



**WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE**  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held (via Microsoft Teams) on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 5pm**

**GOVERNORS PRESENT:** Mary Mamik, Chair  
Andrew Cropley, Principal/CEO  
Andrew Spencer  
Bev Whitefoot  
Spencer Moore  
Kate Truscott (from 5.25pm)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Maxine Bagshaw, Director of Governance  
Matt Vaughan, Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality  
Diane Booth, Assistant Principal: Quality and Standards  
Jane Fishwick, Assistant Principal: Academic, Creative, Community, Digital and Professional Studies  
Phil Clark, Assistant Principal: Construction  
Ian Frear, Assistant Principal: Engineering  
Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement & Student Experience  
Suzanna Smith, Director of HR & Organisational Development  
Nikki Slack, Assistant Principal: Health, Education & Service Industries  
Nathan Clements, Governor observer  
Rebecca Joyce, Governor observer

ACTION by whom	DATE by when

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.

**2 WELCOME INTRODUCTIONS & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Sutton.

**3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_ Chair

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AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

There were no matters arising.

**4**      **ACTION PROGRESS REPORT**

The committee were happy to note the detailed progress update provided on the tracking document, and there were no questions.

**5**      **QIAP – 2020/21**

The vice principal introduced this item and reminded the committee that there are five key weaknesses identified in the QIAP and that the focus at the meeting today will be on:

- a) English and maths
- b) Attendance and punctuality

1) English and Maths

Key matters noted were:

- There are ten actions identified in the QIAP
- The college is driving a range of CPD for staff which is inspired and informed by the deep dives, both discreetly and in vocational areas.
- The college has made significant investment to bring about improvements including discreet classrooms, one-hour lessons, and increased staffing.
- The position in English is much stronger now.
- There are still weaknesses in maths and improvements are not progressing at the same pace as English.
- Staff are involved in the teacher assessed grades process, which is an additional burden on top of the 'day job'.
- In the 19/20 academic year, the college saw improvements in +1 and +2 grades as well as the proportion of high grades; however, the position is still not good enough. It continues to be the case that some students decline against their entry points.
- Results in the autumn were good, with English doing better than maths.
- Attendance has been an issue because of COVID and lockdown. The current position is 77.5% in maths and 69.8% in English; however, the college is not seeing as much progress and improvement in maths, despite the higher level of attendance.
- The college has engaged a maths consultant, who is working with staff and encouraging them to take risks and is working to improve their confidence.

2) Attendance and punctuality

Key matters noted were:

- The position has been negatively impacted by COVID.

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- The college has been keen to ensure that online learning is marked honestly on the register; therefore, there is differentiation between 'attendance' and 'engagement'. The college has been critical in relation to evidencing engagement.
- Attendance is 85.1%, which is only 1% below the same point in the prior year.
- The college has a very good story to tell in terms of interventions, use of catch-up coaches, and attendance monitoring.

Q

One member of the committee asked whether there were any particular groups of maths students that have impacted upon the improvement pace or whether it is a more general issue. The vice principal confirmed that the pace of improvement has been slower for some of the lower-level learners and those on more practical courses, e.g. construction, motor vehicle and hair & beauty. He indicated that performance has not been helped by the 50/50 model, as learners were desperate to continue with hands-on activity. He indicated that the college needs to be better at enticing students to attend even when they would prefer not to. That said, there have been some successes, particularly some level 2 groups, e.g. engineering, joinery, motor vehicle. In some areas of provision, the college continues to try to find really good teachers.

One staff governor present made reference to the Leicester College initiative, recently promoted to staff, and the Malcolm Swans programme, which has an FE focus on maths. She asked whether it is possible to send more staff than originally envisaged. The vice principal indicated that, despite his best efforts, the places are limited to two per college; therefore, the staff who do participate will have a pivotal role in ensuring feedback to all staff. The committee were advised that the head of maths post has been advertised twice and that, in the most recent round, there have been some good applicants; therefore, the college is hopeful of now recruiting the required expertise.

