

Wakefield College Corporation

Board of Governors

Minutes of the Meeting held on 8 December 2020

1 **Present:** Yasmin Ayub, Nichola Bell, Kaitlen Blacker, Claire Corneille, Julie Craig, Dmitry Fedotov, Andrew McConnell (**Chair**), Ian Parsons, Joshua Poole, David Powell, Ruth Sacks, Martyn Shaw, Neil Warren, and Sam Wright (**Principal**)

Clerk to the Corporation (**Clerk**)

In attendance: Executive Director Finance and Resources and Executive Director HR and Organisational Development

Apologies: None

2. **Declarations of Interest**

2.1 The Chair noted that Ian Parsons had an interest in agenda item 7, under which it was proposed that he be appointed as a non-governor member of the Audit Committee.

2.2 No further interests were declared.

3. **Minutes of Meeting Held on 13 October 2020**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 be approved.

4. **Matters Arising**

4.1 *This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.*

4.2 The Clerk noted the following matters arising from the Board meeting of 13 October 2020:

- (i) On minute 5.1(iii), it was agreed that the Principal would choose a date to present a report to governors on the benefits arising out of the pandemic. The Principal noted that this issue would be addressed at a governor strategy session to be arranged for a date at the end of February.
- (ii) On minute 5.1(iv), the Clerk agreed to circulate a revised skills audit. The Clerk noted that this had been actioned.
- (iii) On minute 5.1(vi), the Clerk agreed to contact governors with details regarding unconscious bias training. The Clerk noted that he had undertaken the College's unconscious bias training which he did not think satisfied the governor brief. Governors discussed the scope of the issue determining that the aim was to illuminate whether the decisions and makeup of the Board were in any way influenced by unconscious bias. It was suggested that

consideration be given to a critical friend review. The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development agreed to report back to the next meeting with a plan.

- (iv) On minute 5.1(xi), governors had asked that a deep dive group take place to scrutinise the College's relatively high staffing costs ratio. The Clerk noted that this would be arranged after the College's internal auditors had carried out their review of the issue.
- (v) On minute 5.1(xii), the Clerk agreed that an additional governor development session would be arranged at which the College's mission would be reviewed. The Clerk noted that this would be addressed at the governor strategy session.
- (vi) On minute 5.1(xiii), the Clerk agreed that the relevant KPI would be revisited at the governor development session referred to at 4.1(v). The Clerk reported that this would be actioned at the governor strategy session.
- (vii) *This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.*
- (viii) On minute 6.1, the Chair asked that Lead Governor roles be refreshed at the governor development session referred to at 4.1(v). The Clerk noted that this would be addressed at agenda item 7.
- (ix) On minute 8.4(i), the Principal agreed that she would address the College's COVID-19 statistics in her weekly staff bulletin. The Clerk noted that this was being actioned on an ongoing basis.
- (x) On minute 12.1(ii), the Executive Director HR and Organisational Development noted that she would report back to the Board with updated information regarding counselling wait times. The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development noted that she would provide governors with an email update after the meeting.

4.3 Governors asked for an update as to how Microsoft Teams was evolving as a tool to assist learning. The Principal confirmed that the Executive Director Quality and Planning would give an update at the next meeting.

5. Minutes of the Committees of the Board

Resolved

That the following minutes of the Committees of the Board be approved:

- (i) Audit Committee – 17 November 2020
- (ii) Search Committee – 24 November 2020
- (iii) Remuneration Committee – 26 November 2020

6. Chair's Business

6.1 The Chair noted the following:

- (i) That he was grateful to governors for agreeing to take on the new Lead Governor roles.
- (ii) That he had conducted the Principal's appraisal which was highly satisfactory.

- (iii) That, with the agreement of the Board, he would write an email to staff thanking them for their hard work over the previous year. Governors agreed.

7. Governance issues

7.1 The Clerk noted the following:

- (i) That the resolutions which governors were to consider were set out in the paper.
- (ii) The new Lead Governor roles and the governors who would be taking responsibility for them.
- (iii) That appraisals would be scheduled for a date to be determined in January 2021 at which, among other things, Lead Governor roles would be discussed in more detail.
- (iv) That Education and Training Foundation training opportunities were available to governors, the details of which would be provided after the meeting.

Resolved

That the following be approved:

- (i) The amendments to the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference.
- (ii) The amendments to the Remuneration Committee's Terms of Reference.
- (iii) The appointment of Ian Parsons to the Audit Committee as a non-governor member for the remainder of 2020/21.

8. Student update

8.1 The student governors noted the following:

- (i) That they had been consulting on improvements to the refectory and student study areas.
- (ii) That steps had been made to improve communication between class representatives and the Students' Union resulting in the creation of a 'Voice and Influence Group'.
- (iii) That there were currently no Castleford representatives which was being addressed.
- (iv) That a safer internet campaign was in the planning stage in response to increased online working. The campaign would also address issues of mental health.
- (v) Plans were being made to address 'period poverty'.

