



Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting held on Tuesday 26 March 2024 at 6pm in the College Conference Room

Present:	Sarah Carroll	Foundation Governor
	Mark Dawson	Parent Governor
	John Fogarty	Foundation Governor
	Janet Gater	Principal
	Andrew Jones	Co-opted Governor
	Mick Martin	Foundation Governor
	Andrew Rannard	Foundation Governor
	Graeme Slater	Foundation Governor
	Helen Stevenson (<i>Chair</i>)	Foundation Governor
	Harrison Zysiak Tobin	Student Governor

In attendance:	Michelle Williams (<i>Vice Principal, Finance, Resources & Systems</i>)
	Laura Forsyth (<i>Acting Vice Principal, Curriculum, Quality & Pastoral</i>)
	Lauren Boswell (<i>Assistant Principal designate, Student Support</i>)
	Peter Murphy (<i>Assistant Principal, Staffing & Catholic Ethos</i>)
	Kim Wallace (<i>Assistant Principal, Student Development</i>)
	Liz Walls (<i>Assistant Principal, Super Curriculum</i>)
	Ruth Potter (<i>Clerk to Governors</i>)
	Ron Matthews (<i>External Governance Reviewer</i>) – observer

PART 1

The Chair of Governors welcomed all attendees and opened the meeting in prayer.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Declarations of interest

Governors were invited to declare whether they had any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interest or conflict of interest in any matter which formed part of the agenda for this meeting or was likely to be discussed at the meeting. No interests were declared other than those already recorded on the College register of interests.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received and accepted from the following board members:

- Patrick Alcantara – Foundation Governor
- Susan Jarvis – Co-opted Governor
- Sam Johnstone – Staff Governor

The meeting was declared quorate.

1.3 Items to be included under any other business

One item of additional business had been accepted by the Chair:

- 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

1.4 **Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 5 December 2023** *(previously circulated)*

The minutes of the Full Governing Body (FGB) meeting held on 5 December 2023 were (a) approved and the Chair authorised to sign them in accordance with Article 12(3) of the Articles of Government and (b) publication was authorised in accordance with Article 13.

1.5 **Matters arising from the minutes** *(previously circulated)*

The Governing Body noted the action log prepared by the Clerk.

2. PRINCIPAL AND SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT) REPORTS

2.1 **Ofsted preparation – briefing papers** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Quality, Curriculum & Pastoral) presented this item which had been included by way of follow up to the board's December training session. Governors were invited to consider the 'Frequently Asked Questions' document which had been prepared based on intelligence drawn from recent inspections across the sector. The document referenced the evidence in place across College to support the answers provided to potential areas of questioning.

In addition to this overarching document, the Vice Principal reported that members of SLT had prepared specific briefing papers on their key work areas as follows:

- Safeguarding
- SEND (Level 3)
- SEND (Foundation Learning)
- Pastoral
- Skills
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)
- Catholic Ethos.

Link Governors reported back on their recent meetings with key staff and governors' questions and comments on each of the briefing papers were invited.

Discussion ensued on the Skills briefing paper and the impact of the recent closure of St Helens Chamber. The Assistant Principal (Super Curriculum) explained that the main impact was the loss of Tracy Mawson as the College's Skills and Careers Link Governor. She reported that the College had already benefited from this input in the development of the draft 2024-25 Accountability Statement and in the forging of strong links and connections across the Liverpool City Region. These links would continue to operate despite the closure of St Helens Chamber as the College was an established stakeholder with both the local authority and the Liverpool City Region Chambers (as the employer representative body for the region's LSIP). It was noted that the appointment of a replacement Skills and Careers Link Governor was due to be discussed later in the meeting.

Q – Skills: how would the St Helens area be covered by the Liverpool City Region Chambers in the future? Had this been confirmed?

A – Nothing confirmed yet.

Q – Pastoral: 10:10 attendance data is a key improvement area. Would up-to-date figures be provided in advance of inspection?

