



ST BRENDAN'S
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

ST BRENDAN'S CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM COLLEGE
Governors' Teaching Curriculum Quality Committee

MINUTES OF MEETING

Wednesday 14 May 2025

Virtual Microsoft Office Teams Meeting (16:00–18:00hrs)

GOVERNORS/MEMBERS PRESENT: Mark O'Sullivan [Chair], Svetlana Bajic-Raymond, Gareth Beynon, Marian Curran [Principal], Margaret Harlock MBE, Melaine Jonik, Paul Ryan, Aaron Skinner [8]

ATTENDING: David Beesley [Vice Principal Curriculum Quality Innovation], Louise Roberts [Curriculum Cluster Leader, Health & Social Care, Sport & Public Services], Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional].

APOLOGIES: Vicki Haigh [Head of Teaching, Learning & Assessment] [1]

ABSENT Without Apology: None [0]

CIRCULATION: All Governors, College website

QUORUM REQUIRED: 3/6 (Voting Committee members)

Committee Briefing: Quality Improvement in Sport.

MC introduced Louise Roberts. LR gave a presentation.

Q – What is the number of students doing the extended diploma? This was around 70-80 students, there are 3 full classes with a waiting list for the diploma course. There were 6 students on the extended diploma in Year 12, with five who were coming into the new year. It is hoped to build on this in future years.

Q – Have the sports facilities improved? Yes

Q - What has been the impact of sports enrichment, especially on the extended diploma? It was noted that, if this could be improved, and be made more consistent, then it would improve the courses, there could be more sports teams, and this would improve recruitment etc.

LR left the meeting

ITEM	ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION	ACTION
1. Welcome	1.1 Welcome: MOS welcomed everyone and opened with a Prayer.	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1 Declarations of Interest: The members of the Committee confirmed there had been no change.	
3. Minutes Previous Meeting	<p>3.1 Open Minutes Agreement 26 February 2025: The Minutes were adopted as a correct and true record and passed for electronic signature and for publication on the website.</p> <p>3.2 Actions: All actions were complete. LS would ensure that the report was fully updated.</p>	
4. Quality of Education	<p>4.1 Student progress: MC talked through the key points. It was noted that the data in the report referred only to Year 13 and showed a positive trajectory in reference to both progress and attainment for the cohort. The results showed that students were closing the gap between their actual performance and their potential, and this was testament to the hard work of colleagues and the quality of interventions.</p> <p>There were clear areas of strength in Design, Technology, Drama and Spanish, whilst some areas remained a focus for support. There were still some unit assessments for some courses, to come back in some of the vocational programmes, which would impact the data and there were still some areas of support in this area, but there have been some cautious improvements in the projections.</p> <p>Male achievement and progress remained a priority. Disadvantaged groups were progressing better than they were in December but continued to receive close monitoring and support. The number of U (ungraded) grades anticipated had decreased significantly since December.</p> <p>The ALPs indicator places were just in line with national.</p> <p>In summary, there were tangible improvements across the board, there was still a focus on the subjects where it was needed</p>	

and staff continued to work with supporting students towards the final examination period.

Q – How does out female/male balance compare to other post-16 providers? Boys were slightly under-achieving compared to other Sixth-form colleges. The College has always had more female students than male.

Q – Are the 10 assessments over 2 years? Yes

Q – Are you looking at an evaluation of the number of key assessments plus mock exams and whether this makes a difference to outcomes / projected grade? ASk noted that the mock exams were used in conjunction with key assessments to determine where students were in terms of knowledge. The mocks work better in terms of trusting the projected grade as they were closer to the exam. Some of the assessments used were different to others and could be confusing, giving different results. Consistency would be key in being able to identify problems. MC noted that assessments should be designed as scaffolding around the mock exams, and we should not be waiting for a key assessment to know where the students were struggling. They were intended as scaffolding all the way through, to increase the confidence of the students in looking at and being able to answer questions.

Q – There seems to be quite a large difference in the number of U grades between the December and Feb exams, is there a reason for this? For some, it was the particular mock paper that was set, some of these fell directly after half-term and were not taken seriously by all students. MC was hoping for no U grades.

Q – Do we enter students when we predict a U grade? The College would pay for all students to enter their exams. It would be important to consider when it became known that those students would be likely to achieve only a U grade, and then to consider what action was taken to address this; whether there was work with the student in Year 12 to address any issues etc. It was explained that there was a two-way process around what support is provided to the student to pass and it is important to be able to rely on the assessments.

