



MidKent College

GOVERNING BODY

Governance Self-assessment report 2020/21 (GSAR)

Feedback from Governors on the strengths of the Boards performance over what has been a very tricky bedding in period included good attendance at meetings and consistent engagement by all Board members, despite the exigencies of doing this mostly over Zoom. The new Board is gelling well and bringing diverse and complementary skills to bear. Clear roles have been allocated for individual board members (through committee membership and allocation of specific responsibilities for e.g. safeguarding, apprentices etc and through the Link Governor scheme). Induction and mentoring processes for new members appear to work well for the most part and there has been some thought applied to Governor Development and training. There continue to be good links between the Board and the Executive. Board discussions have been strong for the most part and the level of communications between the Chair and individual Governors have improved. The Board has grappled successfully with turning the Strategy into something a lot more actionable and some progress has been made with the development of an easy to navigate data set held in common with the Executive, although there is more needed to be done here. Good progress has been made too with developing and deepening the relationship with MKCTS.

Some progress has been made with most of the items listed in the last GIP, most notably in relation to item I, the Strategy and momentum is in the right direction against the other items. But more is needed against all the actions now that we are moving to a “college more as usual” environment. Indeed, everything that follows is within the context of the Board switching back to “normal” governing from the successful arm's length key risks approach that we have had for the past 18 months, which Ofsted inspectors on an informal visit complimented us on.

In terms of improvement, first and foremost is the need now to deepen the relationship between Governors and the College and individual senior staff through Governors spending time physically on campus and with staff and students. It is important that all the Governors get a real feel as to what makes the college tick and what drives and motivates staff.

There will be limits to the extent to which all Governors will be able to spend as much time as some of the time-rich, older members of the Board can. And more must be done on working out how to get the best from new hybrid methods of working and how to ensure the Governing Board as a whole maximises its performance by balancing what the time rich members can do with the specific experience and expertise those with full-time jobs can more easily bring. As part of this we could extend the practice of QTL committee to all committees and the full Board meetings in having short pre-meeting discussion of Governors without the Executive to establish their priorities for the upcoming discussion.

Closely associated with this is the need to ensure that the Board focusses strongly on the core business of the College and asks meaningful questions about what is the progress being sought, what are the barriers that get in the way and what are the risk around a particular course of action. Some of this should become more obvious as work progress with the operational plans flowing from the strategy and the emergence of the common data set. But also the Executive can assist when preparing reports by highlighting the key issues only in the covering narrative whilst having in the appendices primarily the full supporting data. Providing data alone means Governors need to test their understanding in the limited time available rather than adding value on the critical issues or worse yet swimming in the weeds of the matter not on the key things. It is important that, where-ever practical, Chairs take time too with the presenters to deal with more detailed questions outside of the Committee or Board meeting itself.

In terms of the Strategy, The Board as a whole need to understand how the College is actively managing risks such as the impact T levels will have on the College and, given our particular and typical student intake, what the risks are to our academic and financial performance. This is bound to be a priority for the College over the next few years and the Boards understanding of all this is as yet patchy.

Similarly, as the College develops its links with our communities and local businesses in line with the strategy, so the Boards role in supporting that as ambassadors and by being more directly engaged needs exploration and refinement. The new Funding and Accountability framework currently in development by the DfE will place greater emphasis on LSIPs and making the delivery against these part of Ofsted's remit. It is important therefore that Governors have some way to seek assurance of how this new regime is working in practice. Ultimately, and something which might form part of an external review next summer, we need to consider whether there should be a new Committee which owns this aspect of the detailed work on the Strategy, and whether in turn that should have some particular responsibility for scrutinising the new apprenticeship structure.

In the meantime, we need to develop a consistent "elevator pitch" or story for Board members about what the College is all about, where it is trying to get to and what we need from our communities better to support them.

We could seek to augment the Board with a representative from local business. It has traditionally proven difficult to get senior business leaders engaged with the College at Governor level. So we could explore whether this might be done instead by encouraging businesses to improve their leadership cadre's skills and experience by offering in effect internships of leaders of tomorrow to join the Board for e.g. 18 or 24 months. We might also resurrect previous practice of quarterly meetings between Governors or a subset of the Board and the local business communities in Medway and Maidstone.

We also need to determine how the Board and College can collectively make better use of e.g. trade bodies like the AoC , chambers of commerce etc and relationships with local authorities and figures to increase the influence and reach of the College overall.