

# QUEEN ELIZABETH SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

## Minutes of the meeting of the Board of the College Corporation Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Present:

Mr C Wiper, Chair  
Mr T Fisher, Principal  
Ms J Barrett  
Mr J Deane  
Mr S Heath  
Mrs J Hillyard  
Mr C Kipling  
Prof K L Oglesby OBE  
Mrs J Pan  
Mr S Regan  
Mr K Sharma  
Mr A Teague  
Ms V Snowball  
Mr D Warman  
Mr A Wilson

Apologies:

Mr A Brown  
Mr I Clyde

In attendance:

Mrs T Amarawansa  
Mr M Baker  
Mr S Hargrove  
Mr L Job  
Mr I Waite  
Mr S Dowson, Clerk

21/19 Declarations of interest  
There were no declarations of interest.

22/19 Appointment of new governors  
The Board voted unanimously to appoint Ms J Barrett as an independent governor and Ms V Snowball as a staff governor, both appointments for four years with effect from 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

The Chairman and the Board welcomed Ms Barrett and Ms Snowball to the Governing Body.

23/19 Minutes of the previous meeting  
The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019 were **agreed** by the Board and **approved** for signing by the Chair.

24/19 Matters arising

There were no matters arising

25/19 Governor Training – Student Mental Health

Mr Fisher reminded governors of the tragic circumstances in which a student at the College took her own life on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

Mr Fisher explained that QE had been fully involved in a, 'Child death review information sharing meeting' organised by Durham LSCB, which had discussed what had happened and looked in particular for any insights and any lessons that could be learnt.

The meeting, which included medical professionals, social services and the police, had been unable to identify any examples of steps which could have been taken by the College to prevent the tragedy. The student did not present as a person in imminent danger.

Mr Fisher wished to reassure governors, staff and students that the College was doing everything it could, with the resources available, to help students with mental health issues and to prevent anything like this happening again.

Mr Baker introduced the Governor Training, 'Mental Health and Wellbeing' and described the national mental health 'crisis' that had developed recently as a consequence of,

- A measurable increase in mental illness
- Pressure on public health systems
- A change in culture – it is now more acceptable to talk about mental illness and there is a new vocabulary developing to describe mental illness and mental health problems

An NHS report, 'Mental health of children and young people in England, 2017' had revealed that 17% of young people aged 17 to 19 suffered from a range of mental health problems. The problems are most likely to develop early, and girls are twice as likely as boys to have a mental health disorder.

In the past 20 years there has been a 38% increase in young women's experience of anxiety and depression compared to a 2% increase in experience of the same conditions among young men.

Children from low income families, LGBT and those affected by learning disabilities are more likely to experience mental health problems and issues.

Mr Baker described the scale of the issues at QE

- 40 students are currently supported by counselling services
- 120 students have a mental health safeguarding record
- c50 students are supported by each principal tutor

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Mr Baker explained that it was difficult to quantify the scale of the issue with any accuracy. The College may be unaware of some problems and some of the issues recorded are very minor.

Mr Baker stressed that schools and colleges are funded to deliver study programmes. It is not the college's role to diagnose and treat mental health issues. But the College must help students to succeed in spite of mental illness.

Mr Baker described the recent training aimed at staff and students including a staff development evening in November 2018 and resilience training for students earlier this term.

In addition, a pre-counselling service called, 'The Listening Post' had been introduced at QE in January 2019 and there were service level agreements in place with two professional counsellors. Some students were receiving support from CAMHS but this did not provide a quick and effective response every time.

Mr Dean asked if there was good sharing of information between the various agencies involved. Mr Baker replied that within the college information sharing was good but externally it was not possible to be absolutely confident of processes. Some students may choose not to inform the college of issues they are dealing with or treatment they are receiving for mental health issues.

Mr Teague asked Mr Baker why, if the national figure was 17%, there were only 120 students receiving treatment not 300+. Mr Baker replied that there were 120 students with a safeguarding record. The figure of 17% covers a very broad spectrum of minor to major issues.

Mr Wilson asked how much of the increase in recorded mental health issues was due to changes in attitude and how much to an actual increase. Mr Baker replied that social media seems to have had an impact on girls levels of anxiety and self-esteem.

Mrs Pan asked if there were any barriers to students seeking help.

Mr Baker said that demand for the Listening Post services was already significant but the college needed to do more to promote it. In reply to a question from Mr Baker, Kion Sharma (Student Governor) said he had not been aware of the Listening Post.

Mrs Pan stressed that as the students were only at the college for two years it was important that they were encouraged to seek sustainable long term help for long term issues through their GP's.

Mr Wiper asked how many students had self-referred to the listening post since January. Mr Baker replied that 30 students were already known to have issues when the service started, a further 10 had joined the list since then.

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Professor Oglesby asked if there was any research that explained why the increase is predominantly amongst girls. Mr Baker replied that, within the college context, the move to Linear A levels appears to put extra stress on girls, among other factors.

Professor Oglesby asked if there had been any group work. Mr Baker explained that MIND had tried group work in the past but it had not been very popular with students.

Governors thanked Mr Fisher and Mr Baker for an informative and reassuring presentation.

### 26/19 Whole College QIP – Spring Review

Mr Waite explained that a large proportion of the 41 objectives listed in the, 'Quality Improvement Plan 2018-19: Actions' had already been completed.

Mrs Pan asked how students identified as from low aspiration or 'cold spot' wards (as defined by the office for students) reacted when they were approached by the newly appointed NECOP/Raising Aspirations coordinator (Serial 29) and how was success measured.

Mr Baker replied that the approach to students was handled very carefully. They were made aware that they were eligible for additional support and were targeted along with other students who appeared to need help.

The scheme was deemed successful if supported students were applying for university in a percentage 'at least' equal to those not receiving support.

The Board **accepted** the Quality Improvement Plan 2018-19: Actions.

### 27/19 Strategy – Raise the Rate Report

The Sixth Form College Association is campaigning to raise the funding rate for students and have calculated what the funding rate would need to be today to equal, in real terms, what it was worth five years ago.

An online survey had revealed a number of common measures schools and colleges have taken to reduce expenditure in line with reduced income including,

- Cuts to the number of courses offered
- Cuts to support and enrichment activities
- Changes to curriculum delivery

Mr Fisher reported that although QE had experienced a reduction in the number of students taking modern foreign languages, this was in line with a national reduction and not directly a consequence of reduced funding.

Contrary to the measures reported in the online survey QE had actually increased delivery hours of courses, increased provision for mental health support and has not reduced provision for sport and music in line with national trends.

Additional funding for maths and T Levels would not benefit students at QE

The Board **accepted** the Raise the Rate Report.

28/19 Student Destinations Report

Mr Fisher explained that the new Student Destination Report was a mixture of analytical evidence provided by UCAS and anecdotal evidence obtained from ex-students by the college.

The national decline in university applications relates to older students and not to younger students completing their A levels.

QE's policy is to encourage students to go to university. The college has not seen any real change in the university destinations and the courses applied for. Overall there is largely a picture of stability.

Mr Heath asked if the majority of students were getting their first choice university, whether this indicated that their first choice might not be aspirational enough.

Mr Kipling suggested that the highest ever number of Oxbridge applications this year was a good indication of aspiration.

Mr Baker said that 3% of students actually 'trade up' when they receive grades higher than they expected.

There was no evidence that unconditional offers led to lower grades.

Around 40 students had chosen to take apprenticeships rather than go to university. Some students had gone down a level in order to work their way back up through their chosen trade.

None of those taking apprenticeships were at degree level. Mr Baker said that degree level apprenticeships did not really exist in the North East. There was a considerably greater chance of students getting into Oxbridge than securing a degree level apprenticeship.

Mrs Pan explained that it was very difficult and expensive for employers to offer degree level apprenticeships.

Mr Fisher was pleased to highlight that QE had exceeded national statistics for sustained destinations at every level.

The Board **accepted** the Student Destination Report

29/19 HR Report

In response to questions, Mr Fisher explained that the higher than previous turnover was a consequence of the college tending to use short term contracts in light of the uncertain future funding. The short term contracts were not an obstacle to recruitment with the number of applicants for each post actually continuing to increase.

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Recent changes in the pension rules had encouraged people to retire early, which had also impacted on staff turnover.

The change in the staff profile between teaching and support staff was explained by the reduction from 4 to 3 A Level subjects and a corresponding reduction in the number of teachers required and the introduction of progress tutors who are classified as support staff.

The number of days off sick had reduced significantly recently and Mr Fisher was pleased to point out that more than half of the staff did not have a day off sick last year.

Overall the picture is very positive.

The Board **accepted** the HR Report

### 30/19 Managing student numbers in an uncertain education landscape (2019-2023)

Applications are currently below the number reached at this stage last year (circa 80 fewer) and this may impact on the number of students attending the College in September 2019. Applications from partner schools are above last year's at this stage, numbers from non-partner schools below. Analysis suggests that non-partner schools with sixth forms may be doing more to keep their students.

The Board **approved** the areas for review and the actions required.

### 31/19 Accommodation expansion and upgrade update

Planning permission had not yet been received for the proposed extension to the sixties block. The planners are waiting for the transport impact report commissioned by the College.

A decision by the Condition Improvement Fund is expected at the end of March or beginning of April.

Mr Hargrove said that Salix had phoned just before today's meeting to give verbal confirmation that the interest free loan for £344,000 for the installation of energy efficient lights had been approved. Mr Hargrove explained that the Finance and Resource Committee wished to be reassured of the reliability of the savings calculations before agreeing to recommend to the Board that the College should take the Salix loan.

### 32/19 Estates and Health, Safety and Welfare Report

Mr Hargrove explained that the new report combined two previous reports.

Mr Hargrove was pleased to report that the Fire Safety Audit carried out by Durham County Fire Brigade on 26<sup>th</sup> February had found everything to be in order. A small number of minor issues had been dealt with.

The Board **accepted** the Estates and health and safety and welfare report

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33/19 Health Promotion Report

A good number of students are participating in a wide range of sport and one off opportunities such as Wellbeing Week.

Levels of activity compare well to National Benchmarks.

The Board **accepted** the Health Promotion Report

34/19 Curriculum and Standards Committee 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019 (draft)

The Board **accepted** the draft minutes of the Curriculum and Standards Committee meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2019 which had been summarised by Mr Heath at the previous Board meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

35/19 Finance and Resources Committee 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 (draft)

The Board **accepted** the draft minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee of 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

36/19 Governor Dashboard

The Board **acknowledged** the Governor Dashboard.

37/19 Any other business

The Clerk distributed an updated list of Governors following the appointment of Ms Barrett and Ms Snowball and a list of proposed meeting dates for 2019-2020.

The Clerk explained that the meeting dates for 2019-2020 had been carefully reviewed to fit in with the College's academic and financial calendar and were not simply a replication of the previous year's dates.

38/19 Confidentiality

There were no confidential matters.

39/19 Date of next meeting

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019