8.2 Dmitry Fedotov noted that he had been working with the College to ensure student governor feedback was representative of the student body and that student governors were more engaged in their role. This had resulted in the creation of the 'Voice and Influence Group' which was meeting more regularly than students had done in the past and was promoting increased student engagement and more representative reporting to the Board. He noted that he hoped that the informal student/governor sessions which had been implemented in 2019/20 could be resumed subject to the pandemic.

- 8.3 Governors asked Student Governors what, at the College, was going well and what could be made better. The Student Governors noted that face to face lessons had been productive, but that the use of distance learning technology could be improved. However, they noted that the transition to online learning had been relatively smooth. The Principal noted that feedback regarding online learning was being sought across the whole student body. The Principal agreed to feed back the results of this to the Board.
- 8.4 Kaitlen Blacker asked whether the Board wanted to report anything back to the next students' meeting. The Principal asked her to pass her thanks on for students' receptive and patient reaction to the College's response to COVID-19. Claire Corneille thanked the Student Governors for their work, which the governors echoed, and asked that Kaitlen feedback to the students' meeting how pleased governors were with the Student Governors' efforts.

9. Principal's Business

9.1 The Principal noted the following:

- (i) The statistics relating to COVID-19 cases at the College and the College's ongoing response to the pandemic.
- (ii) That attendance was down on the previous year due primarily to online English and Maths which was being addressed by the College's attendance team.
- (iii) That retention was equivalent to the previous year and most students were on track to achieve their qualifications and target grades. However, there was an increase in high risk students compared with autumn 2019/20 caused by several issues many of which were related to the pandemic. The Principal outlined the College's response to this issue.
- (iv) That a T-Levels launch event had been held the previous week followed by an open event for potential students. These events had been positively received and the Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships had sent a video to the College to support the open event.
- (v) That the Quality Standard in Carer Support Accreditation had been received which, she explained, was vital as young adult carers were considerably more likely to become 'NEET'.
- (vi) That steps were being taken to market the College's HE provision, which was to be rebranded. The ASIC building would be renamed in honour of Mary Seacole, as chosen by students.
- (vii) That 315 staff had completed the staff survey with, on the whole, pleasing results. Three out of four areas had shown improvement, but work was being undertaken to improve staff satisfaction further.
- (viii) That staff pay award negotiations had begun and further information would be provided to governors in due course.
- (ix) That the English College of the Future Report had been issued in relation to which a briefing paper had been prepared for governors and that the College was considering this as part of its strategic plans which would be reported to governors in February.
- (x) That the Secretary of State had confirmed that students would benefit from a package of exceptional measures to make examinations as fair as possible including a three-week delay to exams.

- (xi) Ofsted had confirmed that no full inspections would commence until the summer term.

9.2 Governors were satisfied with the Principal's update and the Chair thanked her for the College's response to COVID-19 while still maintaining focus on the College's future strategic plans.

10. Self-Assessment Report

10.1 The Chair noted that agenda items 10, 11 and 12 had been subject to scrutiny by the relevant deep dive groups prior to the meeting.

10.2 The Executive Director Quality and Planning had prepared a video presentation in which she noted the following:

- (i) The purpose of the self-assessment report (SAR) and that it must be submitted to Ofsted annually.
- (ii) That the SAR was limited to August 2019 to March 2020 as a result of the pandemic but that necessary reference was made to the period post March 2020 to recognise the College's response to COVID-19 and the issues it had created.
- (iii) That the College's overall effectiveness had been adjudged to be grade 2 and that the grade profile mirrored the previous year.
- (iv) That the grade profile by provision had remained largely the same as the previous year except apprenticeships had dropped from grade 1 to 2 and full cost had improved from grade 4 to 3.
- (v) The scope of the discussion which had taken place at the meeting of the Quality deep dive group and that its members had been assured by the content of the report and the rationale for the grades.
- (vi) The rationale for the grades given for each element of the inspection framework and, where relevant, the improvements needed to obtain a grade 1.
- (vii) The rationale for those areas outside of the scope of Ofsted inspection.

10.3 The Lead Governors for Quality and TLA noted the following regarding the SAR Quality deep dive meeting:

- (i) That the Board could have confidence in the rationale behind the grading and the quality of the information provided both of which were interrogated by the group's members in detail.
- (ii) That the Executive Director Quality and Planning had been asked how soon the College could be graded 'Outstanding'. She had replied that the next Ofsted inspection was the earliest opportunity, but governors noted that they felt the College could be self-assessed as such sooner. The Principal agreed to address this at the governor strategy session but noted that the lack of quality data due to COVID-19 may hamper an accurate assessment.

10.4 Governors asked how the staff conference had gone and what effect it had had on upskilling staff to deal with the demands of remote teaching. The Principal noted that the conference had been a success, that staff had given positive feedback and that the lessons learned were being implemented.

