

MEETING OF THE FULL BOARD OF GOVERNORS

**Tuesday 22nd March 2022
6pm to 8.30pm
Held in St Francis Xavier College**

College mission statement:

We at St Francis Xavier College aim to provide for the educational needs of our students in a Catholic environment that proclaims Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. We are committed to a community based on mutual respect where we recognise our responsibilities to ourselves and others.

July 2005

**MINUTES
PART ONE**

PRESENT:

Mr N Sheta, Foundation Governor, Chair of Governors	Mr G Thompson, Principal
Mr M Belfourd, Foundation Governor, Vice Chair of Governors	Ms K Bainbridge, Co-opted Governor
Mr D Navarro, Foundation Governor	Ms R Clark, Staff Governor (teaching) for part one
Mr S Ebele, Foundation Governor	Ms P Rowe, Co-opted Governor (left 7.55pm)
Mr K Thomas, Foundation Governor	Mrs E Preece, Staff Governor (non-teaching) for part one
Mrs B Meier, Foundation Governor	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms K Foan, Associate Principal, Curriculum
Mrs E Lewis, Clerk to the Governors

The meeting was opened at 6pm by Mr Sheta. It was quorate throughout.

- 1. OPENING PRAYER:** offered by Mr Thompson
- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Mr R Vianello, Mr C Graham, Mr D Freeman, Mr P Barber, Mrs K Taylor, Ms J Quartey, Mr R Lagnado
- 3. CHAIR'S WELCOME:** Ms Bainbridge was welcomed to the Board by Mr Sheta. She and all present introduced themselves. Mr Sheta encouraged governors to probe and ask questions and to challenge any acronyms they did not understand.
- 4. MEMBERSHIP OF GOVERNING BODY:** It was noted that:
 - 4.1. Ms Kate Bainbridge, co-opted governor, had been appointed from 1st January 2022 to a four-year term of office.
 - 4.2. Mr Somayina Ebele had been re-appointed as a foundation governor to a second four-year term of office from 15th January 2022
- 5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** there were none
- 6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:**
 - 6.1. **9th December 2021:** included in the papers and previously circulated 25th January 2022 were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were duly signed by Mr Sheta.

- 6.2. **Review of Confidential Minutes:** It was agreed that the minutes of the confidential part two of 4th December 2012 should remain reserved as they contain reference to two specific individuals. Other more recent confidential minutes would be reviewed in part two of this meeting.
7. **MATTERS ARISING (if not covered by agenda items):** there were none
8. **REVIEW OF ACTIONS CARRIED FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:**
- 8.1. From item 13: membership of the Chartered College of Teaching. There was nothing to report.
 - 8.2. From item 14.2: Quality Day materials had been shared.
 - 8.3. From item 15.1.3: Governors had confirmed their reading and understanding of KCSiE¹ (part two as a minimum)
 - 8.4. From item 15.1.5 and 17.2: Ms Bainbridge had agreed to take responsibility for oversight of Safeguarding for an initial period of one year
 - 8.5. From item 16.3.3: Mr Takyi and Mr Nipah had presented to the CSQ
9. **INFORMATION / DATA COMMUNICATED SINCE DECEMBER 2021 MEETING:** Governors noted the list of documents / reports / data listed on the agenda which had been circulated by email since the previous meeting. Mr Belfour observed that since the agenda had been issued, the February monthly management accounts and cashflow reports had been distributed by email on 10th March 2022.
10. **CHAIR'S REPORT /ACTION:** Mr Sheta had directed a written resolution to vote on submission of a T Level Capital bid for 2023.
11. **STUDENT GOVERNORS' REPORT:** There was no report.
12. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT TO GOVERNORS, no 88.** The report had been included in the papers for the meeting. During the course of his review of the report, Mr Thompson responded to questions submitted in advance from governors.
- 12.1. **Presentation of Executive Summary:** Mr Thompson introduced the Executive Summary
- 12.1.1. **Response to Covid.** Mr Thompson reported a small amount of known covid infection currently amongst staff and students and explained how "living with covid" advice from the DfE was being followed. He noted that overall student attendance was good, attributing this in part to students being glad to be back on site.
Mr Thompson said it was expected that "Plan A" would go ahead for exams in the summer term and advance information had been provided by the examination boards but he described how the college was prepared to implement "Plan B" in the event that exams were pulled.
Mr Thompson advised how the significant funding from the 16 – 19 Recovery Fund was being used including the provision of revisions sessions in the Easter holidays.
Prompted by a question from Ms Rowe, Mr Thompson explained how and why the grade profile for the summer exams would lie close to the midway point between 2019 and 2021 outcomes to protect the current cohort against a reversion to pre-covid grade profiles straight away.
Ms Clark clarified that a student who tests positive for covid during exams should follow the government advice to stay at home. A grade would be awarded in these circumstances if the student has sat at least 25% of the assessment. Exam paper dates would be spread out to make this possible.
Ms Clark commented that a recently introduced system, which automatically sent emails home if a student failed to attend a lesson, was also a contributory factor to improved attendance.
 - 12.1.2. **Progress against in-year strategic objectives:**
Mr Thompson reported positive progress against the "INSPIRE" 2021 – 2022 in-year objectives:

