



WOKING COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
ANNUAL CONFERENCE & SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING
Minutes of the Board meeting held in the Staff Room
on Wednesday 11th September 2024 from 4.15pm

Present:	Gary Botha	
	Erica Ehoru	from 5.40pm
	Charlotte Eker	
	Brett Freeman	Principal
	Tracy Hampton	
	Ben Ramdhony	
	Nawal Raza-Malik	
	Rosh Sellahewa	Vice Chair
	Tim Stokes	Chair
In Attendance:	Ray Marks	Member
	Helen Flower	Observer
	Laura Cook	Assistant Principal
	Helena Clarke	Assistant Principal
	Fiona Munday	Director of Finance & Estates
	Barbara Maude	Clerk to the Board of Trustees

	Item
1.	<p>Welcome by Chair & Principal The Chair and the Principal welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended their thanks to the Heads of Department and the Heads of Year for joining the Annual Trustee Conference.</p>
2.	<p>Trustees & Members to meet College Heads of Department Trustees and the two members present, Ray Marks and Jonathan Miles, were invited to join a table of their choice with Heads of Department and Heads of Year to discuss in small groups thoughts and reflections on the last academic year and to highlight challenges and priorities for the new academic year.</p> <p>The discussion groups were rotated after approximately 15 minutes allowing Trustees to meet separate groups of Heads of Department and Heads of Year.</p> <p>After the session concluded, the Principal thanked all staff members for their time and Heads of Department and Heads of Year then left the meeting. Jonathan Miles also left the meeting.</p>

<p>3.</p>	<p>Apologies for Absence & Declarations of Interest Apologies had been received from Alastair MacAulay and Anne Middleton both of whom had prior work commitments. The apologies were agreed. It was noted that Callum Mitchell was not present.</p> <p>No Trustee, Woking Academy Member or member of SLT declared any pecuniary or other direct or indirect personal interest in any item on the agenda.</p> <p>Before the formal Board meeting commenced, the Trustees gave some feedback on their discussions with the various Heads of Department and Heads of Year. Trustees were pleased to see the variety of older and newer staff faces around the table and commented that all those who had recently joined the College had said that they had been made to feel very welcome. There had also been a very positive feel to the start of the new academic year.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed to the Board of Trustees, Charlotte Eker and Nawal Raza-Malik following their appointment by a written resolution of the Members of Woking College passed on 29th July 2024.</p> <p>The Board duly noted: Charlotte Eker and Nawal Raza-Malik had been appointed as Trustees of the Board and Directors of Woking College (Company Number 10821223) with effect from 1st September 2024 for a term of four years.</p> <p>The Board also welcomed to the meeting as an observer, Helen Flower, who had attended for an interview prior to the meeting as a potential co-opted Trustee.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Introduction to the Board Meeting The Chair outlined the strategic intent of the meeting which incorporated speaking directly to Heads of Department and Heads of Year without the presence of management and then to receive a cross-college update on the start of the new academic term and the priorities and challenges for 2024/25.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting The Board received the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3rd July 2024. The minutes were agreed and approved for signature by the Chair via the marked as signed facility on GovernorHub.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Matters arising There were no substantive matters arising which were not already included within the remaining agenda items.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Trustee & Executive: Annual Conversation The Chair reported to the Board that prior to the meeting, both himself and the Vice Chair and Principal had met to discuss expectations of both the Board and the Executive for the year ahead. This conversation was the precursor to the ‘annual conversation’ which was an opportunity to discuss how the Board and the Executive could best work together to</p>

	<p>ensure skills, knowledge and experiences around the table were all employed effectively for the benefit of the College.</p> <p>The three areas discussed related firstly to the development of the new Strategic Plan as the consultation on the new plan would become a priority for the year ahead. This would require strategic input from all Trustees and the opportunity for voices to be heard. This was the main strategic focus for both the Board and the Executive and a strong and collaborative approach would be greatly welcomed.</p> <p>The second area was for Trustees to be more involved between meetings which would translate into being more informed about what was going on in College. The Executive Team were keen that Trustees read the Board papers in advance and posed questions before the meeting. This approach was really welcomed by the Executive, enabling them, if needed, to have the time to prepare a thorough response. In turn, the Board would appreciate that papers continued to be available well in advance and that executive summaries were completed appropriately and directed Trustees clearly to the action or decision required of them.</p> <p>The third area was the promotion and take up of the Link Trustee Scheme under the new framework where Trustees were linked to members of the Executive Team, rather than as previously had been the case, Heads of Department. The push this year was for Trustees to undertake Link visits at least twice in the course of the year. (Action: ALL)</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>College Briefing Update</p> <p>The Principal gave an oral cross-College update on the start of the new academic year.</p> <p>The Principal advised that currently in terms of recruitment, the College had enrolled 724 students into the Upper Sixth; 920 into the Lower Sixth and 116 at Foundation level. Allowing for a drop of around 30 to 40 students on roll which historically always happened as there was invariably movement at the start of the year, management expected that the College would settle with approximately 1,700 students on roll which compared favourable to the 1,495 on roll in the previous year.</p> <p>The College also currently had 41 students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which represented the highest level of educational needs.</p> <p>In terms of the College's offer, the Principal reiterated the College's commitment to continuing its comprehensive nature and especially the College's L2 offer which was not available at other comparable Colleges. The College had also enrolled 190 ESOL students and this figure was anticipated to rise to approximately 250.</p> <p>The Chair commented that in discussions with staff earlier, there was a consensus that the ethos of the College would be maintained despite the larger student numbers. In addition, the concern over larger class sizes had not transpired as there were in fact only two classes where there were over 20 in a class and these were both in the Maths department where there were classes of 22 students.</p>

In addition, the College had also maintained its extensive enrichment programme which management were delighted about and this together with the comprehensive curriculum offer across the whole College, in the view of management really set the College apart from its competitors.

The Principal gave a brief summary of the works to the College site that had taken place over the summer which had been overseen and co-ordinated by the Finance & Estates Director. Much of the works had taken place within the ceilings of the buildings causing a considerable amount of dust and upheaval. As part of those works a new fire suppression system had been installed which had an investigation delay feature, which basically allowed a few moments for the cause to be investigated before the whole site had to be evacuated.

As a result of the installation of the new fire suppression system, the original brown fire doors had been replaced and new doors fitted which had helped to lift the overall internal appearance across the whole site.

In terms of the canteen proposal which the Board had discussed at the last meeting it was confirmed that the project had originally been spilt across 3 phases. Initially it had been planned to complete all three phases over the summer of 2024. However, due to some issues with the design plans (such as pipework having to be moved) and the complexity of the fire suppression system installation which was ongoing at the same time, only the first phase had in fact been completed. Management were therefore going to assess whether, as the term progressed and the canteen as updated under phase 1 was used, it was necessary or desirable to proceed with phases two and three.

In respect of student numbers, Trustees queried what the College might look like next year if a similar number of students were recruited and how feasible was it for the College to accommodate a cohort of 1,800. The Principal agreed that there was no great flexibility on rooming across the site as it was currently configured, but with the possibility of potential surpluses in the years ahead it may be that the Board and the Executive started the process now of reviewing the options for a new building as that process in itself took approximately 3 years to complete. This approach however had to take into account the need for the College to be able to contribute financially towards the cost of a new build and the fact that in terms of demographics student numbers were anticipated to plateau.

In terms of finances, the Principal reported that there had been a 5.5% pay rise for teaching staff agreed from 1st September 2024 and the government had confirmed that it would be 'fully' funded. Negotiations were still ongoing for support staff although the same level of a 'fully' funded pay rise was anticipated.

The Principal also advised that there was a possibility that the College may receive in-year growth funding, although invariably each year the exact goal posts to achieve growth funding changed so this could not be relied upon.

The forecasted deficit was likely to reduce by the year end and there was the possibility that the College would return to a surplus position in the following years.

	<p>The Finance and Estates Director would reforecast the budget after the October census date and this would be presented and reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee at its meeting in November 2024.</p> <p>In respect of staffing, it was confirmed that the College was fully staffed. Whilst there were a few additional posts that were currently going out for interview, such as a Performing Arts technician, all lessons were covered. The College had recruited 36 new members of staff at the beginning of the year and this had created a very positive feel across the College, feeling like a timely refresh at the start of a new academic year.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Examination Results 2024</p> <p>The Board received a summary of examination results for the academic year 2023/24 from Laura Cook, Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality.</p> <p>The Board were advised that in terms of comparison, the most accurate results for meaningful comparison were in respect of the 2019/20 examination results as this years results returned to pre-pandemic levels. The results for 2020/21 and 2021/22 could largely be ignored for comparison purposes as these had been based on teacher assessed grades.</p> <p>Results for 2019/20 and 2022/23, (but only where the courses had been similar) were therefore to be used for comparison.</p> <p>In headline terms, the College’s overall pass rate for 2023/24 was 97.3% which compared to 99.9% in 2019 and 97% in 2022/23.</p> <p>High grades which were A* to B were 52.5% which compared to 66% in 2019/20 and 47% in 2022/23.</p> <p>Level 3 pass results had increased marginally in 2023/24 to 98.3% compared to 98% in 2022/23 and 99.8% in 2019/20. High grades had also increased to 51.9% in 2023/24 over 49% in 2022/23. High grades had been appreciably higher in 2019/20, but the examinations had been redesigned in the interim, so an accurate comparison was not possible.</p> <p>In terms of A level results then the pass rate was 97.6% for 2023/24 which was comparable to 98% in 2022/23 and 99.9% in 2019/20. High grades had reached 53.3% which was a slight increase over 51% in 2022/23 but lower than 63% in 2019/20. The College had achieved an ALPS Grade 3 which put the College in the top 25% nationally for value added.</p> <p>For those new to the Board, the Assistant Principal advised that ALPS was a measure of progress based on what a student came into the College with in terms of their grades and what they were therefore expected to leave with. The ALPS grades ranged from 1 which was the best score to 9 which was the worst.</p>

An ALPS score of 2 put an institution into the top 10% nationally so in terms of the College; Chemistry, Maths, Statistics and Textiles had achieved an ALPs 2; and Fine Art, Graphics, Photography, Biology, Drama, English, Language, French, Further Maths and Law had all achieved ALPS 3.

The Assistant Principal also highlighted that in terms of Textiles, not only had the department achieved an ALPS 2 but had also achieved 100% High Grades which was to be commended.

Another analysis of value-added data was provided by Six Dimensions which was run by the Sixth Form Colleges Association and was therefore purely sixth form data. This indicated that 20% of College students achieved 1 grade higher than typical for a similarly qualified student in a sixth form college nationally.

This percentage rose to 22% for boys and 18% for girls with the exactly the same percentage for white students and BME students so whilst there was a modest difference in terms of gender there was no difference in terms of ethnicity.

Management advised that students had achieved more 'U's this year, 23 in total which was an increase compared to last year. Management confirmed that every student who had achieved a U had had some form of support in place so it was challenging for management to assess why there had been an increase.

In terms of A level courses that required development, then these were noted as being Music, Classical Civilisation, Philosophy, Religious Studies and Economics.

All of these areas would be monitored upon a half termly basis and management would be looking at attendance, student performance and submission of work. It was noted that Philosophy and Religious Studies had been delivered by one member of staff and the results were disappointing as throughout the year there appeared to have been good engagement by the students and the staff member had been supported by an external manager from another college.

Analysis indicated that students may not have had the necessary exam skills or resources for revision. Going forward, management would be closely overseeing the management of these two curriculum areas. Trustees asked if the students involved had been profiled and management responded that they had looked carefully at the individual students and how they had performed in other subjects and almost without exception the students had achieved their worst grade in these two subjects.

In terms of Applied General Qualifications, the pass rate for 2023/24 was 99.3% up from 98% last year and comparable with 99.8% in 2019/20. High Grades had also increased up to 50% compared to 47% in 2022/23. Currently the AGQ's had an ALPS score of 5 but this was due to be re-run so may in fact change.

In respect of Level 3 vocational courses with ALPs 3 or better these were noted as being the Extended Certificates in Business, Performing Arts and Engineering.

The L3 AGQ areas for development were in Health and Social Care, Childcare and Media. The College had a new HoD in Health and Social Care who was extremely positive and in terms of Media, whilst management were not overtly concerned the percentage of high grades had fallen but often these issues were cohort specific.

However, management would be monitoring closely these areas, especially Health & Social Care which had been an area for improvement identified in 2023.

In terms of L2 the pass rate had increased to 97.5% in 2023/24 up from 96% in 2022/23. High grades were at 55% down from 59% the previous year. 82% achieved merit Plus which was down from 86% in 2023. The L2 area for development was Sport where the department had seen staff turnover and students passing but not achieving a distinction.

Of note was the IT Extended Certificate which in 2023 had been identified as an area for development and this year, the pass rate had increased by 20% and high grades had improved by 76%.

In respect of GCSE high grades in English were up to 59.3% from 55% in 2022/23 and for Maths the increase was from 43% in 2022/23 to 56.8% for 2023/24. This compared favourably to the national average which was 31% in English and 22.7% in Maths.

The Board also reviewed the performance of both SEND students and disadvantaged and Safeguarded Students.

SEND students had improved on 2023 data across retention, pass rates, achievement and high grades and were performing broadly in line with the rest of the College cohort.

Reviewing the data for disadvantaged and safeguarded students it was noted that it was not possible to compare the data to other colleges and Trustees felt it would be helpful, in future, to have the figures for exactly how many students were in each of the respective categories available. **(Action: LCO)**

Management were able to provide this information at the meeting and confirmed that in 2023/24 161 students had been in receipt of a bursary or free school meals and there had been 471 logged safeguarding concerns although this included a range of concerns and were not all high-level concerns.

Finally, in terms of results, the adult GCSE high grades were noted in English (53.9% compared to 88% last year) and in Maths (69.2% compared to 17% last year). The Principal advised that these results were the most cohort specific of any of the qualifications offered by the College.

Other successes across the year were also noted including the significant number of students who had participated in subject specific Olympiads.

The presentation also included the headlines from both the student survey and the staff survey. It was noted that 91 members of staff had responded to the staff survey.

	The Board thanked the Assistant Principal for the comprehensive analysis of the 2024 examination results.
10.	<p>Financial & Capital Projects Update</p> <p>As the Principal had already covered this update earlier in the meeting there was nothing further to add in terms of this agenda item.</p>
11.	<p>Safeguarding & Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024</p> <p>The Board received an update on the key changes introduced under the new Safeguarding Policy and KCSIE 2024 from Helena Clarke, Assistant Principal, Support for Learning.</p> <p>The Safeguarding team at the College had grown to include the Assistant Principal, Pastoral Director, 7 Heads of Year, the Head of Student Wellbeing and the Pastoral Admin officer. In response to a question, it was confirmed that all of the DSL team had College provided supervision.</p> <p>The key changes to KCSIE 2024 had been minimal and included changes mainly to phrasing and definitions. The changes included an increased focus on the impact of young people witnessing domestic violence; an awareness that the guidance on young people who are ‘gender questioning’ was still under review and more changes were therefore likely to follow; and an emphasis on the concerns that may lead to the need for early help including missing education and having a parent or carer in custody.</p> <p>In terms of the changes proposed to the Safeguarding Policy then these reflected the changes made in KCSIE 2024 and the changes to the staffing of the DSL team. There had also been an extension to Appendix 3 of the policy in line with the Surrey County Council audit recommendations to include definitions.</p> <p>The Board were assured that the safeguarding policies and processes were robust and clearly met the requirements of KCSIE2024 and demonstrated best practice in line with Surrey County Council recommendations following the audit of the College’s safeguarding processes in the summer of 2024.</p> <p>Trustees were reminded that the link to KCSIE 2024 was within the confirmation tab on GovernorHub and were requested to read the whole document and complete the confirmation to confirm they had done so. (Action: ALL)</p> <p>It was also mandatory for all Trustees to complete Safeguarding training on appointment and then regularly, which was recommended to be at least annually. Trustees were asked to complete the online Safeguarding module, details of which had been circulated outside of the meeting. The training culminated in an assessment and once passed, Trustees would be able to access a certificate which could then be uploaded to their individual GovernorHub profile. (Action: ALL)</p> <p>The Board resolved to approve: The Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy 2024/25.</p>

<p>12.</p>	<p>Governance</p> <p>For completion via GovernorHub:</p> <p>Trustees were also reminded that it was timely to complete and or reconfirm their register of interests for 2024/25. The external auditors would shortly be undertaking their financial statements audit and they would be provided access to GovernorHub to be able to review not only Board and Committee papers but also confirmations and declarations. This platform was now the only formal record for those declarations as paper copies were no longer utilised. (Action: ALL)</p> <p>In addition to the KCSIE 2024 confirmation and the Register of Interests declaration there were two generic declarations that related to the Trustee Code of Conduct and Gifts and Hospitality declarations that Trustees were also asked to complete. (Action: ALL)</p> <p>For information:</p> <p>The Board received a summary of the Academy Trust Handbook 2024 changes which had come into effect from 1st September. The 2024 handbook had introduced minimal changes compared to previous years. The changes brought greater flexibility in facility improvements through simplified lease procedures; an increased focus on cyber security and technology standards compliance; enhanced scrutiny requirements for larger trusts and greater expectations around estate management and safety.</p> <p>In terms of cyber security and in accordance with the DfE Academy Trust Governance guide published earlier in the year, which recommended that at least one Trustee should complete cyber security training, it was confirmed that Gary Botha had undertaken cyber security training with Every in June 2024 and therefore this would be added to the Board profile. (Action: GBO/BMA)</p> <p>The Clerk advised that the annual Board Performance Review for 2023/2024 had been prepared and was currently with the Chair for review and once approved would be circulated outside of the meeting. (Action: TST/BMA)</p> <p>In addition, the Board were also advised that the College’s SAR process would be taking place on the 26th and 27th September and again the schedule would be circulated to Trustees outside of the meeting and Trustees were encouraged to attend. (Action: ALL)</p> <p>It was also agreed that it would be helpful if the Clerk could circulate details of any relevant College events taking place this term so that Trustees had as much advance notice as possible. (Action: BMA)</p> <p>The feedback from the Staff Focus Group which had been held on 3rd July was noted although the report had been circulated after the event and the Chair of the Board had already provided an oral summary at the last meeting.</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Date & Time of Next Meeting</p> <p>It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 6th November 2024 at 6.00pm.</p>