



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2023 4PM TO 6PM – Minutes

Gateshead College

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Mike Welsh	Chair / Independent	MW	X*	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Michael Wood-Williams	Independent	MWW	X	
Aneela Ali	Independent	AA	X	
Carol Davenport	Independent	CD	X	
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Independent	CJR	X	
Richard Wensley	Staff Governor	RW	X	
Will Berridge	Student Governor	WB	X	
Morgan Penaluna	Student Governor	MP	X	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Presenters				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality	CT	X	
Deni Chambers	Director of Curriculum & Skills	DC	X	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand & Learner Experience	NH	X	
Richard Ward	Head of Quality Improvement	RW	X	
Kevin Marston	Assistant Principal	KM	X	
Suzanne Cunningham	Assistant Principal	SC	X	
Tracy Foreman	Assistant Principal	TF	X	
Tom Bradley	Assistant Principal	TB	X	
John Deary	Assistant Principal	JD	X	

*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting

CQ/186 1. Chair's Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. It was noted that WB and MP had joined the Committee following their appointment to the Board.

There were no apologies to report. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate. There were no conflicts of interest declared. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting.

CQ/187 2. Minutes of the last meeting dated 5 October 2023

A) Main minutes

The Committee **reviewed** the main minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

B) Confidential minutes

The Committee **reviewed** the confidential minutes from the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

CQ/188 3. Matters Arising / Action Log

A) Action Log

NT presented the action log and highlighted that there had been a number of actions completed, however some were ongoing or not yet due.

The action log was noted.

CQ/189 4. Self-Assessment Report (SAR) Validation Process 2022/23 – Proposal of Grades and Judgements

CT presented the report, noting that the creation of the Self Assessment Report was an important piece of work for the College and cyclical in nature. The SAR presented reflected the 2022/2023 academic year, and work had already begun to make improvements since September 2023. CT confirmed that the overall SAR was built up from departmental level SARs. The process included the Quality Team attending SAR meetings and gathering evidence relating to key themes. The purpose of the internal SAR meetings was also to provide support and challenge of the strengths and areas for improvement highlighted. The outcomes of the SAR would then inform the curriculum Quality Improvement Plan for 2023/2024, a draft of which had been included as part of the report.

The overall SAR provided proposed gradings and the Committee were being asked to consider the gradings and recommend for Board approval.

To provide additional assurance, three departmental SARs were presented:

- Maths and English (where the proposed grading remained consistent with 2021/22 at a Grade 2).
- Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing (where the proposed grading had improved from Grade 3 in 2021/2022 to a Grade 2).
- Jewish Girls Academy (where the proposed grading had reduced from a Grade 1 in 2021/2022 to a Grade 2).

The Committee were reminded they were recommending the gradings of the overall SAR not the departmental SARs which had already been challenged and moderated internally.

Maths and English SAR

SC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College continued its focus on stretch and challenge of learners, and for learners to exceed expectations.
- The College approach was to enter learners for GCSE rather than Functional Skills.
- The College demonstrated significantly higher progress scores than the sector.
- The number of learners with “U” starting grades was higher in comparison with other colleges.
- That 19% of learners achieved high grades in English compared, with 23% of General Further Education (GFE) colleges (2022/2023 data).
- The positive progress learners made from their starting points.
- 34% of learners sitting their Maths GCSE required access arrangements.
- The impact of low attendance on retention and pass rates.
- Areas for improvement included attendance within Maths and English classes.

The Committee queried the following:

- Challenges with staffing – it was confirmed Maths and English had experienced difficulties with recruitment during 2022/2023 with agency staff being required. Work was undertaken to maintain high standards. It was confirmed that 2 new staff members had been appointed for 2023/2024.
- The proportion of learners leaving the College without obtaining their GCSE Maths and English – it was confirmed that this was estimated at around 7% however this would need to be confirmed.

Action: CT to confirm the percentage of learners leaving the College without obtaining their GCSE Maths and English, including the percentage protected to achieve.

- The setting / banding of learners – it was confirmed that all learners were initially assessed upon entry to group them accordingly. It was noted learners were able to move between groups. Those with lower attainment were generally in smaller group sizes where there was more opportunity for one to one delivery. It was also aimed for learners to be grouped within their vocational areas to allow delivery to be contextualised to their subject to assist with engagement and understanding.

The Committee discussed the following:

- Links with the English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) department to support the teaching of ESOL learners undertaking functional skills and further qualifications.
- The positive focus around all teachers being teachers of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) learners.
- The continuation of work with the Great North Maths Hub.

Engineering / Advanced Manufacturing

JD presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The linkage between the department and the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP).
- The alignment of the curriculum with the needs of industry, and the strong links with employers.

- The broad range of apprenticeships offered within the department and the significant improvement within apprenticeship outcomes.
- That relationships were in place with key regional stakeholders to upskill their workforce.
- The number of high grades achieved within GCSE Maths were above national rates in 2022/2023.
- Areas for improvement included; attendance in GCSE English lessons, performance (attendance, retention, achievement and progress) of full time Level 1 learners, and the number external work placements. Options relating to HE provision were also to be explored further, linking with Higher Technical Qualifications that the College is seeking to introduce.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The process to facilitate an increase in work experience – it was confirmed that the Business Development Team continued to build relationships with organisations and look for opportunities in relation to apprenticeships, work placements, guest speakers and across all provision where required. A skills matching event took place relating to Digital within 2022/2023 and due to the success, was being repeated for 2023/2024 within multiple skill areas.
- The attractiveness of the engineering provision – it was confirmed that employer steering panels were in place to consider the design of the curriculum and there were plans in place for additional speciality areas within engineering, and the College would be working with employers to promote this. The College were also looking to better promote resources, such as equipment, to prospective learners.
- Plans to improve English achievement / attendance within this curriculum area – it was confirmed that attendance was monitored on a weekly basis with interventions in place to support students. The Go North East bus strike was negatively impacting students. To link with improved achievement in English, the College were working with employers to understand their skills needs in terms of English, Maths and Digital skills, to ensure learners were equipped with these to succeed. The College were continuing to promote the importance of English and Maths with learners, and were considering alternative routes for motivation. Maths linked closer to the skills required within this curriculum area so further work was being undertaken in English to contextualise learning.
- Staff development for new recruits – it was noted that staff were able to undertake a Bootcamp which provided them with the basics of the Teaching Further qualification. New recruits were also placed in focussed development which meant they would have extra resource from lead practioners.

The Committee noted the improvements made within 2022/2023.

Jewish Girls Academy

KM presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College had been working with the Jewish Community for around 12 years, and this was a relationship the College were proud of, with strong community engagement.
- Curriculum intent was clear with a positive learning experience with high standards.
- The curriculum remained flexible and demand led.
- Areas for improvement included; A level performance and attendance (following a recent decline linking with the Jewish Calendar and the observing of festivals and religious events).

It was confirmed that the Rabbis were involved within the SAR process and attended moderation meetings to discuss this.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The changes in curriculum offer – it was confirmed this Jewish seminary was vocationally focussed and the curriculum offer was based on demand from learners and adapted appropriately.
- Interventions in place to improve attendance – it was noted that additional sessions were being offered alongside additional interventions to support and improve attendance / returning learners. It was queried as to whether remote learning could be offered however the College needed to remain mindful of cultural sensitivities around technology.
- Balancing of British Values / Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the curriculum offered – it was confirmed that staff were respectful and sensitive to the Jewish culture and there were requirements for adaptations to take place however topics such as British Values and Prevent were still taught. The College worked closely with the Rabbis to ensure subject text was appropriate and there were positive working relationships in place. It was confirmed that reassurance of this had been previously provided to awarding organisations.

The Committee noted the innovative work and continued mindfulness of cultural sensitivities. The Committee commended the positive work within this area.

4.1. Education Programmes for Young People

TF presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The curriculum was ambitious, well planned and well formed.
- Learners made excellent progress.
- The achievement of high grades within vocational areas was good. Progress grades within Maths and English remained above national averages.
- Achievement rates remained strong.
- Areas for improvement included learner retention.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The impact of the performance in Maths and English GCSE grades on this area of the SAR – it was confirmed that this had been debated internally and the data subjected to detailed review. The College were clear where improvements were needed and confident that this area remained Good.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Good.

4.2. Apprenticeships

JD presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Attendance was good.
- There were positive destinations for apprentices following completion of their qualifications.
- Learners benefited from Careers Information Advice and Guidance (CIAG) prior to, and as part of, their apprentice journey.

- Provision linked to Local Market Intelligence (LMI).
- Areas for improvement included ensuring employers contribute to ongoing progress reviews during the year so that they are clear about the progress that apprentices are making and can support them to develop their skills in the workplace

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The Apprenticeship Blueprint – it was confirmed this was an internal College document which ensured that all apprenticeship programmes contained standard college elements such as enrichment, careers advice, personal and social development sessions (PSD).
- Ensuring employers consider apprentices as full-time employees – it was noted there were regular reviews in place where any issues would be highlighted. The onboarding process had also been extended and improved to ensure the right candidate was appointed for the job.
- The option of refusal to work with employers – it was confirmed that the College could choose not to work with employers if there was reason for not doing so, such as negative past experiences.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Good.

4.3. Provision for Learners with High Needs

TB presented the report and highlighted the following:

- There was a mix of provision types across the College depending on learner need.
- Learners with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) on mainstream courses generally achieved better than their peers in terms of retention and achievement.
- There was a positive ethos across the College that all teachers are teachers of SEND learners.
- Areas for improvement included work experience opportunities and further staff training.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The embedding of placements for high needs learners – it was confirmed that internal work experience placements could be offered, however the College were focusing on supported internships within the community or industry. Apprenticeship opportunities were also being explored further. It was noted that the offering of external placements was part of the aims included within the College's Accountability Statement.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Good.

