

**ST JOHN RIGBY COLLEGE
MEETING OF THE FULL GOVERNING BOARD
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2024**



APPROVED MINUTES

Business commenced at 18:04
Meeting closed at 19:30
The meeting was quorate.

Governors present:		
Pamela Catherall	Foundation Governor	Apologies
Philip Collier (Vice Chair)	Foundation Governor	Apologies
Mark Higgins	Foundation Governor	Yes
Pam Tate (Chair)	Foundation Governor	Yes
Catherine Morgan	Foundation Governor	No
Mark Dumican	Foundation Governor	Yes
James Gresty	Foundation Governor	Yes
Kate Watts	Staff Governor	Yes
Chris Chandler	Staff Governor	Apologies
Peter Cudlip	Foundation Governor	Yes
Meghan Clayton	Parent Governor	Yes
Anne White	Co-opted Governor	Yes
Peter McGhee	Principal	Yes
Jensen Grady	Student Governor	Yes
In Attendance:		
Allan Keating	Associate Member	No
Paula Nolan	Vice Principal	Yes
Victoria Brown	Vice Principal	Yes
Dominic Jones	Vice Principal	Yes
Jim Winstanley	Finance Manager	Yes
Amy Appleton	Clerk - Wigan Governor Services	Yes

Prior to the FGB meeting commencing, the Principal informed the Board that the college council had successfully appointed a new student Governor for 2024/2025 academic year. The current student Governor, Jensen Grady, had met with the newly appointed student Governor for a handover and to discuss expectations and responsibilities.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Nominations were invited for the position of Chair.

Nomination received for Pam Tate which was accepted.

By show of hands, Pam Tate was unanimously elected as the Chair of the Corporation Board for the ensuing academic year.

Election of Vice Chair was deferred to the next FGB meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to include election of Vice Chairperson on the next FGB agenda.

1.2 Apologies and consideration of consent to absence

Apologies had been received in advance of the meeting from Philip Collier, Pamela Catherall and Chris Chandler.

Apologies were accepted by the Board.

The Board noted that Allan Keating and Catherine Morgan were not in attendance.

1.3 Any other Urgent Business (AOB)

The Board agreed to include the following at item point 7.2, any other urgent business

- Parking
- Permission to share contact details
- Confidential information - staff and students would be asked to withdraw for this item.

1.4 Declarations of Interest

Staff present were asked to withdraw for a confidential item which would be taken at the end of the agenda.

1.5 Minutes of the previous meetings held on the 7th July 2024.

Minutes of meeting held on 4th July 2024 were approved as an accurate record and authorised for publication.

1.6 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising. A small number of actions had been included on this agenda.

1.7 Minutes of the Committee Meetings – (if available)

Minutes of the below committee meetings were received in advance of the meeting for information.

a) Quality and Standards Committee – 26th September 2024

In the absence of Philip Collier, the Principal provided the Board with a verbal update on salient points. The following was noted:

- Pupil enrolment figures for 2024/2025 were positive at 1,460 and included a healthy year 12 cohort. College Leaders were hopeful that pupil numbers for 2025/2026 academic year would be maintained and predicted pupil enrolment figures would be in the region of 1,500. College Leaders were ahead of the recruitment recovery plan.
- Pupil recruitment from four “targeted” Catholic high schools continued. There had been an 11% decline from Catholic high schools in 2024 although a positive 11% increase was seen in 2023. College Leaders were continuing to work closely with high school leaders and develop intelligence.
- A detailed curriculum update and current curriculum priorities document was provided to the committee members, which included retention and high grades. College Leaders were awaiting confirmation on 2025/2026 curriculum, which would follow once the government’s curriculum review had been completed.
- The College continued to work closely with applicants, and in particular with pupils who had shown an interest in applying to undertake BTEC qualifications.

Questions were invited.

Q: Have overseas educational visits been discussed?

