

SANDWELL COLLEGE

Minutes of the LQCC meeting held on
Thursday 9 March 2023 at 3.30pm

Present: K Ellis (Independent) (Committee Chair)
A Khodavardar Student Governor, Sandwell
N Makin (Independent)
G Pennington (Principal)

Apologies: A Mohamed Student Governor, Cadbury

In attendance: D Holden Vice Principal, Curriculum
E Scotford Clerk to the Corporation
T Sharma (Independent)
J Stevens Principal, Cadbury College and Vice Principal, Quality

		Action
L23.1	<u>Welcome</u>	
	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received from Ahmed Mohamed and were accepted by Governors.	
L23.2	<u>Declarations of any new personal or business interest or conflict with any agenda item</u>	
	RESOLVED THAT: There were no declarations beyond the standing Register of Interests.	
L23.3	<u>Minutes of the LQCC meeting held on 22 June 2022</u>	
	The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record for signing by the Chair.	
	RESOLVED THAT: the minutes be approved.	
L23.4	<u>Matters Arising</u>	
23.4.1	Minute No. L22.15.13 – Copy of Performing Arts departmental newsletter to be forwarded to Governors via the Clerk – actioned.	
23.4.2	Minute No. L22.21.3 – DH to report on position of trust review to Safeguarding Link Governor – actioned.	
23.4.3	Minute No. L22.22.25 – Governors to complete and return the committee effectiveness questionnaire to the Clerk – actioned.	
L23.5	<u>Programme Standard Review: Early Years incl. focus on T levels</u> Presented by Jane Bissell, Head of Department, Early Years (Copy of presentation attached to the minutes for reference.)	
23.5.1	The team consisted of 17 members from a variety of backgrounds and occupations, experience and knowledge levels which could be shared with the students to develop their awareness and skills in college.	
23.5.2	The department's Intent was outlined. There were a range of qualification levels to ensure the best outcome for students. L3 gave them licence to	

	<p>practice and work in nurseries. They were paid on the L3 route. This gave students the best start to their careers.</p> <p>Students gained UCAS points for courses and had different routes and employment at the end of their courses.</p> <p>L1-L3 were mainly 16-18 students, L1-L5 had a large adult contingent.</p> <p>The College worked with Wolverhampton University to deliver a Foundation Degree. Students go to Walsall campus to top up to a full degree.</p> <p>The College worked closely with employers to ensure its offer matched need in the sector. It worked with over 200 schools and nurseries in the local area and beyond. Students travelled and had placements out of area as it attracted students outside the local area.</p>	
23.5.3	<p>The reasons for studying Early Years and education were outlined.</p> <p>The College worked to help students to changed their mindset. Some students were the first in their family to go to university. Some students were adults returning to education/employment to support their families.</p>	
23.5.4	<p>Enrichment opportunities for students were detailed and included Dudley Zoo, escape rooms and Forest Schools.</p>	
23.5.5	<p>The department's impact was highlighted. Students go on to meaningful outcomes in schools and nurseries. Some adults work in the College as Learning Support Mentors and/or go into HE to study at degree or foundation degree level.</p>	
23.5.6	<p>Many fund-raising activities took place across the department which students participated in, e.g. Children in Need.</p>	
23.5.7	<p>The classroom environments set by students were explained. Governors were welcome to visit the classrooms. A breakfast club was held one morning per week before students start their learning.</p>	
23.5.8	<p>Update given on how T levels would affect the department. The College was in Wave 2 which started in 2021/22. It started with a small group of 16 with an Early Years specialism. Y1 was mandatory; Y2 focused on the specialism with 50 placement hours. Placement hours were on track with 600 completed so far.</p> <p>An assisted teacher specialism was starting which required half the number of placement hours. They were on track and placement hours were building up, with preparation for assessments in May and June.</p>	
23.5.9	<p>Governors asked if the current Y3 leavers were doing BTEC L3.</p> <p>The College explained that it did not run BTEC. It ran a L3 similar to BTEC but that was due to end this year.</p>	
23.5.10	<p>Governors recognised that many very successful courses would disappear because of the introduction of T levels.</p>	
23.5.11	<p>Governors noted the wide range of abilities and levels taught in the department.</p> <p>The College advised that it often had generations of students from families, i.e. mothers and daughters, and benefited from word of mouth recommendations. It also advertised and left leaflets at schools and nurseries promoting courses to those wanting to upskill their current teachers.</p>	

