

AQUINAS COLLEGE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: 8 October 2024
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mr L Byrne, Mr G Hynes, Mr T McGee, Dr A Smith and Miss A Smith.

Mr G Hynes in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr D Pearson Principal
Mr A Bailey Vice Principal

1. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

The meeting began with a prayer led by Mr G Hynes.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Mrs A Lindsay, Mrs J Miller, Mr M Taylor and from Mr A Bailey for his late arrival.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not covered by the agenda.

6 ADMISSIONS 2024/2025

Mr Pearson introduced a paper that showed that the college had started the term with 2569 students including 32 Pathway students and that the college is funded on 2424 students. A number of students had dropped out for a variety of reasons including going back to their previous school, apprenticeships or transferring to another college.

At the start of the term the 2569 students comprised of 1317 in L6, 1220 in U6 and 32 Pathway students.

The figures currently on roll 2547 students comprised of 1297 in L6, 1217 in U6 and 33 Pathway students. The latest figures suggest that there will be around 2530 students on roll at the census date of 17 October 2024. This year there will be 33 pathway students in 4 classes which is similar to last year. The paper also provided additional information in respect of a) gender breakdown, b) study programmes, c) ethnicity, d) previous school, e) cared for child, f) young carers, g) safeguarding, h) free college meal, i) bursary, j) additional learner support, k) wider participation, l) low prior attainment and m) high prior attainment.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college had grown a little more than expected this year. However, he anticipated that some more students would drop out. There are 7 students on roll who have not yet attended for various medical reasons. They should be taken off roll if they have not attended during the first three weeks of term but the college is working with the students to facilitate attendance as soon as possible. Mr Hynes asked if the additional students caused any problems for the college. Mr Pearson replied that it creates pressure on the timetable, but the college did not have to appoint any additional staff. He added that some subject areas are nearing full capacity. The optimal capacity of the college is 2400 and there are now an additional 150 students on roll. It was noted that Marple Hall School provided the most students to the college and that it is now seeking to become an academy. Mr Hynes asked if Laurus Cheadle Hulme had a sixth form. Mr Pearson replied that there is a sixth form at Cheadle Hulme High School, which is part of the Laurus Trust, but not at Laurus Cheadle Hulme.

It was felt that it is better for the college to grow a little each year. Mr McGee added that from 2029/2030 there is a downward demographic change in Stockport. Mr Pearson advised Governors that Xaverian had not recruited as many students as they had hoped for this academic year. He added that it is difficult to predict patterns of recruitment.

Miss Smith felt that the college was busier this year, particularly at break and lunchtime. Mr Pearson added that the U6 is the biggest that the college has had and that more students than anticipated were in L6. In addition, the college has introduced Thrive time, where students are encouraged to stay on site to study.

A discussion took place on the progress of the new Capital Build. Mr Pearson advised Governors that the completion date for the handover is now 29 November 2024, which is 3 weeks later than planned. Governors noted that the scaffolding had come down and the surrounding land had been cleared, ready for landscaping. Work on the external of the building was 94% complete and internally 70% was complete. Mr Hynes asked if there is any time planned for a snagging exercise. Mr Pearson replied that from the end of October staff from the college would go around the building. Mr Pearson added that a swale had still to be dug for attenuation to take rain water away when there was a heavy downpour, the swale would be 1 metre deep and 3 metres wide on either side.

7. ADMISSIONS 2025/2026

Mr Pearson advised Governors that one Open Day had been held on Saturday 21 September 2024 another Open Day was planned for Saturday 19 October 2024. In addition, the college is also scheduled to attend school events and year 10/11 assemblies at secondary schools. The Open Day on Saturday 21 September had been well attended.

The closing date for applications (which are online) for 2025/2026 is 30 November 2024.

All category 1 students will have a telephone interview before Christmas 2024. Applications from category 2 students who have submitted their application forms by 30 November 2024 will then be assessed. All applicants will be notified whether or not they are being considered for interview. Students who are to receive further consideration will receive a letter before Christmas 2024 inviting them to an interview in January/February 2025. Offers to be made by February half term. The telephone interviews for category 1 students are about to start.