DBe noted that he had been impressed with the teaching and learning environment and the engagement of the students, and would now be focusing on where this was not quite right. There was a need to be very clear around what is being assessed, and to find a way to understand the trajectory of each student.

It was also noted that the gap for particular groups at secondary was generally bigger. Good progress was being made with the students and there was very good work going on, that benefited all students. There was work to do with students across the college to increase their confidence in their subject knowledge, and in applying it to questions.

Q – Are there any social or ethnic issues with the gap for male students? It was noted that there was a gender gap nationally at primary and GCSE level. The majority of female students were organised and conscientious in study and sometimes needed to rein back the levels of anxiety. There did tend to be more apathy in male students. This could be addressed by early work on getting students organised and coaching them to structure and manage their time. As a College, we would want to raise all standards for all of our students.

It was noted that some of the key assessments could sometimes feel as though they are designed more for A-Level

programmes of study, and are less helpful for the BTEC courses.

4.2 Quality of Teaching and Learning: MC talked through the key points. MC noted that there were strengths in teaching and learning, where there was evidence of both positive and exceptional practice.

Areas for improvement, which would inform the Quality Improvement Plan, included:

- assessment, and the need for consistent formative assessment and feedback across subjects
- meeting student needs, with sufficient high challenge differentiation and support, particularly for former Pupil Premium, children in care and high needs students.
- learning and progress, supporting students with independent learning and consistency of teaching across subjects.

CPD for next year would include; effective use of assessment and scaffolding this; differentiation and effective lesson planning and how this is effective for BTEC courses; and consistency in teaching practice.

There was also an element of needing to triangulate emerging priorities. Students had been saying that they wanted more interactive learning, and there had been discussions around metacognitive strategies, which are quite powerful for closing the gaps.

When looking at the, 'big five' subjects, from the quality improvement plan, the assessment of feedback was a recurring theme, with students having reported inconsistent feedback practices, for example.

There were strong performances in Biology and Accounting, while Business Studies, Sociology and Fine Art were areas that need focus.

A need was noted to consider curriculum design and construction, to allow for Year 12 topics to be revisited and ensure consistent practice across subjects. Students had expressed concerns about logical flow of course content in some courses, especially in Health Based Studies, Health and Social Care and Fine Arts.

It was planned to look at how the student voice correlated with the data.

4.3 Impact of CPD so far: MC talked through the key priorities for the coming year, including standardisation of assessment, ensuring all courses were being well structured and logically sequenced, learning from student feedback around what they were struggling with and making sure that student led approaches were supporting independent learning.

There was also a piece of work to be done around Access to Level 3 support, improving consistency, using coaching and quality assurance, as well as differentiation strategies with PP students, LAC and SEND students.

Q – Does the use of CPD more frequently, as an intervention to teaching quality issues, reflect the need to share best practice?

There was best practice in the college. DBe talked through some of the ways in which staff were being encouraged to share practice across the same qualifications / department, as well as across the college. There was a discussion around other ways to support staff in a department which lacked experienced staff, and the possibility of using teaching and learning coaches.

	<p>4.4 Class Sizes Update: MC gave an update. The larger classes were now in line with other sixth form college benchmarks.</p> <p>Q – Were any of the workload issues raised related to class sizes? They were at the start of the year. MC talked through the work that was being done to address workload issues and to provide creative solutions.</p> <p>Q – Is the usefulness of two mock exams being evaluated? Yes. The rationale for introducing the February mock had been to ensure that the progress was accurate for students. There was a need to ensure the mock exam is the correct one.</p> <p>Q – Is there a system where enrolment is stopped when a class reaches a certain size? This year was exceptional. There was always attrition at the start of the year, and there would not be the same number of students moving forward. It would be important for the students to have a good first few weeks, and ideally for the College to retain as many students as possible. There was a need to balance these aspects. There was a discussion around this approach and communicating this with staff.</p> <p>4.5 Student Survey: Covered in item 4.2 above.</p> <p>4.6 Curriculum offer and skills needs: MC talked through the key points. It was noted that there was an annual accountability statement produced by the College to show how it is working towards meeting the local skills need. MC talked through the strategic objectives to align the curriculum with the local skills priorities.</p> <p><i>GB left the meeting</i></p> <p>Q – Do we have any problem in balancing the needs of students who are moving on to university away from Bristol, and those who will remain more local, in the curriculum? Do we still make provision for subjects which are not priorities for the local area? Around 36% of students would progress onto courses that meet the local skills requirement. It was known that students travel to the College, due to the diverse offer provided, and it would be important to maintain the diversity of the offer.</p> <p>There was a discussion around possible destinations for students, the reasons students might not travel further afield and ways to raise ambitions of students. It could be helpful to invite people from universities to speak to students. There were always students who wanted to stay local. As a Student Governor, AS talked through his reasons for the applications he has made, and why he believed students make the decisions they do.</p> <p>It was noted that continuing in education was not for all students, and the curriculum should be broad enough to support those students for whom university was not the best choice. There was a further discussion around the possibility that fewer people would be planning to attend university, which may create additional pressure on the local job market, as well as the benefits of a good breadth of curriculum offer in this circumstance.</p>	
<p>5. Quality Improvement</p>	<p>5.1 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) update: MC gave an update. The cycle had now begun for curriculum cluster SARs to be written. The subjects which need to report had been streamlined. Clusters no longer needed to give an overall judgement but would be giving individual judgements by type. Areas had also been asked for an evaluation according to the skills need, and to say how they were contributing to the mission and ethos of the college.</p>	