A – Yes. In addition, College was involved in an Archdiocese of Liverpool project on attendance and this confirmed that the College's attendance data compared favourably with national benchmark data.

The Chair reflected on the College's Catholic Ethos and stressed that whilst this was referenced in a standalone briefing document, the ethos must remain at the heart of everything the College did.

The Governing Body thanked the SLT for their comprehensive briefing papers and **noted** the content.

2.2 **Principal's Termly Report** (*previously circulated*)

The Principal presented her report and highlighted the following key points:

Leadership and management

- New Assistant Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) appointed
- New Curriculum Leader (Business and Social Sciences) appointed
- SFCA middle leadership development programme – significant investment in this across College as part of aim to develop middle leaders.

Student progress

- Level 3 performance for A Level and Applied General Qualifications (AGQs) reported in full to Quality and Standards Committee – these exceeded local and almost all national average data across all parameters.
- Disadvantaged student performance particularly positive
- Destinations – 91% of 2021 leavers progressed to sustained education or employment compared to local authority average of 78% and England average of 83%
- NEET rate (students not in education, employment or training) was significantly lower than local and national average.

Q – Destinations data: in addition to local authority and national data, was it possible to benchmark the College performance against the Liverpool City Region data?

A – Would interrogate published data to provide the additional comparative figure.

Q – Note College was in top 15% of providers nationally for 2021 leavers progressing to sustained education or employment. Did this relate just to sixth-form colleges or all sixth-form provision?

A – All provision.

Quality improvement

- Overview of strategic priorities for quality improvement: high volume subjects and underperforming subjects
- Focus also on 10:10 Ethics and Values programme and Foundation Learning.

Student recruitment, finance and resources

- Enhanced marketing and liaison activity had resulted in increased applications
- Positive impact of marketing team re-structure noted
- College in good financial health – full report provided later on agenda.

Q – Any peaks in subject area applications that could put staffing model under pressure?

A – Increase in Engineering applications, but able to cope with this provided that current staffing numbers remain stable.

Q – Withdrawn applications: what analysis took place and were any trends identified?

A – Rigorous follow up undertaken with individuals to remove any potential barriers to application. Drill down analysis undertaken by postcode, subject, for example, but no significant trends identified.

Q – Number of applications by top ten schools. Could data be provided to illustrate the percentage of applications as a proportion of the total number of students on roll at each school?

A – Yes. This data was available and would be circulated to governors.

Student welfare and wellbeing

- Transition arrangements in place to support newly appointed Assistant Principal and DSL
- CPOMS used to log all incidents
- High aspirations and ambition for all vulnerable and disadvantaged students
- Full safeguarding report provided to Quality and Standards Committee.

Staffing update

- Appointment to key support staff roles of MIS Manager and Deputy MIS Manager
- Staffing changes highlighted – leavers and new starters
- New EDI Co-ordinator appointed.

Q – Note small number of staff left after short time in post: any trends to report with regard to these early leavers?

A – Only trend was the high turnover of Personal Achievement Tutor (PAT) staff. Discussion had taken place with other colleges and this was noted as a sector-wide trend. Opportunities for progression and retention within the College were explored.

Student, staff, parent/carer view

- Staff Carmel Pulse survey now completed every half-term to facilitate greater agility and responsiveness to arising issues. This supplemented but did not replace the end of year formal staff voice survey.
- CEDAR implementation issues raised in staff feedback – fewer issues arising now that MIS Team was fully staffed.
- Student focus groups taken place throughout the year as part of deep dive process.
- Whole college student voice survey scheduled for both subject and pastoral provision: full report would be presented to Quality and Standards Committee in line with usual cycle of business.
- Student Perception of Courses (SPOC) – new process planned for termly SPOC surveys. Results would be reported to Quality and Standards Committee.

Mission and ethos

- Range of College events and activities reported including Holy Week services planned before the end of term.

