

Aquinas College
General Purposes Committee

Date: 25 January 2022

Time: 4.00pm

Venue: Virtual

Governors Present

Dr P Beatty, Mr S Coker, Mr P Horton, Mrs C Knights, Cllr T McGee, Mrs J Miller, Dr A Smith and Mr M Taylor.

Mr P Horton 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 Horton.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr L Byrne and Mr G Hynes.

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 12 October 2021 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. Impact of Covid 19

Mr Pearson advised Governors that for the last two days of the Autumn Term the college reverted back to remote teaching to protect families before the Christmas holiday period.

Students were asked to take a test before they returned to college for the Spring Term. As a result 120 students were isolating and 25 staff were absent but not all related to Covid. The numbers quickly reduced to 20 students and 3 staff (2 were working from home).

The transmission of the Omicron variant has been much greater but the symptoms are not as severe, with some having no symptoms but still positive. There is now a return to normality with low level of interruptions. However, there has been an impact on the planned January assessments. It is expected that the summer examinations will go ahead as planned.

Dr Smith asked what proportion of students had been vaccinated. Mr Pearson replied that this was not known. The NHS had agreed to come back to the college to offer booster vaccinations. All staff have been vaccinated. Cllr McGee informed Governors that the rate of infection in Stockport had been very high but it is now falling. Dr Smith added that people who had previously had Covid had built up immunity. Mr Pearson added that the number of students taking lateral flow test was much better than in other local colleges. Mr Taylor asked if there had been any difficulty in obtaining the lateral flow test kits. Mr Pearson replied that the college had a good supply.

7. Admissions 2022/2023

Mr Pearson updated Governors on the latest position regarding admissions for 2022/2023.

There had been 1103 Category 1 applications and they had been interviewed over the telephone before the end of November 2021. 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. After the interview process there were 1084 applications for about 700 places. In addition there are 58 applications that were late and they have been placed on the reserve list.

The closing date for Category 2 applications was 30 November 2021 and 1409 applications had been received which was down by 100 from last year, for about 550 places. In addition there are 78 applications that were late and they have been placed on the reserve list. The interviews should be completed soon and offers will be made by the February half term. In addition there are 28 Pathway students.

The college over recruited in September 2021 and on the census date there were 2415 students, whilst the college had been funded for 2295 students. The college had aimed to grow by between 20-40 students. An additional 20 students gives the college an additional £100,000 in income. The college is significantly above its capacity, the original building was for 1850 students to be on site at any time.

The predicted number for U6 in September 2022 is 1185 students. The maximum that the college can comfortably cope with is 2400 students. Therefore, the aim is to have a L6 of 1250 for September 2022. This would give a total of around 2400 students by census date in October. Some subjects have grown and the most popular subject is now criminology with around 236 students in L6. The college have been considering a number of strategies to deal with the increasing student numbers. These include efficiencies in college but that would increase class sizes, a possibility of a new build or looking for some accommodation outside of the college needs to be considered.

For September 2021 offers were made to students based on a conversion rate over the last five years of 65% for Category 1 students and 60% for Category 2 students.

All of this should have given the college a total of 1200 students to start in September 2021. However the college over recruited by about 120 students.

Mr Horton felt that there was no easy answer on how to achieve the planned number of students for September 2022. Mr Pearson said that the college cannot over recruit, therefore, he would err on the low side when making offers. Dr Beatty asked if balance between Catholic and non Catholic students had changed. Mr Pearson replied that the over recruitment had mainly been to the increase in category 1 students, therefore, the balance had not changed.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college would need to do a feasibility study in relation to any new build. He reminded Governors of the Joseph Mayer building that was near the Sports Hall that had been demolished as part of the new build, could be a possible site for a new build. Preliminary discussions had taken place with the local authority planning department. Any build on the site of the former Joseph Mayer building would raise issues about how the college functions due to the movement of students around the site.

Cllr McGee advised Governors that after discussions with Mr Pearson it was felt that the continued growth of the college cannot continue without some changes being made. There are a range of options open to the college and these may include some additional build. The college would need to take a long-term view of what provision would be needed in the local area. It was agreed that there needed to be a detailed discussion at a future Governing Body meeting or an item included on the agenda for the training session in May 2022. Any new build would be for September 2023 at the earliest.

Dr Smith reminded Governors that the college opened with around 400 students with about 40% being Catholic. The percentage of catholic students has increased over time.

An update on the admission numbers will be given at the Governing Body meeting on 8 March 2022 and Mr Pearson would prepare a paper outlining the various options to deal with the increase in student numbers. Cllr McGee felt that it was important that the needs of the students are met. He added that if the Marple or Cheadle site of Trafford College closed there would be implications for the college. Hazel Grove High School established a sixth form but it could not offer the range of subjects and subsequently closed. Mr Taylor added that strategic planning is important for the future of Stockport, it needs to take account of demographic trends that are included in the Stockport Local Plan.