	<p>5.2 Quality Improvement Plan [QIP] progress: MC talked through the key points and noted that the QIP tied in with the teaching and learning, and student voice reports. There would be a continued focus on assessment practices in term 6, as well as a review of the curriculum strategy, particularly around level 2 courses. There was also a focus on male achievement and term 6 provided time for professional development.</p>	
6. Principal's Report	<p>6.1 Student Recruitment 2025/2026: The total number of applications was at 2683 and total acceptances was at 2253. Overall retention for this year was high at 88.7%, however there was still need to look at Access to Level 3 and there would be an appointment made for someone to look at this.</p> <p>6.2 Student Recruitment/Attendance Report 2024/2025: MC noted that there has been a struggle with attendance around Year 13 students choosing to stay at home and revise rather than come into college.</p> <p>6.3 Student Three-Year Trend: The data was noted.</p> <p>6.4 Recruitment of Staff Update: MC gave an update. More staff had been recruited into the Business team, along with a teacher for criminology and a full-time teacher of law was in the process being recruited. There would also be recruitment for some teaching and learning leads.</p>	
7. Policy Review	<p>7.1 Quality Improvement Policy: DBe talked through the key points of the policy and how it was intended to work. This was based on previous policies and showed how the Quality Improvement Plan was developed.</p> <p>The Quality Improvement Policy was approved</p> <p>7.2 Examinations Policies: There were a number of policies, which met the requirements set out by the Joint Council for Qualifications. A summary document had been provided and DBe talked through the key points. The aim was to provide students with the best environment to achieve the best results possible. There was a discussion around the experience of exams so far.</p> <p>Q – Is there a possibility that we will run out of smaller rooms / equipment for students who require additional arrangements for access? It was noted that this was a national issue and was something that secondary schools were also struggling with. There was a need for back-up plans, and it was an ongoing logistical and financial challenge.</p> <p>A query was raised about the Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality and Improvement Policy; around some wording relating to lesson visits and safeguarding. Governors felt that the language needed to be clearer that serious safeguarding or malpractice issues need to be investigated.</p> <p>The Examinations Policies were approved in principle, with the above caveat.</p>	
8. Risk Management	<p>8.1 Review of Board of Governors' Risk Register Items: MC talked through the new format of the risk register. MC also talked through the key risks relating to this committee and the mitigations in place for these.</p>	

	<p>Governors noted that the new format of the report was more useful, concise and easier to understand.</p> <p>8.2 Safeguarding/PREVENT Committee Duty review: The quality of teaching and learning report included an item showing how many students have been wearing their lanyards.</p>	
9. Report Items to Board of Governors	<p>9.1 Report topics for Board of Governors: Quality Improvement and Examinations Policies, curriculum offer and skills (relating to the local skills statement which will be discussed at Board), CPD.</p> <p>9.2 Committee Briefing for the next meeting: To be decided by MOS, MC and DBe, potentially in the light of the exam results.</p>	
10. Any Other Business	<p>10.1 Other Business: It was noted that this is AS' last committee meeting. Governors thanked AS for his contribution.</p>	
13. Next Meeting	<p>13.1 Date of Next Meeting: TBC</p>	
Minutes Agreed	<p>Minutes of Meeting agreed as true and accurate record.</p> <p>Date: Wednesday 5 November 2026</p> <p>Signed: _____ Committee Chair</p>	