

**Thursday 2nd February 2023, 5.30pm
Online via ZOOM video conference platform**

APPROVED MINUTES

PRESENT:

Mr D Navarro, Chair, foundation governor
Ms P Rowe, Co-opted Governor
Mr G Thompson, Principal
Ms K Foan, Associate Principal
Mr C Uraih, Foundation Governor
Mr N Sheta, Foundation Governor
Ms K Bainbridge, Co-opted Governor
Mr K Thomas, Foundation Governor

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr M Belfour, Foundation Governor
Mrs S Medicoff, Foundation Governor, joined at 5.38pm
Mrs E Lewis, Clerk to the Governors
Ms M Henry, Head of Health & Social Care (for items 1 – 5)

The agenda had been circulated to all governors. All (except staff & student governors) had been invited to attend.

The meeting was opened at 5.30pm by Mr Navarro and was quorate throughout. All participants were able to see and /or hear one another throughout.

1. **Opening Prayer:** offered by Mr Thompson
2. **Apologies:** Mrs B Meier. Mr Sheta and Ms Bainbridge to leave early.
3. **Declarations of Interests:** there were none.
4. **Membership:** There had been no change in the membership.
5. **Health and Social Care:** Ms Markeya Henry, Head of Department was welcomed to the meeting. She introduced herself and confirmed that her presentation would be made available for circulation after the meeting. Ms Henry outlined the structure of the department and described the courses delivered at level 2 and 3; the size of the cohorts and explained the aims for improvement in 2022 – 2023. She noted the outcomes for the previous year and showed the destinations of the 68 learners who had completed in July 2022, in and beyond the health care sector. Ms Henry explained the component parts of the new T-Level Education and Childcare two year course which would launch in September 2023 and put this into the context of the local labour market / skills needs in Wandsworth and other neighbouring boroughs.

Mr Navarro asked Ms Henry whether the general situation with the NHS was changing the way students were approaching studying in this curriculum area, whether more of them were seeing it as a stepping stone. Ms Henry observed an increase in the number of applications to Midwifery this year and with a determination to remain within the NHS and a commitment to aspiring to higher levels – learners were looking to make a difference.

Mr Sheta asked Ms Henry about preparations were progressing for the forthcoming introduction of the T Level. Ms Henry was enthusiastic about the launch and the childcare focus which she had experience of teaching in the past which she anticipated would also support recruiting students to

the right course. Mr Sheta asked whether she anticipated any challenges finding placements. Ms Henry explained that the current positive feedback from nurseries where year 12 students was reassuring.

Ms Bainbridge applauded the destinations as impressive. Mr Thompson commended significant improvements in the department under Ms Henry's leadership.

Mr Navarro asked whether there was any help that governors could give. Ms Henry suggested governors may be able to help students explore more options and opportunities and issued an invitation to governors to visit the department.

With thanks for her presentation, Ms Henry left the meeting at 5.49pm.

6. **Minutes of previous meeting, 18th October 2022:** Included in the papers for the meeting and previously circulated were agreed to be a true and accurate record to be signed by Mr Navarro in due course.
 - 6.1. **Matters Arising:** there were not that would not be covered by the agenda.
 - 6.2. **Actions to be reviewed:** there were none.
7. **Quality of Provision:**
 - 7.1. **QUIP:** Ms Foan introduced the Quality Improvement Plan (QUIP) 2022 – 2023, included in the papers for the meeting. Progress and impact towards improvement had been RAG rated. She explained how the targets had been identified from the college Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2021 – 2022 which had been included in the papers in full and as an executive summary. Ms Foan confirmed that all progress and impact was either on target (green) or in progress (amber). The QUIP was taken as read and Ms Foan addressed the questions that had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

Ms Bainbridge had asked about the level of attendance for recovery education and how attendance was promoted. Ms Foan acknowledged that the level of attendance was not as good as they would wish due to the focus on level 2 students which was a challenging cohort. She said that the promotion of improving attendance looked beyond absence from lessons to those who were falling behind attendance generally. Class registers generate automatic emails home if any sessions are missed supported by direct follow up by the Attendance and Achievement Officers where necessary. She noted an improvement since level 3 students had been included.

