

## SANDWELL COLLEGE

### Minutes of the LQCC meeting held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March at 3.30pm

Present:                      N Makin                      Interim Chair  
                                    L Capper MBE              (Principal and CEO)  
                                    H Singh                      (Independent)  
                                    J Tew                         (Independent)

Apologies:

In attendance:              Roxana Pal                      Head of MIS  
                                    Asa Gordon                    DP Curriculum & Skills  
                                    Emma Brannan                Senior VP Quality & Student Success  
                                    Fiona Chalk                   Interim Governance Advisor

		Action
1	<b><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></b>	
	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. There were no apologies.	
	<b><u>Student Engagement Activity</u></b> The Chair stated the sessions focus on hearing about the quality of education, student experience, and student's next steps. 4 Digital students attended the session as part student voice activities. Students discussed what courses they are on, why they chose the college, and what their ambitions are. They also stated their reasons for coming to Sandwell as: 'it was recommended; closest college to home; had a free bus pass; the staff 'sold' the course; and the T Level course has work experience built into it. They spoke about their progression plans and intended careers. Some are going to university and others are going into work. On the one thing the college could do better, a student stated, 'recruit more females onto digital courses.' This was agreed as a priority of the college. Students stated that the teachers are very supportive on learning and take consideration of each student's circumstances, supporting them with issues arising outside of the College. The Chair thanked the students for their participation.	
2	<b><u>Declarations of any new personal or business interest or conflict with any agenda item</u></b>	
	There were no new declarations.	
3	<b><u>Minutes of the LQCC meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 (SAR) meeting</u></b>	
	RESOLVED TO: Approve the minutes as a correct record of the meetings.	
4	<b><u>Matters Arising</u></b> The Health & Social Care - the timetable is now in place and teaching is taking place in the new building. Planned twilight session for governors on apprenticeships to take place in the summer term - a summit on apprenticeships has been held to clarify the provision and an external evaluation is planned for March. A report on this will come to the June Board meeting.	FC FC
5	<b><u>Data Dashboard Report – January results</u></b>	
	Governors scrutinised apprenticeship in year achievement rates; in year retention across all age groups; and in year examination results, to be assured that the	

	<p>college is delivering high quality education and positive student outcomes. Governors noted the College:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is making progress towards reaching a minimum of 65% achievement rate across all apprenticeship provision</li> <li>• Has already achieved 59% in year achievement rate, with another 4 months still to go until the end of the academic year</li> <li>• Is closely monitoring Timeliness. This is being tightly monitored on end point assessments. 52 students are out of funding – these are in engineering and were taken over from an ITP</li> <li>• The College has no amber or red indicators flagged on the most recent external Apprenticeship Accountability Framework report. This is tracked over 3 academic years</li> </ul> <p>Governors asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a break in learning? This would be a pause in an apprenticeship for whatever reason, pregnancy/medical etc.</li> <li>• What is the risk for engineering apprenticeships? This is a hard area to recruit staff to. Although the students taken on were funded, any non-achievement would be a risk to the college's performance</li> <li>• What is the impact of current government policy? The policy arena is changing. Pre-apprenticeships are being implemented to get more students onto courses. There is a change in how the levy can be used, which could change the market, but it is unclear at this stage how. There is more flexibility in the use of the levy.</li> <li>• What actions has brought about these improvements in apprenticeships? Greater ownership of outcomes and success; regular monitoring of learner progress; good employer buy-in from SMEs; greater scrutiny of the learner/employer engagement; exiting of unsuccessful areas that weren't so aligned to local needs as set out in the Local Skills Improvement Plan</li> </ul> <p>Governors noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall retention is 97.4% across all provision, with no significant variations between age groups or gender. This figure is in line with expectations and sits slightly above the national benchmarks</li> <li>• In Maths GCSE resit, the number of students achieving a pass grade has remained broadly consistent with the previous year, with 128 passes in 2024/25 compared to 123 in 2023/24</li> <li>• English resit outcomes are a concern, with a significant drop in the number of passes. 107 students achieved a Grade 4 or above in 2024/25, compared to 274 in 2023/24, a decline that has been observed across both college centres. This decrease is largely attributed to shifts in the grading standards for the new English 2.0 specification. This decline is a national trend.</li> </ul> <p>Governors asked why Sandwell's figures are worse than national decline? The grade lines for English 2.0 have been made more stringent. The exam board chosen is not the same as all schools, so there is a difference in how students have to answer questions for example. Actions are being taken to make up the gaps in student learning. More analysis has been done on students' starting points, as these were shown not to be as accurate as they should have been. This allows teachers to better teach to the gaps each student has.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted interventions are currently in place to enable as many as possible of the remaining students to achieve a grade 4+ in the summer exams.</li> <li>• ESOL results are strong</li> <li>• A2 pass rates increased from 91.7% in 2023/24 to 94% in 2024/25, while intermediary (Y1) AS pass rates rose from 81.5% to 86.6%</li> </ul> <p>The governor dashboard was noted. It will be improved to be a document with live data.</p>	
6.	<b><u>QIP update and Teaching &amp; Learning report</u></b>	

