

# Curriculum and Student Matters Committee

Tue 04 June 2024, 17:00 - 19:00

MS Teams



## Attendees

### Board members

**Present:** Andrea Ferguson (Independent Governor - Chair), Ann Harrison (Independent Governor), Jenny Bullen (Independent Governor), Susan Snape (Independent Governor), Chris Fletcher (Independent Governor), Anna Dawe (Principal), Rebecca Turley (Staff Governor), Jennifer Connor (Staff Governor), Aston Aldred (Student Governor)

**In attendance:** Joanne Platt (Director of Governance), Anne-Marie Francis (Vice Principal - Curriculum), Alison Rushton (Vice Principal - Employment and Skills), Louise Brown (Vice Principal - Corporate Services), Dave Harrison (Vice Principal - Data and Funding), Ursula Hoyles (Head of HE) (for Item 5), Vicky Madden (Foundation Studies) for Item 4

The Director of Governance confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

## Meeting minutes

### 1. Apologies for absence

CSM-24-06-01

Apologies for absence had been received from Emilie Hoyland.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

CSM-24-06-02

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

CSM-24-06-03

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024 and agreed that they are an accurate record of the meeting. There were no outstanding actions.

**Resolved:** The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2024 for signature by the Chair.

### 4. Curriculum presentation: Foundation Studies

CSM-24-06-04

The Committee received a presentation on Foundation Studies, which provides programmes for students who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), students who have previously been home schooled, students with previous low achievement, students between 16-18 who are studying English as speakers of other languages (ESOL), students on supported internships or pre Internship programmes, and students on

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Steps to Study Programmes and Aspire Partnership Programmes. In 2022-23, there were 240 learners on Foundation Study programmes, and this has grown to 308 learners in 2023-24, plus a further 26 learners on Aspire programmes.

The Committee noted that the Self-Assessment (SAR) Grade for Foundation Studies has been one (Outstanding) for five consecutive years. It has a highly qualified team of 20 staff, who have a diverse range of specialisms and a wealth of experience. There are excellent working relationships with the Additional Learning Support Team (ALS) and the partnership with Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) is seen as invaluable to the team and to its learners. The department has seen year on year growth in learner numbers, delivering a wide range of qualifications from Entry 1 up to Level 2. The qualifications achieved by learners don't just provide academic certificates but also provide opportunities for learners to try a variety of vocational options. The Team delivers maths and English functional skills and GCSEs to learners within the department and has the largest proportion of learners with high needs and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

The Team has a positive culture and ethos, delivers a student centered approach and an open door policy, has high standards, expectations and aspirations and staff who all go the extra mile. Staff are committed to their own Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and have a desire to continue to learn alongside learners, utilising peer coaching and support. They all have passion, enthusiasm and the desire to make a difference to students who have struggled in education.

In terms of impact, it was noted that high numbers of learners transition from one level to the next and move into a wide range of vocational areas. Some learners have been successful in gaining places in university, learners have reached both academic and social and emotional EHCP targets, are showing increased independence and LSA support is reducing. There has also been an increase in learners with SEND gaining paid employment through the College's Supported Internship programme, learners are gaining friends and are happy in both their college and home life, and parent / guardians are reporting that their young person is settled at home and that family life has improved. Attendance is good with maths and English attendance bucking the trend, retention, achievement and progression are strong, with learners progressing onto both vocational and academic qualifications, from Sport to A-level, with a number going on to university, and learners with EHCPs make significant progress towards their targets.

The Committee noted that an Entry Level 2 group of seven learners was entered into and won the very first ever Foundation skills competition (GM Skills Charity Challenge), with a theme of Environment and Sustainability, against 10 other colleges, whilst raising a significant sum for charity.

The Committee noted that further growth is expected due to an increase in birth rate, the growth in Separated Children from 17 learners in 2022 to 61 learners in 2023, the impact of Covid leading to learners with greater need, the increase in exam grade boundaries and, for the first time, an increase in Year 11s with EHCPs compared to Year 6s.