¹ Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2021)

Inclusion and Respect
Nurture and Support
Standards
Physical and Mental wellbeing
Inspection
Recruitment
Expectations

Ms Bainbridge had submitted a question about the student EDI survey to which 10% had responded that they had been discriminated against on the basis of any of the protected characteristics. Ms Bainbridge suggested this proportion was significant and wondered whether it had been investigated and what actions had been taken. Mr Thompson explained that the survey had been anonymous which minimised the opportunity for individual follow up although some issues raised had been followed up. He said that it had also transpired during discussion of protected characteristics that less than a third of students were familiar with what they were. He advised that a student EEDI committee had been formed along with an LGBTQ+ student support group. Ms Foan commented that students are very open about aspects. Mr Thompson emphasised the commitment to engaging with all the topics embraced by EDI and that surveys were taken regularly including in the tutorial settings.

Mr Sheta and Mr Navarro briefed governors on their understanding of recent events and Diocesan intervention at the John Fisher Secondary School.

Mr Thompson advised that the timetable of expected Catholic inspections under the new framework had been pushed back due to pause in Section 48 inspections announced by the Diocese.

Mr Thompson reported encouraging student recruitment noting that the number of applications by prospective students was 1675 to date showing progress with the plan to grow the student roll by at least an additional 34 for 2022 – 2023. Mr Sheta asked what the increase in applications could be attributed to. Mr Thompson credited a number of factors including a successful in person Open Day in November 2021 and an increased effort in marketing. Mr Belfour asked what level of applications there had been for the new T Level course. Mr Thompson confirmed there was active promotion of the course but explained that specific interest would emerge during the recruitment interviews when initial course choices were discussed. Ms Clark explained that advice and guidance about the most suitable course would be given during enrolment based on actual GCSE achievement.

Mr Thompson announced the second highest level of applications to Higher Education (HE). Mr Sheta noted 88% of eligible students had submitted an application to UCAS with 38% of those applying to at least one Russell Group university and asked why there was an increase of over 100 compared with the previous year. This was attributed to the efforts of staff, and Mr Kier Hull, Assistant Principal overseeing careers, in particular, supported by greater familiarity with the *Unifrog*² platform which supports students with their applications.

Mr Ebele asked whether the upward trend in progression to HE was expected to continue. Mr Thompson confirmed this and said that there was a target of 50% to progress to a Russell Group university. Ms Foan confirmed that increasing the ambition of staff and aspiration of students to attend top universities was an action in the college improvement plan for 2021 – 2022³. Ms Clark commented that the measure of success would be how many of the students took up the places they were offered.

² <https://www.unifrog.org/>

³ Under key priority 3: personal development

Ms Rowe introduced a discussion of a Nuffield funded report⁴ into the disparity between the outcomes and retention of students entering HE with BTECs and those with A Levels. It was acknowledged that the new T Level route may offer a more suitable progression route for some BTEC-type students who might currently get carried along with the flow to university.