Q

One staff governor made an observation regarding the variation that exists throughout the college in terms of chasing attendance for maths and English sessions. The vice principal indicated that the college is looking to have a maths and English champion in each area and that the catch-up coaches do also provide support.

The committee then discussed teacher assessed grades and were advised that there are 85 students who, following review, appear not to have completed any assessments; therefore, these are being chased as a priority. He indicated that many students have struggled during lockdown and some have very complex needs.

Q

The committee asked whether learners have target grades for maths and English. It was confirmed that they do. The committee asked how far the college is away from all students hitting their maths and English targets.

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The vice principal indicated that students would be closer to target were it not for COVID and that progress point four shows that some students are not making as much progress as was anticipated. Statistics were referred to in section 3.1 of the report, and the vice principal acknowledged that the position was not as good as hoped for. He indicated that the intention is to gather more steam this term and that there is confidence that there will be an improvement, but not as much as the targets set. He advised that Functional Skills remains a concern and that, to try to tackle this, the current head of maths is moving over to focus on Functional Skills provision. As an overview comment, he indicated that there is still more to do.

AGREED: to note the content of the report and update provided.

## 6 **BALANCED SCORE CARD ITEMS**

Key matters brought to the committee's attention were:

- Section 2.1 summarises the position in relation to deep dives. At the time of preparing the report, twenty-five had been completed. Since that date two more have taken place, but the grades in relation to these are not yet confirmed.
- There are lots of people involved in the deep dives.
- All areas are accustomed now to the processes, which include learning walks, dialogue with teachers, and a focus on the ASPIRE curriculum (including aspiration, planning and individualisation).
- The process is now RAG-rated as green; however, the overall position is amber because not all areas are remembering to underpin and evidence the impact.
- In terms of deep dive outcomes, nine were not graded because they were undertaken during full lockdown. Sixteen were graded as good or outstanding, which is 50%, with one deep dive graded as outstanding. Eight were graded as requires improvement; of these, three have now moved to good.
- The college is on the cusp but is nearer to good than RI.
- The college has moved forward since the last meeting but there is still more to do, e.g. in maths, construction and health & social care.
- The college continues to move forward and is pushing the trajectory.

(Kate Truscott joined the meeting at 5.25pm)

- The college still self-assesses as amber because the impact for all learners is not yet there.
- There has been tremendous improvement but not enough.
- A significant influencing factor is the skill of teachers, and a significant amount of CPD is being provided to support this. The

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committee's attention was drawn to the data provided on CPD in the detailed report.

- Much is happening but there is still more to do.
- Some deep dives have been rescheduled throughout the year: e.g. apprenticeship provision will take place later in the year so that staff can go out to employers with the easing of restrictions. The college has had to make some adaptations because of the pandemic.
- In relation to apprenticeship delivery, it was confirmed that there is now real ownership and accountability and that there has been a real movement forward.
- Section 7.2 of the report shows that apprenticeship retention is 71.2% and that, if all apprentices stay and achieve, the college will be above the national rate of 65%. The overall position is amber but quickly moving to green.
- In relation to electrical apprentices, there have been legacy issues for many years. The college is working with JTL to transfer 113 apprentices; of these, 76 are existing apprentices in years 2, 3 and 4. Their movement will negatively have impacted upon college retention figures even though the college continues to support them. The 71% includes the JTL transfer; without this, the percentage would have been even better.
- There is greater confidence that apprentices are now getting a better experience and service.
- In relation to end point assessments, the position is 98% overall, with 62% high grades and 27% of leavers going to enhanced roles or being promoted.
- OneFile continues to be an area of weakness and, whilst getting better, it is still not where the college wants to be. There are 14% showing as no assessments/reviews and, whilst the college is getting this figure down, it is still not good enough.
- There are 21% of apprentices with no activity recorded for 30 days, which is a decline on the previous report. The committee were given assurance that staff are really drilling down on the why and that, whilst there are some mitigating circumstances, the position is not where the college wants it to be.

