

**Tuesday 1st February 2022, 5.30pm
Online via ZOOM online conference platform**

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Ms P Rowe, Co-opted Governor, Chair of Committee
Mrs B Meier, Foundation Governor, Vice-Chair of Committee
Ms K Bainbridge, Co-opted Governor
Ms K Foan, Associate Principal
Mr D Navarro, Foundation Governor
Mr K Thomas, Foundation Governor
Mr N Sheta, Foundation Governor, Chair of Governors
Mr G Thompson, Principal
Mr R Vianello, Foundation Governor (until 6.30pm)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr M Belfourd, Foundation Governor, Vice Chair of Governors
Mrs E Lewis, Clerk to the Governors
Mr A Takyi, Director of Faculty 2 / Head of Business Studies (for items 1 to 5)
Mr G Nipah, Head of House / Business Studies Level 3, year 1 Team Leader (for items 1 to 5)

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

The meeting was opened at 5.43pm by Ms Rowe. It was quorate throughout – all participants could see and / or hear one another.

1. **Opening Prayer:** offered by Mr Thompson.
2. **Apologies:** received from Mrs K Taylor were accepted. Mr D Freeman was not present.
3. **Declarations of Interests:** there were none
4. **Membership:** Ms Kate Bainbridge was welcomed to the committee and introduced herself.
5. **Business including progress with T Levels:** Mr Takyi and Mr Nipah co-presented an overview of Business and T Levels supported by a slide presentation which was subsequently shared with the committee.

The headline stats showing outcomes for 2021 were reviewed with overall satisfaction. Mr Takyi shared the particular success of two A Level Business & Economics students, one of whom had returned to support study skills and revision and the other as a Student Wellbeing Ambassador. Mr Nipah shared the success of two students who had achieved triple starred distinction in the Level 2 Extended Business Studies Diploma course – both would be returning to give a motivational talk to the current cohort.

Mr Takyi explained the Intent, Impact and Implementation of the course curriculum and highlighted the extent and importance of digital innovation and the enabling and empowering improvements this had brought to the delivery of lessons and independent learning. He set out some examples of the success strategies that the Faculty would embed and build on arising from the identified key strengths. The quality improvement priorities for the current year, including incentives, inclusion and intervention were outlined.

Mr Takyi introduced an overview of the launch of T Levels, starting with Management & Administration pathway (Business and Administration route) for 2022 – 2023. He explained the aim of the qualifications and why they were being introduced to improve the needs of employers and

how they differed from Apprenticeships. It was noted that the T Level would run as a two year, full time, 1800-hour course. It would have a good progression route including the potential of earning 168 UCAS points (the equivalent of three A* A Level grades). Awareness of the course was being actively raised and recruitment of the first cohort of students was underway.

Mr Takyi emphasised the importance of the 45-day industry placements in the course and outlined the strategies in place to engage with and support employers in this key aspect including the building of an employer database, a working party of employers and development of industry links. He concluded by reviewing progress against the timeline towards opening of the Business Hub building in August 2022 and welcoming the first cohort of students.

Ms Rowe thanked Mr Takyi and Mr Nipah for their presentation, which recapped some content from the Quality Day in November 2021.

Ms Bainbridge asked whether T Levels would be an addition or replacement to the curriculum. Mr Thompson outlined the government's plan for a binary approach to level three qualifications and intention of replacing BTECs with T Levels. He explained that the college considered that there was a place for all three programmes and that, initially, the T Level, with a planned first cohort of 20 students, would run alongside BTEC Business with group sizes adjusted accordingly. He said that as more T Levels became available there would be opportunities to introduce some courses not currently offered at SFX such as Child Care. There was an intention to offer Accounting in 2023 which was expected to attract to new students although some may choose this instead of economics or business.

Ms Bainbridge asked what the perception was of the progression opportunities for students on T Levels, whether HE Institutions regarded it as a route. Ms Foan had discussed this aspect with a local school that had launched T Levels early where students in the second year had changed their ambition in favour of HE, rather than work. She said that it was of concern that universities don't yet know what the standard of T Level qualifications would be and the college would be careful with recruitment to avoid disadvantaging students wishing to progress to university. Mr Takyi commented T Levels would be a viable route straight into employment because employers viewed the qualification as a recruitment pipeline.