12.1.3. Curriculum and Quality.

Mr Thompson explained the data that would be published by the DfE and advised that Value Added measures would be used for internal quality assurance purposes. He said that the first full set of results was due from the BTEC assessments, following transition to the RQF specifications.

The commitment to delivery of T Levels was further confirmed by the intention to add Education & Childcare and Accounting to the portfolio from autumn 2023. A repurposing development of the ground floor would, if the bid for funding was successful, support those new T Levels.

Mr Thompson reported an improvement in the retention rate which was currently very good at 98.5%.

The outcome of the annual cycle of lesson observations reported some excellent practice. Mrs Meier asked what provision was made for the six teachers placed on an enhanced support route and whether the students they were teaching would be impacted. Ms Foan explained the arrangements in place which include a mentor, regular meetings and bespoke development. She assured governors that if the level of concern was high the teacher would not be in front of the class - this was not the case for any of the six identified in this round.

Mr Thompson announced that the college would be part of the Cognitive Science Network next year and reported the extent of the use of iPads under the digital innovation strategy.

The concessions made by the DfE with respect to the removal of funding for BTECs was noted whilst a debate triggered by the successful #protectstudentchoice campaign was awaited.

The passage of the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill, which would deliver the legal authority for Catholic SFCs to academise, through the Commons and Lords was nearing the Royal Assent stage and it was anticipated this would be granted in the coming weeks.

12.1.4. Funding, finance and the Estate

Mr Thompson confirmed that the funding allocation for this current year would be £8,194k for 1249 learners and would be based on 1282 students next year. He explained how the college purse would increase due to an 8.4% uplift in the per capita funding rate. Grant income would bring in an additional £1m. This would be slightly tempered by a requirement attached to it to deliver 40 additional hours to every student over the year. The college priorities for allocating delivery of that extra time were discussed.

The college target of a student roll of 1440 by 2026 was reiterated. The creation of purpose built accommodation to deliver the new T Levels would be significant in achieving this growth.

Mr Thompson noted the current staffing costs expressed as a percentage of income were high 76.14% and confirmed that managing those continued to be a focus with a target of 74% for the next year. Mr Belfour commented that increased on-costs were also a contributory factor.

In response to a question from Ms Clark it was noted that the remaining income was largely spent on the estate / premises / IT.

A summary of the building and maintenance works recently completed and underway was noted along with details of recent bids submitted for further capital funding. The upcoming restructuring of the ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) was noted.

12.1.5. Staffing Matters:

Mr Thompson reviewed the *Staff Pulse* regular online survey of staff members. He

⁴ <https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/news/students-with-btecs-university-success>

confirmed that a menopause policy (appended to the report) had been added to the wider wellbeing strategy. He also commended staff for their generosity of time and experience to teach each other.

12.1.6. College Activities and Events:

Governors were referred to the range of activities which had taken place during the term to enrich the student experience.

12.1.7. Catholic Ethos:

Mr Thompson advised that progress was being made with the review of the College's mission statement and would be reviewed later in the meeting. He said that the formation of an SFX sustainability strategy would be part of the Catholic mission of the college.

The appointment of a new Chaplain, Rev Tony Flavin and recruitment of a Chaplaincy Apprentice, Gabrielle Williams Hamer, were confirmed. Mr Sheta was pleased to note the commitment to saying Mass by two priests from Holy Ghost church..

Mr Thompson described how the Lenten theme of "Peace and Forgiveness" was being reflected in Religion and Philosophy lessons.

12.2. Questions on report: responses to questions and comment submitted in advance of the meeting were addressed at the relevant points in the agenda items.

The Principal's report was accepted.

13. COLLEGE MISSION STATEMENT: Mr Thompson explained the consultation involving staff and students that had taken place since the Governors' Focus morning on 9th October 2021 and the outcome of the subsequent vote. Mr Thompson had included the favourite in his report, which read:

St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College is an inclusive educational community rooted in the Catholic faith, that has Christ at its centre. Our aim is to provide a broad curriculum which emphasises the pursuit of excellence and focuses on career preparation, leadership and service to others. We are committed to preparing the whole person to lead a life of purpose and success in a just and sustainable world.

Mr Thompson recounted the view of students that the college was recognisable from this statement and it reflected the college values.

