

**Orchard Hill College Committee meeting
Tuesday 12th November 2019 at 5.00pm at Quadrant House**

Present: David Hobday, Chair (DH)
* Michele Humphreys, Vice-Chair (MH)
Kelly Phillips, Principal (KP)
Ric Adams (RA)
* Akansha Arya (AA)
Iain Chadwick (IC)
Neil Mears (NM)

In attendance: Dr David Watkins, OHC Trustee (DW)
Janet Sherborne, OHC&AT Chief Operating Officer (JS)
Sara McManus, observer (SM)
Sue Curran, Management Accountant (SC)
Suzanna Challenger (Clerk)

DH welcomed everyone and made introductions. DW introduced himself as a Trustee of the College, saying he had chosen to attend in order to strengthen links between different levels of governance and to further familiarise himself with Committee processes. SM said she had been invited to observe with a view to possibly joining the Committee.

The meeting commenced with a presentation on apprenticeships from JS. OHC and OHCAT generally meets or exceeds the national workforce apprenticeship target of 2.3%. The College is a listed provider on the Register of Apprenticeships Training Providers and holds a contract to deliver apprenticeships to levy-paying employers. Apprentices are mostly drawn from the existing staff team, where employees wish to upskill; however this week four additional apprentices with SEND have started bespoke Customer Service apprenticeship programmes at Level 2. KP noted that OHC is also advertising for premises apprentices at each centre, with a guaranteed interview on completion of the programme in line with the College's mission to secure life-changing outcomes for students. Governors welcomed the focus on outcomes, which for our recent graduates include joining teacher training programmes and achieving promotion. JS added that the College's two 'pilot' apprentices have since found further employment in their chosen fields and are thriving.

NM asked whether apprenticeships would be a separate inspection to any overall College inspection. KP said no, but there would be a separate lead, alongside potential leads for high needs and Adult Education Budget. She said that SM's experience in FE and apprenticeships would prove an invaluable addition to the OHC Committee if she decided to join.

Governors **THANKED** JS for her presentation.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from DT, KC, MH and AA.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations made. The Clerk circulated annual Declaration of Interest forms and requested any governors who had not already done so to complete and return them to Tracey Goodsell, Head of Governance.

3. Skills audit analysis

The Clerk circulated annual skills audit forms and requested any governors who had not already done so to complete and return them to Tracey Goodsell. DH asked whether the analysis could be made available to governors at the next meeting, in order to identify any gaps and areas of particular strength.

Action: Clerk to add skills audit analysis discussion to the agenda for next meeting.

4. Constitution and appointments

- i) Governors were asked to propose the appointment of the Chair of the LGB until autumn term 2020. DH had indicated that he was willing to stand again. The Clerk invited further nominations. No further nominations were forthcoming, and governors **AGREED** the appointment of DH as Chair.
- ii) Governors were asked to propose the appointment of the Vice Chair of the LGB until autumn term 2020. MH had indicated that she was willing to stand again. The Clerk invited further nominations. No further nominations were forthcoming, and governors **AGREED** the appointment of MH as Vice Chair.

Both appointments will be ratified by the OHC Board of Trustees on 13th December 2019.

5. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

6. Matters arising

The following matters arising were updated:

Minute	Action	Resolution
Safeguarding presentation held before formal meeting	The Clerk to send this presentation and Part 2 of KCSIE to all governors.	Presentation and Part 2 attached as Attachments 2 and 3.
Minute 5 Item 4	The Clerk to include an item on the agenda for the next meeting for governors to receive the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offer.	See Principal's report item 7.

Minute 5 Item 5	KP to send TG the link to the Workstart microsite to send on to governors.	Link below: http://workstart.me.uk
Minute 5 Item 6	KP to provide an update on sickness absence figures at the next meeting.	See dashboard.
Minute 7i	KP to update the Visions and Values statement on Page 2 of the Strategy.	See Principal's report item 1.

DH congratulated KP on the Workstart microsite, saying it provided clear and attractive information to potential students. He asked whether a link back to the main College website could be included, and KP said she would look into this.

Action: KP to discuss with Marketing re. adding link to OHC homepage from Workstart microsite.

RA asked whether governors would receive information on the number of OHC employees registered disabled, as noted in the minutes of last meeting. KP said she would provide an update to governors following this meeting.

Action: KP to provide governors with information on the number of OHC employees registered disabled.