Mr Belfourd stated that the college had found it a challenge to find placements when it was running the apprenticeship programme and wondered whether finding them for T Level students would be a sticking point. Ms Foan agreed that securing enough, high quality, suitable placements was of significant concern but this was why Ms Natalie Green had been engaged as Industrial Placement Coordinator in conjunction with a role of Careers Advisor. She said that there was confidence in finding places for the first cohort but the challenge would increase as SFX expanded the range of T Levels. Mr Thompson advised there was a lot of local competition. Mr Takyi emphasised a reliance on utilising personal networks and pursuing named contacts in firms and organisations and gave the examples of Ms Rowe's beneficial introduction to the Sir Robert McAlpine construction engineering company and another successful lead he had followed.

Ms Rowe reiterated the plea for governors to actively support the college-wide pursuit of contacts in their own networks. She suggested the Voluntary Sector should be mined.

Mr Belfourd asked whether it was known yet if the Civil Service was going to be engaged with T Levels and said that government departments and the armed forces had been involved with apprenticeships. Ms Foan announced that she had heard of possible links with the NHS which Mr Takyi would follow up. She reminded the meeting that because the business specification was quite broad no employer would be off limits to provide a placement.

Mr Vianello agreed that the Civil Service would need to play a part although there might be a slight time lag.

Mr Vianello recounted his experience participating in the preparing for work event including the mock interviews. He suggested that the Diocese might be well placed to help with placements. Mr Thompson would reach out to the Diocese.

Mr Takyi and Mr Nipah left the meeting at 6.15pm, with appreciation from the committee for their attendance and presentation.

[Ms Rowe's connection to the meeting was interrupted by a power failure. Mrs Meier took the chair.]

6. **Minutes of previous meeting, 12th October 2021:** included in the papers, previously circulated in draft and reported to the Governing Body on 9th December 2021, were agreed to be a true and accurate record to be signed in due course.

6.1. **Matters Arising:** not covered by the agenda

6.1.1. **Quality Day 2021 learning walks:** would be picked up under item 8.2 (review of the link scheme).

6.1.2. **Governor with oversight for Safeguarding:** the committee noted the priority need to have a governor to keep oversight of Safeguarding. It was agreed that Mrs Lewis would talk to potential governors offline outside the meeting.

ACTION: Mrs Lewis

6.2. **Actions to be reviewed:**

6.2.1. **Settling-in survey results (students):** Mr Thompson introduced the Student experience report which had been included with the papers for the meeting. He congratulated Mr Worms (Director of Personal Development) for his transformational work sharing information with students through the tutorial programme. Mr Thompson reviewed the survey responses and commentary which contextualised the students' responses expressed during the settling-in period and summarised action taken. Noting that the survey had been useful to identify those students without access to technology or Wi-Fi outside college, Mr Navarro referred to a DfE research report "Education Technology (EdTech) Survey 2020 - 21" published in May 2021, benchmarking how many devices there were per learner. As SFX had not been invited to participate in the survey, Mr Navarro would forward a copy of the report.

[Ms Rowe re-joined the meeting and took the Chair.]

6.2.2. **Governors' aspirational award:** Mrs Meier had proposed the introduction of an aspirational award to encourage students who show grit and determination. Mr Thompson had discussed the suggested prize with the student governor and reported to the full Governing Body in December 2021 that the preference would be for a concert or general voucher. Mrs Meier suggested a value of £250 to be funded by voluntary contributions from governors. It might be a one-off or annual award – to be decided in due course. It was acknowledged that identifying a recipient in September could be difficult.

The proposal had received warm approval from governors.

ACTION Mrs Meier and Mrs Lewis would rework the proposal, circulate and collate responses.

7. **The impact of Covid-19:** Mr Thompson gave a general update on the impact and current situation with Covid-19 in the college. He reported the number of positive cases amongst staff and students including in the nursery. He reflected on the spike in infections in the run up to the Christmas holiday and described the performances, services and activities that had been cancelled as a result. He advised that students had been required to test before returning for the new term and reported three pop up vaccination centres had been held in the autumn term for staff and students with another planned for later this term. Since Plan B restrictions had expired on 16th January it had been left to staff and students to decide what they were most comfortable with in regard to the wearing of face coverings around college and in the classroom.

A full BTEC examination series had gone smoothly in January for the cohort of students sitting exams under the new RQF. Ms Foan outlined a potentially unfair situation which she was pursuing with Pearson, for students who had provided evidence of a positive Covid test for whom there were no special considerations and whose only option was to sit the exam in the summer without an opportunity to re-sit. Students who had taken the exams in January had the advantage of resitting

them in the summer.

Mr Thompson reported that, assuming a further variant or spike would not hit, student attendance was returning to normal level. He said that staff commitment had been excellent.

Mr Thompson confirmed that the government's Plan A was that the summer 2022 exams would go ahead. The college was planning for this but with a contingency in place should reversion to TAGs¹ become necessary. He said that on 7th February, exam boards would be releasing advance information about which topics would be included in the examination questions carrying the highest marks. He emphasised that this was not designed to bypass parts of the syllabus and teachers would still teach the whole course, but the intention was to help focus revision. Other support adaptations were also being put in place in subjects such as maths and art & design. Mrs Meier commented that this was not usual and Mr Thompson advised that it was to relieve the impact of disruption learning and teaching had suffered during the pandemic. He explained that students sitting A Level and BTEC exams this year had never sat a set of public exams before or experienced exam conditions and were being prepared for the drill with mock exams. Ms Foan explained how the grade boundaries would be shifted back to 2019 data.

Ms Rowe commended all staff for the ways in which they had responded to the pandemic.

8. Quality of Provision:

8.1. **Quality Improvement Plan (QUIP):** The plan for 2021 – 22 which showed RAG² rated progress and impact against the improvement statements from the Self-Assessment Report, up to the point of review in January 2022, had been included in the papers for the meeting. Ms Rowe introduced it as a live document, which she would take as read, and invited questions. Ms Foan highlighted the impact statement in key priority area 1 (Quality of Education) to improve progress in GCSE Maths and explained that the milestone "November High Grade percentage increased" had not been achieved - the high Grade percentage had dropped to 9.5%. and was rated red.

Ms Rowe noted that reports had been provided to Heads of Department as a mark of progress towards improving retention rates for those courses falling below 75% impact. Highlighting the relationship between retention and achievement, Ms Rowe invited Ms Foan to comment on progress. Ms Foan said that mid-term review meetings were due the following week from which overall potential achievement could be predicted. She advised that there was no particular concern about retention at present as data was well above national averages. The amber rating indicated that progress was underway towards the required improvement.

Ms Rowe referred to the improvement statement in key priority area 4 (Leadership and Management) to improve support for those who do not have English as a first language. Ms Foan updated the progress statement with confirmation that the advertisement to recruit an ESOL Teacher was now live on TES. Ms Rowe asked whether the post would be sustainable. Ms Foan and Mr Thompson confirmed that it would – funding from the Tuition Fund would continue for another two years and the planned growth in student numbers would lead to more money available for ESOL. Ms Rowe commented that most of the students she had interviewed at the prepare for work event had only arrived in the UK in recent years and that the college seemed to have a significant cohort of young people who don't have English as a first language.

Mrs Meier referred to preparation of the College for the Catholic Schools' inspection and enquired whether governors could attend the Catholic Ethos Day. Mr Thompson advised that the Ethos day with the theme of preparation had taken place in July 2021 but there would be another in July 2022. He confirmed the appointment of a Chaplain Apprentice to support the work of the Chaplain once that post was filled. this would be in the summer The college was an early adopter of the position and the apprentice would follow a course created by the

¹ Teacher Assessed Grades

² R = red (yet to start). A = amber (in progress). G = green (achieved)

Diocese and St Mary's University, Twickenham.

Ms Bainbridge asked whether making up for lost learning was a significant problem the college was dealing with. Ms Foan described the staff and programme in place funded through the recovery education fund and commented that it was working well for those who attend. Mr Thompson explained how the recovery programme was being built around three Attendance and Achievement Officers who were subject specialists working in focused groups. She referred back to the former Business students Mr Takyi and Mr Nipah had highlighted who would also be supporting students. Mr Thompson said a creative look was being taken at ESOL and additional learning assistants. Ms Foan said that recovery activities included exam preparation.

- 8.2. **Governor link scheme:** Ms Rowe reported the scheme was up and running following the relaunch and successful learning walks during Quality Day in November 2021. She was confident that link governors had made contact with their department and begun to establish a rapport and some kind of way of going in to visit, sit in on meetings etc. She reminded link governors to complete and submit a record of each visit via the Clerk using the proforma at Appendix A of the Protocol (July 2021) which was also available as a Google Form. Ms Rowe reported she has also been in contact with Mr Hull, Assistant Principal and they had held a meeting to start developing a link with Battersea Power Station. Mr Navarro asked whether formal feedback was required on the *Ready 4 Work* events. Mr Thompson acknowledged that Mr Navarro's email had provided thorough feedback.
- 8.3. **Student focus forums:** Ms Foan proposed two suggested dates, Tuesday 22nd February or Friday 25th February for governors to meet a group of students in college for a discussion focusing on the theme "learner journey". Ms Foan offered to combine the focus group with a learning walk beforehand. Ms Rowe, Mr Sheta and Mr Navarro indicated interest in taking part. Mr Thompson offered to craft some questions. Mrs Meier proposed that Mr Thompson could provide a couple of questions and governors would contribute their own.
ACTION: Mrs Lewis to co-ordinate with governors and Ms Foan.
- 8.4. **Staff "pulse" surveys:** Mr Thompson introduced the "Staff Pulse" survey report included in the papers for the meeting which shared the latest results and commentary on the regular online check of staff wellbeing. Mr Thompson said overall there had been no great surprises but he had noted that despite exceptional staff development programmes and opportunities in the college, "Development" had dropped to become one of the lowest scoring themes. He had scrutinised this and realised that the response related to progression opportunities within the college. He intended to find ways of supporting those staff who would like to progress. The commentary to the report set out how the replies / comments were analysed and responded to.

