



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 3 OCTOBER 2024 4PM TO 6PM – MAIN MINUTES

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Peter Francis	Chair / Independent	PF	X	
Carol Davenport	Independent	CD	X*	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Michael Wood-Williams	Independent	MWW	X	
Aneela Ali	Independent	AA	X	
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Independent	CJR		X
Richard Wensley	Staff Governor	RW	X	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Presenters				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality	CT	X	
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal: Finance & Resources	JC	X	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand & Learner Experience	NH	X	
Deni Chambers	Director of Curriculum and Skills	DC	X	
Richard Ward	Assistant Principal	RW	X	
Bev Blackstone	Safeguarding Manager	BB	X^	
Suzanne Cunningham	Head of Quality Improvement	SC	X	
Tom Bradley	Assistant Principal	TB	X	
Tracy Foreman	Assistant Principal	TF	X	
John Deary	Assistant Principal	JD	X	

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

CQ/221 1. Chair's Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. As it was PF's first meeting as Chair, introductions took place. The Chair **noted** the Committee's thanks to CD for her time as Interim Chair.

Apologies were noted from CJR. The Committee **agreed** that the meeting was quorate.

Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting. It was noted that CD had a conflict with item 10 Risk Register. It was agreed for CD to remain present in the meeting during this item.

The Chair provided the Committee's thanks to report authors for the detailed papers however noted future intentions to reduce paper length where possible and facilitate more discussion.

CQ/222 2. Minutes of the Last Meeting Dated 6 June 2024

- A) The Committee reviewed the main minutes from the previous meeting and agreed that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.
- B) 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/223 3. Matters Arising / Action Log

A) Action Log

NT presented the action log noting that 2 actions remained ongoing. All other actions were either not yet due or closed / completed.

The action log was noted.

CQ/224 4. Strategic Progress Reporting Update

DC presented the report and highlighted that priorities for both the Curriculum and the Quality Strategies had been included however, these would be refined as part of the self-assessment process (SAR). The priorities were based on the emerging key themes. The SAR would be presented at the November 2024 meeting.

Both strategy KPIs were included with a RAG rated updated. DC tabled an updated paper setting out the actuals against target. Further analysis of actuals would take place as part of the SAR. DC noted that some KPIs were more akin to success indicators and wouldn't be annual measures of achievement. Some targets were challenging and ambitious and the College were on a journey to achieve these, rather than expecting to achieve the targets within the first year of the strategies. DC noted the RAG rating of amber set out positive progress.

The Committee discussed the KPIs in detail, specifically focussing on those relating to:

- Information, advice and guidance – it was agreed that rather than a measure focussing on participation / access, an impact measure would be more focussed around outcomes and progression.
- Employer survey response rates – different methods of collating feedback were considered. It was agreed that surveys may not be the most effective method.
- Employer satisfaction rates – satisfaction rates were positive; however, the College had an ambitious target of improved levels.
- The Personal Social Development (PSD) Programme – attendance had decreased in PSD sessions, and this would be noted within the SAR. This correlated to achievement and positive destinations. Again, the College had an ambitious target of improved levels.
- Enrichment – this focussed around widening opportunities for learners. The Committee queried if learner voice was a key part in considering enrichment and support. It was confirmed it was, with work continuing with the Learner

Engagement Manager to ensure learner voice as part of planning. It was also noted enrichment plans were produced termly, and therefore newly recruited learners could share their thoughts / requests and have these responded to in-year. The Committee **took assurance** that learner voice was part of decision making.

- Mental Health – the College believed that the implementation of the Welfare and Wellbeing Team had prevented any further increase in withdrawals due to mental health.
- Staff turnover – it was noted that there had been internal discussion regarding the target of 5%, agreeing that this may not be favourable. The current turnover of curriculum staff was 12.3% however this excluded fixed term and casual staff which offered the college adaptability and flexibility. The College had learner growth of 20% this academic year and therefore additional staff were required. There was a high turnover at the end of the 2023/2024 year and this resulted in recruitment challenges over the summer, specifically in hard to recruit areas.
- Apprentice Achievement – Achievement rated had decreased from 2022/23 to 2023/24, however the College were still 11% above the national average.
- High Grades – the College wanted to achieve more than 30% high grades in vocational areas.
- Engagement with coaching – previously, there hadn't been a full complement of coaching staff however this was now in place. This had not impacted teaching quality or learner experience. The team were looking to explore this data further to see if there were any improvements which could be made in the coaching model.

