



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
held on
TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2017
in CONFERENCE ROOM
at the OSWESTRY CAMPUS**

Present:	Mrs G Richards	GPR	Chair, Health & Safety Lead Governor
	Mrs V Cox	HVC	Safeguarding & Residential Lead Governor
	Mrs W Dakin	JWD	Equality & Diversity Lead Governor
	Mr A Durnell	AD	Business Support Staff Governor
	Mrs F Flack	FF	Academic-Staff Governor
	Mr P Green	PG	
	Dr E Harrison	EH	
	Mr P McCann	PM	Interim Principal
	Mr J Nicholls	JN	
	Mr P Polowyj	PP	(part)
	Miss L Smith	LS	Student Governor
	Mr T Trickett	TT	

Attendance: 80%

In attendance:	Mr B Deed	BD	Interim Finance Director
	Mr B Eshun	BE	Interim Director of MIS
	Ms K Roberts	KR	Assistant Principal Curriculum (part)
	Ms S Shelston	SS	Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services
	Mr M David	MD	Observer (Principal, Reaseheath College)
	Mr R Ratcliffe	RR	Observer (Chair of Governors, Reaseheath College)
	Ms J Vernon	JV	Observer (Lifelong Learning Manager, Shropshire Council) (part)
	Mrs C Thompson	CDT	Governance Advisor

The meeting opened at 17.30

Item	Action
1. Apologies for absence Mr G Casson, Mr J Furber and Ms E McQueen	

2. Declarations of interest

Dr Harrison, Mr Nicholls and Mrs Richards were also governors at Reaseheath College. Mr Green was a consultant for Reaseheath College.

Mrs Dakin said that in her view the papers were the best that had come to Governors and thanked management.

3. Appointments

The following proposals were made: Mr Polowyj to be appointed as a governor and as a member of the Audit & Risk Management Committee; Mr Durnell to be a member of the Audit & Risk Management Committee until 31 July 2017; Ms Vernon to be an observer on the Board. Governors **resolved to approve** the appointments.

**CDT –
imm.**

Mr Polowyj and Ms Vernon joined the meeting.

4. Outreach Centres

The interim Finance Director tabled a draft version of a paper: a final version would be brought to the next meeting. Information that governors wanted could be included. Governors requested the rationale for retaining or closing Aspire, Shipley and Wem, and overhead costs to be applied to each campus's figures. Governors asked what comprised 'other delivery venues': this was Community Education in village halls, and Apprenticeships, including franchising. Governors requested these figures without those elements, and also the farm to be shown separately. Future growth would be taken into account.

**BD/BE –
27.3.17**

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2017 were approved and signed by the Chair.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Report on Nursery

The report had been moved to the March agenda.

27.3.17

7. Principal's report

The interim Principal highlighted some key points within the report.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment: Focus was: stretch & challenge; outstanding, integrating maths and English. Using questioning techniques

High needs students support was good, but needed more funding. 10% of 16-18 students had high needs. The College had 33 LSAs (Learning Support Assistants) which was unaffordable with the current levels of associated income but offered excellent support. A question for the future was if college could provide such support. The interim Principal reported he was working with colleagues to increase the levels of ALS income

claims for apprenticeship and adult provision and was meeting with the local authority to negotiate an increase in the commissioned level 2 places within the EFA funding methodology for 2017/18.

Student focus groups: governors had attended. They had been well attended. At Walford. governors had spoken to agriculture students: additional provision they had requested would be investigated.

PM - Feb

The travel policy to be introduced for 2017/18 reflected the Reaseheath policy, and was arranged in zones. Payments would be able to be made in instalments. Governors asked if students who had been offered places had been advised of the change, and if there had been an opportunity to consider the routes, to encourage recruitment. This was confirmed.

2017-18 external applications, excluding A levels, were on a par with the previous year although internal progression enrolments had not taken place as yet. There had been a high attendance at interviews. The interim Principal confirmed that there were robust arrangements to keep in touch with potential students' pre-enrolment.

Reaseheath College had been very helpful with reviewing the apprenticeship enrolment processes. Governors asked about the initiative to recruit more apprentices on a new contract. It had been discussed at the Post Inspection Working Group (PIWG). They suggested adding it to the risk register as there was risk in taking it on. This was agreed.