Ms Bainbridge had asked whether any useful actions had arisen from the meeting with the Assistant Principal of Haringey Sixth Form College noted in response to the target to *address achievement gaps where they occur, particularly: Mixed Heritage*. Ms Foan reported that the meeting had been a useful discussion which confirmed that the experience of comparing with national average benchmarks was similar in Haringey and across London and that the *Mixed Heritage* grouping was very diverse in itself. She explained that information and communication with teachers was key and how a cross profile-sheet had been developed to include ethnicity to support this. She emphasised that it was expected that **any** student who was falling behind would be identified and the individual reasons causing that would be reviewed for appropriate intervention.

Ms Foan outlined the design of the *learning code* referenced as a tool to increase student attendance and punctuality, which Ms Bainbridge was interested to know more about. Ms Foan described its use as a student support, guidance and discipline process - students moved down as well as up. She confirmed that mid-term reviews evidenced that the code was working.

With reference to the "Development of a well-attended enrichment programme" improvement target in key priority area 3 (Personal Development) Ms Bainbridge asked what constituted success. Ms Foan reported good levels of participation in the timetabled session and attendance. The programme was being promoted to build it up and some classes were being rebranded to make them more appealing. An Enrichment Co-ordinator had been appointed to oversee it. She concluded that success was that the programme is up and running with a greater range of activities, regular attendance by students which it was aimed

to increase in the future.

Mr Thompson commented that the QUIP had been uploaded to the Ofsted portal along with the SAR.

- 7.2. **GCSE results:** Mr Thompson introduced the GCSE results from the November 2022 sitting which had been included in the papers for the meeting. In summary Ms Foan reported an improvement of 3% in passes in English and 1% in Maths high grades. One re-mark had gone up a grade.

Mr Thompson noted improvement since the appointment of a new Head of Department for Maths and a new Head of GCSE.

Mr Thompson said that the policy of entering all students (apart from those with a grade 1) was under discussion with the new HoD. The existing rationale being that where positive progress was achieved this was motivational even if a pass was not achieved in the first resit session. Ms Foan commented that GCSE progress is measured nationally.

Mr Thompson referred to a question from Mr Navarro who had asked whether the lower proportion of students arriving with “pass” grades in GCSE Maths and English was attributable to any specific factors and how was this being addressed to ensure this does not become a barrier to their future learning at SFX. He explained that SFX continued to have a large number of students arriving without grade 4 but the numbers in that cohort were down slightly compared to pre-covid. He explained that the softer impact of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) was still evident (ie more students arriving with a grade 4 and more with grade 3s than previously). Ms Foan outlined how these students were supported to achieve higher grades in their resits and progress their other studies at the college.

- 7.3. **Governor link scheme:** Governors who had attended the Quality Morning had taken learning walks and interacted with their link departments. The benefit of visits was endorsed.
- 7.4. **Student focus forums:** Ms Foan would suggest some dates after the half term holiday suitable for a student forum coupled with the opportunity for learning walk(s). Discussion confirmed the intention of the forums was for governors to have conversations with students and would include some new students and pick up with others that were in previous focus groups. Mr Thompson could support the forum with some questions to trigger conversation.

[Mr Sheta left the meeting at 6.13pm]

Mr Navarro said it would be helpful to set expectations so that students knew what governors wanted to talk about. Mrs Medicoff supported the idea of documenting what the students to aid follow up on specific points and tracking of actions. She said learner voice surveys might give an angle.

Mr Thomas proposed a workshop with students to explore what their “dream college” would be like. He suggested their expectations could be mapped against the QUIP and might identify some overlaps / gaps and provide evidence eg in pastoral areas.

Mr Thomas and Mr Navarro would pull ideas together and liaise with Ms Foan.

Ms Bainbridge suggested that the student forum could support college inspection preparation by exploring aspects such as whether students felt safe and their engagement with / positive attitudes to their learning.

Ms Rowe emphasised that it should be an holistic discussion drawing all participants into the conversation. Mr Thomas said it would be important to have clarity about what everyone wanted to get out of the experience.

It was agreed that a minimum of two governors would be appropriate with no staff and not overstructured. The forum would be an opportunity for letting the students talk with confidence that they would be listened to and actions would be followed up. It would also provide an opening for governors to share their work / careers and for the students to recognise how governors might be useful sources of links and experience.

ACTIONS: Mr Thomas and Mr Navarro would pull together the idea of a “dream college” workshop.

Ms Foan / Mrs Lewis would circulate dates for a forum / learning walks.

