

**Minutes of the Curriculum and Quality Committee meeting  
23 April 2025  
Bedford, Boardroom  
16:00**

**Members Present:** Richard Dimpleby (Chair)

Cathy Barr  
John Butcher  
Yiannis Koursis (CEO)  
Noor Nazir  
LJ Rawlings  
Sheila Selwood  
Kasar Singh (online)

**In attendance:** Sarah Baxter (Executive Director Strategy & External Affairs)  
Sara Gonzalez (Senior Governance Coordinator) (online)  
Clare Hood (Executive Director Education) (online)  
Rachel Nicol (Group Director Governance) (minutes)  
Robin Webber-Jones (Executive Director Curriculum)

#### **CQ/17/25 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

##### Apologies

There were no apologies for absence

##### Declarations of Interest

In relation to the Curriculum Update LJ Rawlings declared her appointment as Chair of Youth Guarantee (Cambridge and Peterborough combined authority).

#### **CQ/18/25 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

#### **CQ/19/25 Quality of Education report**

The Committee confirmed they had read the report. The Executive Director Education highlighted:

- Improvements in teaching, learning and assessment ("TLA") due to ongoing work of the learning excellence team. A range of new processes are being introduced to meet the challenges around consistency. Predicted achievement (noted to be a cautious estimate) is currently 84.5%, 0.2% down on last academic year. Work



has been done with Heads around the processes for predictions. Retention is currently the same as at the end of last year so a better pass rate is needed to achieve a higher level of achievement than last year.

- Predicted achievement is lowest at CBC and highest at Tresham. Targets for Heads of Department ("HODs") are set against predictions allowing for reflection on the accuracy of predictions.
- A gap analysis was completed over Easter on Quality Assurance processes across The Bedford College Group ("TBCG"). It was presented to Executive and has highlighted issues to address. The analysis has shown that 23% of reports show medium or high risk for work with awarding bodies, areas of non compliance with registration for qualifications or some poor exam results for the BTEC exams sat in January.

Committee discussion and questions centred on:

The impact of risks in work with awarding bodies, it depends on the awarding body but can delay results and certifications. TBCG now has a breakdown of the position per awarding body and a robust tracking system.

Previous issues discussed in the Committee on Heads not challenging strongly enough the attendance on English and Maths discussed in the self assessment ("SAR") and lack of progress. Challenges in the quality assurance processes were acknowledged, long term lack of structure linking annual cycle enabling challenge as a Group wide process. Assurance was given that this is an ongoing conversation with Heads, who are now being held to account for English and maths performance, with a focus on the difference between English and Maths and main programme attendance. Accountability focuses on all elements of the study programme.

The Committee understood the reasons for CBC not entering students for English and maths. Historically this was a logistical issue but it is now being managed on a Group basis.

The Committee referenced that 86% teachers show "sound" practice through lesson observations. It was confirmed that judgements are in place and are put together to form a score and meet the components of the framework in place. Further questions were raised to understand who makes judgements and how this is moderated. The Executive Director Education provided a brief overview of the overarching framework (referring back to appendix 1 of Quality of Education report from last committee) Session visits in term 1 had covered 5 key themes. All Heads are provided with feedback and information to ensure robust plans are formulated for each teacher. Some teachers are assigned individual coaches, with a range of other support methods being deployed as



appropriate, including resource sharing and session visits which are now starting to take place.

Governors explored the A level data and what this depicted. **For future meetings Governors requested an average grade summary to show patterns of where pupils are against where we want them to be based on predictions from GCSE.**

**ACTION: *The Executive Director Education will provide some headlines.***

Governors noted that scrutiny of processes has identified greater challenges and inconsistencies and sought assurance on actions planned. The Executive Director Education confirmed processes are in place to support students in the current academic year and longer term processes for future academic years. It was acknowledged that processes need to be habitual and culturally embedded and there will be an education and training piece for heads and programme managers to ensure they understand where they will be challenged.

Governors sought to understand the resource needs and action from them following the process review to ensure students have everything they need to achieve. It was confirmed that the team is focused on the work needed and methods of resourcing such as the online system teacher walk throughs. The review has led to a better understanding. Focus will move towards starting the next academic year with a clear process.

Further questioning centred on the student position and it was confirmed processes seek to understand student knowledge and perceptions of a "good" lesson.

Assurance was provided that there is now a better understanding of learners at risk and the Group is reallocating support as needed.