	<p>Governors scrutinised the progress made against QIP priorities and received the outcomes of the Curriculum Reviews completed to date, to be assured of the college's progress, accountability, and continuous improvement in educational quality, student outcomes, and curriculum relevance.</p> <p>Governors noted the areas of strength and development areas across the 9 QIP priority targets which came from the Ofsted report and internal assessment. It was noted that 13 deep dives have taken place so far. Areas of strong teaching and learning were noted, alongside areas that require strengthening. The key actions being taken to deliver on this were recorded. There is a gap in attendance between vocational and non-vocational courses (which are lower but improving).</p> <p>Governors asked for further detail on improvement strategies.</p> <p>There is an Ofsted Board in place, looking at the Ofsted consultation, the toolkit, any actions, a particular area such as employer engagement and skills development, and areas to prioritise for Leadership and Management attention. Staff are working with an HMI on what they do and why, and what the impact is. Staff are more carefully considering how assured they are that the learners are making the progress they should be.</p> <p>SET membership is used to get specific CPD on Teaching and Learning that will be brought back into college to get cross college improvement.</p> <p>What is a gold employer? This is part of the skills work and the degree to which a course has been designed with an employer's input.</p> <p>Governors asked for clarification on the quality framework.</p> <p>LC stated that the framework is set out in the Quality Strategy and underneath this are policies that detail what is being achieved – this data is then recorded and interventions are put in place where necessary. This practice is being built on.</p> <p>Governors stated they can see that the Leadership is creating a safe and supportive environment for staff to develop and more clearly demonstrate intent and impact. This enables staff to ask and answer the 'so what?' question. This is part of the focus on culture that Leadership &amp; Management are currently cultivating to drive improvement.</p> <p>Work on improving tutorials was noted, to ensure it is sufficiently engaging. Further student input is being sought to help shape this.</p> <p>Governors thanked staff for all their work to date.</p>	
7	<p><b><u>KPI Report including detail on Work Experience Data</u></b></p>	
	<p>Governors scrutinised the performance of the College against the KPIs to ensure suitable educational progress and performance improvement is being made. Governors noted that the College is performing positively against the majority of KPIs. Where a KPI is at risk, it is recorded on the risk register. Any actions being taken were noted by the committee.</p> <p>There are three areas highlighted as at risk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase overall Adult Achievement - 89% against 90% target</li> <li>2. Number of learners studying at L2 and L3 completing Work Experience – 80% against 90% target</li> <li>3. &gt;60% of vacancies filled within 60 days of advertisement – 50% currently</li> </ol> <p>Governors recognised that work experience can be hard to source from employers, especially with home-working still strong in some sectors. It needs correct planning of the curriculum to have this work effectively.</p> <p>Governors asked how employer engagement can be improve and better response rates and quality of response be received? The College does surveys, but need to have regular conversations with employers. The assessor's conversation as part of the apprenticeship delivery assessment, will help support this engagement.</p> <p>Governors asked about engagement on the Gatsby standards. The college is working with Gatsby on new standards as a trial college.</p>	