Mr Pearson reported that 87 category 1 students and 125 category 2 students had completed their applications to date.

When considering applications, the college consider the following:

- i) Commitment to study at the college
- ii) Appreciation of and commitment to the college's ethos
- iii) Wider interests and the contribution the applicant might make to the college community
- iv) Whether the applicant currently attends a school located in Stockport
- v) Quality of application

Mr Pearson circulated a paper to Governors for information that showed the position school by school in Stockport for the following:

- a) The number of students who had submitted applications
- b) The school that the students currently attends, broken down by Stockport and Area (134), Non Partner Schools (49), Catholic Partner Schools (27) and Other (2).
- c) The subject choices made by students
- d) Applications by Electoral Ward

Mr McGee noted that there were no applications from the Heaton's areas of Stockport. It was noted that a number of students from Priestnall School go to Parrswood High School, Loreto College and Xaverian College

Further information on the number of applications for 2025/2026 would be available at the Governing Body meeting on 26 November 2024 and a further report would be given to the next General Purposes Committee.

8. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

A copy of the current General Purposes Committee Terms of Reference had been circulated prior to the meeting.

After a full discussion it was agreed that the following be added to point 1. (j):

“at the summer term meeting of the committee”

9. PUBLICITY

a) College Prospectus - Mr Pearson advised Governors that the 2025/2026 college prospectus was similar to the previous year. The prospectus included photographs of students undertaking activities within the college and of the building.

b) Website – The college website had been updated and Governors were encouraged to have a look and feedback any comments.

c) Mr Pearson advised Governors that for this year the college would not have done anything different. The aim for 2025/2026 would be to grow steadily. The real test is getting the conversion rates from applications right.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Policy Review – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Clerk to the Governors reported that Mr Taylor had reviewed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy and had suggested some minor changes that had been accepted by the college.

RESOLVED: That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy as amended be recommended to the Governing Body for approval.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

21 January 2025 at 4.30pm

Signed _____

Date _____

AQUINAS COLLEGE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Date: 8 October 2024

Time: 4.30pm

Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mr L Byrne, Mr G Hynes, Mr T McGee and Dr A Smith.

Mr G Hynes in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr D Pearson Principal

Mr A Bailey Vice Principal

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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5. EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

Mr Pearson advised Governors of the following:

a) That a member of staff had opted to go to an Industrial Tribunal claiming unfair dismissal due to disability. The deadline for a pre trial review had been the middle of September 2024. However, the former employee had asked for the deadline to be extended due to illness and has been given an additional 21 days. They have also asked for an extension of the trial date, a decision on this would be made by the Tribunal. The college are awaiting an update from their solicitor.

The case had been very time consuming for the college over the last two and a half years, particularly for the Principal and Mrs Barlow (Director of Human Resources).

b) that the recruitment of staff is becoming more difficult, the college has been unable to recruit a maternity cover in chemistry to date.

c) The college were looking at wellbeing of staff with particular reference to their workload to ensure that it was manageable and flexible.

d) That Mr Bailey provides an induction for new staff on Catholic Life at the college.

6. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

A copy of the current Employment Committee Terms of Reference had been circulated prior to the meeting.

After a full discussion it was agreed that no changes were necessary.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Denominational Inspection

Mr Hynes offered his congratulations to the college on the excellent Denominational Inspection findings. Mr Pearson responded by saying that the inspection had been challenging but everyone had rallied round and contributed to the caring culture within the college.

The inspectors had made some extremely complimentary comments about the college which was a recognition of the hard work of the staff and students. Dr Smith added that it was the first inspection under the new regime. Mr Hynes asked if any messages would be passed back to the Diocese. Mr Pearson replied that Damian Cunningham had been at the feedback and had seemed suitably impressed and it was a testament to how the culture had grown through the mission of the college.

Governors noted that it would be 5 years before another inspection would take place and that inspectors need to continue to recognise that sixth form colleges are different from schools

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21 January 2025 at 4.30pm

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____