English and maths results to date were set out for the Committee and it was explained that Grade 1 and above is counted as an achievement as the table reflects how results will be reported nationally. Internal data monitoring focuses on improvement by 1 grade progress. The Executive Director Education explained the work around short course / qualifications, the impact on achievement rates and the value for student development. The focus, particularly through the business planning process is on ensuring the offer is relevant and useful and ensure departments understand the break down of their achievement levels. Assurance was given that decisions on courses to adopt are taken on relevancy for the student and in the context of risk to main qualification achievement and administrative burden. The position was understood to be slightly different in the 6th forms who from next year are looking at more extended project qualification and engagement with Duke of Edinburgh award scheme.



**The Committee noted that the report provided assurance**

### **CQ/20/25 Ofsted Consultation**

The Executive Director Education provided a brief overview. A Group response has been submitted. It is considered that views broadly align with those of the sector. The paper provided some data on what the proposed report card might look like. It is expected that some changes will be made and work on the SAR will anticipate this.

**The Committee approved that the report provided assurance**

### **CQ/21/25 Update on the 6th Forms and ALPS**

The Committee confirmed the paper had been read. The Executive Director Education highlighted that the 6th forms use data capture to report on in year performance. The ALPs scores were explained (7 to 9 being the bottom 25% and 1-3 being top 25% of sixth forms) The in year data capture shows a continuation of below average results. The position was caveated in that some provision has low numbers which can distort the data. Performance is being challenged and support is in place. Some inconsistencies with the data have been identified and are being addressed.

A restructure in the 6th forms in the academic and pastoral side is being implemented and Executive believe this will address issues and drive improvements.

The Learning Excellence Team are going to support work on exam technique.

#### Committee questions and discussion:

*Are we supporting students to make sure they are where they need to be?*

The Executive Head of 6th form has put in systems, mitigation and support where needed.

*Are we stabilising staffing?* The restructure may destabilise staffing and provide challenges in the short term but with longer term benefits.

*To what extent are GCSE grades linking in?* There are a range of factors leading to lower grades which can be starting grades, individual strengths or other factors such as teaching, learning and assessment.

*What is the impact of the current entry criteria?* The entry criteria by subject area has been reviewed which will impact in September. The focus is noted to be to get the guidance right to ensure students are on the right courses and link with pastoral work to understand the needs of the learners and improve outcomes for students with SEND.

It has been agreed to withdraw the academic bursary and funds will be reinvested in booster groups and to support students in need. The assessment strategy is being developed.

Governors and management reflected on whether teaching is good enough and whether it would be timely to reflect on the breadth of provision offered. A robust discussion took place around balancing the Group's mission and articulated purpose around serving the needs of communities in the context of sixth forms, cultural challenges, working practices and the impact of contractual arrangements.

Assurance was given that a full suite of Easter revision sessions are in place.

*With vocational provision we have to justify that courses meet skills needs, should sixth forms look at risk that we don't have an offering that leads to careers locally? Discussion centred on faculties going through a restructure, intended destinations, dedicated staff to focus on high achievement and Russell group entry.*

The Executive Director Strategy and External Affairs outlined the current position on 6th form applications which are significantly down. Work will be done on ensuring the right staff are appointed and a positive reputation is developed. .

***ACTION: Thought to be given to a Committee Creative session on 6th forms with RWJ and Executive Head of Sixth Forms (possible an evening in June)***

**The Committee approved that the report provided assurance**

#### **CQ/22/25 Performance tables – National achievement rate tables and predicted achievement**

The Committee confirmed they had read the report.

The tables are released in March to allow institutions to check accuracy and their performance against other providers. L3 results (which includes A levels) is below national average but last year, overall achievement was an improvement on previous years.

Apprenticeships are not yet at national average. Output is below what we expected internally and 3% below outturn of other FE providers. The differential is linked to merger, movement of apprenticeships and hybrid year end positions.

TBCG is working on ensuring internal data reporting gives a clear analysis of the position and that decisions are then taken to support educational decisions rather than easy achievement.



## The Committee approved that the report provided assurance

### C/23/25 Curriculum Update

The Committee confirmed the paper had been read.

The Curriculum Strategy is being developed with a first draft in place. The Executive Director of Curriculum is meeting with the link governor for skills. The draft strategy includes key central aims and has been influenced by consultation with students. There is broader work being done around community needs, home schooling and building consistency across the Group.

For post 19 education, focus has been on management of the position in view of diminishing grant income, support of adults in wellbeing and skills boot camps.

#### The Committee discussed:

-How careers, advice and guidance are blended into the Curriculum Strategy and how this will be taken forward in the management structure as portfolios settle.

-Hospitality in light of the Universal announcement and the need for a whole visitor economy strategy.

-Need to link estates strategy, resources and prioritisation across the Group to support the curriculum.