8	<b><u>Curriculum Planning and Qualifications Reform (incl. T-Levels)</u></b>	
	<p>Governors scrutinised the information provided on qualifications reform and the steps the College has taken to revise its curriculum offer, ensuring it meets the needs of students and employers, and the college maintains a viable offer.</p> <p>The timeline was noted, and that this work aligns with the new strategic planning activity. A new appointment has been made in support of external engagement. The courses that are being affected by the reforms include Health and Social Care, Computing, Animal Care, and Engineering. Governors noted that changes identified above will be reviewed and approved through the curriculum planning process, with identification of impact on curriculum offer for 26/27 and beyond being planned as part of the 3-year departmental curriculum plans.</p> <p>Governors asked how the changes will impact on offering a broad and meaningful curriculum. The college needs to continue to strengthen English and Maths as these are a key part of T-Levels. Work is being undertaken to link in closely to schools to improve communication on T-Levels. The College also provides a lot of outreach programs and marketing to promote T-Levels. Students are also great at marketing what can be achieved through T-Levels – being role models to inspire others. Governors agreed that schools are not able to offer the breadth of courses that Sandwell colleges can, who deliver more technical and vocational courses that may be more suitable than A levels to a variety of students.</p> <p>Governors noted that the College has a strong ethos around curriculum development that is future focused, and focuses on engaging future students.</p>	
9.	<b><u>Attendance</u></b>	
	<p>Governors scrutinised the attendance data to be assured that effective monitoring systems are in place, and the degree to which policies have been suitably embedded to promote student engagement and retention.</p> <p>Governors noted that attendance requires attention as it does not meet the colleges internal targets, and falls short of national comparators. Current improvement sees increases of Sandwell 2% Central 4% and Cadbury 3.5%. However, the attendance gap between all courses (except E&amp;M) and English (Central – 19.7%, CSM – 6.9%, Cadbury – 8.6%) and maths (Central – 22.2%, CSM – 17.4%, Cadbury – 13.3%) is far too large, and has further increased from 23/24. This is in part due to improved all course attendance, as well as declining English and maths attendance.</p> <p>Governors noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an Attendance Action Plan in place to take the college through to a new Attendance Strategy that will be in place from September. This Plan is very targeted at the most at-risk groups and students.</li> <li>• Attendance will have a greater focus under the Ofsted framework - they will be looking for sustained improvement over time, which is the College's current focus.</li> <li>• ESOL and Functional Skills have high attendance, but this is taught as part of a course, not a separate class.</li> <li>• Attendance does tend to drop towards the end of the course.</li> <li>• Currently, whilst attendance isn't improving across the whole college, it is stabilising.</li> <li>• This is a national problem, particularly the current school year 11 cohort. Flexi-working for parents has allowed children to remain at home in a way they previously had not been able to.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal progression is strong, although attainment at English &amp; Maths isn't keeping up with all course attainment.</li> </ul> <p>Governors asked about engagement with universities? The conversations are about transitions and aspirations, and whether their resources can support engagement of students, such as by running Master classes.</p> <p>Governors thanked EB for the significant amount of work undertaken in a short space of time.</p>	
10	<b><u>Safeguarding Report</u></b>	
	<p>Governors scrutinised the contents of the report to be assured that the college has appropriate policies and procedures in place to safeguard students, including compliance with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and the Prevent Duty.</p> <p>Governors noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18% increase across the campuses with the biggest incidents being in mental health. There has been a total of 2992 incidents reported the 24/25 year to date (1453 learners), compared to 2538 incidents reported at the same point in 23/24;</li> <li>All mentors are Level 3 safeguarding trained to support the safeguarding team.