BD – imm.

Governors asked for regular updates to be brought to the Board.

**KR -
ongoing**

Governors questioned whether staff absence in January had been similarly high the previous January. It had.

Governors asked if a herdsman had been found. It was suggested to consider a sandwich-year student.

Governors questioned the rationale for refurbishing the moth-balled residential blocks. More students were expected in 2017-18. Also, the Business Development Manager was selling accommodation for the summer. It was necessary to invest. Governors questioned whether support services were in place for such an offering, e.g. catering, and the profitability for the College. Services were being put in place. Catering was on a no-cost contract. The arrangement would be reviewed post-merger.

Governors asked if residential fees had been set yet. This was being investigated and would be brought back.

**BD –
27.3.17**

Governors noted that if residential lettings users aged 16-18 were on site at the same time as NSC's own students, the Care Standards would be applied to them also.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

8. **Data dashboard - KPIs**

The interim Principal highlighted some key points within the report. Attendance: previous reports to governors had included pre-authorized absences. It had been around 87-88% the previous year: now 86%, and 78% at maths & English. Governors said feedback from students they had interviewed had been positive. Retention was 95% against target of 93%. This had stabilised well. Students leaving their courses had to be authorised by an Assistant Principal.

Apprenticeships & Adult Education Budget: This was currently disappointing but there was work ongoing to recruit apprentices. Adult apprenticeships could be achieved. £100k short on 16-18 apprenticeships. Adult Education Budget (AEB): there was a shortfall. As much work as possible needed to be done to close the gap.

Governors questioned the 'AEB Other Learning' figures. The line did not add up. It included Community Education. This line would be split out for the next report. There was a £500k estimated shortfall which was being addressed. Management would bring a further report to the March Board.

**27.3.16
PM/BD**

Governors asked about class size and whether a target should be set for 2017-18, to ensure staff were sure of the required target. This was now agreed and was included within the Assistant Principal's curriculum planning guidelines.

**BD –
Feb/Mar**

The Assistant Principal Curriculum joined the meeting.

Governors asked if there was a risk that Barclays would call in the loans. The interim Finance Director said although the bank was supportive, the issue was on a risk register; it was important to keep Barclays informed as to developments.

The Board **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9. **Quality & Student Performance**

9.1 **Student Performance, attendance & withdrawals**

Retention was 94.5%. Attendance 86%. 78% maths and English. There was a tracking document for all learners, to track progress. On target to be above all maths and English targets, except functional skills maths. There was a dedicated Maths Practitioner, plus another Practitioner. Mock exams had taken place that day. There was direct support in place for those students that needed it.

There was strong follow-up on withdrawals. Governors questioned what was included "Other reasons" for withdrawal and asked if the data could be "chunked" into general headings.

SS – imm.

Governors questioned the validity of some of the withdrawal data and requested that it be reviewed so there was clarity as to the reasons for

students leaving. This was in hand. Governors asked if staff took responsibility for their results, which management confirmed. At least one withdrawal was followed up and approved.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.2 Value-added

The report laid out those courses that had performed well, and those that had not. ALPS, Department for Education 16-19, MiDES. The Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services explained the outcomes. Comparators to local colleges had been done. NSC had performed well. This included maths and English, which was also positive.

The position papers explained the data. The College looked to stretch the students from their starting points and had aspirational targets.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.3 QDP Student Survey

The Learner Satisfaction Survey had been changed substantially, with a number of additional questions. There had been a good, 74%, return rate. There had been some good outcomes, e.g. agriculture. Although low, it had been an increase on previous year. One of the main concerns was that the "I feel safe" score had dropped. At student focus groups, all students present had said they felt safe. 15 questions would be asked again via Survey Monkey in March/April. Management would drill down with the Resilience students regarding their responses.

Governors asked a number of questions about the results and agreed that it was important to drill down in the areas of concern to address any genuine issues that were being highlighted. It was also important that any ambiguity in the questions was removed. Governors questioned when a survey of apprentices would be carried out. Management confirmed they were currently agreeing the questions and would learn the lessons from the outcomes of the current survey.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.4 Student Governor report

The student governor presented her report and highlighted the three issues that were raised consistently. Canteen prices was one, which the interim Principal said had been addressed previously with the catering company, following the student focus groups. He would review it again with the new manager but the volume of customer traffic was significantly lower than the projections the company had received when they agreed the contract.

