

**ST JOHN RIGBY COLLEGE
MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BOARD
HELD AT 6PM ON THURSDAY 4th JULY 2024
AT THE COLLEGE**



MINUTES

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*

Business commenced at 6pm.

Meeting closed at 7.56pm.

The meeting was quorate.

Governors present:		
Pamela Catherall	Foundation Governor	Yes
Philip Collier (Vice Chair)	Foundation Governor	Apologies
Mark Higgins	Foundation Governor	Yes
Pam Tate (Chair)	Foundation Governor	Yes
Catherine Morgan	Foundation Governor	Yes (from 6.18pm)
Mark Dumican	Foundation Governor	Apologies
James Gresty	Foundation Governor	Apologies
Kate Watts	Staff Governor	Apologies
Chris Chandler	Staff Governor	Yes
Peter Cudlip	Parent Governor	Via MS Teams
Meghan Clayton	Parent Governor	Yes
Anne White	Co-opted Governor	Yes
Peter McGhee	Principal	Yes
Jenson Grady	Student Governor	Yes
In Attendance:		
Allan Keating	Associate Member	Yes
Paula Nolan	Vice Principal	Yes
Victoria Brown	Vice Principal	Yes
Dominic Jones	Vice Principal	Yes
Jim Winstanley	Finance Manager	Yes
Sophie Gardiner	Clerk to the Governing Board (Wigan Governor Services)	Yes
David Wright	External Governor Nance Review Assessor	Yes

The meeting opened in prayer and a reflection on the memory of John Lumb, former Governor and Chair of Governors.

Introductions were made for the benefit of David Wright who was observing the meeting as part of the external governance review.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Apologies and consideration of consent to absence

Apologies had been received in advance from Philip Collier, Kate Watts, James Gresty and Mark Dumican and were **accepted** by the Board.

Catherine Morgan was expected to join the meeting.

1.2 Any other Urgent Business (AOB)

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

1.3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

1.4 Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 26th March 2024.

Approved and Authorised for publication.

Post meeting note: Following the meeting, the Chair directed that item 8.2 of the minutes remain confidential.

1.5 Matters Arising

Included on this agenda:

- Finance and Resources - loss of key staff.
- Internal Audit Plan.
- Marketing.
- Governance – meeting schedule for 2024/2025.
- Academisation.
- Board membership.

1.6 Minutes of the Committee Meetings

Received and noted for information. The Chair invited Committee Chair's to share salient points:

a) Finance and Resources Committee – 13th June 2024

Pam Tate reported that the Committee had received and reviewed the DfE Benchmarking Report and noted that the number of colleges that had received 'outstanding health' had reduced, and the number receiving 'good' had increased. Most markers were positive for St John Rigby.

The College solvency had improved. The Risk Register items were all progressing well (except HR due to staff absence). Financial Regulations had been reviewed. The Committee had also received the Accommodation Report (CIF bids and ongoing work noted).

b) Quality and Standards Committee – 20th June 2024

In the absence of the Committee Chair, the Chair and Principal drew the Board's

attention to the following items discussed by the Committee:

Link Governor Reports had been received. The potential change to the exam board for English had been discussed. Attendance was well above national average. Retention and the reasons for leavers had been explored. All metrics and comparison data for applications continued to track positively against previous years (just short of 10% on number of accepted offers for places). More students had attended New Students' Day than had previously attended.

The budget forecast matched last year's intake but would more than likely include an additional 20 to 30 students. In terms of growth, it is forecast that subjects could absorb the additional students without the need to create more teaching areas. The Bursary was also reviewed.

The Principal thanked Pam Tate and Pam Catherall for attending the Student Voice Conference. All students had been thanked for their contributions.

6.18pm Catherine Morgan arrived.

Q In terms of the learner voice conference, could student views possibly be gathered at a different time of the year to provide different perspectives through lived experiences?

A Paula Nolan confirmed that new students were surveyed and focus groups did take place during the first half term, but more could be done at different times. Student voice provided a safe space for discussions, and this was welcomed by students.