</li> <li>Safeguarding remains a standalone judgement in an Ofsted inspection</li> <li>Mandatory Safeguarding and Prevent staff training completion is currently 97.6%</li> <li>The vast majority of learners articulate that they feel safe in college, with a small minority expressing some concern regarding their safety off campus</li> <li>There is a trend for a higher spike in incidents in October. This is after their induction has concluded, when they may feel more comfortable to disclose.</li> </ul> <p>Governors asked why Cadbury campus has a higher number of incidents. This is not yet understood, but is being investigated.</p> <p>Governors noted that previously, outside agencies may have managed some of these incidents, but due to reduced funding, extra pressure is on the College safeguarding team.</p> <p>The Chair is going to be meeting with the Safeguarding Team at Cadbury next week in his role as Safeguarding Lead.</p> <p>Governors asked for their thanks to be passed to PS for his input into the report.</p>	
11	<b><u>Learner Voice and Student Services Report</u></b>	
	<p>Governors were asked to scrutinise the content of the report and provide feedback on the effectiveness of student services and learner voice activities, providing further recommendations to enhance evaluation of the impact on the learner experience.</p> <p>Governors noted the work being undertaken in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IAG/Careers – working on NEET events</li> <li>Social Action and Personal Development - An extensive programme of highly engaging tutorial sessions is supporting learners in knowing how to keep themselves and others safe, and also supporting the development of their wider personal and social skills.</li> <li>Counselling &amp; Mentoring – higher levels of access to the service, but with some really good feedback</li> <li>Welfare – there is a culture that staff don't give up on students</li> <li>Enrichment – the College would love to offer more and is trying to expand to address all learners' needs. This is being captured and recorded.</li> <li>Learner voice – introducing surveys which will help the college to benchmark externally</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There have been some positive outcomes from the Ethnicity survey across Colleges West Midland</li> </ul> <p>Next steps were noted.</p> <p>Governors asked if enrichment have buy-in across the board. Many enrichment activities are sports, and this could be improved for wider engagement by targeting enrichment to specific groups – this supports student engagement. The college is working towards doing more social action projects with students across the college.</p> <p>Governors asked how this is supporting the One Team vision? Students had an exercise on engagement with the strategic plan that is currently being developed – exploring the vision and mission, and what the College means to them.</p>	
	<p>RESOLVED TO: To invite students to the Spring LQCC meeting and hold it on site. Student events to be notified to governors.</p> <p>LC advised that students are attending the strategy day; talking heads films are being presented at the Board; governor Link visit programme is now in place and visits will take place in the summer term; and student governors come to the Board.</p>	<p>FC</p> <p>SS / Link Govs</p>
12	<b><u>Risk Register – committee responsibilities</u></b>	
	<p>Governors were asked to comment on and review changes to the Corporate Risk Register and to note that a new risk register, heatmap and board assurance framework will be presented at the June LQCC committee.</p> <p>The 9 risks relevant to LQCC were discussed; curriculum reform having already been discussed on the agenda.</p>	
13	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>Governors thanked LC for attending the International Women's Day at Queensbridge School at the weekend.</p>	
14	<p><b><u>Review of meeting</u></b></p> <p>1. Did we receive the necessary information in the right format and at the right time to have an appropriate discussion and take any necessary decision? <i>There is a lot of transparency from senior leaders. Although there is lots of it, the information is insightful.</i></p> <p>2. From this meeting, are we clear on how the organisation is moving forward to achieve its objectives and priorities? <i>The new &amp; improved SAR &amp; QIP help governors to understand this.</i></p> <p>3. Is everyone clear on the actions, where applicable, they need to take as a result of this meeting? <i>Yes</i></p> <p>4. Our time was well spent. <i>Yes, the agenda was well planned so we focused on the right topics</i></p> <p>LC thanked her staff for all their efforts, working fast and furious to continue to improve outcomes for students.</p>	
15	<p><b><u>Date and time of next meeting</u></b></p> <p>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June on Teams</p>	

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm