

**THE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION OF MIDDLESBROUGH COLLEGE  
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF CURRICULUM AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING – 11.03.2025**

**PRESENT:** P Lynn (CG and Chair), Z Lewis (Principal/Chief Executive), D Still (Staff Governor), A Shaffi (Co-opted Governor), J Tait (CG), and L Woods (CG).

**OFFICERS:** A Adamson (VP – via Teams), 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).

**IN ATTENDANCE FOR RELEVANT ITEM:** C Duggan (AD – via Teams), J Cooke (AD), R D'sousa (AD), K Tate (AD), R Walsh (English and Maths Manager).

**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), A Hassack (CG), S Lane (CG), B Murphy (CG),

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

**3. Work Experience**

G Potts gave an update to his published report drawing attention to the increase to students accessing external placements which was now 1715. He also detailed: an increase to the number of employers, albeit no increase to the overall capacity of placements as more were required; that the majority of awarding body students had started placements or were planned; ongoing limited placements for health, particularly in light of under 18 rule currently in operation; and digital placement reductions due to changes with employers.

Discussion and questions included: how effective the new account management process was in helping with work experience particularly for communications and reports (which would become dashboards in the future); clarification on the increase in placements whereby more were needed due to T Levels and awards body students and also a general increase in students; how far ranging placements were with confirmation that these tended to be where students were or with the flexibility of some remote options; whether the TTE facilities could be shared to assist other colleges/schools/market the College albeit acknowledging timetabling (holidays being the most obvious option), that employers would still need to supervise and that these sorts of activities could only account for 1/3 of a placement.

*G Potts left the meeting at 2.30pm*

**4. Department Presentations**

**4.1 Health and Care** – J Barwell/R D'Souza and K Tate took the Committee through progress against the key Areas for Improvement; in year emerging issues (and progress and impact on those) and future plans which included a split of the department into Nursing and Midwifery and Social Care from September 2025.

Discussion and questions included: persistent absence and impact on destinations with confirmation that support continued for L1 and L2 students as they progressed within the College, and L3 students generally kept in touch and were tracked with most going into employment or university; the benefits of the soft skills element of the programmes (including attendance and punctuality); whether contact was kept with Y1 students who left for jobs in respect of future training etc with confirmation that this was often the case particularly for those sectors who had a duty of responsibility for training (e.g. social care); Higher Education numbers decline and anticipated further decline for 2025-6 and reasons for this which were largely around greater opportunities to study midwifery/nursing direct without the additional year; staffing stability (for this College and others) particularly returns to industry for increased salaries, greater flexibility and lower workloads and ways this might be addressed (including possible provision of an onsite nursery); and the pros and cons of variation of contracts for different cohorts of staff as used elsewhere was discussed.

**4.2 TTE** – P Blewitt and J Cooke took the Committee through their progress against the key Areas for Improvement; in year emerging issues and progress and future plans which centred around health and safety performance, standards and behaviours; curriculum planning including capacity planning and development of new industry based staff's teaching and learning expertise.

Questions and discussion included: the issue of weak maths skills for some students and use of Century Tech for those who did not have a Grade 4 GCSE; industry engagement which was an ongoing area of development;

good attendance rates; recruitment and retention of staff and positive progress of new staff/stability; the switch of TTE and Engineering at QDP data at 1 and 2 and resulting actions for Engineering; health and safety in relation to industry standards and lack of relevant application to assessment/examinations with ongoing communication with awarding body on this issue; and the significant impact of 10% reduction to T Levels for both the College and wider scaling up.

It was confirmed that Engineering would present to the July meeting of the Committee.

**5. Minutes of Meeting of 10.12.2024** – were approved as a correct record.

**6. Matters Arising** – all resolved.

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

Z Lewis gave a brief overview of the five top risks focusing on: qualifications reform (which had reduced slightly), an increase in global events; and most importantly finance and funding including recent updates that the lagged funding was now extremely unlikely to be funded at 50% as in previous years (likely 1/3) and removal of the 10% uplift for T Levels. Z Lewis informed the Committee that SLT were awaiting final funding decisions due any day.