When discussing the apprentice achievement rates, it was acknowledged that, whilst the EPA is positive for 20/21, there are 319 apprentices past their end date and another 241 to reach this point shortly. The committee asked whether this will negatively impact upon this year's data, i.e. if achievement is not recorded until next academic year. The vice principal confirmed that this is a risk and that staff are aware of it and are working to improve the position. The committee were advised that some of these learners are in construction and that staff are working to clear the pipeline to get to gateway. He provided assurance that those learners past their end date are a priority.

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In terms of timely achievement, the current position is 21.3%, which is clearly not where the college wants it to be. The expectation is that the college will be above the national rate but that it is still not good enough. He explained that the vast majority of apprentices are Ofqual grade 1, which means that they have to be industry assessed and cannot be teacher assessed; this in itself is leading to a significant backlog of circa three months.

**Q** The committee asked what the impact is of maths and English attendance/performance for apprentices; they asked whether this is a joint weakness. The vice principal advised that it is possible to provide a teacher assessed grade for GCSE; however, for Functional Skills, this is only acceptable 'as a last resort'. The preference is for on-site assessments and, whilst remote assessments are possible, it is quite difficult as an option given the systems/processes. Attendance at online Functional Skills for maths and English was only 53%, which is not good enough and, therefore, means that they are not ready to take the assessment. The committee were advised that the work of the apprenticeship monitoring group shows that assistant principals know what needs to be done for each learner. It was confirmed that apprenticeship managers are all working to get learners over the line; however, in many instances, this is out of the college's control.

**Q** The committee asked why, given the laser focus on apprenticeship provision, there are learners with no contact recorded. The vice principal advised that many are just waiting for an EPA, and he provided assurance that there is contact with learners but that this is simply not being captured. He advised that the college is much better than it was a year ago and provided assurance that apprenticeship delivery is being considered from every angle. There is a huge team effort and the college has made so much progress in this area.

**Q** One member of the committee asked whether there are separate deep dives undertaken for maths and English. It was confirmed that there are and these were undertaken in 19/20 and 20/21 and that, in addition, the college is looking at maths and English delivery in the vocational areas. The committee were advised that areas of provision cannot be graded above a 3 unless they have a real focus on maths and English.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

**7** **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON CURRICULUM PLANNING – PROGRESS ON ACTIONS AGREED**

The principal introduced this item and confirmed that the college's internal auditors, Haines Watts, undertook a review of the curriculum planning process undertaken last year; however, the college does not believe that the audit outcomes reflect reality. He explained that the report was presented late and did not undergo the right level of internal

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scrutiny; therefore, auditors have been asked to complete their work again based upon this year's planning processes. This audit work is now being undertaken and the full report will be presented to the Audit Committee.

The principal advised that the initial report did raise some useful issues, particularly in relation to the interaction between the planning process and financial planning. The college has learnt from the points made and has now introduced an extra layer of scrutiny. All curriculum plans are tested with the assistant principals, and this was described as a really healthy process. The principal advised that the senior team will be reviewing the financial position alongside the plans, focusing particularly on the level of contribution and staffing requirements.

It is envisaged that the final audit report on curriculum planning will be presented to the Audit Committee in June/July. The committee were given assurance that the seven steps of curriculum planning all knit together and include a financial review on three occasions, which involve the principal and the finance director. He confirmed that all plans are reviewed on the basis of aspirations, actual numbers, planned numbers and financial implications. He advised that there will be a real focus for assistant principals on the AEB position in the next round of discussions. This is because the college needs to do a lot more direct delivery because of the ESFA's subcontracting cap being introduced for 2021/22.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

## 8 **RISK REPORT (RED RAG-RATED ITEMS)**

The vice principal reminded that there are three red RAG-rated items on the register, with one of these being new. These are:

- 1) Failure to embed the ASPIRE curriculum
- 2) Grade 3 Ofsted overall effectiveness
- 3) Risks relating to teacher assessed grades

In relation to the ASPIRE curriculum, he confirmed that the questions asked are:

- Is the curriculum fit for purpose?
- Will it meet employer and learner needs?