In terms of the future, there are plans to increase the number of ESOL groups at both Parsons Walk and Leigh Campuses, a New Steps to Study Engage programme, an expansion of Aspire partnerships in Construction and Hair and Beauty, the introduction of a Pre-Supported Internship programme and a new Digital Skills qualification to prepare all learners for continuous development in the digital age. This will be coupled with an increase in staff recruitment, with specialisms other team members don't currently have, which will provide even more flexibility to respond to learner requests.

The Chair thanked Vicky Madden for her clear and comprehensive presentation, noting that the work the Team is doing is extraordinary and life-changing and that the SAR Grade 1 was well deserved for the consistency of quality year on year.

Governors asked the resource implications on the Team of the predicted 25%-30% growth, and it was confirmed that staff recruitment had started early, that additional funding had been secured for extra IT capacity and classroom space was being made multi-functional with appropriate zoning with private access to maintain safe spaces for learners.

Governors discussed the content of the proposed new Digital Skills qualification, noting that this will include use of MS Office applications, online safety at an appropriate level, and access to online forms for work and living such as driving licence applications.

Governors discussed the number of learners studying ESOL, noting the growth in this area and that many of the ESOL learners have many skills but need the language skills to help them to progress into higher education or work.



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Governors also discussed the strategies deployed by the Team to buck the national trend in relation to attendance.

In response to a question from a Governor in relation to reaching out to schools to tackle issues upstream, it was confirmed that the Team works closely with SEND schools and the SEND Team at the Council, particularly in relation to home schooled English and Maths learners.

The Committee thanked Vicky Madden for her presentation and the excellent work of the Team.

The Committee noted the content of the presentation.

**Vicky Madden left the meeting at 5.55pm.**

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The Committee considered the draft of the HE Access and Participation Plan for 2025-29 (APP), noting that the final date for submission of the new Plan is 1 October 2024, which is before the next meeting of the Committee.

Completion of the APP is a regulatory requirement, and requires compliance with Office for Students (OfS) guidance in relation to consultation. It was noted that the latest release of the OfS data dashboard was not expected until late July or early August, and accordingly, further analysis will be required before a final version of the Plan can be approved.

The data in the draft plan is based on the latest available data dashboard from the OfS and this has been mapped with the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) to identify 10 risks where the data shows that students from particular demographics and characteristics may not have equality of opportunity when accessing, continuing, completing and progressing into and from Higher Education.

The OfS has provided guidance on the expectations for Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) in their response to the risks and for smaller providers such as the College, the expectation is to focus on fewer objectives, but select those areas where providers feel it can make the biggest impact and deliver quality and meaningful interventions. The College's draft APP therefore focuses on six risks, and six objectives have been developed to address these. Two of these relate to access, two to continuation, one relates to completion and one relates to progression.

It was noted that some of the risks identified are currently being addressed in the College's existing APP and these will be reviewed when the updated data is made available, if this shows that significant progress has been made in addressing those risks in the current APP. However, the College will continue to monitor all risks identified to ensure it fulfils its obligation to equality of opportunity for all students.

The Committee noted that student and staff consultation has commenced to gain an insight into the barriers, issues and perceptions from student experiences, from considering HE through to application and enrolment and when on a HE programme. Questionnaires have been sent out and further consultation will take place in the form of focus groups in June. Responses to this consultation will support the development of the intervention strategies for each of the risks identified.

The Committee commended the clarity of the draft proposals and asked if six objectives was overly ambitious. It was confirmed that six objectives was realistic as the College is already addressing these six areas in any event, although it was noted that the College may not to proceed with the risk in relation to disability, if there is insufficient data to show impact.

In response to a question from a Governor in relation to gaps in data and the inability to show impact, it was confirmed that gaps in data are often due to low numbers which could identify students, and that the College is addressing this by utilising its own internal data dashboard to help to develop the plan.

Governors noted that the outcome of the Consultation won't be available before the draft Plan is submitted to the Board for approval but also noted that data from the Focus Groups that have taken place to date shows that the College is going in the right direction.