Discussion included: pay award decision and wider recruitment and retention of staff in light of pay, class sizes, workload, and behaviour; the new Ofsted framework; increase in NEETs; support for staff with large increase of low level learners e.g. bespoke training for vocational steps teachers and training on physical and verbal de-escalation, College support for learners (many who were coming in with wider environmental challenges) such as the movement of Roots students to 2QS; and similar anecdotal evidence from other colleges within the Tees Valley; and the future social impact of under-funding of the additional students in-year.

**8. QIP/Development Plan Update**

O Rodley gave a brief overview of the four main areas of improvement drawing attention to learner progress over time (which was progressing) and persistent absenteeism which was declining on last year specifically in relation to L1 learners. He detailed the three departments which had support and intervention currently. Progress against the 21 wider areas for improvement which sat under the strategic ones was also highlighted.

Questions and discussion included: confidence with measures in place monitoring that students were on track with confirmation that processes were improving year on year with increased rigour in target setting, greater consistency with forecasting and use of data; and calibre of A Level students coming in and positive average point score.

**9. Quality of Education – Intent**

B Robinson gave a positive account of curriculum intent which was well matched to local and national need (as confirmed by the Employer Voice Committee at their January meeting). He outlined some staffing concerns (Digital, STEM) and also the level of upskilling of industry staff required in some areas.

Questions and discussion included: - areas for concern next year including demand for TTE particularly the provision of specialist spaces, and inexperienced/new staff and the delivery of the quality of education; whether specialist resources could be shared and the logistics of this which were difficult; learner growth against the issue of lagged funding at a reduced rate and impact on future strategic decision making on recruitment/enrolment.

**10. Quality of Education – Implementation**

T Pierce gave an appraisal of the key Areas for Improvement for the Committee. She referenced the recent DfE report 'Powerful Pedagogy' much of which the College was aligned with within its CPD/approach to teaching and learning (and who featured as a case study) [Powerful Pedagogy: Effective Practice](#). She also highlighted some additional exams training CPD for new teachers including how to give feedback.

Discussion and questions included: whether there had been any flip learning for metacognition where it was confirmed that whilst there were pockets of good practice more work was still to do with students on skills and behaviour; and whether there was a route to encourage HE students to move onto ITE and making this more scalable in the future (including taster sessions etc.) against the current PGCE route often taken.

**11. Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes**

P Lynn, on behalf of the Committee, praised the success of the Careers Workshop led by Zara Proudler, which had received amazing feedback.

A Adamson then gave an update of the Areas for Development, focussing on persistent absence which was RAG rated red/declining (i.e. more of an issue with greater number of students).

Governors' questions and discussion focused on persistent absence and actions in place to assist with this; and Thrive completion rates variances and reasons and actions to improve these.

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

C Duggan gave a positive overview of progress against the two QiP actions.

Governors' questions and discussion included: whether there were any concerns on high levels of high needs learners particularly if these increased (which was likely) which led to a discussion on diagnostics, multi-agency and intensive support; lack of funding for many against an increase in numbers and expectation/strategy to support those; and the complexities of the funding model (which had 3 elements) which involved some financial risk being carried and significant level of staff involvement to get the funding as requested (usually resulting in around 80% of original ask); and collaboration with other providers particularly in areas where the College had less expertise.

The Committee noted the great work of the provision.

## **13. Quality of Education – Impact**

O Rodley highlighted the areas which were going well including retention and achievement, learner progress, A Level value added, English and maths progress, learner voice, learner destinations and a positive parent survey (which was within the appendices of the report for information).

The main areas of concern were attendance and persistent absenteeism and some areas of improvement within the curriculum quality improvement plan related to impact focused improvements such as learner progress and exam results which were requiring more time/refined strategies.