- 7.5. **Quality Morning:** It was noted that the value of this event had been discussed at the meeting of the Governing Body on 8th December, 2022.
Mr Navarro expressed his concern that the cost-of-living crisis could trigger another digital divide. Mr Thompson confirmed that every SFX student has access to a device (an iPad or a laptop). He acknowledged that there had been a drop in the number of students procuring iPads but confirmed that all students receiving the bursary allowance had been issued with an iPad. All students can loan (with a deposit) an iPad. To mitigate the difficulty of delivering a digital lesson to a class where not all the attendees have an iPad, departments are able to deploy a set of iPads so that each student in that session has one. A bank of college-owned iPads was being built up. Laptops acquired from DfE during covid were still being distributed.
- 7.6. **Staff “pulse” surveys:** Mr Thompson reported that the first online survey since his report to the December 2022 full Board meeting had just taken place. Analysis of the feedback would be reported to the next meeting of this committee.
- 7.7. **Impact of strike action by teaching staff:** The college had remained open for vulnerable learners on the day of the strike the previous day. A high level of support for the protest had been anticipated and 33 of 35 teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) had gone on strike. Non-striking teaching staff had delivered lessons online. Ms Foan reported good attendance.
- 7.8. **The College Collective:** Ms Foan updated the committee on the continuing work of the collective which facilitated the sharing of ideas and peer support. She reported that there are currently three experts in the college each of whom were providing support with A Levels to three other colleges. SFX was receiving support on the skills agenda including how to record links with employers and preparing for conversations with inspectors. The ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher was in conversation about ESOL provision in the college and good practice with supporting students on level 2 and level 2 courses who did not have English as their first language.
- 7.9. **Inspections update:**
- 7.9.1. **Catholic Schools’ Inspection:** Mr Thompson reviewed the expectation that the new inspection framework would start after Easter. He speculated that the launch might be delayed whilst the post of Co-ordinator of Inspections remained unfilled. As a consequence, inspection of the college might be delayed until the summer but preparation and readiness would continue. The committee was reminded that Mr Graham, Associate Principal had been trained and appointed as a Catholic Schools Inspector.
It was noted that the Interim Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Southwark would remain in post longer than had been expected whilst recruitment to the position continued.
- 7.9.2. **Ofsted:** The committee received the “Approach to Meeting Skills Needs” paper which had been included in the papers for the meeting.
Mr Belford referred to the skills agenda focus of the enhanced inspections which Riëks Drijver, Senior HMI, had spoken about at a recent AoC meeting he had attended. Mr Drijver had emphasised that Sixth Form Colleges were in scope.
Mr Thompson said that he had also attended that meeting. He briefed the committee on the expectation that had been set at SFX that every department has engagement with an employer to share what they are delivering and shape some elements of that curriculum. Mr Kier Hull, who would be the skills nominee during inspection, had forged good relationships with the DWP and Reed Employment working with them to develop the transferrable communication skills of the students. Mr Thompson announced that, since the previous meeting, the college had become a member of *Business London* - an employer representative body designated to write the local skills improvement partnership (LSIP) plan for Greater London. Mr Thompson had joined other providers to contribute to the writing of that plan.
Mr Belford recollected that Mr Drijver had said that inspectors would request a list of the employers the college engaged with and would telephone them to confirm the

engagement. The ability to articulate confidently how the college was meeting the local skills needs was understood to be important - encompassing both progression to Higher Education and preparation for entering the workforce.

- 7.10. **OfSTED Annual Report 2021 – 2022 published 13th Dec 2022:** The report had been included in the papers for the meeting for information. Mrs Medicoff had submitted some questions prompted by the report. Mr Thompson responded with reassurance that the aspects she had identified were being addressed and could be seen via the QUIP in so far as they related to the college being in the Further Education (FE) and Skills sector.

Mr Thompson referred to a question raised by Mr Navarro regarding the impact on homework / assessments of CHATGPT an emerging artificial intelligence BOT. Mr Thompson said that the college was looking into how it might be used positively to support the students. He commented that teachers would be familiar with the style of writing of their students and that a BOT wouldn't understand the nuances of what examiners are expecting to see in a written answer. Mrs Medicoff referred to software that was available that could check for plagiarism. It was confirmed that the college deploys "Turnitin" to check for plagiarism from the Internet. Mr Thompson said that this BOT gives a different output each time which can't be picked up by software. Ms Bainbridge was aware of some software that picks up the BOT.

8. Curriculum Development:

- 8.1. **T Level development:** Mr Thompson emphasised the importance of pursuing development of T Level courses in the college curriculum as the only remaining funded route under the governments binary qualification policy. Ms Foan endorsed this and commented that should there be a change of government or a change in policy, the college would be in a better position and ahead of the game as AAQs would have to be reformed.

