

MidKent College Governance Self Assessment (GSAR) Review
Academic Year 2016-2017

Background

Ofsted inspected Mid Kent College from 31 January to 3 February 2017 and determined that the overall effectiveness of the College **Requires Improvement**.

It specifically identified the Effectiveness of Leadership and Management as **Requires Improvement**.

The College had previously been assessed as **Requires Improvement** in 2015.

In its judgment under Leadership and Management, the 2017 Inspection report had noted:

Governors and senior leaders have been too slow to address the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Namely to improve the quality of provision and ensure consistently good performance...Several areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection remain. The new principal and senior leaders have increased the pace of change significantly in the last six months. They are yet to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are consistently good and that more students are able to make progress and achieve. (p3)

With specific regard to the Governance of the Provider, the Inspection Report had noted:

Governors recognise that the pace of improvement has been too slow and have reviewed their oversight of the College to ensure that the pace of improvement increases. For example, insufficient preparations were made to accommodate the significant numbers of students who would need to complete their English and mathematics qualifications.

New members with additional skills have joined the Board to help increase the pace of change. Governors have improved their scrutiny of the quality of provision and now have a good understanding of the key strengths and areas for improvement.

Since the start of the academic year, Governors have access to accurate information and data, using it to monitor the progress and achievement of students and identify areas that require improvement. (p4)

The Inspection Report also noted as strengths that:

Since the start of this academic year, leaders and managers have made rapid progress in building a culture of continuous improvement and accountability that is having a positive impact on the progress and achievement of students.

Since September 2016, leaders and managers are using accurate and reliable data to monitor the quality of provision and tackle poor performance. (p3)

The Governing Body (GB) accepted that the Inspection Report assessment of Governance was accurate and fair and welcomed the acknowledgement that improvements had been made. It sought to drive changes throughout what was left of the academic year.

The GB believes that it improved its effectiveness in some areas, and that this has contributed to improved College results. However until the Overall Effectiveness Rating of the College is (at least) Good, it considers that its Governance must continue to **Require Improvement**.

Governance Self Assessment 2016-17

1. The key functions of Governance

As regards the key functions of Governance

1. The GB was able to make timely strategic decisions

This is evidenced by decisions recorded in the Minutes of the GB meetings and in the minutes of Committees. When necessary, and rarely, decisions taken between GB meetings are reported by written memorandum or Chairs Actions prior to discussion and ratification at the next GB meeting.

2. The GB was able to monitor and hold senior management to account for the achievement of objectives

This is evidenced by the minutes of GB minutes and Committees, particularly the Quality, Teaching and Learning Committee and the Finance & General Purposes Committee. Individual Link Governors followed the progress of specific departments, and many Governors were involved in informal visits to the College to confirm by observation and discussion with students and staff that which had been presented through formal reporting mechanisms.

The GB chairman met the Principal monthly to discuss the progress of the senior team.

The Remuneration Committee scrutinized the performance of the Principal against annual objectives.

3. The integrity of reported information was sound

This is evidenced by scrutiny by the reports and minutes of the Risk & Audit Committee, which conducts occasional deep-dives into matters arising from other Committees including those related to reported data. The Internal Auditors report to that Committee against an agreed plan of actions and provide assurance that processes are sound and are followed. The Quality Teaching and Learning Committee regularly tested and challenged reported information.

All Governors had access to on line real-time data, which was sense-checked during informal visits and Link Governor discussions.

Progress against MLPs was reported at GB meetings.

4. The GB is assured that College controls and financial management are robust;

This is evidenced by the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GP), by the reports of the external auditors and the confirmations of adequate controls in the published accounts. The F&GP, with its specialized membership, paid particular attention to the scrutiny of financial information.

Governance processes received attention from the Search & Governance Committee.

5. The GB is assured that Risk is proactively managed within the College

This is evidenced by scrutiny of operational risk management and the College Risk Register by the Risk & Audit Committee. High-risk projects were subject to a specific risk assessment process.

6. The GB is assured that appropriate skills mix exists both on the GB and at Senior Management Level

This is evidenced by the minutes of the GB meetings; the minutes of the Search & Governance Committee (which concerns itself with Members' performance and Governor Recruitment) and the Remuneration Committee, which scrutinizes the performance of the Principal and Senior Team. Governor Appraisals take place in one2one meetings with the Chair.

7. The GB is assured that Succession planning is in place, for both Governors and senior staff

This is evidenced by the reports to, and Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee.

8. The GB is assured that it is fulfilling its statutory and regulatory responsibilities

This is evidenced by the Annual Report and Accounts, which received the unqualified approval of external auditors. Safeguarding and Equality responsibilities are discharged by receiving detailed reports from the College management and by visits undertaken by specific governors.

2. Performance against specific short-term objectives

Six target Areas for Improvement had been identified in the GSAR 2015-16

1. Securing further improvements in the quality of teaching & learning

Partially achieved - This is evidenced by improved achievement rates for students in 2016-17

2. Improved staffing of English and maths and improved student outcomes

Partially achieved - This is evidenced by improved results in functional skills results and in Maths GCSE results; in contrast, English GCSE results fell (and were below predicted levels)

3. Improvements in outcomes for Building and Construction students

Partially achieved - This is evidenced by poor achievement rates in Building Services, where staffing issues remained significant

4. Enhanced FE skills of the GB

Achieved - This is evidenced, by the recruitment of new governors; and also training also undertaken by existing governors

5. Appropriate vetting of governors for safeguarding purposes

Achieved - All Governors have undertaken DBS checks and specific training.

6. Ensuring the GB provides challenge and support while allowing the leadership to drive improvement.

Achieved - The GB undertook a thorough assessment with the help of external Consultants expert in FEA Governance. The consultants interviewed all Governors, observed a variety of GB and Committee meetings, reviewed governing papers and conducted a review session at a meeting of the Governing Body.

3. Looking forward

The GB began the academic year 2017-18 with this assessment:

- The GB has a good understanding of:
 - The strengths and weaknesses of the College, including with respect to the quality of teaching and learning
 - The financial position of the College
 - The risks facing the College, including with reference to English and maths and staffing
 - The views of stakeholders, including students and employers

- The GB must:
 - Improve strategic insight, having a focus on key issues or “game-changers” impacting the College.
 - Further develop the long term mission and strategic focus of the College.
 - Scrutinise the measures that will accelerate the achievement of good student outcomes and ensure resources are appropriately allocated to deliver these measures.

Ann Furedi - Chairman

30 November 2017

Amended and approved at GB 13/12/17