**Resolved:** The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the initial draft of the HE Access and Participation Plan to the Governing Board at its meeting on 2 July.

**Resolved:** The Committee agreed to recommend to the Board that it delegates approval of the final version of the APP to the Chair following discussion with the Chair of the Committee at a meeting to be scheduled in late September 2024.

**Ursula Hoyles left the meeting at 6.05pm.**

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The Committee reviewed the draft Curriculum Plan for 2024-25, noting that this had been developed to respond to the curriculum priorities outlined in the College's Accountability Action Plan 2024-25 (AAP), which had been discussed by the Accountability Statement / Governor Skills Review Task and Finish Group and which would be submitted to Governing Board for approval on 11 June.

The report was organised into provision types and was mapped to the aims and objectives AA1-AA7 in the AAP.

The Committee noted that Level 3 reforms include the gradual defunding of BTEC courses which overlap with T-Levels have a cost implication in terms of additional hours on programmes to resit Maths or English. T-Levels are also presenting significant challenges in relation to scaling up the offer particularly around assessment and work placements and progression opportunities for Level 2 learners including young adults who would previously have progressed onto a BTEC applied general qualification.

The College has seen significant growth and accordingly, progression pathways are critical for students, with softer skills now being embedded into all curriculum areas.

Governors noted that the Plan aligns closely with the AAP, which is derived from the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for the sub-region.

The Committee discussed access to work placement and apprenticeship opportunities with both large employers and SMEs, noting an alternative approach to sharing work based placements on key projects, that are being trailed with some large employers.

**Resolved:** The Committee approved the Curriculum Plan for 2024-25.

## 7. Equality and Diversity Objectives 2024-28

The Committee considered the draft Equality and Diversity Objectives for 2024-28, noting that the College must publish equality information at least once a year to show how they have complied with the equality duty, and prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four-years

The Committee noted that staff and Governors have been consulted on the priorities and areas of focus and the College's Equality and Diversity Group has drafted the objectives for consideration by the Committee and the Governing Board, based on the outcome of those consultations.

Following the introduction of FREDIE Values as a framework for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) activity across the College, the new EDI objectives for 2024-28 have been set out in a FREDIE format using the key words of Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement.

Each objective includes a target and a number of actions to be taken to achieve the target. Progress will be monitored by the Equality and Diversity Committee and reported to the Committee and to the Governing Board on an annual basis. It was noted that one objective includes reference to the diversity of the College's Governing Board.

Governors discussed Objective five and asked how the College would identify the challenges people face in achieving leadership roles in the College and it was agreed that some additional wording would be added to the objective to provide clarity in relation to this.

**Resolved:** Subject to the addition of the additional information referred to above, the Committee agreed to recommend the Equality and Diversity Objectives for 2024-28 to the Governing Board for approval.

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## 8. Curriculum Reports and KPI Dashboards

### 8.1. Study Programmes and Dashboard

CSM-24-06-08

The Committee reviewed the Education for Young People (EYP) Report and KPI Dashboard, noting that there has been significant growth in 16-18 learners and this includes increased numbers of progressing learners which was a key action identified for improvement in 2022-23.

Attendance continues to decline and is below target with a range of interventions in place to motivate learners to attend. There remain pockets of strong attendance but it is a very inconsistent picture and Governors noted that attendance nationally is an issue, with school attendance also declining, which is having an impact on student expectations when they start college.

The Committee noted that Entry / Level 1 learners continue to have the lowest attendance and these learners are often those presenting with complex needs and challenging home lives. In a further drill down of the data, the College identified a 33% increase in learners requiring a resit in English and the College is investigating if there is a link between poor literacy skills and poor attendance.

Governors discussed the various activities in place to address poor attendance, including timetabling to ensure that students don't have too many gaps in their day, the re-visiting of subject outlines to ensure that teaching and learning motivates students to attend, and trips and guest speakers to make course content more interesting to students.