10.5 Governors noted that they were content with the report, which they validated.

11. **October Finance Report**

This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.

12. **Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2020**

12.1 The Executive Director Finance and Resources noted that the five targets set by governors had been missed but that, even still, in relation to EBITDA, 2019/20 was an improvement over the previous year and that apprenticeship income was maintained despite the disruption of COVID-19.

(i) **Internal Audit Annual Report**

12.2 The Executive Director Finance and Resources noted that the report provided *“reasonable assurance that the College’s governance, risk management, and systems of internal control were operating adequately and effectively, and that there were no instances where any breakdown of control resulted in a material discrepancy”* which is the highest level of assurance that the internal audit service can provide.

Resolved

That the Internal Audit Annual Report be approved.

(ii) **Audit Committee Annual Report**

12.3 The Executive Director Finance and Resources noted that the report states that it is the opinion of the Audit Committee *“that the College’s systems of internal control and its arrangements for risk management, control and governance processes, and securing economy and efficiency and effectiveness (value for money) are both adequate and effective.”*

Resolved

That the Audit Committee Annual Report be approved.

(iii) **The Audit Findings for Wakefield College**

12.4 The Chair noted that there were no control recommendations, which should provide governors with strong assurance. The Chair thanked the Executive Director Finance and Resources and his team.

Resolved

That the Audit Findings for Wakefield College be accepted.

(iv) **Letters of Representation**

Resolved

That the Chair be authorised to sign the Letters of Representation on behalf of the Board of Governors.

(v) Report and Financial Statements

Resolved

That the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020 be approved, including the accounting policies under which these had been prepared.

(vi) Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Resolved

That the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire be approved to be signed by the Chair and the Principal on behalf of the College.

13. Briefing Papers

- 13.1 The Clerk noted that no questions had been raised prior to the meeting.
- 13.2 Each of the briefing papers were noted.
- 13.3 Julie Craig, as Safeguarding Lead, noted that she would be meeting with the College's DSL again shortly. She requested that year on year comparison information be included in the safeguarding update in future. The Principal agreed to pass the request on to the College's DSL.
- 13.4 David Powell noted that he had concerns about certain assumptions written into the Health and Safety Annual Report, for example, that minor accidents were expected on certain courses. The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development noted that she would seek an explanation from the Health and Safety Management Committee and report back as soon as possible.

14. Review of effectiveness of the Meeting and Identification of Emerging Risk

- 14.1 Governors noted that the meeting had run to time and had been effective and that emerging risks had been considered.
- 14.2 The Chair thanked Ian Parsons and Nichola Bell, who were each attending their last meeting, for their service to the Board, which governors echoed.

Signed Date.....

Actions

No.	Minute	Details	Deadline	Responsibility
1.	4.2(i)	The Principal agreed to address the benefits arising out of the pandemic at the governor strategy session	The governor strategy session	The Principal
2.	4.2(iii)	The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development agreed to report back to the next meeting with a plan regarding governor unconscious bias	The Board meeting of 26 January 2020	The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development
3.	4.2(iv)	The Clerk agreed to arrange a deep dive group regarding the staff cost ratio issue following the issue of the internal auditor's report on the same	No date specified	The Clerk
4.	4.2(v) and (vi)	The Clerk agreed that a governor strategy session would be arranged at which the College's mission and KPIs would be reviewed	No date specified	The Clerk
5.	4.2(vii)	<i>Please see the confidential minutes</i>		
6.	4.2(x)	The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development noted that she would report back to the Board with updated information regarding counselling wait	The Board meeting of 26 January 2020	The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development

		times after the meeting		
7.	4.3	The Principal agreed that the Executive Director Quality and Planning would provide an update on how Microsoft Teams was evolving as a tool to assist learning	The Board meeting of 26 January 2020	Executive Director Quality and Planning
8.	6.1(iii)	The Chair agreed to write an email to staff thanking them for their hard work over the previous year	No date specified	The Chair
9.	7.1(ii)	The Clerk agreed to arrange for appraisals to take place in January 2021	January 2021	The Clerk
10.	7.1(iii)	The Clerk agreed to inform governors of ETF training opportunities after the meeting	The Board meeting of 26 January 2020	The Clerk
11.	8.3	The Principal agreed to report back to the Board with the results of feedback from the student body regarding online learning	No date specified	The Principal
12.	10.2(ii)	The Principal agreed to address the College's plans to move to 'Outstanding' at the governor strategy session	The governor strategy session	The Principal
13.	13.3	The Principal agreed to request that year on year comparison information be included in the	The Board meeting of 26 January 2020	The Principal

		safeguarding update		
14.	13.4	The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development noted that she would seek an explanation regarding the expectation of minor accidents in the Health and Safety Annual Report from the Health and Safety Management Committee and report back to the Board	No date specified	The Executive Director HR and Organisational Development