7. Principal's Report

KP circulated two data dashboards: the regional dashboard allows deeper scrutiny of data, while the consolidated dashboard gives a whole College overview.

The following matters were discussed.

i) Ethos, Vision and Strategy

KP thanked governors for their feedback on the College vision. The new strapline ('Building futures, changing lives'), mission statement and values have been developed following informed consultation with students, staff and stakeholders, and KP said that as incoming Principal she was keen to ensure that the vision was strong and that all staff have a good understanding of it. The new strapline is particularly important to ensure that life-changing outcomes remain a focus of everyday practice. DH said he felt that this is a great summation of the College approach.

Work is underway to upgrade all College centre reception areas so that they are uniform: a low arousal environment with clear OHC identity.

Kirsty Cottrell is now Deputy Principal, responsible for Personal Development (she remains DSL for the College). KP acknowledged the challenges inherent in OHC's size and geographical spread and said that going forward she would consider creating a further senior leadership role to oversee business, premises and budgets.

KP requested governor approval to extend the October half term in 2021 to two weeks, and reciprocally reduce the subsequent Easter holiday from three weeks to two. This will help to mitigate the effects of high staff sickness absence during the autumn term. IC said that students also become exhausted during the autumn term, and he felt a longer half term would be beneficial to them in terms of reducing anxiety and challenging behaviour. DH said that any change to holiday dates must be made in consultation with families, so that people have time to make suitable arrangements. KP agreed, saying the College could potentially offer a one week holiday programme. Governors noted that many provisions now offer a two week autumn half term, and some providers and families have experienced logistical issues this year with Sutton and Surrey's one week half terms running consecutively.

Governors **AGREED** the change in holiday dates, subject to consultation with students and families.

Action: SLT to consult with students and families around October/ Easter holiday dates.

ii) Student numbers

Governors **NOTED** that the College has hit its target for student numbers.

iii) Self-Assessment Review update and curriculum development (QIP)

The College curriculum is now more closely aligned with the four Preparing for Adulthood pathways, supporting smoother transitions into and onward from College. The new Core Skills system is in place, allowing assessment of skills in four key areas (English and communication, maths and problem solving, resilience and managing change, and digital skills) using a continuum model; this offers a crucial baseline for students, particularly those making slight or non-linear progress. IC asked whether the sensory curriculum would be rolled out soon. KP confirmed that curriculum packs have all been updated with this content and would be rolled out to centres this week.

With regard to the SAR, KP notified governors that the Teaching and Learning grade has been regraded to 2 (Good) rather than 1 (Outstanding). This is primarily due to the rapid growth of the College in both geographical spread and student numbers. KP confirmed that teaching is consistently Good, and said she felt it is important to be transparent.

iv) Budget

This was discussed under item 10.

v) Human Resources

Governors **NOTED** recent developments, including the Hillingdon recruitment campaign and review of agency staffing. With regard to sickness absence, KP said this is currently high, particularly at VPC and Lomond House. DH asked how the College is supporting staff to manage sickness absence. KP said that a lot of work

has taken place around wellbeing; there is now a universal Staff Mental Wealth, Health and Wellbeing Policy which was developed with staff input throughout 2018-19 and has been publicised to staff via line management, appraisals and training events, alongside a wellbeing programme offered to all staff throughout the year. KP is hoping for good feedback from the upcoming mindfulness week. A perks package (Perkbox) will be launching shortly – this is funded by the College and offers discounts on a variety of purchases.

DH asked whether sickness absence is linked to staff morale. KP acknowledged that the work can be stressful and sometimes physically harmful, meaning that staff wellbeing is an ongoing priority for the SLT. Two staff members have recently been referred for counselling; the College has an in-house Occupational Health service which works with staff to implement Wellness Action Plans; staff can access the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP); there are Mental Health Champions in each centre, and two senior staff members have completed ‘train the trainer’ accreditation in First Aid for Mental Health, with the aim of rolling this out to all centres so that each has at least one trained Mental Health First Aider on the staff team. KP said she hopes to see a positive impact on staff sickness absence in the long term, and SLT will be monitoring the impact of wellbeing initiatives throughout the year.

vi) CPD and organisational development

Governors **NOTED** recent CPD developments, including the launch of staff specialist networks and the planned roll out this year of the in-house SEND specialist modules. KP said that the College has grown substantially over the last few years and has seen increasing complexity of need amongst its students; accordingly SLT is working closely with the Training School to develop and implement a staff development strategy to ensure that all staff have the requisite specialist knowledge.