Retention is strong and ahead of the same point last year. This will map to overall achievement and is being very closely monitored to ensure learners remain on programme and achieve above their potential wherever possible.

Outcomes for technical learners have improved in terms of first time pass rates which was a key priority for this academic year. Learners who need to resit have an individualised action plan and are being closely monitored. The pass rate needs to further improve to ensure the overall achievement rate improves.

GCSE resit results saw 238 students achieve a grade 4 or above in either Maths or English including seven learners on the T-Level resit pilot. The summer GCSE series is now underway and significant numbers of learners are sitting these exams.

It was noted that there is an increasing range of employers accepting learners on valuable placements with 99% of year 2 T-Level learners on placement. 87% of Year 1 T-level learners are either on placement or have plans in place to commence them during this term. Study programme placements (where placements are not a requirement of the course specification) that are either in progress or completed, have shown an increase of 135% on the previous year with a further 408 planned for this term.

The Teaching and Learning Academy is very active across the College and there have been 510 observations compared to 297 observations reported at the last meeting. 31.7% of the observations have been completed as part of Curriculum Reviews with the remainder as departmental Learning Walks which include the new 'Unseen' Learning Walks. These have been viewed positively by managers and staff and where appropriate, follow up actions and / or additional support has been put in place as a result of observations.

The Committee noted that Parental survey responses are low and ways to address this are therefore being reviewed. In the meantime, the results are being analysed and acted upon as required.

The Committee noted the report and agreed to draw the concerns in relation to attendance to the attention of the Governing Board in the Committee Chair's report to the Board.

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The Committee reviewed the Adults Report and KPI Dashboard, noting that adult learner numbers have further increased this year compared to the same period last year, with 23.6% growth, the majority of which is due to increased enrolments on ESOL. There has also been 20% growth on priority Level 3 programmes.

Adult attendance is still below target and is a key concern on most programmes apart from Level 3 Full Time discrete programmes. A number of strategies have been put in place to support improved attendance across adult programmes and work is underway to predict achievement of adult learners and intervene where there is an identified risk of withdrawal.

Retention is strong and above target in almost all programmes apart from Level 3 discrete courses.

Internal progression and destination campaigns are underway with individual and group support taking place to support learners into their desired destination of employment and apprenticeships.

Work continues to develop the College's adult offer in line with the strategic direction and aims. This includes the development of a curriculum offer for Leigh Adult Learning Centre, developments with the Council's Early Years and Residential teams and a number of targeted programmes for LSIP priority sectors.

In response to a question from a Governor about work placements, it was confirmed that 100% of mandated work placements are in place and that no learners are at risk of not achieving as a result of a lack of placement.

The Committee noted the report and agreed to draw the concerns in relation to attendance to the attention of the Governing Board in the Committee Chair's report to the Board.

### **8.3. Apprenticeship Provision and Dashboard**

The Committee reviewed the Apprenticeship Report and KPI Dashboard, noting that enrolments have increased again this year by 9% with the majority of growth in 16-18 Advanced Apprenticeships (21%) which is forecast to increase further by the end of the year.

Apprentice attendance in classroom sessions has improved slightly but is still below the target at all ages and all levels and slightly worse than at the same time last year.

The College continues to meet all ESFA performance measures, although it was noted that learners past their planned end date continues to be a potential risk area due to the size of provision. This is being closely monitored and it was noted that improvements have been made to the processes associated with achieving timely achievement to address this.

Transition to the new EPortfolio system, OneFile, from Smart Assessor is now reaching conclusion and is on target and it was noted that the College's apprenticeship provision was recognised at a number of awards events recently, including being awarded Engineering and Manufacturing Apprenticeship Provider of the Year at the FE Week and AELP, and recognition at AAC Apprenticeship Awards, the Educate North Awards for Business, Employer Engagement FE/HE sector, the UK Nuclear Skills runner up award for Best Employer & Training Provider Partnership with Sellafield Ltd. In addition, one of the College's apprentices won the Advanced Apprentice and Overall Nuclear Apprentice of the Year award and the College's shared work with Kraft Heinz and Wigan Borough Council was recognised at the iNetwork Awards where the project was awarded the Partnership Excellence Award.