The Committee **noted** the progress made to date and **agreed** the proposed strategic priorities for 2024/2025.

The Committee requested for the KPIs to be reconsidered and refined, specific to impact. Action: CT/DC to consider refinement of Curriculum Strategy and Quality Strategy KPIs, specific to impact.

The Committee **asked** to be sighted on any challenges at an early stage.

The report was noted.

CQ/225 5. Safeguarding – Annual Report 2023/2024 and Updated Policies

NH and BB presented the report and noted an annual review of 2023/2024 was provided, in line with termly updates provided on a meeting-by-meeting basis.

The updated Safeguarding Training for the Board would be issued within the next week. This had been updated in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024.

MWW continued in his role of Safeguarding and Mental Health Link Governor and attended the College's Safeguarding Steering Group Meeting.

MWW provided his reassurance of the effective management of safeguarding within the College.

Updated Safeguarding and Prevent policies had been included for recommendation for Board approval. Only minimal amends had been made and policies had been legally reviewed.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The number of behavioural referrals so far, this academic year – it was noted behavioural referrals were low. The Safeguarding, Welfare and Wellbeing team were continuing to support learners and those in classroom management. The College had seen an increase in Level 1 learners recruited and so it may be that more behavioural challenges may arise than had been experienced to date.

The Safeguarding, Welfare and Wellbeing team were working to upskill those staff working within the Project Choice provision to better enable them to support learners who were more familiar with those staff, rather than staff outside of this provision to better support.

There had been small pockets of issues where swift intervention had been implemented, however DC provided reassurance that although the College had recruited an increase of c400 full-time 16-18 learners for 2024/25, there were no significant behavioural concerns to note.

- Staff Mandatory Training Compliance rates – the Committee noted the high compliance rates and sought reassurance that there were no concerns re non-compliance. It was confirmed that any non-compliance was due to very recent recruitment and absence and therefore was about time to complete.

The Committee **requested** for future reporting to include learner population to enable them to identify any trends or concerns. **Action: DH/BB to include learner population in future reporting to enable the Committee to identify any trends or concerns.**

The Committee **noted** the report and **recommended** the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Prevent Policy for Board approval at the November 2024 meeting. **Action: NT to include the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Prevent Policy for Board approval at the November 2024 meeting**

The report was noted.

Bev Blackstone left the meeting.

CQ/226 6. Performance Report

CT presented the report and tabled a slide showing up to date enrolment figures for 2024/2025, showing a c400 learner increase for full-time 16-18 students. It was noted that some growth had been planned as part of business planning, however there had been a significant growth in learner numbers, at approximately 280 above business planning. The College had been able to respond well with a flexible workforce and responsive recruitment. The College maintained its ethos of supportive class sizes and were needing to split classes to ensure this. Some areas were easier to respond than others due to resource, capacity and recruitment.

The number of Level 3 learners remained consistent to 2023/2024; however, the increase was in Level 1 and 2 learners. This had a significant impact on the Maths and English department, with additional space and staffing being required. Recruitment was challenging in this area. The College continued to support staff where possible.

The Staff Governor (RW) provided his perspective of the growth in numbers, and provided reassurance that learners were well behaved and engaged. Teachers felt supported.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The impact of growth on achievement, retention and progression – it was noted that this would be closely monitored. Challenges were expected in Maths and English. The profile of learners had changed, with more Level 1 and Level 2 learners and therefore this may have an impact on achievement rates however, the College were exploring additional interventions and targeting support, as well as considering staff development needs.
- The impact of growth on staff – reassurance was provided that staff were working hard to respond to growth and managers were continuing to support the staff

within their areas. Assistant Principals and members of the Executive Team were visiting all college sites and speaking with staff face to face.

The Committee **queried** whether feedback could be sought via surveys however it was suggested this may add to workload and informal collection was seen to be a more effective route at this point. It was agreed that this could be discussed by the Staff Voice Group. **Action: VC to action staff feedback following growth in learner numbers to be discussed at the Staff Voice Group.**

There was a two week half term break planned in October and staff were being encouraged to take leave following a busy half term. Free refreshments had also been provided as a thank you to staff for their continued support. The Aspire Appraisal deadline had been extended to reduce immediate workload.

The Quality Team noted the impact of additional learners in classes, noting the increased workload was all throughout the academic year in terms of increased marking and assessment. The Quality Assurance Framework was being considered to ensure appropriate support for staff all year round.

