. Interestingly, however, engineering, construction and digital T-levels generate the most interest at open events.
- Next year, the college will extend to two more options in construction (T-Level Building Services Engineering for Construction and T-Level Onsite Construction); another pathway in engineering (T-Level Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing); the T Level Healthcare Science will come in with a nursing pathway; two digital T Levels (hardware and software – there is more interest in the latter, to date); and T-Level Animal Care and Management. In relation to the latter, the existing Level 3 technical quals in this area are very difficult and provide a challenge for learners and teachers. The T-Level workload for animal care staff is actually smaller than that of the existing qual.
- Colleagues are linking with other colleges, including Loughborough and Bishop Burton.
- The college is keeping an open mind in terms of a T-Level offer in media production and broadcast – this has come under the spotlight as it has moved to a different awarding body and the spec is not yet available. It was reported that other colleges in similar demographics are doing the same.
- Level 2 quals are also being reformed to eventually link into T-Levels. A lot of awarding organisations are currently applying for approval, but the college will not see the outcomes until July and then will need to deliver in 2025.
- Beneath this, there will eventually then be reforms at Level 1.
- The general election will possibly change this picture, which means no one knows as yet what it will actually look like.
- Senior leaders and managers have a huge piece of work to do over the coming years to ensure learners can progress to either apprenticeships or T Levels – T Levels are very demanding and high-level, but it is also the case that employers want these people to be practical and hands-on in industry.
- Where there is no T-Level route, it is proposed that there will be new quals (AAQs – alternative academic qualifications) brought in to either stand alone or to sit alongside A Levels, depending on the subject area and whether there is a T Level available.
- In relation to defunding from August 2024, the impact for the college is that there will be no alternative option for health and social care, construction and building services, or childcare. From August 2025, affected curriculum areas are engineering, motor vehicle, and fabrication and welding.

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- The cycle of reform will complete in 2028, with Level 1 the last to be reformed.
- The college's T Level link has informed the vice principal that he tells people to speak to West Nottinghamshire College as it is 'ahead of the game'.

The principal attended the AoC Conference earlier this week, where he met two DfE officials who will come to visit the college in the spring (date TBA). They put a lot of importance on the T-Level foundation year and seem relaxed that a high proportion of students will do a three-year Level 3, and the key for the college is about how to market this and how to make this sort of offer attractive to young people. He feels that colleges want to make this work, but there are so many questions to which the answers are not known and so many potential pitfalls.

The chair thanked the vice principal for this in-depth report and acknowledged that it is clearly difficult to predict which way things will go. He would hope to see some common sense around the demands of T Levels and around transition. It is good to see that there is a lot of engagement with parents – other colleges are not doing this and are finding it harder to get across how valuable T Levels will be.

It was indicated by many attendees of the meeting that they have not seen this level of uncertainty and impact within education for some time.

One final point raised was that the creative T Level does not yet include photography or graphic design, which are the two most popular elements for today's young people. Similarly to the digital T Level, which was written in 2018 (before the pandemic then caused the increase in digital skills) and quickly became out of date, the media T Level is also a potential victim to swift technological developments. This is something about which all colleges are concerned; however, WNC's team does stretch the delivery to ensure students are given up to date knowledge.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

11 PERFORMANCE REPORT – DATA ON A PAGE (2022/23 YEAREND)

The assistant principal: quality and standards introduced this item and particularly drew the committee's attention to the following data:

- Attendance and retention for 16-18-year-olds are slightly better than at this point last year at +2.4% and +0.7% respectively.
- Adult learning data shows that progress is slightly better (+0.07%) but retention is lower (-2.3%).
- Subcontracted delivery data shows that attendance and achievement are lower than at this point last year (-8.5% and -28.6%), but it was indicated that there are low student numbers.
- Community retention is lower (-3.7%) but achievement is better (+86.1%) than at this point last year.

