

ST JOHN RIGBY COLLEGE EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW SUMMARY

In accordance with Department for Education's statutory guidance, the College commissioned an external governance review through the Association of Colleges. The Review was carried out by David Wright between May and July 2024.

The Reviewer noted that Ofsted in their recent inspection of the College in January 2024 reported that *'Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior leaders and governors are highly ambitious for their students and their staff. They have an unwavering commitment to provide high-quality education across all subject areas and groups of students'* and also *'Governors are passionate and committed to making continuous improvement to the quality of education at the college. Leaders provide governors with clear and highly detailed reports, which they use to challenge and hold leaders to account for their actions. Governors have a very accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college and individual programme areas. They set clear and precise targets for leaders and managers to help rectify any weaknesses and to maintain the high quality of education. Governors have an excellent understanding of their statutory responsibilities. They ensure that equality and the college values, vision and ethos are promoted throughout the college'*.

This was also evidenced and witnessed in the findings of the External Governance review, as below:

The overall conclusion of the Reviewer on Board effectiveness is that there is strong evidence that the Board is highly proficient and consistently impacts positively on college strategy, effectiveness, and outcomes.

The Board is a well-led, highly engaged, knowledgeable and enthusiastic group of governors, who clearly care deeply about the success of their students and the corporate success of the organisation.

The Board comprises a good mix of people with wide-ranging skills and experience in its membership, including good curriculum and education and finance experience (with two qualified accountants) and a range of private and public business sector backgrounds. Governors have relevant professional skills and experience and are in sufficiently senior roles in their own right, to influence outcomes and the structures and processes of governance provide them with relevant information and opportunities to shape strategy.

There is a clear governor engagement and commitment and governors understand their role and responsibilities.

Board meetings are well chaired, and all governors are encouraged to take part, with questions or comments invited by the Chair as a routine part of meetings. The open and inclusive culture of meetings ensures that Governors are able to challenge and are listened to. There is good engagement with students and opportunities are provided to hear from the student community at meetings, college events and through surveys and the link governor arrangements.

The Board understands its context well, are aware of what needs to be done and monitors its progress closely, offering senior managers both support and challenge in equal measure. The Board scrutinise performance and students' achievements closely and are open with views on college strengths and weaknesses. They receive regular updates on local and national issues. Their expertise in curriculum, finance and strategy management is used to support the development of the College in a productive way.

The Review found that Board outcomes are underpinned by the structures and processes of governance, which are comprehensive and aligned. They provide Governors with the

information and the opportunities they need to exercise oversight of quality of education, risk and finances.

There is a systematic approach to compliance and board self-assessment. Drawing on their skills and experience outside the College, Governors challenge and support the Executive and hold them to account. All Governors, including staff and student governors, contribute. They offer strategic leadership in areas of specialism, participate in external stakeholder events as well as internal strategic discussions, and their concern for and interest in the student experience is evident in their questions and their challenge.

Evaluation and self-assessment are embedded. This reflectiveness is part of the Board's continuous improvement mindset, which enables it to be responsive to the multiple needs of stakeholders and the challenges of the sector and locally. The Board is particularly aware of meeting local and regional skills needs and has a proactive approach to doing so which draws on best practice.

The Reviewer identified strengths and areas of best practice and a few areas for further embedding and development which the Board will consider at the next meeting at the start of the new academic year.

The College's next review will take place in 2026/27.