

# Waltham Forest College



## THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

### CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

#### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2021

#### MEMBERSHIP

##### Governors:

Alison Morris (Chair), Gary Davies, Janet Gardner (Principal), Andrew Hall, Susannah Hume, Fosterer Joseph

**Co-opted external member:** Ian Gurman

##### In Attendance:

Hassan Rizvi - Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality (DPCQ)

Stella Hawkins -Director of Curriculum (DoC)

Vanessa Georgiou – Student Governor

Meghan Muller – Student Governor

Ian Rimmington (IR) – external validator (for items 1- 4 only)

##### Clerk to the Corporation

Naomi Shoffman - Director of Governance (DoG)

#### 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular the new members. Introductions were made all round. The Chair then gave a brief overview of the duties of the Committee which differ to those of the previous working group.

Apologies for absence received from Gary Davies and Ian Gurman due to a clash with work commitments.

The DoG advised that the student Governors need to leave the meeting at 8pm as they are being collected by their parents.

#### 2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no issues included on the agenda for the meeting in which they had a personal interest relative to the College.

#### 3. NOTES OF THE CURRICULUM & STANDARDS WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2021

The notes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record. It was confirmed that all follow up Actions were completed.

#### 4. DRAFT COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT – SAR – 2020/21 AND QIP 21/22

The DPCQ introduced the draft SAR and QIP. The SAR has been through external validation. The DPCQ gave an overview of the SAR and the process for both area and whole SARs and validation of the grades. The panel included external validators including Ian Rimmington, an external quality consultant and the Head of Adult Learning from the London Borough of Waltham Forest. All the data in the documents have been collated from each departmental SAR. Both the departmental SARs and the College SAR underwent rigorous challenge. In terms of outcomes the SAR identifies strengths and areas requiring improvement some of which have been carried over from the previous year. There is a set format for the SAR which we have sectioned in line with Ofsted educational inspection framework. The DPCQ then highlighted the following:

- The student demographic is diverse, both ethnically and socially,
- The significant majority of learners who attend Waltham Forest College have not yet achieved a

grade 4 or above in GCSE English and maths

- The College delivers ESOL to a large number of local communities.
- A large number of students come from outside the borough
- The College curriculum addressed the skills gap, in terms of the local, regional and national priorities and local and surrounding area community demographic.
- In response to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic the College used all its available resources to support learners and staff to successfully meet and overcome those multi-faceted challenges. Any risks to a positive learner experience were mitigated as far as possible and additional support was offered for students where needed
- In order to meet the Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) challenges presented by the pandemic, strategies were put in place to ensure the implementation of the curriculum intent met the needs of learners, the community and local and national skills needs. Sequencing, delivery plans and practical activities were front loaded where possible in the first term to mitigate against the disruption to learning in the event of another lockdown
- Overall effectiveness judgement remains “Good”.
- All aspects are graded Good.

Mr Rimmington was then invited to present his assessment.

Mr Rimmington reported that this year’s SAR is more evidence based, robust and complete than in previous years. He highlighted the following:

- There is a lot of strong data with a lot of rates above national or last year’s rates. The College has managed to achieve all this despite the challenges of the pandemic.
- There is also a lot of good data around student progression and destination data. There is clear evidence that the College is making a good contribution to the community and local economy. It is clear students are getting a good learning experience.
- In terms of progression, achievement, financial strength, there has been positive staff and student feedback with all the evidence pointing in the same direction. The depth and rigour of evidence clearly demonstrates the distance travelled.
- We should not underestimate the College’s achievement in dealing with the pandemic and the positive and proactive action taken. The College had the foresight to assess students’ ability to ensure the right students got the right resources and support to progress and achieve. It is very important to show how relevant the College is to its local community and economy and this document demonstrates this very well with the curriculum designed to support that. For instance, delivering short courses to upskill students to go into employment.
- The College had made a huge contribution to English and maths, inclusion through ESOL, and employment through supporting growth areas.
- The SAR does a thorough job showing the important role and contribution the College makes to community and economy. There are however some areas requiring improvement; attendance at maths and English remains an issue and high grades are not being achieved in all areas where they should be.

Mr Rimmington concluded by saying that overall this is a rigorous report which he is happy to recommend the judgements made

The Chair thanked Mr Rimmington for supporting the College through the process and also the senior team’s and all the staff’s hard work leading to this positive report.