The committee were advised that the business improvement projects have had a real focus on the ASPIRE curriculum, including teachers focusing on teaching. Reviews have included:

- First 42 days
- Registers and timetables – it is critical to ensure smooth enrolment and induction
- The development of 18 learning companies with 23 planned for the autumn

The college is seeing some really good initiatives and there is confidence that there is a rich, cutting-edge curriculum in place.

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In terms of the Ofsted grade, the vice principal described the college as being on the cusp between grade 3 and 2. The college is improving but not at the rate desired. The college has a raft of quality assurance and quality standard processes in place including:

- Monitoring reviews
- Rate Your Course initiatives – there were 576 responses in the February survey, which is really positive. The aim for the next round is to have over 1,000 responses.

In relation to the new risk surrounding teacher assessed grades, it was explained that:

- The college needs to have evidence in place for the assessments made
- Documentation needs to be retained for a year
- Evidence will be scrutinised
- This process is increasing teacher workloads, particularly in relation to completing the evidence collection processes.

After teachers have made their decision on grades, an internal expert will review. There will be an additional second and third level of quality assurance before each and every grade is signed off. The vast majority should be assessed by cohort/group, but there are some students who, more than others, have been impacted by the disruption of the pandemic. 18<sup>th</sup> June is the deadline date for all grades to be submitted, and this is an incredibly tight timescale to pull all the evidence together.

The committee were advised that the college works with a number of awarding organisations and, unfortunately, they do not all have the same processes and expectations. A lot of training has been provided by awarding organisations, and this is also on top of the day job, i.e. that staff have to continue to support learners and gather grade assessment evidence. The committee's attention was drawn to appendix 9, which provides a really clear summary of roles and responsibilities. Once grades are submitted, the awarding organisations will choose a sample to test.

The committee asked whether the college has benefitted from any external guidance, e.g. from the AoC. It was confirmed that the assistant principal: quality and standards sits on the AoC quality group and they are currently focused on teacher assessed grades. She confirmed that there has been some great sharing of practice and it has provided an opportunity for lobbying. In terms of Ofqual, they have looked at all categories and it is important to keep on top of their guidance and requirements as this does change. An example was given of a change even this week. The committee were advised that there has been a significant impact on the sector and that the AoC is working to support; however, all acknowledged that changes made so close to the deadline date for submission are not helpful. Staff advised that announcements

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are being closely monitored on a week-by-week basis but the turbulence has been huge.

The committee commended the work done and felt that the college's plans were clear and that the documentation provided was really robust.

**Q** One member of the committee asked how close the college is to embedding the ASPIRE curriculum. The vice principal indicated that, when considering this, it has to be taken within the context that the sector as a whole needs to be reactive and that the curriculum needs to

**Q** suit the Mansfield area. The committee asked whether there were any areas of provision at risk. The principal indicated that discussions have taken place on whether the college offers too broad a curriculum: an example given was in arts, subject sector area 9, which is music and performing arts. The college is seeing declining numbers and is, therefore, considering whether there is a need to 'cut its cloth' accordingly and also honestly reflect on whether this college does this as well as others. He indicated that in some areas it is not possible to take a strategic position and that there are some aspects of the arts curriculum

**CH** which are just not taking off. A challenge from the committee was to ensure curriculum decisions are linked to the EMSI data on future growth areas and, correspondingly, any decline in the Mansfield area. The principal provided assurance that the first of the seven curriculum planning steps includes thorough analysis of the EMSI data. The committee were advised that John Gray, a former governor who works with EMSI, has asked some critical friend questions, for example in relation to animal care and, particularly, the comparison with the demand in the engineering sector.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

## **9** **DATA ON A PAGE 2020/21**

The assistant principal introduced this written report and reminded that the national rates used are from 2019 and that no rates have been published since then. Key matters noted were:

- Retention has declined by 3.5%.
- Progress has improved slightly for English and maths but not as much as the college wanted. In the main, this is because of COVID disruption.
- Retention for adults has declined slightly (0.4%) but progress is better.
- The position in relation to apprenticeships was discussed earlier in the meeting and key areas of focus are off-the-job training and the fact that the college needs to be better at completing and recording the reviews.
- Retention for high needs learners has declined by 3.5% and the position in relation to disadvantaged learners is broadly the same.

