AQUINAS COLLEGE
GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: 21 January 2025
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mr L Byrne, Mr G Hynes. Mr T McGee, Mrs J Miller, Dr A Smith and Mr M Taylor.

Mr G Hynes in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr D Pearson	Principal	Mr A Bailey	Vice Principal
Mr J Morrison	Head of Careers/Careers Lead		

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 J Miller for her 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 8 October 2024 copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

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

6. ADMISSIONS 2025/2026

Mr Pearson updated Governors on the latest position regarding admissions for 2025/2026 and advised them that 2781 applications had been received for around 1300 places.

There had been 1036 Category 1 applications and they had been interviewed over the telephone before the end of November 2024. The interview is to give students advice about entry requirements and courses available at the college. The number of applications was similar to last year. Of the 1036 students 416 had accepted their offer, 5 had declined the offer, 607 had still to reply and 8 would have a further interview.

The closing date for Category 2 applications was 30 November 2024 and 1776 applications had been received which was the highest number ever received. Prior to the interviews the student's applications are classified as follows:

i) excellent, ii) good or iii) requires improvement. The interviews should be completed soon and appropriate offers will be made by the February half term. Those students classed as excellent (368) would not be interviewed but directly offered a place. 499 students would not be offered an interview based on their poor application. This left 896 students to be interviewed and most of these had been completed with 276 students still to be interviewed. Mr Pearson advised Governors that the interviewer complete 15 interviews in a session of 2.5 hours.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that a moderation process is then undertaken before the formal offers are made by February half term. A conversion rate of around 65% is then applied to determine how many places to offer to meet the college's target number. The college SLT review the admission arrangements each year.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that there are 30 students from Category 1who have been refused a place (due to missing the deadline), who still want a place at the college. These have been placed on a waiting list.

In addition, there are 69 students who have Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP) who have applied to the college. Whilst these are mainly Stockport students others are from neighbouring authorities. Out of the 69 students only 10 have submitted their EHCP, with the remaining awaiting their updated review. It is unlikely that an EHCP will be taken away but it is important for us to have sight of the up to date EHCP so that we can determine if we can meet need. Mr Pearson added that whilst the college receives funding for these students from the appropriate local authority, it usually takes sometime before the college receives it. The college faces a big challenge juggling its resources to accommodate this and it can be very time-consuming chasing the funding. Mr McGee added that there are more students with EHCP applying and the college needs to know what the students' needs are to ensure that it can provide an appropriate education. Mr Pearson responded by saying that if the college can meet the students' needs it will accept them but they are likely to be in a class of 20 students.

Mr Hynes asked if there had been any geographically unusual applications. Mr Pearson replied that the college receives applications from students at about 100 schools with 20 of these schools providing the majority of students.

An update on the admission numbers will be given at the Governing Body meeting on 18 March 2025.

7. STUDENT DESTINATIONS

Mr Morrison introduced a paper that had been circulated to Governors which showed the destination of students who had left the college at the end of the 2023/2024 academic year.

Mrs Miller joined the meeting whilst this item was being discussed.

Governors' attention was drawn to the Executive Summary in the report which showed the following:

a) 1036 students who had completed a level 3 course left the college in 2024. Additionally, 15 students also completed their studies who were on level 2 courses.

b) 57.2% of students progressed straight to higher education courses (63.3% when including students who have deferred entry to Higher Education), whilst 17.5% progressed to either an apprenticeship or employment. The remaining 13.6% of students took a gap year, an FE course as well as some currently seeking opportunities.

c) The Final UCAS reports students completing level 3 qualification and accepting a place at university was 593.

Female acceptances – 309 (52.0%)

Male acceptances – 272 (45.9%)

Prefer not to say – 12 (2.0%)

101 Students deferred entry to university for 2024

Total number of students gaining a place at a university was 694 students

Number of students who gained entry to their first choice – 523 (88.1%)

d) 204 students accepted places at Russell Group Universities which was 34.4% of total number of acceptances to universities.

e) Oxford and Cambridge places – 7 students.

f) Universities in northern cities continue to be the most popular with Aquinas students. Once again Manchester Metropolitan University is again the most popular university with 93 students progressing onto a higher education degree course. Other popular universities were Sheffield Hallam 51, University of Salford 48, University of Liverpool 37, University of Sheffield 31, Liverpool John Moores University 31, University of Manchester 25, Nottingham Trent University 20.

g) Students from the college went onto 77 institutions compared to 89 in the previous year.

h) 122 students out of a total of 180 who identified as anything other than White British (67.7% of cohort) progressed onto higher education.

i) 88 students out of a total of 166 who identify as from a "widening participation background" (53.0% of their cohort) progressed onto higher education. This compares to last year, with 122 students out of 218 (59%).

j) Governors noted that 46 students started apprenticeship (up to degree level apprenticeship).

k) 49.7% of students who left are based in the North West.

l) Aspire students who participated during (2022/2023), 67 out of 121 completed their studies in Summer 2024. 55.4% of those students progressed onto higher education and 21 progressed onto either an apprenticeship or employment.

m) There were 94 other, students who do not fit in one of the other categories (a decrease from 181 in 2023).

n) There had been an increase in the number of students taking a gap year or going into employment.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that most students were staying in the North West due to the financial pressures that families are facing. Some students were working a year to help with the finances of going to university.

Dr Smith noted that in Table 6, Most popular university courses, there were no science or mathematics courses listed. Mr Pearson added that science accounts for a lot of the high grades at the college. Mr Morrison undertook to find out more information on this.

Mr Taylor asked if a gap year was signposted to students. Mr Morrison replied that the college provide a check list for students on all possible options. Mr McGee added that those taking Health and Social Care courses may not have attained the grade needed in English and Mathematics for higher education, but Salford University offers an alternative course. Mr Pearson replied that of those students entering the college without the necessary grade in English, 82% achieve the grade, whilst in Mathematics it was 64%.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that by the deadline date for UCAS submissions many students do not know what they are going to do. There are a few who plan a meaningful gap year, for example in sports coaching.

Mr McGee asked if first aid courses were available at the college. Mr Pearson replied that all sports courses have to undertake works experience which includes first aid. Mr Bailey added that the Health and Social Care courses also include first aid. In addition, the enrichment programme offers more skills related elements. Mr Hynes asked if students have to pay for Sign Language courses. Mr Bailey replied that the students do not obtain a full qualification and do not, therefore, pay for the course.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college does not send as many students to university as its competitors as some students are choosing apprenticeships and other routes to the workplace. The Careers Department do a good job in trying to ensure that they reach everyone to make them aware of what is available.

Mr Morrison was thanked for his informative report.

RESOLVED: That the Student Destination Overview for 2024 be noted.

9. PUBLICITY

Mr Pearson advised Governors that there was nothing new to report.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Any Other Business.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 24 June 2025 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson