

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE  
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING – 10.12.2024**

**PRESENT:** P Lynn (CG and Chair), A Hassack (CG), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), J Tait (CG), and L Woods (CG).

**OFFICERS:** A Adamson (VP), J Barwell (AP), P Blewitt (AP), Z Foster (Clerk), R Gray (AP), T Pierce (AD), G Potts (VP), B Robinson (DP), O Rodley (VP), P Stone (Director of HE), P Watt (AP), C Yule (AP) (Teams).

**IN ATTENDANCE FOR RELEVANT ITEM:** C Duggan (AD), J Cooke (AD), R Stainthorpe (AD),  
R Walsh (English and Maths Manager), C Weldon (AD).

**Key:** CG – College Governor, CO – Co-opted Governor, DP – Deputy Principal, VP – Vice Principal, AP – Assistant Principal, AD – Associate Director, Head of T & L – Head of Teaching and Learning.

**1. Apologies for Absence -** C Cannon (CO), M Gaze (CG), S Lane (CG), B Murphy (CG), D Still (Staff Governor).

**2. Declarations of Interest** – no declarations.

**3. Department Presentations**

**3.1 A Levels** – C Yule and R Stainthorpe gave a comprehensive update in relation to key areas for improvement where initial indicators were positive overall at the early data collection point, in-year emerging issues (increase in safeguarding numbers, staff turnover/recruitment, curriculum planning and recruitment) and related progress and impact, and future developments (including Curriculum reform and adjustment of offer for September 2025, Sixth Form marketing campaign, and Sixth Form staff benefits and terms (outwith pay) to ensure recruitment and retention of high quality staff).

Questions and discussion included: whether the potential increase in applications next year would present challenges for recruitment with confirmation that should conversion rates be similar to this year much of the increase could be absorbed via increasing class sizes. However, it was agreed that disparity in pay with school salaries (amounting to approximately 10k) would remain a significant challenge in recruitment and retention of high quality A Level teachers which could present different issues; general capacity of MC6 (which did allow for growth) and variances for different subjects/classroom/lab sizes; the option of the College growing its own Sixth Form staff and use of FE ITE bursary to recruit graduates; the reliability of the data at this early stage and of processes to ensure greater accuracy including tailored induction assessment, standardization and moderation practices; and the reasoning behind the increase in safeguarding numbers and the complexity within some of these cases.

**3.2 TTE Engineering** – P Blewitt, J Cooke and C Weldon updated the Committee in relation to the six key areas for improvement for 2024-2025 particularly within the context of the move of TTE at the end of the year and changes in curriculum structure and mix of staff.

They drew particular attention to: the management of T Levels including a quality assurance visit in January from the awarding body (City & Guilds), the detail of which would be reported back to the Committee; learner progress including the use of 'Select-a-Head' and more creative use of Century Tech (for English and Maths); the careers programme and appointment of two more Thrive tutors to aid engagement with industry figures; improvements within attendance and persistent absenteeism (albeit at an early stage); recruitment and retention challenges (with two outstanding vacancies) and actions including the recruitment of a consultant to provide a single point of contact for mentoring and coaching of new staff from industry; and change management activities to ensure reputation remains high with employers and staff harmonization and integration is effective.

In year emerging issues (student induction survey results, completion of workshop facilities and group sizes and centre capacity) were outlined with actions and progress detailed for the Committee.

Finally, the team outlined six areas of future development: focus on HSE performance, standards and behaviour; completion of workshop equipment; curriculum planning particularly capacity; continue work on employer engagement and social action with existing and new employers; growing the scholarship scheme; and CPD for staff on the new equipment.

Questions and discussion included: clarification on what the final assessment entailed for T Levels; a wider discussion on awarding bodies; and a full discussion on the careful balancing of issues and progress required to ensure the quality of delivery and support for learners, staff and employers within this transitional year.

4. **Minutes of Meeting of 01.07.2024** – were approved as a correct record.

5. **Matters Arising** – the one action would be taken under *Item 11*.