- Continued sustainability of quality of teaching – it was noted that no groups sizes were outside of internal planning metrics (other than Maths and English where additional recruitment was taking place) and any smaller class sizes were to support learners to achieve, and for staff to appropriately support learners. Relevant staff were currently meeting twice per week to consider class sizes, learner numbers and provision.

CT noted that outputs would be monitored closely throughout the year.

The Committee **noted** their thanks to all staff involved and the College's responsive approach to accommodate growth.

The report was noted.

CQ/227 7. Special Education Needs (SEN) Annual Report 2023/2024

TB presented the report, noting the positive work undertaken across the College linked with inclusion and improving outcomes of all learners.

TB noted the focus on ensuring high quality placements for those within the Project Choice provision, in line with the College's ethos of employment edge.

The Committee **discussed and queried** if there were any expected challenges linking with the priority areas of focus – it was noted more learners were presenting with complex needs in mainstream provision and additional support was needed for staff to understand and support these needs.

The Committee **noted their commendation** of the quality of placements and positive case studies provided.

The report was noted.

CQ/228 8. Higher Education Annual Report 2023/2024

TB presented the report, noting the focus on Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) and the positive links with the Skills Agenda. TB provided reassurance of oversight via the HE Oversight Panel and HE Quality Board. The 2023/2024 had resulted in a strong outturn with satisfied learners, with an improving 3-year trend.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The HTQ market – it was noted the College had noticed a shift between the market of students wishing to go to university and those opting for a higher

apprenticeship. The College were being responsive to need with positive working relationships with employers.

- Ambition of the strategy – it was agreed that the future aims weren't to grow, however the focus was ensuring an offer of high-quality provision in key sectors to support skills need. This needed to be driven by employer demand.
- Ambitions beyond HTQs – The College would remain responsive to need.
- The role of universities within collaboration.

The Committee **noted** the importance of horizon scanning future skills needs.

The report was noted.

CQ/229 9. Quality Assurance of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

RW presented the report and highlighted the following:

- One of the College's key measures of performance was learner voice, and a learner survey was issued at 3 points within an academic year.
- The current survey was quite lengthy, and the college were looking to streamline this. Previous work had been undertaken to ensure understanding of questions to ensure accessibility. The learner representatives had been involved in the improvement work to date.
- There was positive feedback regarding inclusivity.

The Committee discussed and queried the following:

- The slight decline in the satisfaction of student services – it was noted this was being explored further as again potentially linked to the wording of the question as scores relating to individual student support areas were very positive. **Action: RW to consider whether the student support services question is a duplication of questioning.**
- The promotion and celebration of positive responses – it was confirmed that headline figures were included within promotional materials, and student successes were celebrated as part of awards ceremonies. Further promotion of positive student feedback was captured within the College's annual report which was shared with external partners.

The Committee **noted** the excellent results and requested for the headlines to be flagged at Board level regarding quality of provision and the positive experience of learners.

Action: CT to include learner survey headlines in the Performance Report at the November 2024 Board meeting.

The report was noted.

CQ/230 10. Strategic Risk Register

JC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The main change to the Risk Register related to increased learner numbers. The Finance & General Purposes Committee had considered this in terms of the financial challenges surrounding this. Conversations had taken place with the DfE and the bank to notify them of the current unfunded position of additional learners. Positive discussions had also taken place around the opportunities linked to growth and maintaining a positive learner experience.
- In terms of the Gateshead International Stadium, the procurement exercise to appoint an operator had been delayed. A new operating and management regime was expected to commence in April 2025. This would delay conversations about the college's continued presence, and costing, of utilisation of space.

The Committee **discussed and queried** horizon scanning for future years, linking with insight from HE, and understanding how the College might respond differently to needs of the future. DC provided reassurance that the College undertook its own internal horizon scanning and were responding to future needs. DA noted the uncertainty across the FE, and wider, landscape, arising from a number of reviews and initiatives announced by the new UK Government, and noted further changes were expected.

The Committee **agreed** that the risk register should also include opportunity as well as negative risks.

The report was noted.

CQ/231 11. Curriculum & Quality Standards Terms of Reference and Work Plan 2024/2025

NT presented the report, noting that this would be a standing item as a reminder of the Committee's remit and planned upcoming agenda items.

The Chair **asked** for the Committee to review the remit and highlight if there were any areas not covered.

The report was noted.

CQ/232 12. Any Other Business

N/A

CQ/233 13. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 23 November 2024 at 4.00pm.