A: Yes, overseas educational visits have been approved at Q&S.

b) Audit Committee – 2nd October 2024

Peter Cudlip was appointed as the committee Chairperson for 2024/25 academic year.

Peter Cudlip gave a verbal update on salient points. The following was noted:

- The board thanked Anne White for leading and undertaking the role of Audit Committee Chairperson for the 2023/2024 academic year and for her excellent work in doing so.
- Terms of reference were reviewed and recommended to the FGB for approval (at this meeting).
- The risk register was reviewed.
- Assurances from College Leaders and documentation evidenced that the College met contractual requirements in complying with the relevant funding documentation set out in the ESFA's funding rules.
- The College data protection policy and cyber security policy were approved.
- The meeting was informative.

Questions were invited.

Q: Has the internal audit workplan for 2024/2025 been finalised?

A: Yes, all is on track.

c) Finance and Resources Committee – 9th October 2024

Pam Tate gave a verbal update on salient points. The following was noted:

- Pam Tate was appointed as the committee Chairperson for 2024/2025 academic year.
- No Vice Chair was appointed, this item had been deferred to the next committee meeting.
- Committee terms of reference were reviewed and recommended to the FGB for approval (at this meeting).
- Year end finances were presented by the Finance Manager - The College made a surplus of £109,000 for the year, compared to a budget surplus of £102,000, resulting in a favourable variance of £7,000. Non pay variance costs were £5,000. Income and pay were both higher than budget but largely due to the pay award. Two items had not yet been processed through the financial accounts but were disclosure notes which would not affect the bottom line surplus figures.
- 2024/2025 budget had been reviewed; some minor changes had been included. The original budget predicted a small surplus which had since reduced but a surplus was still predicted. It was noted that the budget was tight and was to be carefully managed going forwards. It was noted that the additional student numbers had already been reflected in the original budget figures.
- A detailed HR update had been received – overall there were 10 fewer staff this academic year compared to last academic year. Staff sickness absence had reduced, with stress and mental health remaining the main reasons for staff absence.
- Staff wellbeing was discussed and was to remain a focus going forwards.

Q: Can I clarify, staff wellbeing sickness absence has declined, not staff wellbeing?

A: Yes, that is correct, there had been a reduction in the number of absences linked to staff wellbeing.

- PDR (Performance and Development Reviews) had been discussed, PDRs were now taking place.

- Single point of HR failure had been mitigated. A HR Manager had recently been appointed and was set to commence in their role from January 2025. College Leaders were very pleased with the candidate appointed and look forward to having her on board.
- An estates report was circulated which detailed works completed and works set to commence. The report also included finance bids.

2. COLLEGE ITEMS

2.1 Principal's Report (to include Student Exam results and student recruitment).

The Board received the Principal's report in advance of the meeting.

The Principal reminded Governors that they had received the finance and HR update at the recent Finance committee meeting held on 9th October 2024.

The Principal referred to page 5 of his report; A Level summary and data which was produced by the National Benchmarking system - last academic year College figures were above national figures, this academic year College figures were in line with national figures, the decrease was 8% and was due to a reduction in high-grade rates. Improving high-grade rates was to remain a College priority. Student destinations remained positive, 90% of students received their first choice university place. Retention percentage evidenced that although retention was good and above benchmark, College Leaders would have expected retention to be higher than it was. Further conversations and strategies were to be explored to increase retention figures along with continued emphasis on providing clear progression opportunities, strengthening career guidance and enhancing connections with employers.

Performance data had been received on this date and evidenced that the average grade remained the same as the previous year. Improvements had been seen at the lower end of the grade.

High standards and expectations remained.

The Principal referred to page 7 of his report; Retention for BTEC qualifications for 2023/2024 was 82.4% which was higher than the national figure of 82%.

The Principal referred to page 8 and page 9 of his report; There was strong performance in Diploma qualifications and extended certificates. Performance was in line with national targets and value added was reported at four and five which was positive. Retention for extended certificate was positive at 89.8%.

