

## The Manchester College Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 10:00am at Openshaw in OP116/117/118.

Present: Mark Fletcher, Cllr John Hacking, Catherine Hill OBE, Lisa O'Loughlin (Principal) and Pauline Waterhouse OBE (Chair)

Via Teams: Jenifer Burden MBE and Philip Johnson (for Minute No. 21/21 – 24/21)

Apology: Justice Ellis

In Attendance: Amy Avery (Assistant Company Secretary and Solicitor), Victoria Cornwell-Lyon (Vice Principal – Quality), Jennifer Foote MBE (General Counsel & Company Secretary) and Christine Kenyon (Deputy Principal)

Observer: Leo Nicholas (student Co-optee elect)

Via Teams: Barry Atkins (Vice Principal – FE Curriculum), Rachel Curry (Deputy Principal), Debbie Sanderson (Divisional Finance Director - College and Income Team), Marie Stock MBE (Vice Principal – Student Experience and Support), Michael Walsh (Vice Principal and Dean - HE and Higher Skills), Carol Whitworth (Assistant Principal) for Minute No. 22/21 and Chris Wright (Assistant Principal) for Minute No. 22/21.

*No declaration of interests were received.*

*The Board welcomed Victoria Cornwell-Lyon to her first meeting and also Leo Nicholas as an observer (student Co-optee elect).*

### Part A

21/21	<p><b>Part A minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021</b></p> <p>The Part A minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 were received, approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair in hard copy.</p>
22/21	<p><b>Industry Excellence Academy – Sharing Vision</b></p> <p><i>Carol Whitworth and Chris Wright attended for this item.</i></p> <p>The Board received the College's Curriculum Strategy for 2020-2024 to provide context for the presentation on the College's initiative, the Industry Excellence Academy ("IEA"). The strong progress which had been made on the curriculum strategy was noted positively.</p>

	<p>For assurance, the key topics of the IEA presentation covered: the ambition, initial strategy, employer forums, IEA models, outcomes, roles, project overview, timeline and support/investment.</p> <p>The Board expressed its thanks to the College and the teams for achieving great progress on the incredibly challenging curriculum strategy.</p> <p>In response to a query, it was confirmed that the option of the IEA model was particularly attractive to employers, as opposed to offering L3 apprenticeships, as it provided the opportunity for them to change the curriculum to ensure it aligned with the issues being faced by the employer's business.</p> <p>In response to further query, it was clarified that employers might take on fewer Level 3 apprentices as a result of the benefits of the IEA initiative.</p> <p>A discussion ensued regarding few apprenticeships being offered to 16 year olds, in comparison to adults, and how apprenticeships were not in competition with the IEA model as the focus should be on ensuring the students reached their destination.</p> <p>The outcome of the IEA model of 66 per cent of students going on to study at university was noted positively and it was hoped this would develop to 2024.</p> <p>The Board flagged how tangible the advantages and positive impact of the IEA model were from the levels of enthusiasm and enjoyment of the College's students who were currently working on the construction of the new City Centre Campus with Willmott Dixon.</p> <p>In response to a query, in relation to the College's ambition to be the number one choice for technical education and its competitors, it was confirmed that some of the responses by the College's competitors were better than others and that the College's competitive advantage must be maintained.</p> <p>In answer to a further query, it was clarified that no resistance to the IEA model from employers, in any sector, on the grounds of Covid-related impacts. All employers to date had been interested in the opportunity to get close to the curriculum. However, some employers were reluctant to take physical work placements hence the numerous virtual placements which were undertaken during the lockdowns.</p> <p>The Board expressed its thanks to the College and the teams for the impressive IEA initiative and thought it would be helpful to receive progress updates at future board meetings.</p>
23/21	<p><b>Appointment of co-opted student member of the FE Board</b></p> <p>The Board considered the appointment of Leo Nicholas as the co-opted student member of the FE Board.</p>

	<p><b>RESOLVED</b> that the LTE Group Board of Governors be recommended to appoint Leo Nicholas at the next meeting, on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021, to serve as a co-opted student member on The Manchester College Board, until the end of the current academic year.</p>
24/21	<p><b>FE Student Outcomes Report for 2020-21 including Equality &amp; Diversity Achievement Gaps</b></p> <p>The Board received the FE Student Outcomes Report as at the end of the 2020-21 academic year (which encompassed all ESFA-funded, classroom-based provision), in the interests of scrutiny and challenge. It was explained that the context to the data was highly complex. It was articulated that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020-21 FE student outcomes mostly consisted of teacher-assessed grades (“TAGs”) whereby results were provided by teachers and moderated through a series of achievement boards.</p> <p>The headline performance measures were presented to the Board which covered achievement rates, retention rates and pass rates.</p> <p>The challenges were flagged which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a decline in the adult achievement rates for the first time in years due to the pandemic and lockdowns, which was expected to be seen nation-wide. This had particularly affected ESOL, Childcare, Logistics and Business &amp; Computing. Contextual understanding was provided relating to the added pressures experienced by adult students such as childcare and home schooling responsibilities and increased working pressures;</li> <li>• a decline in high grades;</li> <li>• using the ‘<i>All qualifications</i>’ measure, achievement rates across the large majority of curriculum departments improved or stayed broadly the same but 11 departments currently showed a decline in achievement rates, compared with five in the previous year; and</li> <li>• achievement rates for 19+ female and male students, with Caribbean or White and Black Caribbean heritage were significantly lower than their peers.</li> </ul> <p>Many positives were highlighted such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• achievement grades for 16-18 students increased for the third consecutive year and reached 91.8% for the first time (8.4% above the national rate);</li> <li>• achievement rates for students with high needs continue to exceed those of <u>their</u> college peers;</li> <li>• achievement rates for female and male 16-18 students with Caribbean or White and Black Caribbean heritage continue to sit significantly above the national level; and</li> <li>• achievement rates for 16-18 students with dyslexia have improved further and now sit above national comparative rates.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion ensued regarding the Covid-related reasons for some of the declines and it was acknowledged that this did not represent the full picture as the ‘coasting’ in some areas would necessitate a change in management.</p>

One significant hurdle regarding high grades was that some students had never sat an exam due to the lockdowns. The Board was assured that this was being addressed by individual action plans in the QIP to ensure the best results would be obtained by the students. It was noted that enhanced embedding of study skills was required to achieve high grades.

Whilst the Board commended the great progress of the IAE, it was made clear that this must not be to the detriment of other areas. It was expected that, for the next two years, the impact of the deficit caused by Covid would continue to be felt. Using the national rates of 2018-19 was outdated (which was the benchmark being used in all colleges) and a risk was highlighted that the College's adult achievement rates might have slipped further than currently thought.

A further concern for the Board was that some of the issues in the February QIP (such as the teachers' ambitions for the students, areas for assessment and attendance) were still present but it was appreciated that there were no quick fixes. The Board challenged whether some of the fora which the College had set up (such as Communities of Practice) were having a sufficient impact.

The Board was assured that the Covid and non-Covid reasons for the declines were being investigated to ensure that quality improvements would be achieved next year. Further, it was emphasised that a huge proportion of the College's adult provision was functional skills which was performing significantly above the national average.

The Board raised a concern regarding the amount of areas RAG rated red and therefore the College needed to accelerate the improvements in order to improve quality. Assurance was provided that a member of the SLT (and in some cases two) were leading the improvement of each Afl.

In answer to a query regarding timescales it was confirmed that improvements would be seen next year regarding the Covid impacts but discounting Covid it was likely to be a two year journey at least for the College to return to pre-Covid levels.

In terms of national rankings the College was expected to by far exceed these. The Board requested that achievement rates be closely monitored and required progress updates in the QIP on the in-year achievement in working towards the exams to highlight successes and difficulties.

It was agreed that at the next board meeting some Assistant Principals from less well performing areas would present to the Board.

The meeting emphasised that the College should not compare its results to the national rates as these were low. The College needed to be significantly ahead of the national ratings to make the necessary improvements on quality to obtain a Grade 1 (outstanding) rating.

The Board raised a concern regarding a sentence from the FE Outcomes report at section 10.4 'High Grade Achievement':

	<p><i>"...many teachers felt reluctant to award high grades as part of the TAG process"</i></p> <p>which suggested that non-Covid reasons might be relevant. The Board stressed that the Covid pandemic should not be used as an excuse for under achieving by staff or by students.</p> <p>In answer to a query regarding, the Board discussed the consequences for the students and the College if improvements did not materialise next year. Assurance was given that performance management would continue to be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning and also to address some middle leader challenges.</p> <p>The Board articulated that it was unacceptable for certain demographic groups (such as Black Caribbean and women) to be under achieving compared to their peers.</p> <p>The student co-optee elect offered valuable insight into current student anxieties regarding the forthcoming exams due to an awarding body's changed stance. Assurance was given that the matter would be addressed outside the meeting and the students' response to the examining body would be reinforced by the College (in addition to the lobbying the College was already undertaking with awarding bodies) to obtain equality for students and alleviate students' concerns regarding exams.</p> <p><i>Philip Johnson left the meeting.</i></p> <p>In response to a query, it was clarified that strategies were in place regarding the wellbeing and mental health of the students (and also teachers) which included emotional support. It was explained that the best way to assist students' anxiety regarding exams was to provide support so they would feel well-prepared and confident in the exams.</p> <p>The achievement gaps for Black Caribbean students was a concern for the Board. It was agreed that a further analysis of the achievement gap data would be produced for the next board meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022.</p>
<p><b>25/21</b></p>	<p><b>College Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan</b></p> <p><b>SAR</b></p> <p>The Board received the FE Self-Assessment Report ("SAR") for the last academic year of 2020-21 for consideration and approval. This formed the basis for developing Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) for the current academic year of 2021-22. It was understood that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020-21 academic year was a more difficult year to self-evaluate.</p> <p>The overall SAR for 2020-21 was a Grade 2 (good) which was broken down into quality of education (intent, implementation and impact), behaviour and attitudes, personal development and leadership and management.</p> <p>In the interests of scrutiny and challenge, the Board received an in-depth explanation as to why the assessment of the SAR was rated as a Grade 2. The grade was not</p>

<p>definitive and would be reconsidered once the national data was published. The Board fully endorsed that approach.</p> <p>The meeting was reminded that the last Ofsted inspection was in December 2019.</p> <p>The key strengths of the SAR were noted positively which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leaders and managers have designed an exceptionally broad and diverse curriculum. Closely aligned to local and regional employment needs though an effective business planning process, that embeds employability throughout, thereby providing students with invaluable industry-specific skills (Quality of education);</i></li> <li>• <i>Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the overwhelming majority of students benefit from extensive arrangements for work and industry placements, as well as work-related activities and inspirational virtual masterclasses, enabling them to broaden their learning and make life-changing career choices (Behaviour and attitudes);</i></li> <li>• <i>Students' strong engagement with the whole College approach to the promotion and celebration of equality, diversity and inclusion contributes to the highly diverse and harmonious College environment (Personal development); and</i></li> <li>• <i>Astute, challenging and supportive governance, strongly focused on quality and improvement, closely monitors the progress made by the SLT in meeting agreed objectives (Leadership and management).</i></li> </ul> <p>The Areas for Improvement (Afls) were flagged to the Board such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Support for adult students, particularly those 'at risk' of not remaining on programme, in order to improve adult achievement rates on long courses (Quality of education);</i></li> <li>• <i>Continued improvement in students' attendance and punctuality (Behaviour and attitudes); and</i></li> <li>• <i>Continued development of 'leadership in learning' at all levels whilst addressing the burden of daily operational management and administration on curriculum managers (Leadership and managers).</i></li> </ul> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> that The Manchester College SAR for 2020-21 be approved for inclusion in the LTE Group SAR.</p> <p><b>QIP</b></p> <p>It was confirmed that the Board would be furnished with a fully comprehensive version of the QIP at the first progress monitoring point at the next board meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2022.</p> <p>Debate ensued regarding the strategies to secure quality improvements.</p> <p>The issue of teacher confidence was discussed in relation to helping students to understand radicalisation and racial and religious hatred and the Board requested this to be addressed by considering the College's CPD programmes.</p>
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	<p>It was signalled that the student voice results needed to be used more to drive improvements and the digital offer and appraisal process also required advancements.</p> <p>In relation to a query regarding the reduction of the administrative burden on teachers, to enable them to focus on improving the quality of learning, it was clarified that reductions would be achieved by the curriculum, Group Operations driving efficiencies and an imminent restructure of the admin team.</p> <p>The Board requested the team re-consider the curriculum sections in Appendix 1 – ‘Curriculum and support area self-assessment summaries’ as some of the AfIs might be too harsh.</p> <p>The Board expressed its thanks to the team for its significant efforts in preparing the SAR which highlighted numerous areas of strengths and positives.</p>
	<p><b>RESOLVED</b> that as the items to be considered are deemed commercially sensitive, the Board moved into confidential session.</p>
	<p>----- <b>Chair</b></p> <p>----- <b>Date</b></p>

The meeting closed at 1:41 pm