The Committee noted the report and agreed to draw the concerns in relation to attendance to the attention of the Governing Board in the Committee Chair's report to the Board.

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The Committee reviewed the HE Report and KPI Dashboard, noting that there has been an improvement in HE attendance, albeit that this is below target.

It was noted that the results from the Internal Student Survey highlighting satisfaction in all seven themes, have improved especially in the areas of teaching, assessment and feedback and academic support

The Graduate Outcomes survey is highlighting an increase in response rate, however the percentage of graduates in employment or further study has decreased. In direct contrast, only 1.72% of graduates are unemployed compared to 2.77% at the same time last year. The survey also shows that 65% of graduates are in highly skilled work.

The Committee noted the report and agreed to draw the concerns in relation to attendance to the attention of the Governing Board in the Committee Chair's report to the Board.

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## 9. QIP Update

**CSM-24-06-12**

The Committee reviewed a report providing an update against the 2023-24 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The key areas for improvement identified in the QIP were ensuring that a minority of programmes meet the high standards expected including improvement to attendance and retention rates, raising attainment on technical qualifications across all provision types through consistently good or better Teaching and Learning and improved first time pass rates, and establishing more effective communication channels with parents and employers to improve the consistency of reporting on the progress of learners and apprentices.

Governors noted the progress being made in relation to specific areas for improvement in the QIP and noted that Heads of Department meet with the Head of Quality to update Departmental QIPs each term and the progress within Departments is translated into overall improvements across the College. This work is overseen by the Vice Principal for Curriculum and the Vice Principal for Employment and Skills and triangulated through reviews, learning walks, observations and focused intervention.

The Committee noted the update.

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## 10. Link Visits report

CSM-24-06-13

The Committee reviewed the Summer Term Link Visits report, noting that five Governors had attended Link Visits to Automotive Engineering and Creative Arts. In each visit, the afternoon included a curriculum intent conversation with managers, a discussion on the strengths and areas for improvement in the department and a reflection on the College Self-Assessment Report and grading for the area.

Governors had the opportunity to observe teaching and learning and meet with students and test the impact of the quality of education by having students demonstrate their skills development. There was also opportunity for a staff focus group discussion.

Feedback from this visit is very positive particularly in relation to Governors' assurance that the College is pursuing high quality teaching and learning and the quality of the student experience. It is also pleasing to note the very positive feedback about employer links within the creative arts and the effect this is having on learners' knowledge, behaviours and progression opportunities.

The visit to Automotive Engineering offered Governors the opportunity to see the plans for the refurbishment of the workshop space to include the electric vehicle laboratory. Feedback is again very positive with Governors noting the improved attendance of Level 1 learners.

Two Governors who had attended the Link Visits provided additional feedback to the Committee and both were very positive about their experiences.

The Committee noted the report.

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## 11. Link Visits Feedback Form 2024-25

CSM-24-06-14

The Committee considered a report in relation to the Link Visits Feedback form, which is due for review this year. However, it was noted that the form had been reviewed by the Committee following feedback from the Committee at its meeting in November 2022 and that the Link Visits Scheme itself is not due for review by the Committee until June 2025.

In addition, the existing form was seen as a strength in the recent External Board Review and accordingly, the Committee agreed not to make changes to the Link Visits Form this year, and to instead review this again next year alongside the review of the Link Visits Scheme.

**Resolved:** The Committee agreed not to make any changes to the Link Visits Feedback Form for 2024-25.

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## 12. Items to be included in the Committee Chair's Report to the Governing Board, including any KPIs to draw to the attention of the Board as necessary

CSM-24-06-15

The Committee agreed the items to be included in the Committee Chair's report to the Board.

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## 13. Any other business

CSM-24-06-16

There were no items of other business.

The meeting ended at 7.02pm.

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## 14. Date and time of next meeting: TBC

CSM-24-06-17

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