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

8. Student Destinations

Mr Pearson 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 2020/2021 academic year.

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

a) 1038 students left the college in 2021. Additionally, 8 students also completed their studies who were on level 2 courses.

b) The Final UCAS reports students completing level 3 qualification and accepting a place at university was 634.

- Female acceptances – 372
- Male acceptances – 262
- Number of students who gained entry to their first choice – 510.
- Unconditional offers – 67 unconditional offers were made to Aquinas students.
- 26 students then progressed onto their chosen unconditional offers.
- 45 students deferred entry to university for 2021. The impact of Covid was the main reason why students decided not to start their course in 2021.

c) 166 students accepted places at Russell Group Universities which was 26.2% of total number of acceptances to universities. This is a decrease from last year 221 students (33.4%) of total acceptances. It was widely accepted that universities over recruited last year due to the lifting of the university cap and uncertainty of the impact of Covid 19. In context, in 2019, pre Covid, 147 students (24.9%) gained a place at a Russell Group university.

d) Oxford and Cambridge places – 5 students.

e) 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 90 students progressing onto a higher education degree course. There was a large decrease in students going to Salford University with 60 students compared to 80 in the previous year. The impact of the Covid-19 crisis seems to indicate a student preference to study at a local university this year. Sheffield Hallam and University of Manchester were also popular.

f) Students from the college went onto 86 institutions compared to 77 in the previous year.

g) Governors noted that 62 students started apprenticeship compared with 72 in the previous year. The decrease can be argued due to the effects of the Covid 19 crisis as employers pulled back on their apprenticeship programmes. 157 students went in to full time employment, 42 students continued on a FE Course and 58 took a GAP year with 45 deferring an HE course.

h) There were 64 other, students who do not fit in one of the other categories and there were 66 unknown, students who the college have not be able to contact.

Mr Taylor said that he thought students were going to universities close to home. Mr Pearson replied that over 30% of students stay close to the Manchester area. Only a small percentage look beyond the north west. Dr Smith felt that the trend nationally was to stay closer to home. Mr Coker advised Governors that students do want to stay close to home and don't seriously consider moving away. Mr Pearson added that 30 students had applied to Oxbridge. Mr Coker stated many students leave it until the last minute and are not aware of what is available. Dr Smith added that there has been an increase in the number of degrees on offer to students. Mrs Knights added that due to Covid it had not been possible for students to undertake visits to universities. Mrs Miller felt that the way universities had dealt with Covid was also an influencing factor

RESOLVED: That the Student Destination Overview for 2020 be noted.

9. Publicity

Mr Pearson advised Governors that there was nothing to report on publicity at the moment.

Information will be available at the next meeting.

10. Any Other Business

Governors noted that this would be the last meeting that Mr Coker would attend because his term of office as Student Governor would cease at the end of the Spring Term 2022. Both Mr Horton and Mr Pearson thanked him for his contribution to the meetings of the Governing Body and wished him well for the future.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is 5 July 2022 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____

AQUINAS COLLEGE
EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Date: 25 January 20212
Time: 4.00pm
Venue: Virtual

Dr P Beatty, Mr P Horton, Mrs C Knights, Cllr T McGee, Mrs J Miller, Dr A Smith and Mr M Taylor.

Mr P Horton in the Chair

In Attendance

Mr D Pearson	Principal	Mr A Bailey	Vice Principal
--------------	-----------	-------------	----------------

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr L Byrne and Mr G Hynes.

2. 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.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

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

5. Employment Issues

a) Staff Wellbeing

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the wellbeing of staff was important and that they were valued. Mr Bailey was undertaking regular surveys with staff and acting on the feedback received. Mr Pearson added that he was undertaking “fire side chats with staff”.

Mr Pearson reported that the contact time for staff had increased and was a strain on staff but there was a positive feel around the college and staff morale seemed higher than the previous term.

b) Staff Absences

Mr Pearson advised Governors that there were four members of staff on long term sickness due to physical and mental health issues.

The employment of a Head of Department who had been absent due to anxiety had agreed to have their employment terminated. A member of the Support Staff was also likely to agree to their employment being terminated. Two of the four staff off long-term are part-time.

Other members of staff were absent due to family matters associated with Covid. Some of these have been able to work from home. Mr Pearson added that it was difficult to find supply staff to cover absences during these difficult times but the college were trying to keep on top of it.

Mr Pearson acknowledged the support that he had received from the Governing Body and the Leadership team at the college.

The Governors recorded their appreciation of the hard work and dedication of staff at the college.

6. Date of Next Meeting

5 July 2022 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____