Mrs Lewis reminded governors that the statement of "arrangements for obtaining the views of staff and students on the preservation and development of the educational character and mission of the college and the oversight of its activities" would be routinely reviewed at the Governing Body meeting in March. She suggested governors might consider the statement in the context of reflecting the consultations taking place on updating the strategic plan, the college Mission and the development of staff and student forums / surveys.

- 8.5. **The College Collective:** Ms Rowe introduced the paper which had been included for the meeting and commended the scheme. Ms Foan outlined the pilot and benefits of two way support and development between paired colleges and explained the four areas the college had identified for support. She highlighted that this included GCSE Maths which tied back to the lack of progress rated red in the QUIP. She confirmed that the partnership was proving valuable already. Mr Thompson highlighted that the three SFX Experts had passed six modules from the ILM (institute of Leadership and Management) AoC Associate Expert Pathway.
- 8.6. **Catholic Schools' Inspection update:** A statement from Dr Simon Hughes, Director of the Education Commission of the Archdiocese had been included in the papers for the meeting and was noted to announce a pause and shifting back of the inspection regime so that an inspection of the college under the new framework was not now expected until after Easter

2023. Mr Thompson said this would allow time for preparation and settling in of a new Chaplain supported by Mrs Meier as governor link.

- 8.7. **OfSTED Annual Report 2020 – 2021 published 7th Dec 2021:** Had been included in the papers for the meeting for information and was noted. Inspections had recommenced and visits to Sixth Form Colleges had so far produced encouraging improvements in judgements.
9. **Curriculum Development:**
 - 9.1. **T Level development:** Ms Rowe said that Business T Level development had been covered earlier in the meeting. Mr Thompson confirmed that course would be starting in September 2022 and the Business Hub would be ready. He announced an intention to on-board further T Levels in 2023 in Education & Childcare and Accounting. He announced that a proposal to bid for capital funding to develop facilities for those new courses would be presented to the Governors' Finance and Resources Committee later in the month. Ms Rowe observed that a lot of funding was being made available for T Levels. Mr Belfour commented that the Secretary of State was keenly in support of T Levels and wore a badge to show it. In his paper for 9.2 Mr Thompson had noted his expectation that T Levels would be around for the foreseeable future and must feature in the mid to long term curriculum plan as they were considered to be sound and credible qualifications in their own right.
Ms Rowe would expect the committee to be regularly updated on T Level development.
 - 9.2. **Student choice:** Mr Thompson had prepared a paper which had been included for the meeting on the review of Level 3 Qualifications and the withdrawal of funding for Applied General Qualifications. He was very pleased to report that lobbying of the DfE by the SFCA / AoC and other organisations via the #protectstudentchoice petition had reached and exceeded the 100,000 target required to trigger a debate in parliament.
10. **Student Complaint Procedure:** Mr Thompson introduced the procedure and presented it for routine review. No revisions or updates were proposed. The procedure was accepted without revision.
To be recommended for approval to the full Governing Body on 22nd March 2022.
11. **Risk Management:** Ms Rowe referred to the Risk Register included in the papers for the meeting and asked whether governors had identified any new risks or modifications to existing risks on it. It was agreed that the register comprehensively reflected current risks.
12. **Any Other Business:**
 - 12.1. Mr Thompson commended Mr Hull and the Careers staff team on achieving a near record submission of 472 UCAS applications.
 - 12.2. Mr Belfour enquired about progression of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill through parliament. Mr Thompson advised that the amendment which would make it possible for Catholic sixth form colleges to academise was still in place and expected to remain so when the bill became enacted.
13. **Review of meeting:** Mr Navarro commented that the approach which invited questions on the assumption that papers had been read had worked well. Mr Sheta offered congratulations on the successful handling of technical challenges during the meeting.
14. **Date of next meeting:** It was unanimously agreed that the next meeting, currently scheduled for Wednesday 15th June 2022, would take place on **Tuesday 14th June 2022** instead.

The meeting closed at 7.21pm.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____