Governor questions included: the outcomes of the root cause analyses on persistent absenteeism which highlighted low level learners as a primary focus but with a wide range of reasons for the absences (which were discussed in detail) resulting in a strategy to cover the key themes; the lack of male/female split analysis with some insight as to how this looked anecdotally across various faculties; detail of the pattern of persistent absenteeism with confirmation that it was mainly avoiding lessons (but sometimes socialising in College); and a note that apprenticeship achievement had not yet been moderated.

Action by O Rodley to consider the number of apprenticeships post end date (which was higher than last year) whilst still outlining as green in the accountability statement.

## **14. Provision Type Reports**

### **14.1 English and Maths – R Walsh presented his report.**

Questions included: the potential effect of reducing hours from 4 to 3 – with confirmation that 3 hours would still allow for a high quality provision; changes to the national requirement for 19+ apprenticeships to no longer require maths and English, how this might impede progression and outcomes, and the approach of the department in liaison with employers going forward particularly with the need of some apprenticeships to have a certain standard (e.g. engineering); wider consideration of the value of basic skills for employment; November pass results and work with the team to support those students resitting in the summer; strategy behind increased use of Century Tech; staff retention for English and Maths; and increase in higher numbers of learners sitting English and Maths (up 200 in both currently) which presented some challenges in respect of class space etc.

**14.2 Education Programmes for Young People** - P Watt gave a brief overview to his report highlighting the positive February curriculum department review grades. As detailed elsewhere, the QiP actions were referenced with persistent absenteeism being the only one in 'declining' status.

The Committee considered how the actions to tackle persistent absenteeism were working with discussion on the variety of approaches being utilized and the need for a case by case approach, and also that attendance levels, whilst less than the College target, were often much improved for learners from their school attendance; and a discussion on neurodivergence and relationships with students/parents.

**14.3 T Levels** – J Barwell gave a brief update to her report drawing particular attention to how the faculty was supporting new staff on the core elements of T Levels to raise high grades.

Governors' questions and discussion included: positive retention for year 1 and how this compared nationally (which was unknown as there was little national data); and the vital role and responsibilities of the employer in learner success; the NHS placement issue in respect of under 18s (*outlined within Item 3*) and hope that this might be opened up in the future.

**14.4 Apprenticeships** - O Rodley detailed a strong position from a quality perspective and noted a slight decrease to retention. The accountability framework was green across the board which was very positive and destinations were also positive.

Questions and discussion focussed on: lower retention showing in one department, with clarification that this relates to prior year (covid) drop out rates with current year retention improving year on year; and clarification on teaching and learning data, specifically 'introducing new learning' gaps with more information scheduled to be entered which would give a more accurate and improved data set.

**14.5 Adult Learning Programme** – R Gray outlined progress against the areas for improvement, some of which had been discussed elsewhere. She reminded the Committee of the issues relating to ESOL retention (outwith the College's control).

Discussion focussed on: distance learning changes; BELPs issues particularly expense and expectations from Ofsted on destination percentages going forward (wanting 95% to go into employment) and expectations relating to this.

More generally, Z Lewis reported positive meetings with new interim leads of TVCA.

**14.6 Subcontractors Provision**

Governors had a full discussion on progress for all three subcontractors particularly: the Hope contract changes and support; and progress with Uplift post audit where all actions had been implemented; with R Gray confirmed additional DfE approval to engage 3T if there was any risk of under delivery.

**15. Committee Review of Top Risks**

The Committee concluded that the risks remained as detailed under Item 7 (i.e. staff and retention, finance, qualifications reform and international events).

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

**16.1** Tuesday 9 June 2025 at 5pm (Curriculum Planning)

**16.2** Tuesday 1 July 2025 at 2pm

**17. Any Other Business**

None taken

*The meeting closed at 5.11pm*