Questions/comments were invited

The Chair asked re GCSE maths and English, as this had been an unusual year and led to higher grade whether some narrative should be included about what will be done to maintain the grade this year. The DPCQ agreed this will be a challenge and there are a few things we have started to do to address this, including offering November resits to give students an additional opportunity to sit an exam. The College has also been given additional learning funds to support small groups. There is also challenge with language as a greater number of students are on the GCSE courses. In terms of attendance, the curriculum area will take greater ownership of the English and maths and whole programme, so this starts right from enrolment with clear expectations set from the start. The Principal said that whilst the DPCQ has outlined some of the actions taken to address the challenges it is important to recognise that we will not be comparing like for like. The results should be compared to a 'normal' year. A Governor asked whether when comparing the last known national averages which are for 2018-19 results, there is a risk that we may drop compared to current national rates, the Principal said it was a risk but highly unlikely as it looks like we have performed positively. Moreover, as national averages have not been published since Covid, the college can only compare to the last published data at this time.

A Governor said that regarding attendance it would be helpful to be more explicit as to what the issues are, how we know this and how the evidence links what we are doing directly to address the challenge. The DPCQ agreed to add some more narrative on this. There is lot of activity and we use a lot of feedback through the student voice work. The DPCQ gave some examples of how these challenges are addressed with a drive on getting teachers to contextualise English and maths. Actions are agreed based on areas for improvement and then progress and impact against those actions are monitored throughout the year; where actions do not have the required impact, these are changed as the QIP needs to be an agile working document.

A Governor asked whether the College is targeting outstanding and if so, what are the sticking points to that. The DPCQ said that's the aim we aspire to for all our learners but until all areas for improvement are addressed, consistent and well embedded, we can't achieve outstanding. The last couple of years the College has done really well to get staff and students through so well, given all the challenges of Covid, but Governors should not underestimate the amount of work and progress this has involved

A Governor said that a lot of resource has gone into supporting the wellbeing of staff and students and asked whether this should be more explicit in the SAR. IR said that there are definitely parts in the SAR of the College's management of Covid that were outstanding as discussed earlier. The Principal said that we want to ensure our learners have an outstanding experience, not just work towards an Ofsted grade. Ofsted should look at the journey and distance travelled over the past couple of years. Actions taken demonstrate the progress we are making, to help us drive the college forward.

There was a further discussion around the language and repetition in the SAR. The Principal responded that the language used is purposely so and in line with Ofsted expectations; the repetition is necessary as it applies and is relevant to different areas as some evidence spans across different areas.

In response to a query re T Levels from a governor, it was confirmed the College has registered for T Levels for delivery from 2023-24.

The Chair commended the phenomenal effort and very strong data and reiterated the request for any further comments to be submitted by the following Monday

**The Committee:**

- **Agreed the key judgements and recommended approval of the SAR to the Board, subject to the amendments discussed and any further comments.**
- **Noted the strengths and areas for improvement.**
- **Noted the SAR grades per area for 2020-21.**
- **Noted the Quality Improvement Plan for 2021- 22**

*IR and the Student Governors left the meeting*

**5. CURRICULUM AND QUALITY END OF YEAR UPDATE**

The DPCQ introduced the report and said that in all cases outcomes are in line or above national rates. He then highlighted the following points:

- The overall outcome, which is above National Average (NA) and above the Provider Group (PG).
- 16-18 outcome which is better than PG and better than 2019-20.
- 19+ outcome for 2020-21 which is above PG and better than 2019-20.
- GCSE English pass rates (9-4) for all ages have increased from 2019-20.
- GCSE Maths pass rates (9-4) for all ages have increased from 2019-20.
- The overall attendance of the College in 2020-21 is better than 2019-20. E&M attendance requires improvement, so we need to carry on working with students on this
- Apprenticeships is above national rates – knowing the challenge in the sector and with loss of businesses and jobs this is a good achievement
- Support offered to the students and the quality assurance and improvement cycle was followed through the academic year despite the challenges of Covid-19.
- On top of delivering the long quals one of the key positive aspects has been to deliver meaningful short courses to support learners going into employment, supporting mental health and well-being.

**Questions/ Comments were invited:**

The Chair said the results were impressive given the year we've had. It is good to see that what was presented at the last Board has transpired and she offered her congratulations to all. She then asked about the risk around the use of agency staff. The DPCQ responded that in terms of TLA quality the problem is a shortage of skilled staff and qualified industry lecturers; an equal challenge is the cost of staffing

Another Governor echoed the impressive outcomes particularly with the amount of other challenges the college has had. She commented that she was impressed by all the collaborations going on to learn and share good practice with other FE Colleges. The DPCQ said that the drive is to get more staff and managers out as well as students. A Governor suggested that it may be good to compare TLA practices with a College with a similar demographic. The Principal suggested that it is also good to look at a different way of doing things and we can learn from good practice out of London too. The Chair agreed these were great initiatives.