The Principal referred to page 10 of his report; GCSE English results at 50%, above national average figures of 33%. GCSE Maths figures at 33.1% were above national average figures at 22.7%. In previous years GCSE Maths figures had been higher, between 40% - 50%. The delivery of GCSE subjects was to be explored further.

The Principal referred to page 12 of his report; A retention strategy to improve pupil retention had been created, Senior Leaders identified several key focus areas at the summer term strategic planning day. Whole College collective approaches to address and increase retention were working well, pupil attendance was very good and higher than in previous years. A new attendance and punctuality policy had been introduced and was being adhered to and a new attendance tracking system had been introduced which was proving very useful, impact was noted. Changes to the induction and enrolment process were very well received and supported pupils.

The Principal referred to page 13 and page 14 of his report; College enrolment was as expected at 1,460 which equated to a 5% increase, although College was only being funded for 1,381 pupils. The College curriculum plan and group sizes were good, strategies were in place to develop and increase career academy numbers and opportunities further. Pupils fed back that they enjoyed attending Career Academy.

Q: Is the new Hybrid Pastoral model supporting with attendance figures and the College retention strategy?

A: Yes, impact has been seen. We have had four strong appointments, three coaches plus one staff member who is covering a maternity leave cover. Communication is strong, the whole team are working hard and are continuing to build relationships.

The Principal referred to page 30, 31 and 32 of his report; The university engagement programme was excellent. College Leaders continued to explore ways of further developing and enhancing pupil experiences and aspirations. Pupils were to continue to receive excellent enrichment experiences.

The Principal referred to page 47 of his report; As part of Catholic Life, morning prayers commenced from the start of the Autumn term. The CAFOD lunch had re-commenced. Chaplaincy work continued. A bible and studies enrichment group had been formed, pupil engagement remained high and there was a strong network presence.

Questions were invited.

Q: Firstly, congratulations on the excellent pupil attendance, it is great to see the progress made and strategies implemented to improve retention figures. How will tutorial be delivered, and have you received any feedback / concerns from staff?

A: It is early days, but the consistency of approach helps college Leaders to manage it. We asked for feedback on the delivery, feedback received was positive.

Q: Are Vocational tutor groups mixed?

A: Yes they are, but not T Level as this is a much smaller group of students. We will continue to concentrate on tutorial evidence. On average, attendance is positive at 94% – 95%.

Q: Page 24 states that there is currently no Work Placement Officer in post, will Senior Leaders look at appointing a work placement officer?

A: Yes, we have looked at our options for recruiting a Work Placement Officer. We have recruited a temporary person through an agency provider for two days per week. Whilst in the process of doing this, one staff member who has the skills to undertake the role of work placement officer has returned from an absence, so we will look into this in more detail. Discussions are still ongoing; to clarify we will not be advertising externally for a Work Placement Officer.

The Chair informed the Board that she knew of someone who may be able to support with work placements at The Christie Hospital and Salford University.

3. STRATEGIC MATTERS

3.1 Academisation

The Board received an academisation report in advance of the meeting.

The Principal highlighted the following:

- The Trustees and the DfE (Department for Education) gave permission for the CMAT (Catholic Multi Academy Trust) approval.

- Expressions of interest had been requested and were sent in on the previous Monday.
- Interviews for the position of a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) had been concluded. College Leaders were awaiting further information on who had been appointed.
- College Leaders were still awaiting feedback from the Archdiocese as to which schools had expressed an interest in being part of the CMAT.
- The ESFA had updated on the current position, and the benefits and challenges attached to academisation had been explored.
- Next steps for Governors was to continue with due diligence and collect questions to submit to the Archdiocese.

Q: In regard to the makeup of the MAT, SJR (St John Rigby) is a specialist college, do we know if the appointed CEO has post 16 experience? I am mindful of the implications if the appointed CEO does not have the experience of working in the post 16 sector.