Mr Navarro said that the college had done well to be awarded funding to make sure facilities were fit to support the developing T Levels.

Mr Thompson alerted Mr Belford ahead of the next meeting of the Finance & Resources Committee, to a proposal being prepared for capital funding to refurbish accommodation and facilities for delivery of a media broadcast and production T level for 2024. Mr Belford assured the committee that the bid, which would require matched funding from college reserves, would be looked at as a whole including the impact on the financial position of the under recruitment of students this year.

The committee noted that the suite of T Level courses would expand in September 2023 to offer Accounting and Education & Childcare.

- 8.2. **Student choice:** Mr Thompson referred to the "Protect Student Choice Campaign update" paper (January 18th 2023) included for the meeting authored by James Kewin Deputy CEO of the SFCA which, he said, set out the position clearly. The defunding of the majority of applied general courses in 2024 would have a fundamental and significant impact on SFX. The remaining portfolio would be of single A Level equivalents. Students would be left with a much more limited choice.

[Ms Bainbridge left the meeting at 6.45pm]

9. **Carnegie Mental Health Award:** Mr Thompson introduced the award and reviewed the good work going on in the college to support the wellbeing of staff and students which, he proposed, should be badged. Tom Spindler, staff wellbeing lead, had come across the Carnegie Award which Mr Thompson commended as a suitable accreditation for the college to seek. The competencies framework had been included in the papers for the meeting. Mr Thompson advised that Governors would be involved in line with their responsibility to ensure that the mental health of students and staff was being supported. It was expected that there would be a named governor with oversight of this responsibility which would involve an occasional meeting with himself and Mr Spindler. Mr Graham suggested that a natural fit would be for the Safeguarding link governor. It was noted that mental health sits with this committee as its terms of reference included the staff and student experience.

The committee agreed that Ms Bainbridge should be invited to incorporate oversight of mental

health into her role as Safeguarding link.

Progress with the award would remain on the agenda along with the Staff Pulse survey feedback.

10. Self-assessment of Governance:

10.1. Summary report for 2021 – 2022: Mrs Lewis introduced the report which had been included in the papers for the meeting. She would amend it to include a suggested update from Ms Bainbridge in the section on governors engagement “visit by link safeguarding governor to DSL and regular contact between DSL and link governor”.

The summary report was accepted.

10.2. External Review of Governance: It was agreed that the ERG should be commissioned sooner rather than later whilst Mrs Lewis could do the groundwork prior to her retirement. It had, in any event, to be completed before July 2024. An appropriate reviewer was being sought who would understand the Catholic Sixth Form College context. Mr Navarro suggested Andrew Hamilton Accredited SRMA a National of Governance.

11. Governors Focus Morning 2: Saturday 18th March 2023. The committee reviewed areas to be included:

EDI

Further rehearsal of areas of Ofsted inspection

Academisation –feedback on joint meeting of Dioceses of Academisation options for Sixth Form Colleges

Mr Navarro had suggested FLAIR – a company specialising in gather data from students and staff to compare against others and make recommendations on improvement in the area of EDI. It was agreed that Mr Navarro would send further information including costs to Mr Thompson. It was felt that gathering information in advance would be helpful.

Mr Thomas said that he had been interviewed recently about his experience of being a governor. He explained it was part of some work on behalf of Tower Hamlets Local Authority on how to remove barriers to the engagement of minority groups with governance. He felt this might help with recruitment onto the Board. It had been a positive experience for him and he would pass on any ideas.

12. Risk Management: The risk register updated for the autumn meeting of the Audit Committee had been included in the papers for reference. It was currently being updated again. In considering whether there were any new risks or modifications to existing risks on the register, Mr Navarro had sought to ensure that the retirement of the Clerk to the Governors at the end of May, 2023, was given adequate priority on the register.

Ms Bainbridge had highlighted how the college would meet the additional skills expectations; how the college would maintain its digital journey in the face of the challenge of a decrease in iPad procurement and the link between BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) and cyber essentials.

ACTION: Mr Thompson / Mrs Lewis for next revision of risk register.

13. Any Other Business: There was none.

14. Review of meeting: It was agreed that the meeting had dealt with the business of the agenda effectively and that the Charing was good.

15. Date of next meeting: Tues 13th June 2023

The meeting closed with a prayer at 7.15pm