

MidKent College Governance Self Assessment (GSAR) Review
Academic Year 2019-2020

Background

Ofsted inspected Mid Kent College from 13th to 16th November 2018 and determined that the overall effectiveness of the College **was Good**.

It specifically identified the Effectiveness of Leadership and Management as **Good**. The College had previously been assessed as **Requires Improvement** in 2015 and 2017. In its judgment under Governance the 2018 Inspection report had noted:

- Governors have high aspirations for the College. They use a diverse range of expertise and skills combined with a detailed knowledge of the local community to hold senior leaders to account. They challenge leaders effectively to make improvements.
- Governors involve themselves fully in the life of the College and visit frequently. By taking part in activities such as assessment validations, student meetings and observations of teaching they improve their knowledge of the quality of the student experience. They know the college well. Detailed reports that senior leaders share with them help them to identify clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the college.
- Senior leaders and governors work together effectively to make sure that the college is financially sustainable. They plan well to improve college facilities and resources. They invest in leading-edge technology to improve students' job prospects and tackle local skills shortages.

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. As such the Governors accepted that governance was currently **Good**.

The GB recognised that there was ample opportunity for further improvement **and that they had a strong desire to further raise the standard of governance to outstanding**.

Governance Self Assessment 2019-2020

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. The college performed an extensive further review of strategy through the year which was recorded in minutes and an updated public statement of the strategy.

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 within the Principal's report and throughout the year at meetings of the Teaching and Learning (QTL) committee

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 specialised 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 and many aspects of the Risk Register itself was substantially reviewed and revised during the year with input from committee chairs and senior college leaders. This is further evidenced by the proactive response of the College to Covid and the challenge and support provided by the Governing Body.

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

Substantial effort was extended in 2019/2020 to ensure retiring Governors were replaced by appropriately skilled and experienced new Governors. 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 scrutinises 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 for Governors and of RemCo for senior staff.

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

Five target Areas for Improvement had been identified in the GSAR 2018/19

- a) Further develop the long-term mission and strategy of the College, with clear plans to further enhance the educational outcomes and financial robustness. Strategy has been a focus of the College and GB, evidenced by a thorough strategy review supported by an external consultancy, details of which are recorded in the minutes of Main GB, minutes of the Strategy Away Day and creation of a public facing strategy statement. Financial robustness has been substantially enhanced by securing a 5 year extension of the contract for Royal Engineer training. The College has been graded Outstanding by the S&FA during the year and further work has been done to extend 3rd party income generation and streamline costs which is evidenced in the minutes of the GB and F&GP.
- b) Continue to scrutinise the measures that will accelerate the achievement of outstanding student outcomes and ensure resources are appropriately allocated to deliver these measures. Continued focus on improving outcomes is evidenced within minutes of QTL, which has been further strengthened through the year with the addition of two new Governors recognised as experts in Educational quality. Further discussion was held at the Strategy Away Day on the journey to excellence and this will continue to be a topic of discussion for the main GB. QTL has focussed through lockdown on ensuring continued student progression and ensuring exams/assessment predictions/adaptions/delays through lockdown have been managed professionally.
- c) Particular focus should be maintained on addressing achievement of apprentices, achievement in English and mathematics, and addressing attendance as highlighted in the 2018 OFSTED report. The main GB and QTL have closely monitored performance in these areas throughout the year. The GB recognises that English and mathematics will always be a challenge for the College and has commissioned the executive to conduct research into best practise nationally.
- d) Enhance connectivity in the sector and local community, gaining a stronger understanding of the long-term needs of local learners, employers, and of the effect of new technologies on the employment market. Search and Governance has recognised the need for the GB to improve its own strengths in this area and has been successful with securing new governors with skills in this area. The effect of new technology on the employment market has been a focus of the Strategy Review and Strategic Away day. Findings in this area have been accelerated into implementation as a result of Covid – which are evidenced within the minutes of the GB.
- e) Refresh the Governing Body with capable new Governors, as existing Governors come to the end of their term of service and adjust GB structure to reflect future needs of the college. Search and Governance has secured some excellent new additions to the Board and a good recruitment process in place for the future. Search for the replacement of the Chair has been more challenging, [and time was lost on looking to recruit a Chair through the College's own advertising. Poor process and communications resulted in a long-standing and capable member of

the Board resigning]. A professional recruitment firm has now been engaged, which has put this process on track [and lessons learnt for the future].

Covid-19 placed unprecedented challenge on the whole education sector through the 2019/20 year and required the college Senior Leadership Team and Governing body to adapt to new ways of working. From early in the calendar year the College began to recognise that Covid-19 could be a significant concern and this became very apparent just before lockdown came into force. The College's reaction to lockdown was exemplary with the education and wellbeing needs of the student at the forefront and a very swift ability to communicate virtually. The Principal, SLT and the staff have worked extremely hard and the up-dates to the GB have been excellent through meetings, the Committees and through the Principal's weekly briefings. The GB adapted quickly to virtual working, facilitated by an efficient and effective Clerk. This is well documented in GB minutes and audio recordings of QTL calls. It has been identified, however, that virtual working has increased the challenges for new governors to assimilate information and the GB will seek to implement a blended mix of virtual and physical meetings going forward.

3. Looking forward

- The GB begins the academic year 20-21 in an environment severely affected by Covid-19 which has, amongst other things, created new uncertainties and risks and potentially made the tasks facing the GB more difficult to complete. Nevertheless, 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:
 - Enhance Connectivity in the sector and local community, gaining a stronger understanding of the long-term needs of local learners, employers, and of the effect of new technologies on the employment market.
 - Having worked closely with the Executive to finalise and publish an updated mission and strategy, ensure that plans are put into practice in the short and medium term..
 - Continue to scrutinise the measures that will accelerate the achievement of outstanding student outcomes and ensure resources are appropriately allocated to deliver these measures. Particular focus should be maintained on addressing achievement of apprentices, achievement in English and mathematics, and addressing attendance.
 - Ensure that the skills of the several new governors are successfully employed and that remaining replacement positions coming up soon are filled.

- Further improve the Governors' celebration of the achievement of the college students, staff and appreciate the commitment and contribution of Governors.

Approved at Governing Body 15 July 2020

Approved GB July 2020