Mr Sheta concluded that it was clear that all stake holders were in favour of this mission statement and it **was unanimously agreed that this should be adopted forthwith** as proposed by Mr Thompson in his report and feature everywhere including on the website. Mr Belford commented that the Catholic Schools Inspection would focus on it, how well the college community knew and applied it and delivered it.

Mrs Meier recommended displaying the statement on walls and that it be used in decision making. Mr Thomas would encourage consideration of how the mission and values had been applied during appraisal reviews. In approving the mission statement, governors thanked Mr Thompson for his hard work in the process.

14. ORAL REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS COMMITTEES: Draft minutes included in the papers for the meeting were taken as read.

14.1. Audit committee had met remotely on 1st March 2022, chaired by Mr Vianello. Draft minutes had been received in the papers for this meeting.

14.1.1. Mr Ebele, Vice Chair of the committee proposed the continued appointment of Buzzacott LLP as external auditors for a fee of £21,150 for year ending 31st July 2022 work (3% increase on year end 2021). He advised that the recommendation was the result of a formal process of re-tendering and a satisfactory review of performance. The external audit service would be re-tendered again within five years and performance would continue to be reviewed annually. The draft minutes of the meeting recorded the consideration of the risk of familiarity with long-standing auditors **The proposal to renew the appointment of Buzzacott as external auditors was approved unanimously.**

14.1.2. Mr Ebele advised the Governing Body that RSM (internal auditors) would disengage from SFX after completion and reporting on the agreed upon procedures assignments for this academic year. The committee would keep the internal audit strategy on the agenda and the budget would be protected pending further risk-based considerations of assignments and cyclical reviews.

Mr Sheta asked what the view of the Audit Committee was in regard to not having an internal audit service (IAS). Mr Ebele explained that the committee had weighed up the risks and benefits and was neutral given that the budget would be retained and expert specialist reviews would be commissioned as required if the existing assurances were deemed to need further reinforcement.

Mr Thompson commented that about half the ACVIC⁵ colleges have an IAS and the other half have other ways of monitoring controls and risks.

Mrs Meier emphasised that the committee's debate had been robust and realistic and the commitment had been made to keep it on the agenda.

Mr Belfour referred to the change which had been effected in the last year with regard to additional checking ILR data to provide assurance in the external audit of the grant funding earned by the college.

14.1.3. Following a routine review, Mr Ebele proposed revised terms of reference for the committee which had been included in the papers for the meeting for approval. **The revised terms of reference were approved unanimously for immediate adoption.**

14.1.4. The current risk register had been included in the papers for the meeting.

The committee would meet next on 17th May 2022.

14.2. Finance and Resources Committee had met remotely on 22nd Feb 2022, chaired by Mr Belfour. Draft minutes had been received in the papers for this meeting.

14.2.1. Mr Belfour reminded fellow governors of the significance of the monthly distribution of managements accounts with commentary and cashflow reports.

14.2.2. The revised "Charging Policy" (to cover tuition and other fees) for 2022 – 2023 had been included in the papers for the meeting. Mr Belfour introduced the update and explained that the main change concerned the introduction of a Digital Device Fee. **On the recommendation of the committee, the Charging Policy, 2022 – 2023, was approved unanimously.**

14.2.3. Mr Belfour confirmed that the bid to the T Level Capital and associated college financial liability for match funding had been agreed in principle by the committee prior to the electronic unanimous vote in favour of the written resolution reported by Nader under Item 10, Chair's Action. Mr Belfour advised that the bid had been submitted on 7th March to meet the 11th March deadline and thanked all involved in achieving that. The outcome of the bid was expected in June and confirmed costings / match funding would return to governors for a final decision in the summer. Copies of the plans for the Business Hub were available on the table.

The committee would meet next on 21st June 2022

14.3. Curriculum Standards & Quality Committee had met remotely on 1st Feb 2022, chaired by Ms Rowe. Draft minutes had been received in the papers for this meeting.

14.3.1. Ms Rowe confirmed that Ms Kate Bainbridge had been welcomed to the committee. She reviewed the presentation by Mr Aaron Takyi and Mr George Nipah on the work of the Business department including an update on T Levels and reiterated the value of hearing from department heads.