IC asked how training needs for agency staff are being managed; many College centres have long term members of staff who are agency, and they cannot always access the OHC training. KP said that she has spoken to all agencies and informed them that from January 2020, the College will not employ any agency staff who cannot evidence that they have suitable Team Teach and manual handling training. In between now and then, the College has offered to provide this training for free if the agencies pay for their staff to come in – KP said she is keen to retain good staff, however the College cannot afford to have staff working with students without the requisite skills.

vii) Safeguarding/health and safety (including premises)

Governors **NOTED** the ongoing work around developing a contextual Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offer. KP said she is currently looking at case studies to include.

Governors **NOTED** the ongoing programme of works to College premises, as detailed in the Principal’s report, including the delay and subsequent review of works to Beaconsfield. KP confirmed that OHC is pursuing reimbursement of some expenditure, alongside the contract penalty for late completion. She added that Lomond House and VPC are being fitted with all new IT equipment this term.

KP invited questions from governors.

DH asked about plans to move teaching from Good to Outstanding. KP said the SLT has very high expectations for all staff, and that an average rate of progress would be to move one subgrade i.e. 2b to 2a over the course of one term. Teaching in some centres is already Outstanding and she expects teaching to be Outstanding across all centres by September 2020.

RA asked whether comparator figures could be included in the dashboard, for example year on year measures in order to make tracking of trends easier. KP said that embedding impact assessment and reporting is very much on the agenda for senior leadership across the organisation, and that the aim is to build these kinds of comparators into reporting going forward. She asked governors to always use the data as a prompt for further enquiry; for example, she would expect the data to show a rise in safeguarding incidents over this year, because the reporting system is more robust and staff are more confident both in their use of the system and their understanding of safeguarding, and that challenge from governors during meetings is crucial to building an understanding of the full picture.

DH asked for an update on Lewisham and Nash College. KP said that Nash have asked OHC to extend the support programme for two terms. There are no plans currently for Nash to join OHC. The working relationship continues but at some point it will draw to a close. Governors **AGREED** this approach. RA noted that Nash includes residential provision and KP said OHC has no plans to offer this at present. However, Stephanie Hill continues to look for suitable premises for OHC in Lewisham as there is high demand in the area.

DH invited questions on the dashboard, following discussion at the Governor Conference in October. KP asked governors which sections are more or less useful. Governors **AGREED** that the high level budget section is less useful, as this is comprehensively covered during the Finance items each term. Comparisons would be useful, as would some explanation around variances in sites e.g. cohort etc. – for example, Wyvern House has high behavioural incidents due to the complexity of need among its students. SM said that staff numbers in each centre would also help contextualise the data.

DH queried the mid-year dip in staff typicality in Wyvern House. KP said this was due to rapid growth in numbers alongside a high quotient of unqualified teachers – Hillingdon is a difficult area in which to recruit. Observations have just been completed there and she expects to see a rise in G2 teaching. Wyvern is also leading on developing the autism specialism, with staff undertaking an accredited course delivered by the Head of Centre, which should positively impact on quality of teaching.

RA left the meeting at this point.

8. (i) Portfolio Visits

Ethos Vision and Strategy

Further to the Ofsted discussion noted in his report, DH said he agreed with the view expressed by John Prior, (OHC&AT CEO) at last month's Governor Conference, that quality is driven first and foremost by individually and collectively doing the right things and asking the right questions, maintaining our focus on the students. KP added that she needs and appreciates the stretch and challenge offered by all governors.

Governors **AGREED** that it would be helpful for examples of life-changing outcomes to be shared at future Committee meetings.

Action: SLT to include case studies of life-changing outcomes in future Principal's reports to governors.

DH said that local links in students' communities are a key part of the College's ethos and operation and as such a Teaching & Learning representative from the Hillingdon area would be a valuable addition to the Committee, ensuring that OHC's full geographical spread is represented in discussions. Governors **AGREED** to consider this for future development.

Teaching and Learning

As report.

Health, Safety, Child Protection and Safeguarding

NM reported that safeguarding continues to be a real strength and focus within the College. The local Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offer continues to be developed and governors were excited by the prospect of using it to show student progress. OHC's student safeguarding ambassadors continue to be an asset to the College – KP noted that they are attending a conference in Birmingham today.