23.5.12	In response to a Governor's question, the College advised that it had 150 16-18 students, and over 100 adult students.	
23.5.13	<p>Referring to employer engagement, Governors noted the College spent considerable time with a number of employers, not just helping to shape programmes, but identifying areas of careers interest and need, for the students coming into the College.</p> <p>Governors asked for recent examples of how employer engagement had helped shape the College offer.</p> <p>The College advised that there was a skills lead in the department who met with employers to identify any gaps in knowledge they thought needed to be better delivered, e.g. nurseries wanted students to have food hygiene qualifications as they were preparing food for children. This had been introduced last year to Early Years students and offered another qualification for them. The paediatric first aid qualification had also been introduced after discussions with an employer. Also the Early Years framework changed recently which meant there were new key words that students were not familiar with. This vocabulary had been introduced to the course so students could use it more frequently and confidently.</p>	
23.5.14	<p>Governors asked if there were enough employers to provide the required number of placements.</p> <p>The College advised that it worked closely with local schools to maintain close links and rectified any issues quickly. It worked closely with school liaison teams in high schools and was present on GCSE results day to help direct their students to the College's courses.</p>	
23.5.15	<p>Governors asked what were the biggest challenges in the next 12-24 months.</p> <p>The College explained that T level targets would be a challenge as they were high but the department was well prepared for the future.</p>	
23.5.16	<p>Governors asked if English and Maths qualifications were challenging for those students who wanted to do L2 and beyond.</p> <p>The College explained that it had been challenging at first. Now there were more students who had passed English but were still doing Maths so it had put on extra support for Maths, e.g. revision classes. Not all students arrived with high grades but were supported. Past students had visited to explain to current students how important English and Maths was to their future careers.</p>	
23.5.17	<p>Governors asked what sort of growth was planned for the department and in 2-3 years' time what would be the consistent path to growth.</p> <p>The College advised that it needed to be more involved in schools so Y11 were aware of childcare and the opportunities available to them.</p>	
23.5.18	Governors acknowledged the department's success in adapting to T levels. It had benefited from its existing good placements and employer links.	
23.5.19	Governors thanked JB for her impressive and informative presentation and asked that their thanks be passed on to the team for their hard work and the impact this had on the lives and raised aspirations of students and their families.	
23.5.20	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received a presentation on Early Years.	

L23.6	<u>Qualification Reform Update</u>	
23.6.1	The context of the reform was outlined. The reform was meant to have been published in November 2022. The update set out the scale of the potential problems facing the College.	
23.6.2	<p>At present, students could pursue three routes: academic qualifications such as A levels; technical qualifications that led to a specific occupation; and applied general qualifications such as BTECs that combined the development of practical skills with academic learning.</p> <p>These 3 routes would reduce to 2 following the reform, i.e. the academic A level route or T levels. At present, A levels and T levels were the only qualifications available in the next few years, all others would be impacted with funding removed for the majority of BTEC qualifications.</p>	
23.6.3	<p>The 4 main issues were outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those courses that overlapped or were deemed to overlap with T levels would be defunded. - Those courses with no T level plan but eligible to seek approval to be funded in the future but not in the current form included travel and public services. - Those eligible for funding, examples given, would still have to go through an approval process. There was uncertainty as to what they would look like. - Of the smaller academic qualifications, about 62% of Applied Generals would be scrapped even before the approval process began, e.g. Criminology, Applied Psychology. 	
23.6.4	Around 4% of the L3 qualifications would be impacted, which would affect around 2,000 students. Of them only c19% would have a clear alternative pathway. The College would need to look closely at how to get the other students onto suitable courses and ensure they progressed.	
23.6.5	The timeline for the changes was detailed. The courses which would be funded from September 2025 would not be notified until July 2024. The DfE believed in pushing forward with doing T levels but this would lead to increased numbers of NEETs or unsuitable students being put on A levels.	
23.6.6	The uncertainty was damaging as, apart from 106 qualifications, the College did not know which ones would be defunded until very near the time. Colleges had also been informed on 9 March 2023 that 4 T levels due to come out in September 2023 would be delayed by a year. This level of uncertainty made the situation chaotic.	
23.6.7	Governors were concerned at the impact this would have on advice and guidance able to be given to students starting in September 2023.	
23.6.8	Governors noted that progression from L1 to L3 raised the aspirations of many students so understood why there was a huge campaign against this qualification reform.	
23.6.9	<p>Governors judged it to be unacceptable for colleges not to know until July 2024 the final list of qualifications and what courses they were able to offer from September 2025.</p> <p>Further work on the qualification reform would take place at the Annual Board Strategy Forum on 12 May 2023. Governors appreciated the need to proceed with caution until final confirmation was received. Firm lobbying would take place in the intervening period. Governors recognised this</p>	