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The committee were advised that the national scene for apprenticeship delivery is very turbulent; therefore, this college's position is not as bad as some others.

AGREED: to note the content of the report provided.

## 10 CURRICULUM STRATEGY

The vice principal introduced this item and confirmed that the RAG rating is now green as the strategy has been completed. The committee's attention was drawn to sections 2.1 and 2.2, and it was explained that the strategy has been fully informed by both internal and external stakeholders and that it builds upon discussions at the skills conference and the content of the White Paper. The proposal has been consulted on widely with all levels of staff.

The vice principal described the strategy as being succinct and incisive and, particularly, drew members' attention to section 3.4, which sets out the underpinning commitments. There are six strategic curriculum aims, which are underpinned by detailed criteria.

Q In reviewing the strategy, the committee agreed that it was possible to still see how it will benefit local needs, and they asked what the next steps would be in terms of assessing impact. The committee's attention was drawn to page 4, which provides a rolling three-year curriculum plan. Assistant principals have been asked to develop a three-year look ahead, i.e. where the curriculum will get to. It was acknowledged that the college cannot do everything all at once but that this strategy is taking the college from a position of good intent to reality. The principal indicated that there are currently some really interesting conversations taking place regarding the future; examples given were in relation to the nursing school and sports provision. The committee were advised that a real focus for the college is engaging employers and that this includes:

- Understanding data
- Listening to employers (an example given was the robotics curriculum).

The aim is to deliver with and not just for employers.

CH The committee asked a question in relation to transferable skills, and an observation made was that the focus on economic need may not give enough priority on the need for transferable skills. The principal advised that the prospectus for the Skills Accelerator Fund does have more emphasis on transferable skills than is currently the case in the White Paper. A challenge from the committee is that the college needs to equip its learners ready for a lifetime of different opportunities and not just the next step. All acknowledged that employers themselves value transferable skills and that this will be a key lever to ensuring focus and prioritisation.

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**Q/CH** A question and challenge from the committee was that the significant emphasis on 'leading to employment' may lead to other aspects being squeezed out, e.g. arts and humanities. The principal confirmed that the college has to ensure that learning is inclusive but that it can't ignore the direction of policy travel. The aim is to allow students to fall back in love with learning and to give them confidence. The view expressed by the committee was that there are many aspects 'in our blood' that are not overplayed in the document.

**CH** A challenge from one member of the committee was that the use of EMSI data and insight in relation to this is missing from the document. They felt that it didn't jump out as part of the strategy. The committee felt that there was an opportunity to really use this as a marketing opportunity and that the document should say 'wow, look at us'. All agreed that the content was not the issue but that they would like to see the college's message 'pop out of the page'.

**CH** A challenge from the committee was that they would like to see a section on governance and the role of the Corporation Board.

**CH** The committee were advised that, whilst this document is still in the draft consultation stage, it does give an opportunity to review. A challenge from the committee was to really celebrate what the college is and does. They felt that the college was not selling itself enough and that there needed to be more 'pizzazz and wow'.

**Q** One member of the committee asked where the college records the improvements seen in learners' soft skills. It was agreed that there is an opportunity to refresh and improve the profile in relation to this, with more being celebrated. All agreed that employers are very much leading in this area and that their demands in relation to soft skills will come through.

The committee considered the document presented and were happy to recommend it for approval to board, with the caveats discussed at the meeting and conversion into a format that has the needed pizzazz.

**AGREED:** to recommend that the Corporation Board approve the Curriculum Strategy developed.

## **11 SAFEGUARDING, PREVENT AND E&D**

The vice principal introduced her detailed report. Key matters that she wished to bring to the committee's attention included:

- Paragraph 2 and the reference to criminal exploitation. The college has requested a mapping meeting in relation to three students, and there will be one more added who is a concern.
- The number of students who have a social worker.