Student update

- Regular schedule of 'Inspire me' talks continued, giving students a wide range of opportunities to hear from skilled and inspirational external speakers.
- Variety of student trips and activities designed to offer opportunity to develop cultural capital.

Future look

- Ofsted inspection due next term.

- Denominational inspection not due yet, but College staff had attended recent training delivered by the Archdiocese of Liverpool on the new inspection framework and was preparing the College accordingly.
- Level 3 reform preparation and curriculum development – A Level in Classical Civilisation due to commence in September 2024 and recruitment to new Early Years T Level was positive.

The Chair thanked the Principal for her comprehensive report and the Governing Body **noted** the contents.

ACTION – (a) 2021 leavers’ sustained destinations data – provide benchmark data for Liverpool City Region
(b) Top 10 schools application data – circulate data on percentage of applications as proportion of total students at each school

Lauren Boswell, Peter Murphy, and Kim Wallace left the meeting at this point.

3. STUDENT VOICE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Student Governor Update *(previously circulated)*

The Student Governor presented his report and explained that the Student Council’s recent focus had been on preparing for a smooth transition to next year’s Council. The following points were highlighted:

- Merseyside transport – meeting had taken place with engagement officer from Liverpool City Region Mayor’s office focussed on transport issues and impact on students.
- Social media engagement – efforts to engage students through social media activity; specific success with student involvement in recent 5k charity run.
- Student Council – the Council continued to be represented on the College’s EDI and Sustainability committees. Meetings had also taken place with the Upper Sixth Pastoral Director to discuss leavers’ celebrations.
- IT – in response to feedback and issues raised by students, the Council had been invited to meet with the College’s IT team.
- New Council elections – these were due to take place in early April, following which the outgoing Student Council would be able to focus on preparing for their final exams. Positive level of interest noted from current Lower Sixth students.

The Chair thanked the Student Governor for his well-presented report and commended the Student Council on its efforts to ensure a smooth transition to the incoming Council to ensure continuity of progress with key issues.

Governors’ comments and questions were invited.

Q – IT issues: any significant trends emerging for students?

A – Connect was the main issue. The Vice Principal reported that the College planned to move to a new VLE for the next academic year and this would hopefully help to address most of the issues currently experienced.

The Governing Body **noted** the report.

4. STRATEGIC ISSUES

4.1 Academisation *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) presented this report which provided an update on developments and discussions since the last meeting. It was

reported that the Department for Education (DfE) had confirmed that it was not in a position to support the original proposal for the College to be part of a post-16 Catholic Multi-Academy Trust (CMAT). A key barrier to the College's academisation was its outstanding loan. Following reclassification as central government sector, colleges faced restrictions on commercial borrowing and the DfE had indicated that government funding was not available to offer a replacement loan. The horizontal structure of the proposed post-16 CMAT was also cited as an issue.

The Vice Principal referred governors to the options set out in her report, namely:

- challenge the DfE decision
- explore alternative academisation options within structures more likely to garner DfE support
- postpone strategic aim to academise until such time as the College was in a position to pay off its outstanding loan.

Lengthy discussion ensued on the above options and specific points of clarification were provided with regard to the remaining term on the College loan, total value outstanding, and financial impact of early breakage fee. Alternative academisation options were discussed and, should these be explored further, there may be the opportunity for the College to join an established MAT with sufficient resources to support repayment of the loan.

Governors discussed the Archdiocese of Liverpool's academisation strategy and the existing MATs in place across the region. The need to focus on what was in the best interests of Carmel students, allowing the College to retain its unique identity and distinctiveness, was emphasised. The potential risks and rewards associated with the various options were highlighted. Governors agreed that whilst it was difficult to predict longer-term policy, the College's current position was strong and this must be sustained in order to continue to compete in the sixth-form sector.