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- Apprenticeships attendance is slightly better than this time last year (+5%); retention is equal; achievement is lower (-21.4%), but these achievements are starting to come through. The percentage of apprentices that have had a review in the last three months is lower than this time last year (-2.2%) but the recording of 20% off-the-job training is higher (+2.5%).
- High needs attendance is 1.7% better than at this point last year; progress scores are -0.74 on last year (a positive); but retention is 2.6% lower than in the previous year.
- Free school meals attendance, retention and progress scores are all slightly better than last year, with differences of 1.8%, 2.5%, and -0.12 respectively.
- Four deep dives have been completed to date on college direct delivered provision, and two meet expectations. One subcontractor deep dive has been carried out (this has been reported previously and was 'good') and more are planned.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

12 **PRIORITY LEARNERS DATA REPORT**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented her report, and key matters highlighted were:

- Finalised outcomes data shows that students with a declared disability or identified as high needs achieve in line with, if not better than, peers.
- There is a slight gap in pass rates for learners with EHCPs in that they are lower, and this is the first time this has been seen. The vice principal has explored this and identified a pattern when a young person with an EHCP has declined in-class support. The SEND code of practice clearly states that the young person must be heard in terms of their preferences in relation to receiving support. However, an EHCP is in place to set out educational provisions and, if the young person is declining these provisions, the question is whether the local authority should continue to with the EHCP. This year, there have been some low-level behavioural exhibited by young people with EHCPs who have declined support. A debate is taking place with ICDS colleagues around this issue.
- The college has largely closed the gaps for young people in receipt of free school meals; however, the gap for BAME learners there, and this is reflected in the EDI report.
- Outcomes for LAC learners and those in foster care are better than their peers, but gaps have widened for young people in residential care or supported housing. The vice principal has started to look into the reasons for this.
- In addition to the previously approved KPIS, the vice principal proposes to add closing the gap for EHCP learners so that this can be more closely monitored.

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- In-year data shows some gaps already in terms of attendance, particularly for learners in residential care settings or supported housing, but the residential care heading relates primarily to one learner with some significant vulnerabilities. The college is very aware of why this young person is not currently attending, and there are weekly meetings to discuss this and keep a close watch on the matter.
- There are two young people in supported housing. One is very likely to be withdrawn, and the other has already been withdrawn despite best efforts to reengage and the college having been working closely with social care.
- Overall, post-42 days retention rates are largely in line with, if not better than, peers.
- The vice principal has included those young people under close guardianship in the care experienced category, as they share many vulnerabilities.

In relation to those EHCP learners who are declining support, one member of the committee asked whether their parents have a view and whether this makes a difference. The vice principal advised that a partnership approach is taken – the college is consulted in relation to EHCPs and has to confirm that it can meet need. There is then a detailed assessment process with the learner and their parents wherein the college puts forward its proposals for in-class support. It is usually at this point that the young person declines this support as they do not want to be different from their peers. It is then that parental support (or otherwise) of this refusal is invited. If the college starts to see behavioural issues, parents are contacted again in relation to this matter. However, last year, a number of parents that backed their child to not receive support.

In general discussion, it was suggested that the reason for refusing support is the stigma, and this is perhaps also linked to the support available in schools as they operate differently to colleges – not every young person in schools is given in-class support. It was also suggested that parents and young people might not appreciate this the amount of personal responsibility placed on those young people in terms of their learning and behaviour. Some young people do not want to not be labelled, and they want to be like everyone else in the class. This is understandable, but it is the case that these learners may then struggle. The vice principal indicated that the situation will be monitored.

AGREED:

- to note the contents of the report
- to add a new key KPI in relation to monitoring the emerging gap between EHCP learners and peers.

13

A LEVELS

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

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The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented her detailed written report, and key matters highlighted were:

