NWSLC
NORTH WARWICKSHIRE & SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

Summary of North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College External Board Review

Received by the People, Strategy & Governance Committee on 24th October 2023 and the Corporation on 14th December 2023

1. Report Conclusion on Overall Board Effectiveness

There were many strong features of governance at NWSLC with a positive Board composition, healthy Board structure, strong Board interaction and an overall maturity to the operation of governance. Inevitably there were some areas where further improvements could be made, but these were in the context of making the Board even stronger in its operation, rather than in any sense weaknesses or remedial actions.

The Board takes time to consider the student experience and quality, all governors see the student as central to all their decision making; clear collective accountability operates and there is painstaking attention to what is required to be done. The Board gives strategic leadership to the College, works carefully in reviewing the progress against the strategic ambitions and takes a meticulous approach in ensuring financial soundness.

The way in which the Corporation observed the Nolan Principles, its adoption of Code of Governance and the extent to which the culture of the Board focused on outcomes was looked at and indicated that the Board demonstrates integrity and responsiveness.

The overall conclusion on Board effectiveness is that the Board is proficient and made a strong impact on College strategy, effectiveness, and outcomes.

2. Review Framework Overview

The Review was based on the Education & Training Foundation and Association of Colleges pilot review framework. This Framework considered and was not limited to, principles from Codes of Governance, the Education Inspection Framework and the Department for Education's current guidance on external board reviews.

The focus of the Framework was on Board composition, Board structures and Board interaction. The Corporation also requested consideration of two additional aspects;

- whether meeting minutes were of an appropriate style, length and content; and
- if there was any specific good practice that it might consider adopting to take its practice to outstanding.

In assessing overall Board effectiveness the Review focused on the core functions of a Governing Body, namely:

- setting and communicating the College educational character, strategy and goals;
- holding executive leaders to account for educational performance and quality of the College and performance of staff; and
- exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected and legal obligations are met.

The External Board Review was undertaken by Heather Cross over the period April - July 2023. Following moderation, the draft report was shared with the Chair, Principal/CEO and the Clerk to the Corporation.

The final report was then received by the People, Strategy & Governance Committee (when discussions took place to consider the report's recommendations for implementation in 2023/24) and the Corporation.

3. Board Composition - Summary Findings

STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
• Many experienced governors with wide-ranging skills and experience • Good use of governors' particular skills in its committee chairing and memberships	• Use of external recruitment assistance to bring about wider diversity in membership in filling a number of current governor vacancies. • Extension of skills audit to include experience and diversity. • Widen extent of induction programme.

Conclusion: The Review identified that Board Composition, whilst having many strengths, was an area for more development.

4. Board Structure - Findings

STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
• Strong governance support arrangements • Systematic purposeful governance practices • Crisp and concise verbal summaries from Exec at meetings	• Minutes style regarding recording questioning to be reviewed. • Review delegations to focus more governor attention on strategic matters. • Further consideration of ways to reduce Board packs to refine the extent and reduce complexity of papers governors receive. • Development of accessibility of governance information on the website.

Conclusion: The Review identified that the current Board Structure was positive, whilst there were some minor aspects to be considered for improvement.

5. Board Interaction - Findings

STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
• Good team ethic, spirit of inclusion, support for Executive Management team • Strong work with student governors and interaction with student community	• Wider exposure at Board level to hearing student views and experiences. • Exploration of ways in which governors could be used further to open doors in the community.

Conclusion: The Review identified that Board Interaction was an area of strength.