After further discussion, the Governing Body **approved** the following next steps:

- Chair of Governors to update the Director of Education at the Archdiocese of Liverpool on the College's intentions to explore alternative academisation options.
- SLT to explore options to join established MATs and report back to the next Governing Body meeting.

ACTION – FGB agenda item at next meeting

4.2 Strategic planning session – report and action plan (previously circulated)

The Chair referred governors to the report and action plan from the December strategic planning session. It was noted that a number of key actions had already been discussed or were on the agenda for discussion later in the meeting. The evaluation feedback summary was also provided for reference.

The Governing Body **approved** the report of the strategic planning session.

4.3 Strategic Plan 2022-25 – updated (previously circulated)

The Principal presented this report and referred governors to the updated progress report against the 2022-25 strategic plan which now included more data-evidenced review comments. She confirmed that, in accordance with the actions agreed at the December strategic planning session, the existing plan would now run until the end of the 2024-25 academic year. To supplement this, however, a new one-year delivery

plan would be prepared for the 2024-25 academic year setting out more measurable targets against which progress could be monitored. Planning would then take place to prepare an entirely new strategic plan for the commencement of the 2025-26 academic year.

Following discussion, the Governing Body **approved** the updated plan subject to minor amendment to reflect the fact that it was no longer a member of St Helens Chamber.

ACTION – Amend Strategic Plan 2022-25 ‘Key Facts’ section

- 4.4 **Accountability Agreement 2024-25 and Local Needs Duty** *(previously circulated)*
The Assistant Principal (Super Curriculum) presented the College’s draft Accountability Statement 2024-25. The document had been reviewed by the Quality and Standards Committee when it met on 5 March 2024 and recommended to the Governing Body for approval. Since then, St Helens Chamber had closed and therefore two minor amendments were required to accurately reflect this change. No revisions were required to the remainder of the document which contained the College’s skills objectives and the Governing Body’s summative statement with regard to the Local Needs Duty.

The Assistant Principal confirmed that prior to the closure of St Helens Chamber, the College had worked closely with Tracy Mawson (CEO of St Helens Chamber) in her role as Skills and Careers Link Governor. The draft document had been developed following extensive collaboration with other stakeholders and providers across the Liverpool City Region and reflected the College’s contribution to the skills needs set out in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) as well as national skills priorities and the top ten wider employability skills identified by the World Economic Forum. Three main objectives had been identified alongside priority actions to further strengthen the College’s contribution where possible.

It was noted that the document must be approved by the Governing Body and submitted to the ESFA by 30 June 2024, following which it must be published on the College website.

Following discussion, the Governing Body **approved** the Accountability Statement 2024-25 subject to the two minor amendments to St Helens Chamber references.

ACTION – (a) Submit Accountability Statement to ESFA by 30 June 2024 (b) Publish statement on College website by 1 December 2024

Liz Walls left the meeting at this point.

5. FINANCE & ESTATES MANAGEMENT

5.1 Finance Update and Management Accounts – January 2024 *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) referred governors to the finance update and management accounts as at the end of January 2024 and reported that these had been considered in detail by the Finance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 14 March 2024. The operating deficit at the end of January was £(158)k adverse, however this was a favourable variance against the plan and the College was operating well within the approved deficit budget. As a result, the Vice Principal anticipated the planned outturn position to improve by the end of the year. The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee updated governors on the discussion that

had taken place at its recent meeting and confirmed that close monitoring of costs – alongside the growth strategy for student recruitment – had contributed to this improved position.

The Governing Body **noted** the contents of the finance update and management accounts.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT

6.1 Risk Management Action Plan *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) referred governors to the College's updated risk register and action plan and reported that this had already been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2024. One significant risk had been identified associated with progress against the ILT strategy and tracking of student progress and applications. In addition, contingent risks were identified relating to:

- software reporting development within CEDAR
- financial health
- academisation
- new senior leadership team
- recruitment and retention of staff.