A: We can ask for insight into this. SJR is a very good college with an excellent reputation. Education is of good quality and so is our financial management, therefore we would expect no issues becoming part of the CMAT. If the CEO does not have knowledge of post sixth form colleges, this may be a little disappointing but hopefully over time SJR will reap the benefits of academisation.

The Chair confirmed that expressions of interest had been submitted and had been acknowledged.

The Principal informed the Board that College staff had been briefed about academisation, to date no questions had been raised from staff. It was possible that questions from staff would arise closer to academisation completion date.

Q: Noting that a letter was sent to all Headteachers for the position of CEO, will the Interim CEO likely be one of those Headteachers?

A: As far as I am aware all Headteacher's that were interviewed for the position were from the Headteacher cluster.

Q: How interim will the interim CEO position be?

A: The duration of the post is for 2 days for 18 months. An advert is to be published for a substantive CEO. I would expect the role will be very attractive and that applications will possibly be received from nationwide.

3.2 College Development Plan

The Board received the RAG rated College Development Plan in advance of the meeting.

The Principal highlighted the RAG rated areas. Amber and red areas were to be carried forward and included within this current year's College Development Plan, to be received at the December FGB meeting along with KPI's (Key Performance Indicators). The Board was satisfied with the progress made.

Q: Can I propose that you remove *"To establish links with the DfE as part of the strategic plan for academisation with Carmel College"*?

A: Yes, I will remove this item.

3.3 2024/2025 College Priorities

The Board received the 2024/2025 College priorities in advance of the meeting.

The Principal highlighted that following a review of the College's Vision and Mission statement which was done at the strategic planning meeting held in March 2024, the Vision had been retained and was to be used as a framework for this academic year. The Vision was displayed across the College and linked to the 5 core values.

The Principal referred to the College 2024/2025 priorities, these being - attendance, retention and high grades and the College vision - "To be an outstanding, inclusive Catholic sixth form college; valuing the individual, celebrating learning and raising aspirations".

4. FINANCE AND AUDIT

4.1 Overview of current financial position and forecast

Governors received the management accounts summary report in advance of the meeting. The Finance Manager provided an update.

The College ESFA rating was "Good". Barclays banking arrangements were scheduled to end in 2026.

Q: Is the audit currently being undertaken?

A: Yes, the audit is ongoing now, no issues have been reported.

Q: Are the audit team on schedule and will the accounts be provided to Governors at the next Audit Committee meeting in December 2024?

A: Yes, I am expecting the audit to have been undertaken and reports received, although there may be a very small number of outstanding reports. An example was provided.

4.2 Audit Updates

As above.

5. GOVERNANCE ITEMS

5.1 Governing Board Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the following committees had been reviewed by the committees and recommended for approval by the Corporation Board:

Quality and Standards Committee – APPROVED.

Audit Committee – APPROVED.

Finance and Resources Committee – APPROVED.

Governors suggested academisation remain as an item on future FGB agenda's, ensuring the Board was kept well informed and regularly updated on conversations and next steps.

ACTION: Clerk to include academisation on future FGB agenda's.

5.2 Annual Declarations

The Chair reminded the Board to complete via GovernorHub their annual declarations. A deadline date of 25th September 2024 had been originally set at the beginning of the Autumn term and in line with the Governance workplan.

ACTION: The Board to complete via GovernorHub their annual declarations (Code of Conduct / Governor Eligibility / Register of Interests / KCSIE 2024)

The Chair also reminded the Board to undertake Governor specific Safeguarding training via the NGA (National Governance Association) website. Should Governors have any issues accessing the training, they were to contact the Clerk in the first instance.

ACTION: The Board to undertake Governor specific Safeguarding training via the NGA.

5.3 Chairs Update

The Chair provided a verbal update.

SAR (Self Assessment Report) Panels were scheduled for Monday 4th to Wednesday 6th November 2024. The Board were encouraged to support and attend the event if they are able to attend.