4.4. Adult Learning Programmes

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- A significant part of this provision related to those completing sector-based work academies, mainly within rail and engineering.

- Learners had high achievement rates with positive progression into employment.
- Areas for improvement included the learner experience and outcomes on the Access to Health provision.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- Planned improvements within the Access to Health qualification – it was noted there had been some staffing challenges within 2022/2023, and that this was also a difficult sector to recruit to. This provision was being monitored closely.
- Timetabling of functional skills – it was confirmed timetabling was being further considered, however attendance proved difficult for learners with external commitments.
- Attendance interventions for adult learners – it was confirmed attendance interventions focused on 16-18 learners however this would be explored further.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.

4.5. Quality of Education

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Intent, implementation and impact was clear.
- Teaching and learning was excellent and continued to improve through the work of the Teacher Academy and Lead Practitioners.
- The College's learners came from some of the most deprived backgrounds, with the majority in the highest 3 of 10 bands of deprivation.
- Achievement rates for adults and young people undertaking education and training were consistently above national averages.
- Areas for improvement included the continued focus on improvements within functional skills and GCSE English and Maths.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The focus on placements over external work commissions – it was confirmed the College wanted to continue with both opportunities however there was a continued focus on improving the number of placement opportunities for learners.
- Any indications of discrepancies within the retention of protected characteristics – it was confirmed a small working group was being created to explore this in greater detail with updates to be provided to the Committee in due course.

Action: CT to update the Committee on if there are any discrepancies within the retention of protected characteristics.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Good.

4.6. Behaviour and Attitudes

KM presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College maintained high expectations of learners in terms of positive behaviour.
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) was a strength across the College.
- Learners benefited from a range of different work experience opportunities.
- Areas for improvement included to increase the proportion of external work placements.

The Committee **agreed** that the positive atmosphere was felt around the College.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.

4.7. Personal Development

DC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The Personal Social Development programme remained responsive to key themes and hot topics.
- Careers Information, Advice, and Guidance (CIAG) was strong.
- Areas for improvement included the transition period for learners with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) joining the College.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Outstanding.

4.8. Leadership and Management

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College had agreed a Strategic Plan which provided clear focus.
- Governance was strong.
- Curriculum remained relevant and innovative.
- The College had invested in the learner experience and resources within the year, specifically the investment in IT.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Good.

4.9. Safeguarding

NH presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The College complied with statutory duties.
- There was a positive culture of Safeguarding across the College. This was reiterated by the Safeguarding Link Governor (MWW).
- The College had strong links with the local community and this strengthened the understanding of local risks.

The Committee **suggested** the addition of the work to further support learners with mental health and wellbeing.

Action: CT to add further narrative regarding the College's work to improve mental health and wellbeing support for learners.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Effective.

4.10. Skills

DC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The SAR included a skills statement for 2022/2023 following the inclusion within the Education Inspection Framework (EIF).
- The College had successful strategic partnerships in place with strong collaboration with employers.
- The skills intent was demonstrated and embedded through the College's Employment Edge ethos.
- Areas for improvement included ensuring a consistent approach to skills development in each curriculum area.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed grading of Strong.

4.11. Overall Self Assessment

The Chair noted he had provided detailed feedback in advance of the meeting to CT regarding the SAR and QIP which was intended to further improve the effectiveness and these comments may be factored into the final version submitted for Board approval at the December 2023 meeting.

The Committee **noted** that the proposed gradings were consistent with the March 2023 Ofsted inspection outcomes.

The Committee agreed with and recommended the proposed overall grading of Good.

4.12. Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

CT presented the QIP and highlighted that this set out the actions to take forward to address the 9 areas for development as set out within the SAR. As this was being presented for the first time within the first term, there was not a huge amount of progress to report however a more detailed update would be provided at the February 2024 Committee meeting.

Action: CT to present updated QIP at the February 2024 meeting.

In relation to the implementation of the new College Health and Wellbeing Team, who were appointed during summer 2023 following this being identified as a key priority, there had been positive feedback from both staff and learners, however other than the volume of demands for appointments and referrals there was no trend data to report at this point.

The Go North East bus strikes continued to negatively impact attendance, and the College were working hard to mitigate this wherever possible. The attendance rate had dropped by 4.2%.

MP and WB left the meeting.

CQ/190 5. Admissions Policy

NH presented the Admissions Policy for recommendation for Board approval.

The Committee **noted** the legal tone of the policy, however recognised that this was important for the policy level document which would be underpinned by a supporting framework.

The Committee **queried** if this policy was applicable to HE learners and if this was compliant with the Office for Students.

Action: NH to check if the Admissions Policy was OFS compliant.

The Committee **suggested** that careers guidance was clarified as being provided by the College.

Action: NH to look at wording regarding careers guidance and clarify this is College offered guidance.

The Committee recommended the Admissions Policy for Board approval at the December 2023 meeting.

CQ/191 6. Any Other Business

N/A

CQ/192 7. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 15 February 2024 at 4pm.