- Cumulative attendance for Year 13 across both 2022/23 and 2023/24 is 83.2%. Lower attendance is attributed to a small number of individuals who are struggling with mental health and anxiety. There was also a period of three weeks at the start of the academic year when there were a lot of viruses, including COVID, causing a high number of absences.
- Year 12's attendance is 94.2%, RAG-rated green.
- The first progress check for Year 12 is positive at -0.4 against a target of 0 by the end of Year 2. The head of sixth form is checking to ensure these assessments have been robust. This check, as the first one, will be a baseline check.
- Year 13's progress is -1.29 – the vice principal indicated that the college would normally expect this to be better. Exceptions can be seen in environmental science, computer science, and further maths, so the head of sixth form is checking the assessments for these three subjects for robustness. The residual scores for Year 13 show that too many learners' current 'working at' grades are more than one grade away from their minimum grades. Strategies and interventions are in place, and there are some further interventions in the form of progress boards, learning walks, and learner voice.
- This academic year, letters are being sent to parents and carers after each progress check so they can ensure that their young people are dedicating sufficient time to studying outside the classroom.
- Progress scores have been inputted into ALPs – there are more in the blue category than would be hoped at this point of the year, which is a concern. Clear expectations were set for all students at the start of year, and these were reiterated in tutorials. Some new policies have been put in place to help those students that are struggling with their mental health to continue to study, e.g. a quiet day policy. It is too early to assess impact as yet, but the vice principal will report on this later in the year.
- Interventions in place include extra one hour for law and business; holiday classes for geography, law and politics; teachers providing targeted learning to those who are falling behind; and academic studies sessions are focusing more on exam techniques, testing strategies, and so on, rather than relying on re-reading and going over notes. Teachers and achievement coaches are contacting parents when students do not attend intervention.
- A total of 35 students are on action plans based on their mock outcomes; to date, 31 of these are judged to be making good progress; two have been withdrawn; and two are undergoing fitness to study.

VP: C&Q

March
2024

Signed :  _____ Chair

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- Pro Monitor shows an increase in the speediness of follow-up actions when concerns are raised.
- ALPS scores for Year 12 show a lot more in the red category, but it is still early days. There are no concerns at this point.
- Retention for Year 13 is 76.9%, which is low, and is 100% for Year 12, which is expected.
- The head of sixth form is predicting that the average grade score for learners leaving the college this academic year will be 5.5 (in 2022/23, the actual average grade score was 8). If this were the case, the subject average would be white on the ALPs thermometer for 2023/24. There is a lot more monitoring and structuring taking place, including sessions with external consultant and a deep dive (which the external consultant will join). Because the two years are very different, there are also plans to complete two position statements and QIPs, one for each year, to then be combined again to create the final end-of-year position statement for the overall department.
- Fortnightly learning walks are taking place as needed, based on learner voice, work scrutiny and progress checks.
- The assistant principal added that a homework policy has been implemented. Some students, some of whom are holding down two or three jobs, are being worked with to ensure that they can meet the need of the A Level. Colleagues are making their expectations clear as having a job can and does have an impact on learning.

The chair asked what is happening with English literature in terms of intervention, and the vice principal indicated that there will be 1:1 support available for learners who are struggling.

The chair indicated that he feels the department is turning a corner and the measures in place seem robust. The committee agreed that it is positive to see the level of granular detail.

A predicted grade of 5.5 is a significant achievement compared to the other ALPS data, and the assistant principal was asked to think about how she and colleagues will ensure this is met. She indicated that colleagues are receiving some complaints from parents and learners about the amount of homework being set and the expectations outside of class. Colleagues are really pushing this, and it is felt that it will make a difference. On top of this, colleagues working hard on improving exam results via strengthened revision skills. Learners have been asked what they doing outside class and what is stopping them from studying, and they are indicating that the college needs to structure the homework more and assist them with revision skills. Learners are eager to do well, and it has been communicated to them that attendance and effort will help them to increase their grades. Overall, things feel more positive, and the deep dive has helped everyone to focus. It is hoped that January will see a definite improvement.

Signed :  _____ Chair

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The student governors, who are both Year 2 A-Level students, were invited to give their perspective:

- One student governor feels that the workload has increased – she is studying history, law and politics and is finding the homework stressful. She does not currently have a job and can focus fully on college, but a lot of her peers either need to work to support their families or want to work to get experience. This can impact on their college work.
- The student governor indicated that, in history, homework has been set consistently from the start of year, meaning that there is a routine. However, some teachers do not have a set pattern for setting homework, and others do not set it at all. This means that their students are not accustomed to it and find it difficult to get into a routine if homework is suddenly then set. Stress and looming exams, personal statement deadlines, etc. all lead to students putting things off as they are worried. Some feel they don't have the support they need in tutorials, and some activity in those sessions is not as useful as others (e.g. UCAS would be useful, as would looking at apprenticeships).
- The second student governor agreed with the above and indicated that many A Level students have employment – they have a job now themselves, whereas they did not previously. They have noticed that homework is being set for subjects for which it would not previously have been set, and the homework has now become more time-sensitive, structured and important.
- The second year of A-Level study has felt more like students are getting ready to go to university and should be preparing for exams – the student governor understands that the point of college is to get ready for the next steps, but this can distract from the 'now' (i.e. the importance of getting good A-Level grades). Without unconditional offers and with the competition for spaces, this added distraction away from studying for exams is worrying.
- The student governors informed the committee that they feel expectations have been raised overall, and not just between Year 1 and Year 2. They feel more like they are completing a programme of study, rather than loosely studying with a last-minute crunch to prepare for exams. All of this together makes the students feel a little stuck, but teachers are helping as much as possible. The students made it clear that they do not have any complaints about the programme.

