

Newham Sixth Form College

Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2015

Present: Gail May (Chair), Christopher Owens, Jessie Robinson, Jay Nair, Jonathan Birdwell, Chinye Jibunoh, Susan Landeryou, Allison Locke, Aniqah Begum, Mariam Oluwasbusayo Ajibola, Eddie Playfair

In attendance: Ray Ferris (Vice Principal), Arthur Hasler (Director of Finance and Resources), Tracy Oko (Director of Student Services) Nick Christoforou (Director of Studies), Alfred Cardona (Head of Teaching, Learning and Quality), David Watherston (Finance Manager), Paul Baglee (Clerk)

Apologies for absence were received from Shazia Ali-Webber, Meg Dabasia and Claire Blakemore.

1. Declarations of interest

Eddie Playfair declared an interest in the review of senior postholder's pay and performance (minute no 23 refers). There were no other interests declared.

2. Ofsted inspection outcomes and post inspection action planning

The governors were advised that the report of the Ofsted inspection carried out from 20 to 23 October 2015 was now published. This confirmed that the overall effectiveness of the college was judged as "good". The governors congratulated the college on this achievement and on the significant progress that had been made over the last 13 months.

The Principal considered the judgement reflected the contribution of the staff, students and governors to the improvements that had been made. It also confirmed the direction of travel and the journey towards "outstanding". The Principal thanked Ray Ferris for his work as the college nominee and Gail May, Shazia Ali-Webber and Jonathan Birdwell for meeting with the inspectors.

The governors received and considered the draft post-inspection action plan. They noted that, following the publication of the inspection report, the action plan could now be finalised. This included developing a target for governors to become more closely linked to curriculum areas. Work had already begun on the next stage of development. This included staff training to make better use of tutorial time and more effective engagement with students. This engagement would initially focus on Prevent and British Values and the use of the multi-faith room.

Action: draft action plan to be finalised and presented to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to work with the Chair to develop the link governor arrangements with the heads of school and to prepare a target regarding this engagement. This target would be used for the post-inspection action plan and the governing body self-assessment review (minute no 14 refers).

3. Approval of audited accounts 2014/15

The governors received and considered the report of the 2014/15 financial statements audit that was carried out by Buzzacott in September 2015.

The governors were advised the auditors had offered an unqualified opinion about the accuracy of the accounts and the adequacy of the financial controls. This was the fifth consecutive year that the college had achieved an unqualified opinion, and the governors noted that the Ofsted inspectors had also commented positively on the strength of the college's financial systems.

The governors were further advised that the college had finished the year with an operating surplus of £76k. However, as part of the site had been demolished to make way for phase one of the redevelopment works, this was represented in the accounts as a disposal of assets. Therefore the accounts showed a deficit of £205k, but the governors were assured that in trading terms the college had a sustainable financial position.

The auditors had focused on a number of key issues. These included the capital project, the Ofsted judgement (prior to the latest inspection), student numbers and a balance sheet tidy-up. No issues had emerged from this work and the auditors had commented positively on the work to tidy the balance sheet. The Teachers' Pension Scheme had been reviewed as an early part of the audit work and an unqualified opinion was achieved. The auditors also ensured the college's liabilities under the Local Government Pension Scheme were properly reflected in the accounts.

The governors noted that the audit committee had received a detailed report on the audit and the accompanying management letter. The committee recommended the 2014/15 accounts for approval.

Governors' question (*response in italics*)

a) The accounts show the proportion of staff who are teachers. Is this in line with sector averages? *The annual staffing report will provide governors with benchmark data on staffing levels. The college probably has a higher number of support staff, but some of these support learning. Overall the college spends 70% of its income on salaries and this is around the sector average.*

The governors thanked the Finance Manager, the Finance Team and the Director of Finance and Resources for the continuing quality of their work in managing the college's finances and they congratulated them on achieving a further unqualified audit.

Decision: on the recommendation of the audit committee the governors agreed to accept the financial statement audit and authorised the Chair to sign the accounts on behalf of the governing body.

4. Audit committee's annual report 2014/15

Decision: the governors received and accepted the audit committee's annual report. They noted that the internal auditor's overall opinion was that: "based on the work carried out in the year, the college has adequate and effective risk management control and governance processes in respect of the areas examined during the year".

5. Chair, membership and name of the audit committee

The governors were advised that Jonathan Birdwell wished to step down as Chair of the audit committee and they took the following **decisions**:

- a) Jay Nair should be appointed as Chair of the committee
- b) the Clerk should contact those governors not yet assigned to a committee and ask if they would join the audit committee
- c) the committee should be asked to consider changing its name to reflect its scrutiny role.

6. Election of vice-chair

As Jay Nair had been appointed as Chair of the audit committee he stepped down as Vice-Chair of the governing body. The governors **elected** Jonathan Birdwell as Vice-Chair.

The election of the second vice-chair would be deferred to the next meeting.

7. Campus masterplan update

The governors received and accepted an update report on the campus masterplan redevelopment. They **agreed** that as the report contained commercially sensitive information it should be treated as confidential.

The governors were advised that good progress continued to be made with phase one works. The steel frame would start to be erected from 4 January 2016. However, a delay in receiving the necessary permissions to install a gas supply was likely to result in a claim for the additional costs incurred by the contractor. This claim would be assessed by the quantity surveyor and, if necessary, the architect would arbitrate. The governors were reminded that the contract was let on a fixed price basis, but with a small contingency (this was highlighted as a significant risk in the project risk register that was circulated with the report). The claim could account for a significant proportion of this contingency, but other savings were being made that had yet to be reflected in the accounts. The governors were provided with a detailed breakdown of the budget and commitments. They noted that the audit committee had received a presentation on the financial controls for the project.

The governors were further reminded that the college had committed £6 million from reserves to the project. The remaining £3 million would be funded via a commercial loan. The college was working with a consultant to secure a loan and five banks were asked to submit their terms. Of these three had responded and the consultant would undertake a detailed analysis of their proposals so that a recommendation could be made. The loan would be available from February 2016, but was unlikely to be required before June 2016. The governors noted that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had recently announced that sixth form colleges could convert to academies. The banks submitting loan proposals had all indicated that the college's governance arrangements were not a material issue for them.

Decision: the campus masterplan steering group (the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chair of the audit committee) be given the delegated authority to accept the terms of the loan on the basis of the advice of the consultants. The governors noted that this task could be carried out by means of a virtual meeting.

8. Report from the student governors

The governors received and accepted the report of the student union.

The governors were advised that the new members of the student union executive had taken part in a two-day training session to help prepare them for their roles. Drop-in sessions had been started for students and these were held on three days each week during the lunch break. This helped the executive hear the views of students and it also provided an opportunity to sell NUS cards, although sales were down compared with last year.

Student councillors had received training and this was well attended. The first student summit was also well attended and the student union had organised a Black History Month event. This had taken place during the Ofsted inspection and it received good feedback from the inspectors. Student union executive members had attended a Black History Month event at BSix and took part in a debate about celebrating Black History Month. Two students had taken part in the Young Mayor elections, but were unsuccessful. However, one of the candidates was now part of the Newham Youth Council. The student union was also supporting fund raising for five students to attend Raleigh International and it was involved in the multi-faith room committee.

Governors' questions to the student governors (*responses in italics*)

- a) Why are NUS card sales down? *We probably bought too many cards for face-to-face sales. Students prefer to register and buy online, so we will promote this as the means of sales in future.*
- b) What is your target for Raleigh International? *We have places for five students and they must each raise £800 (see action below).*
- c) What will you be doing at your next student summit? *We are creating a time capsule to bury below the new building, so we'll need to decide what should be included.*

Action: students to approach their previous schools to ask for help in raising moneys for Raleigh International.

9. Review of student destinations

The governors received and accepted the annual report on student destinations.

The governors were pleased to learn that 91% of applicants had progressed to higher education, compared with 89% in 2014. Progression to higher education had been highlighted as a strength by Ofsted. The number of students attending Russell Group universities had increased to 90 from 74 and there was a further increase in the number of students attending universities outside of London.

Internally, there was an increase in the number of students progressing from AS to A2, but a reduction in the numbers progressing from level 2 to level 3 courses. Further data is being collected and a report on the numbers progressing to employment and apprenticeships will be presented later in the year. The governors were advised that the number of students taking up apprenticeships was likely to be low when compared with national averages.

Action: further data on student destinations to be presented at a future meeting.

10. College self-assessment review

The governors received and considered a report on the college self-assessment process and the provisional programme team grades.

The governors were advised that Gail May, Christopher Owens and Shazia Ali-Webber had attended a grading meeting on 25 November 2015, to provide an assurance about the rigour of the college's processes. However, the full college self-assessment review was not yet completed. The provisional programme team grades were as follows:

Programme team	Provisional grade
Health and child studies	3
Science	3
Maths and numeracy	3
Social Sciences	2
Engineering and technology	2
Information and communication technology	2
Travel, tourism and sport	2
Art and design	2
Media	1
Performing arts and music	2
Humanities (including languages)	2
English and communication	2
Foundation learning	2
Business	2

Those governors attending the grading meeting commented on the effectiveness of the review process and it was noted that a link governor visit report would follow.

Decision: The governors agreed to accept the provisional grades.

The governors would be given access to the full self-assessment report when it was finalised.

11. Revised student performance targets 2015/16

The governors received and considered a report on the revised top level targets for 2015-16. They were reminded that the targets for level 3 advanced courses and GCSE higher grades had not been accepted at the last meeting. These were now increased to 90% and 50% respectively.

Decision: the governors accepted the revised top level targets for 2015/16 as set out below.

	Approx Starts	2014-15 Actual SR%	2015-16 SR% Targets**	Based on
Overall college long level success rate target % (excluding Functional Skills)	5850	85%	87%	SFC NA
Overall college long level success rate target % (including Functional Skills)	6450	82%	85%	NA all inst + 4%
Long level 3 success rate (excluding functional skills)	3800	88%	88%	SFC NA
A-level		95%	96%	SFC NA
AS-level		81%	83%	SFC NA+1%
Other : level 3 advanced vocational		89%	90%	SFC NA+2%
Long level 2 success rate (excluding functional skills) <i>N.B. Primarily vocational long quals</i>	1600	76%	85%	NA All Inst + 18%
Use of Maths level 2		68%	83%	NA All Inst
GCSE Higher Grades		35%	50%	NA All Inst
Long level 1/Entry level success rate (excluding functional skills)	450	85%	90%	NA All Inst + 4%
Use of Maths level 1		66%	80%	NA All Inst + 9%
Functional Skills	600	56%	80%	NA All Inst +18%
English level E1to L1		84%	88%	NA All Inst +11%
Maths level E1 to L1		64%	84%	NA All Inst + 14%
ICT level E1 to L1		68%	87%	NA All Inst
English level 2		34%	60%	NA All Inst + 9%

(** All targets for 2015-16 are based on SFC averages and on 'All institution averages if the latter are higher.' Where national averages are low, minimum aspirational targets are set)

12. Courses requiring improvement

The governors received and accepted a report on the courses requiring improvement and the performance of new courses.

The governors were advised that courses causing concern in 2014/15 continued to be tracked along with emerging courses of concern. The monitoring data related to standard monitoring assessment (SMA) 1. For most courses this provided an assessment of the first month's work. However, as English and maths GCSE courses started later, the assessment period was the first two weeks. This data and the course action plans would be reviewed with programme team managers.

The governors were also advised that a number of level 2 and 3 courses had changed to different awarding bodies. An analysis of SMA 1 results showed improved performance for most of these courses.

Governors' questions (*responses in italics*)

- a) Why are some of the SMA completion rates low? *Some of these were controlled assessments carried out in classes and in a number of cases the completion rate indicates not yet complete rather than a failure to complete. Students might have been absent from class for genuine reasons, such as work experience, when the assessment was carried out. Better planning will be in place for SMA assessments next year.*
- b) Is MyMaths usage monitored? *We will sharpen our practice in this area to ensure that MyMaths usage is properly monitored and optimised. We will consider publishing usage.*
- c) What was the technical fault referred to in GCSE English Language? *This related to a process issue where managers could not see the full performance data on the system. As this SMA was a controlled assessment those students not achieving the required grade would be given the opportunity to re-sit.*
- d) How does the performance compare with 2014? *SMA 1 does not provide a good comparator, the SMA 2 results are a better indicator and these are due to be uploaded by 4 December 2015.*

13. Performance management

The governors received and accepted a report on the college's staff performance management arrangements.

The governors were advised of the training that had taken place since the 2014 inspection to improve performance. This included training on setting SMART appraisal targets and managing difficult conversations. Staff who received consecutive grade 3 assessments in their performance management or a grade 4 assessment were supported by a learning coach. Anonymised data was provided to show the impact of this support for five members of staff.

The governors were also advised how action research communities and learning walks were used to support staff development and extend good practice. The college had been able to show inspectors how performance management had improved at the college and this was acknowledged as a strength in the inspection report.

14. Governing body self-assessment

Decision: the governors accepted the analysis of the governing body's performance against the 2014/15 self-assessment actions. The governors also adopted the self-assessment action plan for 2015/16, subject to the finalisation of a target regarding governors' engagement with curriculum areas (see minute no. 2).

15. Link governor reports

The governors received and accepted link governor reports for the quality link governors meeting on 6 October (to look at the exam results) and one for health and safety.

The governors were reminded of the importance of submitting visit reports to provide evidence of their engagement.

Decision: the governors to receive a video presentation prior at a future meeting on the characteristics of the range of lesson observation grades.

16. Principal's report

The governors received and considered the report of the Principal.

a) Key performance indicators 2014/15

The governors received updated figures that were tabled at the meeting.

The governors were advised that the college had underachieved its recruitment target and this was likely to reduce its 2016/17 income by approximately £270k. Work would continue to assess why some students were on part-time courses and consideration would be given to offering late start programmes if the investment could be justified.

b) Updates on spending review and area based reviews

The governors were reminded that the college was in the London area review region. There are five sub-regions and the college was in a group that would be reviewed in May 2016. Work to develop a collaborative partnership with the 11 other London sixth form colleges was underway and a meeting of chairs and principals was scheduled for January 2016.

c) Development plan 2015/16

Decision: the governors received and accepted the final version of the 2015/16 development plan.

d) Stakeholder meetings

The governors received and noted the minutes of the student council, staff council and parent forum meetings.

e) Spending review

The governors received a tabled paper on the outcomes of the comprehensive spending review.

The governors were advised that the national funding rate for 16 and 17 year olds would stay at £4k per student, but confirmation about the rates for 18 year olds had still to be received. There would be savings of 3% on some elements of 16-19 funding over the next four years, but the detail was not yet known. This could equate to a reduction of £110k in the college's income each year if the savings were evenly spread. For 2016/17 these savings would be additional to the £271k reduction in income due to falling student numbers.

The governors were also advised that the Chancellor had also announced that sixth form colleges could apply to become academies. If the college converted this would mean that VAT could be reclaimed. This could equate to a saving of £400k or more per annum. The advantages and disadvantages of this governance change needed full analysis and there would be a briefing for governors on this in the New Year.

f) Recent events

The governors received a summary of recent events.

Governors' questions (*responses in italics*)

1. What are the disadvantages of becoming an academy? *The savings on VAT is a major financial advantage, but we are likely to lose some autonomy if we become an academy and it could affect our ability to borrow moneys for capital projects.*
2. If we were an academy would we be funded as a school? *The Education Funding Agency would need to decide the funding rules.*

Decision: the governors recognised the potential significance of the Chancellor's announcement for the college. They agreed that a special meeting should be called if any decisions needed to be taken ahead of their next scheduled meeting.

17. Regularity audit

Decision: on the recommendation of the audit committee the governors accepted the regularity audit report.

18. Review of the performance of the internal auditors in 2014/15 against the indicators and the performance indicators for 2015/16

Decision: on the recommendation of the audit committee the governors accepted the review of the performance of the internal auditors in 2014/15 and that the same performance indicators are set for 2015/16.

19. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2015 were **agreed** as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

20. Minutes of the audit committee held on 10 November 2015

The governors received and noted the minutes of the audit committee held on 10 November 2015.

21. Minutes of the search committee held on 13 October 2015

The governors received and noted the minutes of the search committee held on 13 October 2015.

22. Meeting dates 2015/16

The governors agreed the following meeting dates:

Spring Tuesday 9 February 2016 Tuesday 22 March 2016

Summer Tuesday 17 May 2016 Tuesday 5 July 2016

All meetings to start at 6.30 pm

23. Review of senior postholder's pay and performance

The governors **agreed** that this item should be deferred to the next meeting as there were insufficient governors in attendance who are not staff or students to form a quorum.