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- There are 47 care experienced young people.
- The apprentice discussed at the last meeting who had been convicted of a serious sexual offence is no longer employed and is, therefore, no longer an apprentice with the college.
- Page 2 information in relation to Prevent – the matter is now closed with no further action being taken by the college, although the college does continue to provide support.
- Right-wing groups are causing more concerns and are actively recruiting young people. A number of groups are ‘skating a fine line’, and Mansfield and Ashfield have been identified as hotspots.
- Full internal safeguarding audit has taken place with Steve Sutton, Sean Lyons and Kate Truscott providing their input. Some changes are planned. The college was described as not perfect, and staff have been hard on themselves during the review and will continue to be so until there is absolute confidence that the college is grade 1 in this area.
- Staff continue to meet with the student focus groups. One point raised in recent meetings was that students miss the presence of the security guard. He has now been reengaged and has had a warm welcome back.
- The college is purchasing a bespoke system (CPOMS), this will provide a move away from the current clunky and highly administrative systems. It should mean that transition information from schools is easier to obtain as they use the same system. The phase 1 introduction will be purely safeguarding, but there are then options to expand further, e.g. wellbeing.
- The college is purchasing e-Safe, which will mean that it is better able to monitor and manage access. The system will log all activity and the aim is for it to be fully implemented by September. Through the i-Trent system, HR can now monitor minor causes for concern. These are matters that would not lead to a LADO referral, and this will allow the college to build a picture of suitability.

Q

One member of the committee asked whether there will be a link between CPOMS and Pro Monitor. The vice principal indicated that, unfortunately, this is not possible and, in fact, Pro Monitor does not easily sit alongside many systems.

- ‘Everyone is Invited’ website – the vice principal indicated that, in relation to sexual assault and harassment, there is a piece to do in terms of communication and, particularly, language. Because of the national focus, the college will start to report on this to the committee.
- The college’s E&D scheme is being reviewed; proposals in relation to this will come to this committee in June 2021.

VP CESE

June 2021

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In general discussion, members of the committee who are familiar with CPOMS described it as a really powerful tool. It was confirmed that phase 2 of its introduction will be to provide support to the welfare team.

The committee noted that, in a previous meeting, there had been a risk flagged that the level of safeguarding activity and concerns would rise following the return to site. The vice principal indicated that, whilst there has been a rise in referrals since returning, this has now levelled out. In terms of emotional and wellbeing concerns, she indicated that, whilst there is not a significant growth, they are on the rise. The college is looking at what it can introduce as a standard offer in relation to mental health for every student so as to avoid anyone getting to the point of crisis. Mental health training is to be rolled out to staff and the college is working closely with CAMHS. The objective is to nip the lower-level issues in the bud before they become a crisis. There may be more to do in September, particularly in the first 42 days for students, as their learning will have been disrupted over two academic years.

In relation to the use of e-Safe, one member of the committee asked how it will be communicated. It was confirmed that the system only reports on anything that may lead to a safeguarding concern, which should alleviate any anxiety regarding its introduction.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

**12**      **AOB**

As a matter of additional business, the committee discussed how the college presents itself when reporting. The principal indicated that a key college value is high expectations and that staff are relentless in relation to this, which does lead to being constantly self-critical. A challenge from the committee was to regularly recognise how far the college has come, and they felt that there was a lot of good and developing work that is not necessarily picked out enough and communicated and celebrated.

**13**      **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

This was confirmed as Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.

**14**      **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021**

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

As a matter arising, it was agreed that the vice principal would provide a

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briefing note to Kate Truscott in relation to the Stepping Stones programme, which supports 14-16-year-olds.

VP CESE

May 2021

The committee chair took the opportunity to thank staff for their reports and the information provided. She confirmed that they give confidence that the college really knows its strengths and weaknesses.

Meeting closed at 7pm.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_ Chair

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