NM asked whether KP's role would change now that she is Deputy Principal. KP said there would be no significant change; KP is now lead for Personal Development but remains College DSL.

Action: NM to go through the Single Central Record with DT.

HR

As report.

Business Development and Marketing

IC reported that he had carried out his first portfolio visit with Clair Hill, Publicity & Promotions Manager, to gain an overview of the Marketing team and their work. He noted that the whole organisation identity is very strong, and that he had discussed with CH how to make social media work harder for the College e.g. building up Instagram stories to show students' progress, making stronger connections between social media sites/apps to highlight what teachers and students do in order to

provide a clearer window into College life. Social media can also be a great teaching tool around personal development, welfare etc. and governors agreed that involving students in the development of OHC's social media use will be key to ensuring it remains relevant and engaging.

IC left the meeting at this point.

Governors **RECEIVED** the portfolio reports.

9. Finance and Funding

- i) SC presented the end of year management accounts, noting that these are unaudited so the figures may change. Governors **NOTED** that the projected deficit has been successfully converted to a surplus and praised KP and the SLT's hard work throughout the year in turning this around. SC said that matching staff costs to student needs is very dynamic and will always be a challenge. She also drew governors' attention to the fact that reserves had increased over the year, saying that the College is now spending some of this money in order to increase capacity e.g. premises works.

OHC's pensions obligations had previously contributed to a negative balance; however, the auditors have this month provided updated figures on pensions liability which means total funds now show a positive variance of £591k

DH congratulated KP on the turnaround and asked whether there had been any impact on delivery. KP acknowledged some impact on therapy provision, but added that recruitment to this area remains very difficult and she continues to work with HR to try and address this staffing need.

SM asked how the College manages staff sickness absence, in terms of contingency plans for staffing. KP said that staff cover is provided for incidences of long term sickness absence (two weeks plus), but that the College has to manage short term absence through creative staffing and flexibility within centres/regions. Recruitment is difficult overall, particularly in certain areas e.g. Hillingdon, and bringing in unfamiliar short term staff to work with students with complex needs can bring added complexity. The College has insurance to cover absence.

Action: SC to provide further information to governors around insurance coverage at next meeting.

DH said the positive balance sheet position is great news, not just for its own sake but because having a positive balance puts the College in a strong position when engaging in fundraising, liaising with new suppliers etc.

DH asked about variance of top up between different Local Authorities. SC explained that the College works out Element 3 costs based on what each individual needs.

Governors **RECEIVED** the end of year management accounts.

- ii) SC presented the management accounts for September 2019. She noted that a full year forecast of -£143k at this point is positive; forecasting is done on approved figures at month end and these fluctuate with late starters etc. These accounts were prepared using assumed student income of £239k, against actual student income at this moment of £257k.

Therapy assistants have been added to each centre, to mitigate against the ongoing shortage of therapists, and this has impacted on staffing costs. Therapy posts have also been advertised at improved rates in order to try and attract good candidates.

DH asked whether OHC could offer therapy provision during holiday time, as families often struggle to access this and it can impact on students returning to College after holiday breaks as well as the obvious impact on young people and families themselves during the holidays. KP said that while this may be logistically possible, the implications of 'selling a service' would need to be considered before any such plans were made.

DH thanked SC on behalf of governors for providing such clear accounts, saying the narrative is particularly useful.

Governors **RECEIVED** the management accounts for September 2019.

10. Policies and Procedures

Governors noted the policies and procedures approved by the OHC&AT Board at their meeting on 28th June 2019.

11. Dates of Future Meetings

The following dates were agreed and noted:

- Tuesday 10th March 2020 at 5pm at Quadrant House
- Tuesday 16th June 2020 at 5pm at Quadrant House
- Tuesday 10th November 2020 at 5pm at Quadrant House

DH noted that RA had had to leave the last two meetings early, and asked whether it might be worth checking if this is due to a standing arrangement on Tuesdays.

Action: Clerk to check regular availability with all governors in order to ensure that dates work for all.

12. Any Other Business

DW asked KP to ensure that the new OHC vision and values were included for discussion at the upcoming OHC&AT Board of Directors meeting on 13th December.

Action: KP to ensure that OHC vision and values are discussed at OHC&AT Board meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.52pm.

CHAIR: _____ **DATE:** _____