Themes for this year's Strategic Conference were to be considered. The Chair asked the Board to consider items, suggest speakers, themes and topics. The Strategic Conference was scheduled to take place during the first week of March 2025. A Governor suggested academisation be included as a topic.

The Chair informed Governors that she had attended the annual Wigan Governors Services Conference, which was held on Saturday 28th September 2024, the theme was Sustainability. The Chair fed back that the conference was very informative and that all educational settings were to have a sustainability action plan and Link Governor in place by the end of 2025. The Clerk informed the Board that Wigan Governor Services would be providing further information during the Spring term, and the item would be included on the agenda. The Chair encouraged the Board to attend the next year's annual Wigan Governors Services Conference.

ACTION: Sustainability to be include as a standing agenda item on all future FGB meetings

A Governor commented, it would be useful to include Scheme of Delegation as an agenda item at the Strategic Conference as this sets out accountabilities and shapes the Governing Board when in an Academy Trust.

5.4 External Governance Review

The Board received the External Governance Review in advance of the meeting.

The Chair informed the Board that the draft report had been received on 25th July 2024 for review and agreement by 31st July 2024. Following review of the report, the Principal and the Chair felt that even though the report celebrated many areas of strength, there were some factual inaccuracies and some areas were not an accurate reflection of the Governing Board, therefore the Chair challenged several of the reviewer's comments during the review stage. Following some agreed change, the report was agreed by the deadline of 31st July 2024 and a note placed on the college website confirming that the review had been completed and the report had been agreed.

The Board reflected and discussed the report in depth. The Board felt that the review had been in depth and thorough and agreed that the report celebrated the good work of the Governing Body in governance matters and highlighted many areas of good practice and achievement.. It was pleasing to note that the only recommendations were to continue to embed current processes already in the implementation stage or minor recommendations about adding page numbers to committee papers and add timings to agendas.

A Governor commented that the summary report was very good and clear. The Chair explained that she had written the summary report at the time of the review and shared it with the reviewer. The Board thanked the Chair for her comprehensive two page summary report. It was noted that the External Governance Review was completed at a cost of approx. £8,000.

Q: Are we required to publish the full report?

A: No, there is not requirement to publish the full report. It is up to the Board, we can either publish the full report or a summary report. The summary would have to be approved by the ERG Reviewer.

The Board noted the recommendations within the report that the ERG (External Reviewer of Governance) had suggested.

The Principal commented; there has been many changes and developments in the college governance arrangements and process over the last 18 months which have had a positive impact, evidenced by the Archdiocesan and Ofsted reviews this last academic year, culminating in the External Governance Review in July. The Board is to continue to develop and embed areas of good practice and consider which recommendations to add to the Governance Improvement workplan for 2024/25.

Q: What Governance experience does the Reviewer have?

A: He is a National Leader of Governance.

Following careful consideration, the Board agreed to publish the summary report on the college website.

ACTION: Chair to agree the report with the ERG Reviewer and ensure the summary report is then published.

5.5 Governance Improvement Plan

The Board received the Governance Improvement Plan for 2024/2025 in advance of the meeting.

The Chair suggested the Governance Improvement Plan be discussed at length at the Strategic Conference and reminded Governors that effectiveness and actions were to be monitored by the Board. Suggested recommendations were to be included within the Workplan.

The Board acknowledged the improvements and progress made which would continue to be embedded.

A Governor commented; there were positives to celebrate in the report, as a Board we should be proud of the work and developments achieved.

ACTION: Clerk to include Governance Improvement Plan on the next FGB agenda.

5.6 Governor Training Plan

Governors received the Autumn term SFCA (Sixth Form Colleges Association) Governance webinar programme schedule in advance of the meeting.

The Chair reminded the Board of the importance of undertaking regular training and development through the opportunities available to them. Training was available from Wigan Governor Services purchased training package and the Archdiocese and SFCA.

