

**ST JOHN RIGBY COLLEGE
MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BOARD
HELD AT 6PM ON TUESDAY 19TH DECEMBER 2023
AT THE COLLEGE**



The core functions of the corporation board include:

- *Preserving and developing the college's educational character*
- *Setting and communicating the college's strategy and goals*
- *Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance and quality of the college, and for the performance of staff*
- *Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, the organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met*

The meeting opened in prayer.

Business commenced at 6pm.

Meeting closed at 7.49pm.

The meeting was quorate.

Governors present:		
Pamela Catherall	Foundation Governor	Yes
Philip Collier (Vice Chair)	Foundation Governor	Yes
Mark Higgins	Foundation Governor	Yes
Pam Tate (Chair)	Foundation Governor	Yes
Catherine Morgan	Foundation Governor	Yes
Mark Dumican	Foundation Governor	Apologies
Kate Watts	Staff Governor	Yes
Chris Chandler	Staff Governor	Apologies
Peter Cudlip	Parent Governor	Yes
Madison Bryan	Student Governor	Apologies
Anne White	Co-opted Governor	Apologies
Peter McGhee	Principal	Yes
In Attendance:		
Paula Nolan	Vice Principal	Yes
Nicola Craven	Vice Principal	Yes
Dominic Jones	Vice Principal	Yes
Jim Winstanley	Finance Manager	Yes
Sophie Gardiner	Clerk to the Governing Board (Wigan Governor Services)	Yes

1. Apologies and consideration of consent to absence

Apologies were received in advance from Anne White, Madison Bryan, Mark Dumican and Chris Chandler and were accepted by the Board.

2. Any other Urgent Business

There were no additional items to be included on the agenda.

3. Declaration of Interest

No declarations were made. Staff members would withdraw for item 11.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

12th October 2023 - **Authorised** and **Approved** for publication.
Confidential minutes – **Approved**.

Extra Ordinary meeting held on the 7th November 2023 – **Approved** and **Authorised** for publication.

There were no matters arising.

Actions reviewed. All had been addressed or were itemised for this agenda.

The Chair encouraged Governors to complete the NGA Learning Link online courses which she had found to be interesting and useful.

5. Minutes of the Committee Meetings

Verbal reports were received from the Committee Chairs:

5.1 Quality and Standards Committee – 13th December 2023.

Philip Collier reported that the committee had a good meeting with lots of questioning and challenge of senior leaders evident within the minutes, around the SAR and curriculum areas. There had been a brief discussion around the election of a committee Chair, and it had been decided that this would be undertaken on an ad hoc basis, when required.

Leaders had presented subject level destination data, a safeguarding update and discussed the current pastoral challenges. Attendance across all courses was 91.9%, against the target of 93%, which was in line with benchmarks.

There had been a reduction in the number of behaviour incidents and the positive praise and rewards system was working well. Mock exam data was discussed. SARs (Subject Access Reviews) had been completed with areas highlighted for enhanced monitoring or monitoring and review.

The committee also reviewed results from the parent questionnaire and discussed the questions and answers.

Anne White presented a Link Governor Report.

The committee received a summary of the updated Exams Policy.

Action – College SAR had been revised and presented for this agenda (item 6.3).

5.2 Finance and Resources Committee – 30th November 2023.

Pam Tate reported that the committee had received the draft Financial Statements and Management Accounts.

The Management Accounts showed a loss of £44,000 in-period but this was better than budget (due to grant income). It was disappointing to note the reduction of funding for high needs learners.

Action - Audited Financial Statements itemised on this agenda item (6.2) – to be approved and signed.

The committee received the Annual HR report and noted staff turnover and the reasons for absence. Three members of staff had been out of work due to stress related absence (which totalled 220 days in the 12-month period). The committee noted that there was no mention of disciplinaries or grievances and this would be included in future reports.

The Accommodation report noted that an additional £25,000 cost had been incurred when problems had been identified in the concrete beams around windows in D block.

5.3 Audit Committee – 7th December 2023.

In the absence of the committee Chair, Pam Tate reported. Pam had attended the committee by way of a hand over to the new Chair.

The committee had been joined (online) by the internal auditors *Wylie and Bisset*. Introductions were made and the committee agreed the internal audit work plan for January through to August 2024.

The committee received the draft Audited Financial Statements and noted that last years' Management Letter from *Beavers and Struthers* had made three recommendations. These had been actioned. There were no recommendations this year and confirmation had been received that there had been no material misstatements or errors with the internal control. The committee extended thanks to Jim Winstanley.

The committee was pleased to report 100% attendance at meetings by its members.

The Risk Register was reviewed – there were no changes to scores and actions had been updated.

The committee were assured that Internal Audit had reviewed the Risk Register.

The Health and Safety update confirmed that progress had been made on all areas of focus.

The Finance Manager addressed items 6.1 and 6.2.

6. COLLEGE ITEMS

6.1 Annual report of the Audit committee to the Governing Body

6.2 Annual financial statements

Jim Winstanley confirmed that the final Audit Management Letter had been received. It provided the Board with reassurances around the financial statements. The report from the Audit committee substantiated the statements.

Once approved by the Board, the Financial Statements must be signed on the date of this meeting and sent to the ESFA. They must then be published on the college website. Letters of Representation must also be signed. Nothing of significance had changed since the draft. There were some minor presentation changes.

Q How long was the lagged funding for?

A There was a one-year lag. There was a reduced number of students in 2022 and in 2022/2023 the college received funding for more students than it delivered to.

The Board **approved** the Annual Audit and Annual Financial Statements – signed by the Principal and Chair of the Board at the meeting.

6.3 College Self-Assessment (*Action from last FGB*)

Nicola Craven reported that the College Self-Assessment had been presented to the Quality and Standards committee. Some minor updates had been made and a revised version had been circulated to Governors prior to this meeting.

The Self-Assessment process had been a useful exercise to review the past year and importantly to ensure a rigorous and robust action plan was in place for the year ahead.

Recommendations from the Quality and Standards committee had been included.

Leaders were confident in the 'outstanding' grading.

Almost all areas from last year's assessment had been fully achieved, those areas that were 'partially achieved' were not seen to be weaknesses but were areas to continue to improve and had been carried forward into the College Development Plan. They did not affect the self-assessment grading and context was noted within the report.

The Board's attention was drawn to the retention rate of level two female students – there had been inflated grades in Summer 2022 (this had been common across the sector). Two areas were identified internally as requiring improvement.

Student destination data was strong and had been reviewed at length by the Quality and Standards committee.

Governors were thanked for being involved in the process which had also included external critical friends.

Q Was any national benchmark data used around student groups?

A Yes and these were contained within the report. It was pleasing that nothing stood out from gender, disadvantage, SEND or high needs data apart from the retention of level two female students.

Q 99% of students said that they felt safe in College – did the 1% express that they did not feel safe or had there been no response?

A This was around where students may have felt that support and disciplinary actions had not quite gone their way – perceived as bullying.

Q Were individuals identifiable?

A No.

There was a discussion around what some of the percentages meant, and if there should be more answer choice provided.

Q Did a neither agree nor disagree answer report as a 'negative'?

A Yes.

Q Of the areas to improve, could leaders provide a sense of priority?

A Leaders considered all areas to be priorities.

Q Where actions had been partially achieved, was there a sense of what percentage had been achieved?

A This was hard to quantify. Leaders were confident that the majority of actions had been completed and that some areas continued to be developed.

The Board **approved** the report for submission to Ofsted.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair placed on record thanks to Nicola Craven for the detailed and comprehensive work undertaken to produce the report.

6.4 College Development Plan (*Action from last FGB*)

The Principal talked to the report and explained in detail the three key areas:

- Action Plan 2023/2024
- Key Performance Indicators
- Objectives

Governors would note the overlap between the College Development Plan and the College Self-Assessment. The Plan would be updated to reflect the changes to the SAR.

Points to note:

Student recruitment – there had been a positive number of applications for September 2024 (25% up on the previous year), demonstrating a strong appetite for the college.

The Quality Improvement Plan - review dates fall in line with the dates for the Principal's Report to the Board. A 'RAG' rated report would be presented to the Board at the Summer term meeting.

Key Performance Indicators – 'RAG' rated for 2022/2023 and compared performance against the college target and the national benchmark.

Retention and achievement targets identified.

6.5 Denominational Inspection

The Principal confirmed receipt of the report which would be circulated the following day.

A summary of the key findings was shared:

- *Students and staff fully embrace the Catholic identity and mission of the college through a strong culture of welcome and inclusion.*
- *Leadership is hugely impressive at senior and middle levels, fostering a culture of support and care for one another.*
- *Chaplaincy is 'front and centre' of the college, supported by a dedicated lay-chaplain, with the chapel as an effective place of prayer.*
- *Strong lesson planning is evident for both A level and core religious education with a focus on religious literacy and learner engagement*

The Principal confirmed that the report was very positive and that Inspectors had recognised and celebrated the catholic mission of the College. There was one line within the report that Leaders challenged. The draft was subject to an IT 'glitch' which meant that the report had been blocked resulting in Leaders not having received it to review before publication. Leaders challenged the inclusion of 'A level data was slightly below national average for 2023 for A level Religious Studies'. Inspectors had not discussed the data with Leaders and the result was impacted by one student not passing the exam.

The College was required to publish the report within five working days. Leaders had chosen to use the official complaints process and hoped to have this statement removed.

Q How many students took A Level RE last year?

A 20.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair extended thanks to the Principal and staff for their hard work and preparation for the short notice inspection. Governors were thanked for meeting with Inspectors.

7. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

7.1 Link Governor Updates/Reports

Reports from Anne White had been circulated via Governor Hub and reviewed by the Quality and Standards Committee.

Pam Tate shared a verbal report from a visit that had taken place on the 28th September (as Link Governor for Skills).

Work was underway to analyse destination data. 67% of student progress to university. Pam had asked about what the college did to support those students who did not go to university. The College held open evenings with employers as well as an apprenticeship fair and it had been encouraging to see the number of students engaging with these. There had been a good selection of industries represented.

There was a request for Governors to support the forthcoming mock interview panels.

7.2 Governance Review

The Chair explained that sixth form colleges were mandated to undertake an external governance review. The process had commenced last year with discussion with David Wright from the Association of Colleges. Governors had then completed a questionnaire at the strategic conference.

The external review was scheduled for June 2024 and David Wright had been appointed to undertake the inspection. David would attend the meeting of the Board on the 4th July 2024.

7.3 Governing Board Membership

The Principal reported that he had received two expressions of interests for the role of Foundation Governors, in response to an email sent to parents.

A meeting had taken place with interested parties. One of whom was eligible to be a Foundation Governor and worked in primary education (and were moving into a leadership role). They had provided an outline CV and were willing to apply to the Archdiocese. The Principal recommended that the application be progressed.

The second interested party was not eligible to be a Foundation Governor but had fantastic post-16 specialist education experience.

The Principal suggested that the college engaged with them in their role as a Parent. The current Instrument and Articles permitted only one Parent Governor on the Board but engagement may support succession planning and the individual could be brought onto committees as a non-corporation member, to provide expertise (they had a background in SEND and Pupil Premium).

One further meeting with a third interested party, who would be eligible as a Foundation Governor and was a local Councillor with strong links to the college was scheduled.

There were also some other interested parties identified, who would also be eligible as Foundation Governors. One, in particular, had expertise within the sixth form and academy sectors.

The Board recognised excellent opportunity to attract highly skilled Governors to the Board.

7.4 Academisation

The Principal reported that the proposal circulated was a redraft of the original. A representative from the Archdiocese had assisted. A recent scheduled meeting with the DfE (Department for Education) had been cancelled. The lack of progress by the DfE and CES (Catholic Education Service) was frustrating. Reasons for the delay had not been forthcoming.

Q What were the reasons given previously?

A The DfE had stated that it wanted to better understand the vision for how school improvement would be impacted by the MAT structure and to better understand the leadership structure. Both areas had been addressed within the re-worded proposal.

STANDING ITEMS

8. Urgent Items

The Chair placed on record a sincere thank you to Nicola Craven as this was the last Board meeting that she would attend before her departure for her new role. Nicola was thanked for her contribution to the college and wished well in her new role.

The Chair asked Governors to consider the format for the 2024 Strategic Conference and proposed to hold a twilight session on the Friday evening preceding the Saturday daytime session.

The majority of Governors felt able to commit to both sessions.

Agreed – Strategic Conference to be held over Friday 1st March (4.30pm – 6pm) and Saturday 2nd March 2024 (9am – 1.30pm).

ACTION 1: Chair to send out a governance questionnaire in preparation for the Governance Review. All Governors requested to complete.

9. Confidentiality

Item 11 was deemed confidential.

10. Date and time of next meeting committee meetings:

Thursday 26th March 2024
Thursday 4th July 2024

Strategic Conference:
Friday 1st March (4.30pm – 6pm) and Saturday 2nd March 2024 (9am – 1.30pm).

CONFIDENTIAL STAFFING ITEM

11. To consider a confidential staffing item

Staff members Nicola Craven, Paula Nolan, Dominic Jones, Jim Winstanley and Kate Watts withdrew from the meeting.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chair thanked all in attendance for their contributions and closed the meeting at 7.49pm.

MEETING ACTION POINTS

Action	Item	Action	For Who	By when
1.	8.	Governance review questionnaire to be completed by all Governors	All	Post meeting