6. **Principal/CEO Verbal Overview and Risk Summary**

Z Lewis drew attention to the three QiP priorities (learner progress over time, persistent absenteeism and new teacher retention) already approved, and then detailed a fourth emerging priority in relation to safety and security both in respect of the challenges, reasons why (including changes in learner profile and impact of that) and actions. Additionally, she encouraged the Committee to consider the financial situation primarily due to lagged 16-18 funding affecting the College.

7. **QIP/Development Plan Update**

O Rodley first drew out the emerging key theme in relation to Safety and Security which was moving positively (albeit still at progressing stage at the time of writing).

He then outlined positive progress in relation to learner progress over time (reminding the Committee of the more challenging set of targets this year), new teacher retention, and persistent absenteeism which was slightly lower than at this time last year (detailing the context for this).

He also reminded the Committee of the additional 21 areas for improvement identified on the College QiP.

The Committee discussed persistent absenteeism and the balance of reward strategy and process of exclusion (in which the approach had been more of both elements).

8. **Provision Type Reports**

8.1 **Adult Learning Programme**

R Gray detailed a positive start to the year for the faculty. She outlined progress with QiP actions for the Committee including improvements to Access to HE retention rates.

Questions and discussion included: the long term issue of determining ESOL retention rates/tracking learners effectively; and BELP training processes.

8.2 **Subcontracted Provision**

R Gray gave an overview in relation to all four subcontractors, noting that Rely on Nutec had yet to start delivery.

Questions and discussion included: Hope Foundation – level of NEETs/value for money with R Gray detailing the complex nature of support for that cohort of learners (which could not be done in College), and which was effectively delivered by Hope; and a wider discussion on aspects of improvement for Hope Foundation with increased management support/rigour/monitoring going forward to support.

9. **Quality of Education – Intent**

B Robinson drew out key aspects of his report including: upskilling of inexperienced staff on new equipment in key areas; improvements to sequencing to some T Level provision; and staff recruitment and retention challenges in skills priority areas.

10. **Quality of Education – Implementation**

T Pierce drew attention to the three areas of improvement and of progress within. She also informed the Committee of a successful visit yesterday by FE Commissioner's Team's to the Health and Social Care faculty (pedagogy based focus) where a report would follow in due course.

Discussion included: the effect of digital feedback on student engagement; areas of difficulty for new teachers in relation to quality and CPD approaches to support this (including 'How Too's, practical sessions and tailored training which would focus on teacher workload and AI and feedback in January).

11. **Quality of Education – Impact**

O Rodley drew attention to the one matter arising - the postcode analysis for persistent absenteeism. He highlighted the postcode areas with the lowest attendance which presented a picture of those closest not attending well (TS2) and those travelling a distance (where possibly travel issues were impacting). This was contrary to previous analyses which had seen those in the middle distance being the poorest attendees.

**11.1 Curriculum KPIs** - O Rodley highlighted that which was going well which included: 6 week retention, overall retention, learner progress, learner voice (with a supportive induction survey showing 5% overall satisfaction); intended destinations and curriculum KPI progress.

He confirmed that the main areas of concern remained attendance (which had decreased by 1% on the previous year) and persistent absenteeism, which was up 3.87% on the previous year. He outlined actions in progress to tackle persistent absenteeism including the implementation of root cause analyses.

Discussion and questions focused on absence with confirmation that the departments retained overall responsibility for attendance, the attendance process, individual support in light of the wide range of reasons for attendance issues (including safeguarding, carer experience, multiple deprivation factors); the impact of non-attendance on success; changes to the bursary provision, and detail of contact with home/role of attendance officers.

**11.2 Work Experience** – G Potts gave an overview of Term one which had focused primarily on Tier 1 and was in a good position. Learners within Tier 2 would be the focus for Term two activity. He drew attention to changes within T Level Industry Placements guidance whereby 20% could now be remote based, which may offer some flexibilities.

Governors discussed: market saturation in respect of work experience with the general consensus that this was a difficult area which had the potential to become more competitive if the Government moved to increase requirements for secondary education level placements (as was likely going forward); and also, parity of experience for those not on T Level courses.