The principal indicated that students are welcomed and encouraged to speak to teachers about the pressures they are facing, if they need to have a job, to ensure they can be supported to be in the best place for exams.

Signed :  _____ Chair

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Student governors also mentioned that, although this year has been more difficult, staff have done best to help them through. They particularly gave thanks to Megan McQueen for helping them.

The chair indicated that this was a positive update and a well-received report.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

14 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY (STUDENTS) EXCEPTIONS REPORT**

The vice principal referred to her detailed report, and key matters highlighted included:

- The investigation of BAME outcomes has been completed, and it has been found that the largest proportion of students sit within adult learning and community provision. Adult learning houses skills academies provision, which is largely online learning, and this is where the largest gaps in outcomes for BAME can be seen. There are issues in terms of quality of that provision and the vice principal: curriculum and quality is working on this. There are small numbers across most classroom-based learning, but issues were also found in construction, foundation studies, beauty, art and design, and animal care.
- There are 61 care experienced students within the college. The committee needs to be aware that it is likely that colleges will be asked to take on the statutory mantle of corporate parenting. This is not expected until 2027, but the vice principal is going to put together what this will look like in terms of a charter. Part of the work with DfE and other colleges is around making sure this charter is about education and does not include matters which social care and other bodies should be picking up.
- The welfare services team has been nominated for a national Alex Timpson award around the work it is doing with care experienced young people. The ceremony will be in Birmingham on 21st November. The committee asked that their congratulations be passed to the team.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided

15 **RISK REPORT (RED RAG ITEMS)**

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Vocational progress at this point is much better than it was last year. For technical qualifications, the college has continued to use recent national performance data from awarding organisations as a basis for setting targets, as this provides a more realistic target for skills-based qualifications than the ALPs methodology.

Signed :  _____ Chair

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- PMR meetings have seen challenge in relation to these assessments, and reports from assistant principals and heads of department indicate that these are all robust.
- GCSE Maths and English and Functional Skills used the same assessments as last year. This assessment was completed in the first few weeks to allow gaps to be identified and used to individualise learning.
- The overall residual scores for maths and English are slightly better than at the same point last academic year.
- The college has moved to an individualised approach to CPD, and each department has a plan, as do the individual staff members within. Progress is being monitored within PMR meetings, as is the closure of identified actions in QIAPs.
- The grades for progress check 2 will soon be uploaded. This point in the year is slightly early to report at length on progress, but there will be more to report in January.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided

16 **LEARNER VOICE REPORT (MONITORING)**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented this verbal item. Key matters to note were as follows:

- The learner reps training programme took place in October.
- The first full Your Voice meeting will take place on 23rd November – governors have been invited to attend if they wish.
- The Rate Your Course survey is currently out for students to respond.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

17 **COMPLAINTS – ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented this item as read.

One member of the committee referred to complaints about the attitude of staff, and the vice principal informed governors that this was mostly about how teachers have spoken to young people. It is possible that this could be a case of oversensitivity on the part of some students, but it might also be that some staff can be a bit sharp with students. The vice principal confirmed that there are no issues with particular areas or specific members of staff – the complaints are fairly even across all curriculum areas and with no particular staff members standing out.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

18 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Thanks were given again to Angela Newton-Soanes for her service. Governors indicated that she was an excellent and knowledgeable chair, and they are sad to see her leave.

Signed :  _____ Chair

Date: 18/01/2024

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DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

This was confirmed as Thursday 18th January 2024 at 17:00.

Meeting closed at 19:30

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 18/01/2024