-NEETS (not in Education, Employment or Training) and home educated and need for a set of standards and work with key stakeholders around transitioning students back into education. TBCG is seeking external funding to support that work. Anecdotal evidence was provided on the positive work that has been done in providing guidance to curriculum teams. (***LJ will connect the Principal of Bedford College with another College who are making significant progress in this area.***)

***ACTION: The Executive Director Curriculum will link up other Executive leads with LJ, (link governor for careers) and John (link governor for skills) to make sure the Curriculum Strategy pulls together all elements needed.***

The Committee approved that the report provided assurance.

### CQ/24/25 Accountability statement update

The Executive Director Curriculum has mapped the Group strategy against the local skills improvement plan ("LSIP") and priorities.

The Committee was informed that the T level allocation is 1395 but the true number believed to be 1074.



The final statement will come to the Board on May 21<sup>st</sup> for approval.

References to “soft skills” “Character education” were noted to relate to transferable skills with wording reflecting the language used by LSIP and in the Ofsted framework.

**The Committee approved that the report provided assurance**

### Behaviours & Attitudes

#### **CQ25/25 Student Services update**

The Committee confirmed they had read the report and that it had provided a useful update.

The Executive Director Curriculum is working to develop the UCAS application table to look at presentation of percentages.

Work with Bedford Giving, the Harpur Trust, learning lounge, broader activities and the plan to move to YOUR framework was outlined.

Student voice and participation were commended as feeling a lot stronger.

The Committee sought to understand work experience which is confirmed in every study programme. It was explained that there is an internal audit on work experience and industry placement. Challenges have included making it meaningful and linking it to local skills.

***ACTION: Governors commented that the paper provided a lot of information but the focus of future papers will be monitored to ensure key information for governors is identified.***

**The Committee approved that the paper provided assurance.**

### Safeguarding

#### **CQ26/25 Safeguarding Update**

The Committee confirmed the paper had been read.

CPOMs system implementation is on track and lock down drills have successfully taken place across most campuses. There is potential for inspection of residential provision in the near future. The Executive Director Education outlined the position, work that has been done and developments since the last inspection. Assurance was given that where issues have been identified mitigations are in place and learners are safe.



The Committee had a robust discussion on the role of governors in safeguarding including the appropriate data for oversight at each level and assurance required that leaders are picking up cases in a timely manner. Although there were different views on the appropriate level of data the Committee was keen that reporting is proportionate to the risks identified.

The link governor for safeguarding provided further insight into the information received at the Group Safeguarding Committee and the meetings she has had with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and with the HR team.

The Committee understood that the legal responsibility for safeguarding sits with the full Board.

Further questioning and discussions centred on reporting and referral rates, part time adults and factors impacting referral rates in particular.

The Committee further sought to understand how the Board could impact positive progress. More work is being done around mapping the academic year to give reports a different focus and support "Embedding culture of safeguarding" Assurance was given on the readiness for Martin's law, and positive use of CPOMs, inputting of data to the system and staff awareness. The issue as to whether there are sufficient resources in July and August given the term time contracts in place will continue to be monitored.

Further assurance was given that processes already in place are working and the permanent member of staff to lead on this area will start in July.

***ACTION: The Committee considered that an internal audit of safeguarding processes once systems and processes are settled would be beneficial. The CFO will be asked to consider an appropriate scope with relevant leadership.***

**The Committee approved that the paper provided assurance.**

#### **CQ/27/25 Stakeholder Feedback**

The Executive Director Strategy and External Affairs went through the report and highlighted:

- FT student first impressions survey results, all colleges satisfaction improving but not where want it to be currently.
- Looking at benchmarking and average of other providers, in bottom 25%.
- NSS internal survey, shows improving position, moving out of bottom quartiles, Bedford results lower than other colleges but still strong. External NSS results have not yet been received. The Committee congratulated the team on the 68% response rate.

The Committee had a discussion around information provided, whether it was a surprise to Executive and sought to understand the planned actions, in particular in teaching and learning.

It was explained that Executive are seeking to find the balance between how much information is included in the reports with timeliness and relevance. Waiting for focus group outcomes can delay information. It was understood that results are presented to Principals but acknowledged that there needs to be more triangulation through Executive and assurance given that the new structure will allow more connected conversations.

**The Committee approved that the paper provided assurance**

**CQ/28/25 Regulatory and Compliance**

The report presented confirmed the position on maximum fees for 2025-2026 finalised with the Office for Students

The Committee sought to understand higher margin offerings and the balance between larger groups, costs and quality.

**The Committee approved that the paper provided assurance**

**CQ/29/25 Minutes of the previous meeting 12.02.25**

The minutes of the meeting on 12 February 2025 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting

**CQ/30/25 AOB**

There was no other business discussed.