## **12. Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes**

A Adamson highlighted time increased participation in competition activity for the Committee and also the increase in employer encounters. Persistent absence was also a key area of focus as discussed elsewhere in the agenda.

## **13. Provision for Learners with High Needs**

C Duggan gave a brief overview of his report with focus on: learner profiles and the scope of support across College; exams avoidance and resilience and development of a cross college working group to support improvements; and the increased use of the SEND gateway for training and engagements.

He also updated the Committee on resolutions on high needs funding which had been previously reported to the Governing Body.

Governors' questions considered: detail of the first exam avoidance workshop which was based on a best practice model with the aim of giving students better on the day support; and how CPD supports new staff with SEND learners.

## **14. Provision Type Reports**

**13.1 T Levels** – J Barwell outlined a positive position regarding T Levels. She highlighted the introduction of Foundation programmes which had started well and the various elements which comprised staff CPD.

Governors questions included: peer to peer CPD and experience sharing/building on T Levels with confirmation that there was some cross college work particularly with A Levels which was building experience; whether numbers may need to be capped on some T Level courses and the complexities of determining this at the current time in light of curriculum reform (the detail of which was currently unknown) leading to a wider discussion on qualification reform and what changes it may include.

**13.2 Education Programmes for Young People** – P Watt drew attention to the November Curriculum Department Performance Grades within his report (self-assessment) for a comprehensive overview of the current position.

Clarification was given in respect of curriculum performance reviews for TTE and Engineering and the detail of this was discussed by the Committee.

**13.3. English and Maths** – R Walsh detailed good progress with English progress by the end of 2023-2024 and excellent progress for Maths over the same period.

Governors congratulated all involved in the sets of results.

Questions and discussion focused on: contributing factors to the Maths results including: targeted use of Century Tech, change of exam board which included a reduction in number of papers and better spacing between exams,

centralized and better CPD/sharing of good practice within English and Maths, good staff retention, and a centralized specialist team of English and Maths cover staff.

The requirements and funded national support had been softened for 2024 onwards and R Walsh detailed the ongoing funding and support measures from the College to keep the positive momentum achieved last year, to ensure retention of excellent specialist staff and ensure learner progress was kept at a high level.

Governors were keen that there was further in-depth consideration of what had worked well both to ensure positive outcomes for English and Maths students going forward but also with the possibility of sharing/developing key transferables which could impact across the College.

**13.4 Apprenticeships** – O Rodley gave an overview to the Apprenticeships provision where there was strong performance across key metrics. In general, the provision was assessed as outstanding with the exception of Engineering and Construction where intervention and support was in place.

He also drew attention to the three areas for improvement both in terms of progress and related actions.

C Duggan highlighted some of the difficulties for students with additional needs which was resulting in a retention gap and detailed actions to be introduced for January to reduce this particularly as a greater number of students with needs was coming through this year.

An update was given in relation to the Associate Director position for Apprenticeships with the replacement starting as of 1 February 2025 with a full interim process in place until that point.

Governors sought greater detail re the 'lack of introducing new learning' in some progress reviews and of the need to develop a consistent reporting approach going forward (which was being actioned).

## **15. Committee Review of Top Risks**

The Committee **agreed** that the top risks remained.

The following was noted:

- The effect of the lagged funding on potential staff pay awards and any expansion plans
- Qualification reform implications with any further information shared with the Committee/Governing Body
- That the first DfE benchmarking measures should come out in February and be available for reporting upon at the March meeting

## **16. Dates of Meetings for 2024-2025**

- 16.1** Tuesday 11 March 2025 at 2pm
- 16.2** Tuesday 9 June 2025 at 5pm (Curriculum Planning)
- 16.3** Tuesday 1 July 2025 at 2pm

## **17. Any Other Business**

- a) Topics for Feb Training Day – it was noted that a new FE employment dashboard should go live ready for sharing at the training day

## **18. Report Reflections**

P Lynn thanked report writers for their use of the revised templates developed by the Committee.

There were some minor observations made with general support of the new format by the Committee.

*The meeting closed at 6.30pm*