14.3.2. Ms Rowe reported to governors on the student focus forum which had taken place since the committee meeting on 25th February. She and Mr Sheta had met a mix of 7 BTEC and A-Level students in their first and second year of study. Ms Rowe commented

⁵ Association of Catholic Sixth Form Colleges

that they had been very comfortable talking to governors and that the impression gained was that students, overall, were very happy with the college although there had been comment about the standard of some items on the lunch menu.

Ms Rowe requested a follow up meeting with the same group in 6 months or before they leave. Mr Sheta said that the direct interaction without teachers being present provided an invaluable opportunity for governors and he hoped more would take part as well as in the learning walks.

- 14.3.3. Ms Rowe introduced the Student Complaints Procedure, included in the papers for the meeting, which the committee had received for routine without any proposed changes. Ms Bainbridge had asked what the nature had been of recent complaints and what had the actions been. Mr Thompson said that whilst not too many complaints were filed, mostly concerning teachers, food or the *Starbucks* pod, they were all taken seriously and followed up. He advised that there had been one recent formal complaint about the treatment of an SEN student which was being investigated. Mrs Meier asked whether if food was a consistent theme it was being taken seriously enough. Mr Thompson acknowledged some recent challenges with service and the standard of catering. Mrs Preece confirmed that these had improved recently under new management. Competition from outlets in the high street was significant offering cheaper if less healthy options. Mr Thompson advised that the catering contract was currently out to tender.

The Student Complaints Procedure was approved unanimously.

The committee would meet next on 14th June 2022.

14.4. **Appeal Committee:** had not met.

14.5. **Remuneration Committee:** had not met.

14.6. **Governance Committee:** had not met.

15. GOVERNANCE:

- 15.1. **Admissions Policy:** The updated policy had been included in the papers for the meeting following annual review by the college management committee. Mr Thompson introduced the policy which was proposed for approval and immediate adoption. He explained that the update was more specific about academic references and now included unsatisfactory behaviour as a reason for declining to offer a place. Mr Thompson responded to questions from Ms Bainbridge who had asked whether the college had experienced difficulty obtaining references from schools that didn't want to lose their pupils and whether behaviour issues had arisen that were not flagged. He said there had been some instances of these as well as misunderstandings arising from the mistaken belief that the college is regulated by the DfE School admissions code. He explained that the policy needed to take immediate effect to cover the current round of student recruitment. The policy is posted on the college website.
The Admissions Policy, 2022 was approved unanimously as presented to take immediate effect.

- 15.2. **Conduct of Business (standing orders):** Mrs Lewis introduced the revisions in the standing orders which had been included in the papers for the meeting. She noted that 10.1.3 also needed to be updated to replace *Head of Finance* with *Director of Finance & Resources* and that *Senior Business Manager* should be deleted.

The Conduct of Business was approved unanimously subject to those additional changes being made.

- 15.3. **Statement by GB on obtaining the views of staff and students:** Mrs Lewis introduced this statement which had been revised by routine review and included in the papers for the meeting - publication was a requirement of Article 5 (2) (b).

The updated statement was approved unanimously subject to removal of an editorial comment on the final bullet point under "staff" which had been left in erroneously. The statement would be posted on the Governing Body pages of the college website.

15.4. **Academisation:** Mr Sheta introduced the opportunity to discuss any development in the matter of potential Academisation which would become legally possible once the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill receive Royal Assent. For reference, Mr Thompson had shared the latest paper produced by James Kewin, SFCA Deputy CE. Mr Thompson updated governors with a report from a strategic planning session with the college senior team the previous week which had debated the risks of academising or not. An arising action was a commitment to investigate what the plans of local schools were.

Mr Thompson outlined an aspect he was currently considering regarding the emphasis on skills in the FE sector, where the college would remain as a designated Sixth Form College with, potentially a lesser influence on the national debate. As an academy, the college would move back into the school sector.

Noting that, currently, there was no real appetite for academisation for ACVIC or from staff, and acknowledging there were some potential financial benefits, it was agreed that Academisation must be kept on the agenda for review and updates. It was known that, despite some reported resistance, the Diocese was moving ahead rapidly with its plans for schools to academise. Mr Navarro described the perspective he had gained from working as a senior leader in a Primary School, and he advised cautious selection of potential partners and careful consideration of the impact on the community of staff and students. Mr Thompson had persisted in his pursuit of a dialogue about strategy with the Diocesan Director of Education (Simon Hughes) without success.

It was agreed that the Governing Body and leadership of the college should undertake due diligence and be in a position to show a decisive lead. **To remain on future agendas.**

15.5. **Committees:** An update had been included in the papers for the meeting from which it was noted that Ms Bainbridge had been added to the CSQ Committee and was also listed as Safeguarding link governor.

15.6. **Vacancies:** Mrs Lewis advised that two new student governors would be nominated in the summer term and that there remained a vacancy for a parent governor and (currently) one foundation governor. Two expressions of interest had been received in response to the most recent advertisement sent to parishes for volunteers to serve as foundation governors.

15.7. **Tracking against governance improvement plan:** Mrs Lewis introduced the monitoring report which noted that progress was being made against the targets in the governance improvement plan. She also reported that the process of one to one meetings between the chair and individual governors and the Clerk and new governors had begun. The improvement action plan was agreed.

[Ms Rowe left the meeting at this point at 7.55pm]

15.8. **Schedule of meetings for 2022 – 23:** The draft schedule had been included in the papers for the meeting and was provisionally accepted. It would be confirmed at the next meeting when a decision would be taken as to whether committee meetings would be held online or in person. Full Board meetings and the Focus morning would be in person in college.

15.9. **Governor Engagement: Feedback from meetings / conferences / webinars:** It was noted that external reviews of governance had been a topic at the recent AoC London & South East Region Governance conference held online attended by Mr Sheta, Mr Belfour and Mrs Lewis.

15.10. **Report / update from Safeguarding Governor:** Ms Bainbridge reported that she had met with Mr Graham and confirmed she was in receipt of minutes of meetings which referenced appropriate relationships with agencies and showed that policies were being following. She applauded the planned move to CPOMS⁶ software for a centralised system of recording and monitoring safeguarding. The advantages of CPOMS over the current in-house system were emphasised by Ms Bainbridge.

Thanks were extended to Ms Bainbridge for taking on this responsibility.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

⁶ Child Protection Online Management System.

16.1. Mr Thomas asked whether the college followed the Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme. He promoted the potential benefits to students including in their applications to Russell Group universities and also outlined why the awards were good for non-academic students. Mr Thompson said that there had been recent discussion about re-introducing the scheme which he would follow up.

17. Governors confirmed that they were satisfied that the information received and all decisions taken at this meeting had been centred on improving the experience and levels of achievement of students at St Francis Xavier college in a safe, healthy environment that embraces the Catholic ethos and mission and values of the college, the prevent duty, and promotes equality, diversity, dignity & inclusion.

Mrs Preece and Ms Clark, Staff Governors, withdrew from the meeting at this point.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL.

Commenced at 8.07pm. The meeting remained quorate.

PRESENT:

Mr N Sheta, Foundation Governor, Chair of Governors	Mr G Thompson, Principal
Mr M Belfourd, Foundation Governor, Vice Chair of Governors	Ms K Bainbridge, Co-opted Governor
Mr D Navarro, Foundation Governor	
Mr S Ebele, Foundation Governor	
Mr K Thomas, Foundation Governor	
Mrs B Meier, Foundation Governor	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms K Foan, Associate Principal, Curriculum
Mrs E Lewis, Clerk to the Governors

1. **Review of minutes classified as “Confidential”:** Governors considered whether the confidentiality of part two minutes of meetings held on 6th July 2021, 18th March 2021, 3rd Dec 2020, 1st July 2020 and 17th March 2020) should remain. It was agreed that the matter declared confidential had been transparent, open and honest but sensitive for those potentially affected and should remain confidential until the next review in March 2023.

Mr Ebele asked what the position was on the matter and was advised that whilst it had been decided not to proceed, the options remained on the table.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____

Next meeting of the full Governing Body: Tuesday 5th July 2022, in college.