There was a discussion around how to gain the most valuable feedback and how to ensure that all students had the opportunity to provide feedback at various times throughout their college journey and not just at the end of two years.

c) **Audit Committee** – 27th June 2024

Anne White reported that the Committee had reviewed the Risk Register and Financial forecast and had received the latest audit code of practice along with assurances that the College was compliant.

The Internal Audit Report on financial controls was presented. There was one medium recommendation (this had been addressed by the recruitment of a Finance Assistant). The Internal Audit Plan for 2024/2025 was accepted and approved.

The External Audit Plan was presented, accepted and approved. The Health & Safety Action Plan was reviewed for 2023/2024. The Annual Work Cycle was received and approved. The Committee reflected that it was pleased with the result of the Internal Audit and the assurances it provided Governors with.

2. COLLEGE ITEMS

2.1 Safeguarding and Pastoral update

Vice Principal Paula Nolan shared additional verbal commentary:

- There was now a zero-waiting list for Counselling which demonstrated the impact of the Mindfulness and Mental Health support available to students.
- Male attendance and engagement would be addressed.
- There had been a reduction in the number of concerns, suspensions and permanent exclusions.
- New Attendance strategy to be launched in September, in line with Government guidance for schools.

- Staff wellbeing – survey about to be undertaken.
- Case studies shared, explored the situations faced by students.

The Board commended the positive impact of safeguarding and wellbeing provision across the College and were assured by the positive and proactive approach of leaders.

Q How do we get across to future students and parents, how good the College was at supporting students? The case studies provided evidence of the fantastic amount of support available but the content was too sensitive to share.

A This was difficult due to the sensitive nature of individual scenarios impacting on a small number of students. The reputation of the College was that it was supportive, and this was shared through word of mouth in the community.

The Principal explained that a unique selling point for the St John Rigby was the annual parents' conference (held for parents of applicants) and for applicants with vulnerabilities, there was a separate evening run and lead by the Learning Support team. Staff and current parents were invited to speak to new parents.

The College could work towards a Mental Health accreditation which would then be promoted to further enhance the reputation.

Q Safeguarding training – do all staff undertake this?

A All staff complete KCSIE training annually. All staff also complete Prevent training. Speakers were invited into College to provide additional training and support around Self harm.

Q If a staff member were to miss the training, how would this be addressed?

A Safeguarding was part of staff induction. Online training can be accessed anytime although the preference was for face-to-face training as this had greater impact. All staff sign (annually) to confirm they read and understood KCSIE.

Q Case study five provided powerful examples but it was concerning to note that CAMHS had not provided the support that was needed, was this raised?

A Yes but in this case the student did not meet the threshold for support.

2.2 College Items

a) Principal's Report

The Principal highlighted the concern around student retention. The Senior team had implemented strategies to address this as a priority and these would be shared with all staff before the end of the term. Attendance was positive, relative to sector benchmarks, but leaders would seek to improve this further. There was remarkable work being undertaken through the Careers and Honours Academy.

Q How worried should we be about retention?

A We believe that the College could make a positive impact in this area. Issues had been identified (more with vocational courses than with academic courses). Some A-Level subject areas had lower retention than others. Leaders were looking to address this through the enrolment process. There was a higher proportion of attrition from mixed and vocational courses. Leaders were confident that this would be redressed but it was a disappointment that this had occurred.

b) Staffing and HR Matters

A full report had been shared with the Finance and Resources Committee.

The Principal drew the Boards' attention to the concern around the single point of failure, which had been tested during a recent staff absence. Contingency was now in place to address a key risk.

Curriculum management changes had resulted in back filling of areas vacated through internal appointments (initially for a fixed term of one year).

Governors were assured that systems were now in place to cover areas of risk.

Q Student Welfare Officer – would there be a large enough field of candidates?

A The advert had been placed for the Student Welfare Officer and this would be determined through the recruitment process. The appointment had first been possible due to grant funding from the Association of Colleges but will now need to be funded by the College.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair placed on record sincere thanks to Vice Principal Dominic Jones for his role in providing cover for the key parts of the HR function throughout the period of staff absence.

The Board also extended thanks to Loreto College and Yvonne Bimpson for their assistance.

2.3 Estates Management

The Finance Manager confirmed that there were four CIF bids in process. The window project was almost complete. Fire compartmentalisation would take place in two parts; fire door replacement and upgrading followed by compartmentalisation (to take place after the heating and boiler CIF bid completed due to the work to the pipework, including the heating management project).

Planning permission is being sought for the Reception Safeguarding project which would provide secure access, meeting room and disabled toilet and would involve re-modelling the access for cars and buses. Money from reclassification must be spent by March 2025 and the remaining £90,000 had been earmarked for the replacement of fencing on the 3G pitch. There was also £15,000 of the energy efficiency grant remaining which would be used to replace some areas of lighting. Energy consumption had reduced by 30% due to energy efficiency project.

The Board **noted** the report.

2.4 Risk Register

The items of risk pertinent to each committee had been reviewed by committees. The remaining risk for the Full Governing Body is that of academisation and will be addressed in item 3.1.

2.5 Accountability Agreement

The Board noted that this was in line with the previous year. Updates had been made to relevant areas of data. The Greater Manchester Learning and Skills Improvement Plan remained unchanged. The College continued to meet this in the same way as last year.

The Board **approved** the Accountability Statement as presented.

3. STRATEGIC MATTERS

3.1 Academisation

The Principal drew the Board's attention to the previously circulated letter from the Archdiocese regarding the amalgamation of CMATs 5 and 7 and the proposal that, as the College was allocated to CMAT 7, it would also be included in this new amalgamated CMAT. The Board had previously explored options around academisation and were aware of the benefits that academisation would bring to the College.

The benefit of the larger, amalgamated CMAT would mean that four of the five local high schools would be included alongside 22 local primary schools.

By September, schools would know which other schools had expressed interest and if there were sufficient numbers, the Archdiocese would apply to the Headteacher Board for approval.

Senior leaders unanimously felt that this direction was one that should be explored. The College already worked collaboratively with the schools and recognised the benefits. Joining the CMAT would provide greater financial protection and greater access to capital investment.

Senior leaders requested the Board's support to extend an initial expression of interest to join the amalgamated CMAT 5 & 7 as a founding member.

The Chair invited comments and questions on the proposal **to give the Principal permission to register the College's expression of interest in joining the amalgamated CMAT.**

The Board noted that it was disappointed that the CMAT did not include St Edmund Arrowsmith High School.

Q Do we know what the contribution from individual schools/colleges would be towards central services?

A There had been nothing confirmed for later waves, but the expectation would be between 3-5% (likely closer to 5%). This would be considered under due diligence. SJR would be charged 5% of its budget but would gain the VAT element it currently lost through corporation status.

Q The current loan was due to be paid by December 2025. What would the situation be around the loan re-payments as the College would not be allowed to have an outstanding loan upon joining the CMAT?

A The Finance manager confirmed that the College had sufficient funds to repay the loan.

Q What would the timeframe be?

A The expectation was that from approval, the process would take around six months and would be complete ahead of the 2025/2026 academic year.

Q What were the general feelings of the Headteacher's of the local high schools?

A The collective view seemed to be that Headteachers of the four high schools felt that this was the right direction of travel and were entirely supportive of the combined CMAT but, not all schools were ready to proceed at the same time.

Following the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair called for a vote (by show of hands) on the proposal **to give the Principal permission to register the College's expression interest in joining the amalgamated CMAT.**

Resolution - proposal unanimously agreed.

3.2 College Development Plan

It was noted that a full review including RAG ratings would be shared in September.

4. FINANCE AND AUDIT

The Board noted the minutes from Committee Meetings and the updates provided under item 1.6 for items 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

4.1 Overview of current financial position and forecast

4.2 Audit Updates

4.3 Budget 2024/2025

Additional verbal updates were provided by the Finance Manager:

- Forecast – break even.
- Cash reduced to £1.6 million (from £1.7 million).
- College continued to meet the bank covenant.
- ESFA financial health rating of 'good' (not outstanding as not able to produce sufficient surplus).
- Last year's budget was set with 2% in pay (paid 6.5% and additional funding from ESFA).
- Reduction in high needs income from Wigan Council – would carry forward into 2024/2025.
- Recruitment - numbers were higher and there was an increase in rate per student funding.
- Forecast - surplus £43,500 next year but no contingencies.
- Budget produced with detailed Curriculum Plan for 1,460 students.
- Forecasting reduction in cash to invest in capital projects in estates.
- £50,000 to upgrade storage network vital for the College.
- 500 PCs were not *Windows 11* compatible and needed to be replaced (£75,000 initially followed by two further investments of the same amount the following Easter and Summer).
- ESFA Financial Rating – expect to maintain 'good' but prudent budget monitoring would be required.
- If 1,460 students were recruited, then the 2025/2026 financial year would look better.

The Chair confirmed that the Finance and Resources Committee had reviewed the budget in detail and recommended it for approval by the Board.

The Board complimented the clarity of the reports and considered how and when to address Governor succession planning and long-term maintenance of the fabric of the buildings.

The Finance Manager confirmed that two CIF bids would be submitted, one would be for roofing and one for replacement of water systems with a view to ensuring buildings remained compliant with regulations.

Following the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair called for a vote (by show of hands) on the proposal to approve the 2024/2025 budget.

Resolution – 2024/2025 budget unanimously approved.

5. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

5.1 Chairs Update

The Chair reported that regular one-to-one meetings with the Principal continued.

5.2 External Governance Review

It was noted that following the Governance Review, the report (or a summary) must be published on the College website by the 31st July 2024.

5.3 Governor Training:

The Board recognised the value for money of the additional buy backs and **approved** the purchase of:

- Wigan Governor Services - Training and Development SLA - Cost £1,430 (for the 2024/2025 academic year).
- National Governors Association Learning Link - £140 (for the 2024/2025 academic year).

5.4 Governing Board Membership

It was noted that there were two Foundation Governor vacancies.

5.5 Governing Board Annual Work Cycle (*including Committee work cycle plans*)

The Board **adopted** the Committee and Board annual work cycle plans.

The Chair provided a verbal summary update on the Governance Improvement Plan which remained under review and included the following areas of development:

- Improving communication/quality and quantity of reports.
- Membership and succession planning.
- Stakeholder engagement.
- Self-assessment following governance review.
- Governor training.
- Website – governance area.
- Ensuring that all papers for Committee and Board meetings had a cover sheet which explained the purpose, summary and link to strategic objectives).

6. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

6.1

a) **Health and Safety Policy – Approved** (*pending suggested amendments arising from the following questions*):

Q Should the role of the Office Manager be incorporated given that their role including the administration of medication?

A Yes and also the role of the Vice Principal with responsibility for line management of the Office Manager.

Q Would it be helpful to explain the process for policy approval and how the Governing Board was informed about health & safety?

A Yes, reporting arrangements would be included.

Q Fire Risk Assessment – did the College have one in place?

A Yes. This was in place.

b) Financial Regulations – Approved.

Financial Procedures – Approved.

7. STANDING ITEMS

7.1 Meeting Reflection/Impact

The Chair explained that this item provided an opportunity for Governors to consider what had been achieved during the meeting and what impact Governance continued to make.

Reflections and comments noted:

- Approved budget.
- Academisation expression of interest approved.
- Good quality debate.
- All able to contribute.
- Coherence around the key responsibilities around governance.
- Checks and balances in place around challenge to ensure senior team providing information and assurances to Governors and providing opportunities for Governors to challenge.
- Consolidation of annual work cycle for Committees and Board.
- Steerage around Student Voice and opportunities to engage and potential to gain accredited Mental Health Award.
- Governor training.
- High quality papers presented.
- Good technology to access meeting virtually.

The Chair summarised the work of the Board over the academic year and noted in particular the welcoming of new Governors to strengthen the skill set of the Board. Governors were thanked for their role in the RE and Ofsted inspections as well as for their engagement with the governance review.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair expressed thanks to the Principal and Senior leaders who had led the College to outstanding achievements.

Governors expressed thanks to the Chair for successful leadership of the Board.

7.2 Urgent Items (AOB)

There were no additional items included on the agenda.

7.3 Confidentiality

No items were deemed confidential.

7.4 Date and time of next meeting: Wednesday 16th October at 6pm.

See attached meeting schedule for 2024/2025.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 7.56pm.