	change was an existential event for the College due to the number of L3 students who would be impacted.	
23.6.10	Governors understood that colleges remained charities which meant their first duty was to students so there was a need to navigate this new complex landscape to best meet learner needs as well as ensuring good student outcomes met local economy and business need.	
23.6.11	Governors recommended that qualification reform be included in the Risk Register at the highest risk rating.	
23.6.12	Governors asked if the College believed that most qualifications would move from BTEC to T level. The College explained that in 2024, the 3-4 year time plan would possibly reach to a crunch point but it hoped that the dialogue would have softened by then. There was an opportunity to move forward sensibly with some subjects.	
23.6.13	Governors asked how the introduction of T levels would impact L1 and L2 students and were they a risk to many of the College's students. The College explained that much of its methodology was based on lower level qualifications progressing to a higher level. If lower levels were removed it would impact on entire subject areas.	
23.6.14	Governors welcomed further in-depth discussion at the Annual Strategy Forum.	
23.6.15	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received the qualification reform update.	
L23.7	<u>College SAR</u>	
23.7.1	Changes to the previous version were highlighted. Covid related items had been removed. Previous versions of the SAR did not fit the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) which focused on quality rather than outcomes.	
23.7.2	The SAR would continue to be reported to LQCC and Board. This version was validated by Ofsted in October.	
23.7.3	The Cadbury merger was viewed by Ofsted as extremely successful, to the benefit of students at Cadbury, and were complimentary how it had been managed from a strategic and operational point of view.	
23.7.4	Ofsted agreed with the College's self-identified strengths.	
23.7.5	In the previous EIF format, any areas identified for development would be accompanied by an action plan but Ofsted's approach now was to look at microcosms of the College so a whole college action plan would be unhelpful. The action plan focused mainly on apprenticeships as they were spread across a range of areas.	
23.7.6	Ofsted update to be included on next meeting agenda. Clerk to note.	Clerk
23.7.7	The Quality team were carrying out an audit of the departments to identify whether comments applied to them as well but apprenticeships were college-wide which is why an improvement plan was in place for this area.	
23.7.8	Comments from the Ofsted inspection report were included in the SAR.	
23.7.9	The College had considered obtaining external validation of progress on apprenticeships using Ian Smith as it was his area of expertise and would	

	<p>ask him to carry out a periodic review of progress and share this with the Committee.</p> <p>Governors were in favour of any approach which would support the team to be able to report back on progress made.</p>	
23.7.10	<p>Governors suggested that the skills agenda and meeting of skills need was an area for development, quoting from comments in the Ofsted report, and recommended that this be included in the SAR.</p> <p>The College pointed out this was not part of Ofsted's judgement of the College: the EIF required a statement only. When Ofsted were able to benchmark skills needs it might feature in future inspections.</p> <p>The College explained that the strategy of the skills agenda was discussed at weekly meetings to check it was appropriate to meet local needs, examples given.</p> <p>Governors recommended that the SAR included references to the importance of the skills agenda and outlined the College's strengths in this area.</p>	DH
23.7.11	<p>Governors referred to the Ofsted comment that leaders did not do enough to monitor the progress of learners when they leave the college.</p> <p>The College pointed out it was impossible for colleges or government to track learners after they had left. The College tracked them as best it could at present via planned destinations. Ofsted could offer no advice as to how to do this either.</p> <p>Governors recognised it was impossible to do so and most important was to support students to achieve the right qualifications to be able to progress to the next stage of their life.</p>	
23.7.12	RESOLVED THAT: Governors would recommend approval of the College SAR to the Board, subject to the suggested amendments.	
L23.8 NFP	<u>Safeguarding update</u>	
L23.9	<u>Risk Register – committee responsibilities</u>	
	RESOLVED THAT: Governors reviewed and monitored the Risk Register and noted the areas of change particularly relating to reduction in risk ratings for: English and Maths; Prevent; Covid.	
L23.10	<u>Complaints Report</u>	
23.10.1	The College explained its approach to complaints and its hard work in addressing them quickly and effectively with the aim of resolving complaints at local level wherever possible. The report therefore contained the 4 formal complaints received. These were discussed in detail by Governors.	
23.10.2	<p>Governors noted that 4 formal complaints out of 7,000 learners was very low and positive and asked if there was any comparative data and was it standard in FE to have formal and informal complaints.</p> <p>The College explained that each college had a different complaints procedure. The College tried to resolve things immediately each one being investigated by the Quality Department and someone independent of the complaint. This meant it did not receive many formal complaints.</p>	
23.10.3	RESOLVED THAT: Governors received and monitored the Complaints report.	

L23.11	<u>Policies</u>	
	There were no policies to review/approve.	
L23.12	<u>Any Other Business</u>	
	There was no other business.	
L23.13	<u>Determination of Confidential Items</u>	
	Minute No. L23.8	
L23.14	<u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u>	
	Wednesday 21 June 2023, 3.30pm NB - Autumn term meeting to be held on site.	

The meeting ended at 5.15pm