**The Committee:**

- **Noted: The positive progress on the key aspects of curriculum and Quality.**
- **Noted: The final outcomes for 2020/21.**

## 6. CURRICULUM AND QUALITY UPDATE - TERM 1

The DPCQ introduced the report which provides a summary of the start to the year he highlighted progress against key performance indicators including:

- Retention
- Attendance
- Early exams and assessments
- Additional support provided
- Additional qualifications
- Comparisons to the previous year

He also outlined progress on the quality cycle including:

- The first Performance Boards took place in week commencing 4 October 2021 and focused on:
  - Attendance, Punctuality, Retention
  - Condition of Funding and Banding
- As well as the introduction of new Study Programme and Adult qualifications, additional courses have been introduced to further support employability and progression and in response to employer feedback. These courses have been planned into the curriculum delivery and will be delivered as part of the tutorial process by Christmas.
- The College has considered the lack of exams over the past two years and has enrolled more 16-18-year-old students than the previous year for November GCSE resits to provide an additional opportunity to achieve Grade 4. Additional workshops were organised for the students during prior weeks and in the half term to support learners with their preparation. 94 learners sat the maths GCSE resit and 83 learners sat the English GCSE resit
- In addition, all Entry Level English and maths Functional Skills students are preparing for their first exams at the end of November to allow for an earlier assessment opportunity. We are doing this now so we know what support they will need to achieve
- In its Education Recovery Plan, the College has set out the steps it is taking to support students this year in the wake of the pandemic and to help them transition successfully back fully into teaching and learning so that each one can succeed and reach their fullest potential.
- The College recognises that many students have experienced significant disruption to their education during the last two years because of the pandemic. This has resulted for some in a significant loss of learning with respect to the development of key knowledge, understanding and skills at a critical time during their educational journey.
- The College already has an extremely strong system of support both academically and pastorally which we have reviewed and expanded so that each student has the help they need at this time to enable them to achieve and to equip them for the next steps in their life.
- The delivery plan is already being implemented through small group support by respective departments and is being monitored regularly.

A Governor asked if recruitment is going well across the board or in particular areas. The DPCQ outlined the areas where recruitment was strong and those that were down on last year.

A Governor asked about the student Induction process. The DPCQ explained the process.

The Committee discussed the interception and support available for students in need who were identified as part of the induction process. The Staff Governor commented that student also need other support due to external problems and this applies not only to low level but also higher-level learners. The Committee agreed it was good to identify problem early if possible.

**The Committee noted the progress on the key aspects of curriculum and quality**

**7. FE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT BID**

The DPCQ spoke to this paper saying the College was very excited about this bid. He then highlighted the following points

- This report will also be going to the Finance & Resources Committee to monitor the financial side of it. The report is coming to this Committee to monitor quality.
- It was reported at the last board meeting that the College was successful with the bid which we are leading on and working with another College group. The grant has a £500k value.
- The decisions were delayed by 6-8 weeks so we were late in starting but are confident we will be able to deliver this.
- The College is now in receipt of the 60% of the grant and the remainder will be paid on completion of the project.
- teaching and support staff across the two Colleges will directly benefit from the delivery of the programme and gain up to date staff industrial knowledge of their respective vocation
- The learning and experience will be cascaded by each staff member attending to at least two further staff members. and they will also be required to produce two learning resources one at last in digital form to share across the sector.
- The programme will increase pedagogic and industry knowledge of staff on sustainable and emerging green technologies/approaches.
- Staff will acquire skills to deliver teaching and learning/pedagogy through digital platforms, facilitated by E-Learning coordinators.

**The Committee noted the planned activity for the duration of the project**

A Governor congratulated the College on winning the bid. In terms of outcomes it would be useful in future monitoring papers to see the link between the problem this funding is hoping to address and the impact on students.

A Governor suggested this would be useful way to make contact with employers as they do not have to pay anything. He was also pleased to hear about the sustainability aspects and use of resources.

**The Committee noted the planned activity for the duration of the project**

**8. RISK REGISTER REVIEW**

The DPCQ highlighted Risks on the college risk register pertaining to this committee.

The Committee discussed the risks, actions taken and recommendations for further improvement and were satisfied overall on the actions being taken to mitigate risk. The Chair thanked the DPCQ for the report and agreed that it is useful looking at the risks relevant to this group.

**The Committee received and noted the updated College Risk Register.**

**9. ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED AT FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee is asked to note that the agendas for future meetings will include items as per the agreed business cycle for 2021/22.

**21.00 finish**

**These minutes have been approved by the Curriculum and Quality Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

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**Signed**

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**Date**