The Chair confirmed she had attended an online training course which focussed on evaluation and had booked onto Succession Planning for Governing Boards (Maintained Schools and Academies) - Part 2 scheduled to be held on Thursday 14th November 2024. She said that the courses are all easily accessible and available to all and are very well done and are useful and interesting.

6. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL

6.1 a) Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

The Policy had been reviewed by the Quality and Standards Committee and recommended for approval by the Corporation Board.

Q: Were the updates/changes made in line with KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) 2024?

A: Yes, the policy is compliant and includes the updated information as noted in KCSIE 2024.

The Corporation Board APPROVED the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

6.1 b) Conflict of Interests Policy – to consider

The template policy had been reviewed and was to be personalised to the College, approval of the policy was to be taken to the next FGB meeting.

The Principal informed the Governors that at a recent meeting it had been noted that conflicts of interest of staff whose family members worked within the examination team was to be considered in the policy. Staff would be asked to complete a personal interests form, and wording was to be included within the policy.

ACTION: Clerk to include Conflicts of Interest policy on next FGB agenda.

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, what we could have done/ do differently and what impact Governance continued to make.

Reflections and comments noted:

- Annual compliance requirements undertaken ensured the Board remained compliant and supported with succession planning.
- Governance development, ERG and the Governance Improvement Plan was discussed which ensured the Board continued to meet its objectives and that Governance arrangements in place were effective and remained strong.
- Academisation discussions and information received was very informative and supported the College's strategic vision and goals.
- Finance updates and discussions ensured that the Board had good oversight of the College's sound financial management.
- Key priorities, retention, attendance and high grades were to remain a priority and be at the forefront of the Board's expectations.

7.2 Urgent Items (AOB)

The Principal reminded Governors, as noted at item point 5.3, expressions of interest to support with SAR panels were to be received by the end of the week. The schedule had been previously circulated to the Board.

The Principal informed the Board that the College production, due to be held in November, had been postponed due to unforeseen circumstances. Once a new date had been agreed (suggested in the Spring term), the Board would be informed.

A celebration certificate evening was to be held on Monday 6th January 2025, the Board were invited to attend.

The Chair informed Governors that the Archdiocese had asked for permission to collect Governor contact details (names and email addresses). Should a Governor not wish for their name and email addresses to be shared they were to inform the Chair by the end of the week. No personal information would be disclosed to the Archdiocese.

The Chair highlighted her concerns and dangers associated with parents continuing to park along the main road at pick up time, outside of resident's homes and outside of the College. The Principal commented; we have seen an increase in drop-offs and pick-ups. Parking along the main road is difficult for the College to police. We are fully aware of the concerns and we continue to remind pupils and parents to not drop-off and pick-up on the main road, to use the student car park.

7.3 Confidentiality

A confidential item followed the meeting, staff were asked to withdraw from the meeting for the discussion.

The confidential item was minuted in separate confidential minutes.

7.4 Date and time of next meetings:

Wednesday 18th December 2024 at 5.30pm.

Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 5.30pm.

Wednesday 2nd July 2025 at 6pm.

19:29 Staff were thanked for their attendance and withdrew from the meeting at this point.

Governors were thanked for their attendance and contribution to a good meeting. The meeting closed at 19:30 to be followed by a separate confidential item.

ITEM POINT	ACTION	WHO
1.1	Include election of Vice Chairperson on the next FGB agenda.	Clerk
5.1	Include academisation on future FGB agenda's.	Clerk
5.2	Complete via GovernorHub their annual declarations (Code of Conduct / Governor Eligibility / Register of Interests / KCSIE 2024)	All Gov's
5.2	Undertake Governor specific Safeguarding training via the NGA.	All Gov's
5.3	Sustainability to be included as a standing agenda item on all future FGB meetings	Clerk
5.4	Ensure the summary report is agreed and published.	Chair
5.5	Include Governance Improvement Plan on the next FGB agenda.	Clerk
6.1	Include Conflicts of Interest policy on next FGB agenda.	Clerk