**PM –
Feb/Mar**

The student governor had done a survey of the student representatives. She would bring the paper to the next meeting.

**LS –
27.3.17**

Governors asked about Animal Care students finding it difficult to find time for their work placement. This was caused by the students' part-time jobs:

expectations needed to be managed.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.5 HE Course Committees Autumn 2016

The APQSS summarised the report. Regular reports on HE would be brought to Board, on quality and performance as part of the data dashboard/KPI report.

**PM –
ongoing.**

QAA evidence had just been submitted: they would be visiting at the end of February/early March.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.6 Residential Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) update

The APQSS spoke to the paper, highlighting key points. Since the Monitoring Visit in December there had been a full update of the PIAP. A Quality and Compliance review had been carried out: the report was in the papers.

Governors noted it was a good report but questioned certain omissions of improvements that had been made, e.g. installation of traffic barriers. An annual report on residential provision would be brought to governors.

SS/CDT

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum left the meeting.

9.7 Nursery Post-Inspection Action Plan update

The previous PIAP was 90% green and had been archived. There was now a new action plan, based on that from the Local Authority, incorporating any outstanding matters.

There had been a no-notice inspection the previous week a grade 2 had been awarded (as yet un-moderated). Governors noted that the interface between management and the nursery had changed dramatically and they congratulated management.

Governors asked how a grade 2 positioned the College in the local market. There were a number of good nurseries in the area: management would market the nursery strongly when the grade 2 was confirmed.

SS - Mar

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.8 Post-Inspection Working Group action notes

Governors **resolved to note** the action notes from the meeting held on 25 January 2017.

10. Finance

10.1 Management accounts to December 2016 & cash flow

The main change in forecast outturn was due to the costs (£250k) incurred by Reaseheath for the Federation and the potential merger.

Farm and Nursery: income and expenditure was laid out more clearly. There was a month-on-month and a week-on-week cash flow, extended because the planned merger had been delayed. Cash balance at the year end would be lower than was shown in the report. (see also Strategic Recovery Plan). This would be discussed with the SFA (Skills Funding Agency). It would be a challenge at the end of the year and start of next financial year. Governors asked if the SFA would continue to support the College. This decision was taken at a higher level. It was possible they would not ask for £500k pay back. The College would possibly need another £200k to take it through to merger. The £250k due to Reaseheath had been discussed at the Joint Steering Group.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

10.2 Franchising & sub-contracting

Sub-contracting Policy had been due for renewal but it was noted that there was no further sub-contracting provision.

11. Search & Governance Committee

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2017 were noted. The Committee Chair said he was very pleased with the qualities the two new governors and Ms Vernon as an observer, had joined the Board.

12. Policies

The Prevent Policy was approved, subject to one change, that it was not possible for senior managers to be present at every speaker event. This was **agreed**.

13. Any Other Business

There were no items under Any Other Business.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Monday 27 March 2017, at 5.30pm in the Board Room at Oswestry.

Governor challenge & impact	
3.	Approved the appointment of two new governors, and an observer. Impact: maintaining strength of the Board membership, especially in Quality and Finance. Ensures robust questioning of management.
4.	Requested further detail in the Outreach report. Impact: clarity of information to ensure accurate decision making.
7.	Questioned whether management had informed applicants of the changes to travel policy and if other routes had been considered. Impact: recruitment levels are maintained and

	increased.
	Proposed adding a new apprenticeship contract to the risk register, and requested regular reports to be brought to Board. Impact: keep sight of the significant risks.
	Questioned staff absence figures. Impact: seeking clarity on the meaning of data.
	Questioned the rationale for investment. Impact: ensuring the best decisions made with limited resources.
	Questioned whether infrastructure was in place to support growth strategy. Impact: challenging management to deliver strategic growth.
9.1	Questioned withdrawal data, and requested a different report. Impact: seeking clarity as to the reasons for withdrawal, and to allow monitoring or decision making accordingly.
9.3	Questioned when a survey of apprentices would be carried out. Impact: ensuring full clarity on Learner Voice would be received.

Chair Date