

**Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting  
12 February 2025  
Bedford, Tower Boardroom  
16:00**

**Members Present:** Richard Dimpleby (Chair)  
Cathy Barr  
John Butcher  
LJ Rawlings  
Kasar Singh  
Sheila Selwood  
Yiannis Koursis

**In attendance:** Robin Webber-Jones (Executive Director Curriculum)  
Sarah Baxter (Executive Director Strategy & External Affairs)  
Sarah Mortimer (Principal CBC)  
Rachel Nicol (Group Director of Governance) (Minutes)

**CQ/1/25 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Noor Nazir.

Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest relevant to matters on the agenda.

**CQ/2/25 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

It was explained to participants that the meeting was being recorded and a transcript produced for the purposes of producing minutes and experimenting with the College approved AI platform only.

The action log was reviewed. It was noted that the outstanding action relating to mitigation of risks referred to a previous paper on academic risk. Reports are now presented in a different format and it was therefore agreed that the reference is redundant and can be closed.

**ACTION: The CEO agreed to check the status of the Single Equality Scheme and this will be presented at a board meeting before the end of the academic year.**



## CQ/3/25 Quality of Education report

The report was noted as read. The CEO presented highlights and discussion centred on retention, attendance and the relationship with achievement. The overall retention position is positive. Attendance remains a challenge across the Group, with Tresham campuses noted as more impacted. Steps to manage the risk of lower attendance impacting achievement had been implemented. These included a progression board at Central Bedfordshire College (CBC) to review the position for each student and identify those at risk and put interventions in place to support achievement. Similar boards are planned at other campuses.

Members explored further the repeated discussions in different meetings on attendance and explored the robustness of data management to inform decisions, the potential causes for low attendance and governance actions and support required.

A robust conversation took place on the link between the quality of teaching and learning, consistency of delivery and assurance required given the percentage of staff with development plans. The need for a consistent structure and expectations for lesson delivery which then allows for creativity was highlighted.

A governor raised the need for the paper to contain more information on context, core drivers and metrics showing expected progress versus actual progress. Background was provided in the meeting on the HMI report on persistent absenteeism in schools and correlation to the current position. The need for better informed transition work with schools to support students and a curriculum strategy driving attendance was acknowledged. The role of the learning mentors in supporting attendance was outlined.

Assurance was given by the management team on the gap analysis work carried out by the Group Director of Learning Excellence and actions taken. These included development of group and department led development activity and individualised action plans. Policies are being reframed to look at the longer term.

There was no obvious link between attendance and retention which was positive. Governors were keen to understand how the work being done will support current students achieving.

**ACTION - It was agreed that a report will be presented to the next meeting to outline predicted achievement and provide assurance on any learners at risk of not achieving (ED Education)**

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



## **CQ/4/25 Apprenticeships**

The report was noted as read. The CEO highlighted the improving position on apprenticeships with the Group set to achieve the targeted 67% achievement. The employer survey had generated insufficient responses to be able to identify any patterns and this is being reviewed.

Discussion centred on the current economic position, risks of redundancies for some apprentices with large employers, ability to find new apprenticeships for individuals and funding implications for the Group. Opportunities were also identified in terms of adult education work in retraining other parts of work forces who had been made redundant and potential recruitment of lecturers with industry knowledge and skills.

Assurance was provided on the transfer in of apprentices from Marshalls with current delivery from Cambridge. The potential for future contracts, location plans and time lines were outlined.

Assurance was given that although apprenticeship numbers are below target, funding targets are on track. More detailed analysis will be contained in the management accounts presented to the Resources Committee and Board.

Governors who had attended commended the Apprentice celebration event hosted by the College.

It was noted that there are significant changes politically impacting apprenticeships and a need for the Group to review its curriculum strategy in this area to ensure demand is met.

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

## **CQ/5/25 English and Maths**

The report was noted as read. The CEO reminded governors of the current policy for the Group with the vast majority of students without a grade 4 GCSE now entered for English and maths and targeted to make at least one grade progress.

Governors sought and were provided with assurance that the statutory requirements for delivery are and will be met, noting that for 2025-2026 this equates to 100 taught hours in each subject.

The data was discussed including the number of students moving to a grade 4 and those making progress of at least one grade. There was some discussion on the Group position relative to the national picture presented in FE week which was



understood to take Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) data and governors noted the position.

Governors supported the reframing of English and maths into a culture of English and maths with resits contained within in it and were pleased that students are being encouraged to have a pride in progressing their skills in these areas.

The high costs of the exams and disappointing lack of engagement from schools were noted.

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

#### **CQ/6/25 Higher skills outcomes**

The report was noted as read. The Executive Director Curriculum highlighted that the Group position is broadly in line with the national bench mark position and that data is in the public domain. The presentation of data and variations were explained.

Governors explored the internal progression levels and the movement between Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas.

It was noted that there has been a reduction in new starts year on year and the challenges in this area acknowledged.

It was understood that delivery of the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) to the Group's own staff was an important part of the recruitment plan. This area will be overseen by the Executive Director of Education and teaching loads managed for relevant staff to support them.

Governors were keen to understand if there is a targeted number for PGCE completion. Ultimately the management team agreed that all teaching staff should be appropriately qualified.

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

#### **CQ/7/25 Complaints**

The report was noted as read. The Executive Director of Strategy & External Affairs highlighted that the overall number of complaints for the period reported is lower than at the same time in the previous year with Bedford having a higher level of complaints. Work being done to capture more information on the stakeholders impacted, lessons learnt, recommendations and training was outlined.



Assurance was given that the information received is triangulated to other performance indicators and the analysis did not reveal anything unknown. It was also confirmed that complaints are being managed within agreed policies and timelines.

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

#### **CQ/8/25 Update on 6<sup>th</sup> forms and ALPs**

The report was noted as read. The Executive Director Curriculum highlighted: current progress on the recruitment to the management structure; number of students on intervention to support, achievement in the current year and position on UCAS applications.

Discussion focused on quality of provision verses the breadth of the curriculum, challenges faced for delivery and staffing but in the context of community demands.

Governors commented that it is difficult to assess the appropriate checks and balances where there is no clear visibility of where the Group is on the journey. Assurance was given that the Group is where it predicted it would be, being nearly at the planned retention levels and on track regarding ALPs progress relevant to the 3 year Quality Improvement Plan.

Governors asked about the support for widening participation and the plan for promotion of summer schools was outlined. Work is also being done to upskill staff on access to HE and to better resource the support for students in looking at UCAS applications.

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

#### **CQ/9/25 Update from the local Curriculum and Quality groups**

The Chair of the Committee summarised the work to date of the local groups and a detailed review will take place on the terms of reference at the end of the agreed trial in the summer term. Themes emerging consistently from the 3 groups this term included ongoing challenges with recruitment and retention of staff and attendance of students.

Members who had chaired the respective groups highlighted; positive engagement with students and staff, either through session visits, presentations or tours and ability to triangulate information on curriculum, student experience and performance.



**ACTION - The notes from the local groups had been included in the pack but require review post meeting to ensure the Bedford group notes are correct (Group Director of Governance).**

**The Committee noted the update**

#### **CQ/10/25 Subcontracting performance**

The report was noted as read. The CEO confirmed the Group strategy in focusing on select use of subcontractors and partners for niche provision or new areas. The overall direction is not to increase the number of providers but to use to meet community needs.

Assurance was provided that performance of subcontractors and partners is positive and that only providers approved in the July meeting are being used.

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

#### **Behaviours & Attitudes**

#### **C/11/25 Student Services update**

The report was noted as read. The Interim Executive Director for Student Experience and Inclusion highlighted: there were no significant gaps for high needs students; the learning mentor function is active but needs time to be fully embedded; safeguarding had been the initial priority but with interventions, parents' evenings and better reporting now in place. A Group Director has been appointed and development work on the student union and student voice activity.

Appendices had been provided to the Committee on Careers advice and guidance and attendance data.

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

#### **C/12/25 Safeguarding**

The report was noted as read. The Principal of CBC confirmed that Group Heads for Student Services are in place at Bedford and Northamptonshire. Positive progress against the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for safeguarding was noted. The CPOMs system has been fully implemented and is pulling in information as expected with checking of all components taking place.

Recent incidents at college campuses were outlined to the Committee and assurance given on actions taken.

Progress on the lock down system was outlined including plans for training and roll out and on the effectiveness of current practices.

The Committee discussed the impact of the behavioural teams, the balance between creation of safe spaces and inviting campuses, resourcing requirements and plans to continue the model. It is anticipated that the future model will be costed and included in the budgets presented in the summer.

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

### Stakeholder Feedback

#### **CQ/13/25 Student Survey results (apprentices)**

The report was taken as read. The Executive Director of Strategy & External Affairs confirmed that survey results demonstrate apprentices have had a positive start to their apprenticeship programmes with results showing TBCG in the top 25% of benchmarked providers (survey carried out by QDP)

**The Committee was pleased to note the results and approved that the report provided assurance.**

#### **CQ/14/25 FE conversion and early leavers report**

Due to an administrative error the report had been uploaded late to the pack.

The Executive Director of Strategy & External Affairs presented the highlights including: the new applicants to enrolment conversion rate (16-18) had improved to 62% from the previous year at 57% and is on target; the adult conversion level is at 39% against a target of 31% and compared to the previous year rate of 24%.

Governors asked if there is any benchmarking on conversion levels but this is not the case. Further discussion took place on internal progression and strategic plan targets with positive levels from L2 to L3 reported.

The 42 day leaver position was outlined and the new process had seen a slight reduction in the level of leavers from 4.81% to 4.77% but with some challenges noted. These included a small “transfer window” and classes being full, preventing some students from moving to a preferred course. It was understood that the sector 42 leaver level is believed to be at around 7% for comparison purposes.

Although the numbers were not deemed to be statistically significant work is being done with the EDI committee to review the position for certain ethnic groups, particularly where historic trend data has identified potential patterns for exploration.

The Committee approved that the report provided assurance.

**CQ/15/25 Minutes of the previous meeting (19.11.2024)**

The minutes of the meeting on 19 November 2024 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting

**CQ/16/25 AOB**

There was no other business recorded.