The Vice Principal shared with governors the SFCA Sector Risk Register and confirmed that SLT had considered this when reviewing the College's own register.

Discussion ensued on the sector-wide recruitment and retention challenges and the College's own strategies to attract and retain quality staff.

The Governing Body **noted** the updated risk register and action plan.

7. GOVERNANCE

7.1 Membership and succession planning *(previously circulated)*

The Chair updated the Governing Body on the latest developments with regard to its membership and succession planning.

Co-opted Governor vacancy

Tracy Mawson had resigned as Co-opted Governor following the closure of St Helens Chamber; this created a further vacancy on the Governing Body.

Foundation Governor vacancies

One application had been received from Paul Joseph Foy (Brother Benedict) who was a De La Salle Brother living in the St Helens Community. The Chair of Governors, Principal and Clerk had met with Brother Ben in line with the Governing Body Recruitment and Succession Planning Policy and explored his application form, skills audit, and declaration of interests. As a result, they had recommended him for appointment with assignment to the Finance and Resources Committee. Brother Ben's application had since been approved by the Episcopal Bishop for Education at the Archdiocese of Liverpool (the appointing authority for Foundation Governors).

Skills and Careers Link Governor

Following the resignation of Tracy Mawson, expressions of interest were invited for this key link governor role. The Clerk confirmed that although he was unable to attend tonight's meeting, Patrick Alcantara had indicated his willingness to undertake this role.

Catholic Ethos Link Governor

Governors were referred to the recommendation from Search Committee to introduce a new Catholic Ethos Link Governor role. A draft role description was presented for consideration and approval. Expressions of interest were invited from Foundation Governors for this role. Andrew Rannard confirmed that he would be willing to undertake this role as he already had a good working knowledge of the denominational inspection framework.

Following discussion, the Governing Body **approved**:

- the appointment of Paul Joseph Foy (Brother Benedict) as Foundation Governor for a term of four years and assignment to the Finance and Resources Committee
- the appointment of Patrick Alcantara as Skills and Careers Link Governor with immediate effect
- the appointment of Andrew Rannard as Catholic Ethos Link Governor with immediate effect
- the Catholic Ethos Link Governor role description.

ACTION – Clerk to arrange standard checks, documentation and induction for newly appointed Foundation Governor

8. CONSENT AGENDA

It was noted that no questions had been raised in advance of the meeting with the Clerk regarding the papers listed under the consent agenda. The Chair advised the Governing Body that there remained an opportunity to raise any queries if required. None were raised.

Policies and other documents (*previously circulated*)

- 8.1 **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Annual Report and Plan**
- 8.2 **Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Expression**
- 8.3 **Redundancy Policy**
- 8.4 **Disciplinary Policy**
- 8.5 **Grievance Policy**
- 8.6 **Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Discretions Statement**
- 8.7 **Financial Regulations 2024**
- 8.8 **Procurement Policy**
- 8.9 **Safeguarding College Assets Annual Report**
- 8.10 **Business Continuity Annual Report**
- 8.11 **Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy**

The Governing Body **approved** all the documents without revision.

Committee minutes and reports (*previously circulated*)

Committee Chairs were invited to highlight key points of interest arising from the recent round of Committee meetings.

- 8.12 **Search Committee draft minutes from 4 March 2024**
- 8.13 **Quality and Standards Committee draft minutes from 5 March 2024**
- 8.14 **Audit Committee draft minutes from 12 March 2024**
- 8.15 **Finance and Resources Committee draft minutes from 14 March 2024**

The Governing Body **noted** all committee draft minutes.

9. OTHER MATTERS

9.1 Any other business


16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

The Governing Body **approved** the 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy and delegated future approval of this policy to the Finance and Resources Committee.

9.2 Date of next meeting

Monday 8 July 2024 at 6pm

There being no further Part 1 business to discuss the meeting concluded at 7.45pm.

Signed by the Vice Chair: 

On this day: 8 July 2024