



Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2017 at 5.30pm in Room 301

Members present: Mark White (Chair), David Craig, Phil Cook (Principal), Daniel Johnson

Officials: Mick Hickey (Deputy Principal), Jason Faulkner (Vice Principal, Curriculum), Sarah Thompson (Clerk), Tracy Thomas (Minutes)

Apologies: Lynda Brown, Liz Boynton (Head of Quality), Rebecca Hodgson, Deborah Merrett (co-opted member), Michelle Elliott (Director of Business Development)

Mark White was appointed Chair and Lynda Brown was appointed Vice Chair in absentia.

SIC17/25 Agenda Item 1 - Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was **agreed** to approve the circulated minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 17 May 2017.

Updates against agreed actions were **noted**.

SIC17/26 Agenda Item 3 – 2016-17 College Performance – key headlines

The Deputy Principal spoke to a report provided by the Head of Quality which noted considerable progress in relation to achievement rates and value added. There had been significant improvement in English and maths. Construction had had a successful year due, in large part, to groundwork undertaken by Head of Department, Michael Duffy, in what was felt, historically, to be a problematic curriculum area. The Prince's Trust had performed well and Foundation Skills had shown improvement; as had other areas such as beauty, catering, aviation and ESOL. A greater emphasis had been placed on the progress of individual learners through meetings between Head of Quality and Heads of Department, raising issues, undertaking intervention and taking preventative action where necessary. Stretch and challenge in teaching and learning in College had also helped.

Retention was felt to be problematic, particularly at SRC Bede and this was deemed potentially damaging. Too large a cohort showing mediocre performance would

reflect on the Leadership and Management grade at SAR. Overall college evaluation at SAR would also be impacted by NETA's performance. Good progress had been made in 16/17 but there were still challenges to be faced.

The Deputy Principal responded to questions from the Chair about the impact of the resignation of the Head of Quality. Governors commended Ms Boynton for her tremendous effort and hard work. The Chair noted his appreciation for the work carried out by the Head of Quality and her contribution to the committee.

Members **received** and **noted** the report.

SIC17/27 Agenda Item 4 – Review of Value Added and ALPs

The Deputy Principal reported a year of progress with an improvement in high grades and value added/progress measures across all types of study provision in 2016/17. However, the college was said to be performing at around the national average and continued progress was deemed necessary with the focus on underperforming subjects.

The Deputy Principal reported that he was pleased with progress so far and the Chair acknowledged the amount and quality of the work undertaken. However, the College still had work to do on improving value added and continued progress was necessary with the focus on underperforming subjects.

Members **received** and **noted** the review.

SIC17/28 Agenda Item 5 – Quality Improvement Plan for SRC and Redcar & Cleveland College

The Deputy Principal reported that meetings had taken place with RCC staff, particularly Mandy Morris, around planning for quality improvement at the merged colleges. Work was being undertaken on a post inspection improvement plan for RCC which was complimentary with the SRC 2018/19 plan but was not part of its monitoring processes or procedures. This was described as a quite generic plan for improvement across the board and a plan which utilises systems developed at SRC over three to four years; a source of reassurance for RCC staff and a means by which to establish robust foundations for the new college.

In response to questions from the Chair around the mood at RCC post inspection, the Deputy Principal reported positive interaction with the staff responsible for quality.

There was some discussion around timescales and the possibility for the revision of dates in order to assess what is achievable in the shorter term and which aspects required faster delivery.

The Principal contextualised the writing of a quality improvement plan for 18-19 as part of the proposal submission process and stressed the importance of having the Deputy Principal and Vice Principal: Curriculum based at SRC. A bid had been submitted to recruit one Director, two Assistant Directors, Quality Co-ordinators, Safeguarding and Prevent Officer and High Needs Officer. The RCC VP:C was reportedly looking towards SRC leadership for counsel and advice. Members noted that the plan for this year was to provide advice and guidance to RCC whilst ensuring SRC is the primary responsibility.

Members **received** and **noted** the report.

SIC17/29 Agenda Item 6 – Review of SRC Bede Curriculum

The Vice Principal: Curriculum (VP:C) spoke to his report on proposed curriculum revision at SRC Bede. It was established that, whilst 'A' level provision would continue, it was considered desirable to update the curriculum offer to incorporate a wider range of vocational programmes and new entry criteria. Greater consideration would be given to learners' entry levels in order to determine the most appropriate pathway and facilitate more individualised programmes of study. Having considered offers and recruitment strategies of other providers in the local area, facilitating subjects would continue to be offered alongside more vocational pathways; dependent upon learner entry levels and aspirations. A number of Level 3 courses were identified including Creative Media Production, Travel and Tourism, Performing Arts, Art & Design and Photography which would help to diversify the curriculum offer.

In response to a governor challenge around the level of market research undertaken, the VP:C identified Vector software as having been instrumental in identifying SRC Bede's percentage share of the market and indicating where students had chosen a different college.

Discussion centred on marketing and the Principal was assured that there was some marketing information available for the Open Evening which had generated keen interest. Further marketing work was being undertaken by Mark Flannery and learners would be advised about possible pathways following discussion around aspirations and achievable levels.

There was some debate about entry requirements at university level. Whilst the Deputy Principal believed universities were now more open and that progress would not be significantly impeded by such “vocationalisation”, the Chair expressed concern and encouraged members to ensure that guidance and advice was accurate at the enrolment stage.

CPD and training and resource needs were being identified and governors challenged levels of disruption to staff. The VP:C reported that some staff at SRC Bede were already experienced in the teaching of vocational programmes and it was reiterated that the A Level programme would still predominate although there would be some movement across to BTEC. Access to a significant number of high performing staff at SRC Teesdale would be invaluable to SRC Bede staff and the process of curriculum development would be organic.

The Chair, who had recently visited other local 6th Form colleges and had been impressed by what could be described as a scholarly atmosphere, was reassured that most of these colleges already offer this mix of the academic and the vocational.

Members **received** and **noted** the review.

SIC17/30 Agenda Item 7 – English and maths – internal audit advisory review

The VP:C spoke to his report. The Audit Committee had recommended that SIC consider outcomes of an ICCA review of English and maths provision. It was noted that a number of recommendations had been made relating to operational matters (progress coaches, attendance issues, disciplinary procedures) and that many of these had either been addressed already or were underway. As former Chair of the Audit Committee, David Craig commended the College having recognised risks and commissioned the report. The Principal called for some attention to be paid to process, feeling that the report had taken far too long for closure and suggesting that the VP:C reflect upon this. A close down report was requested for Audit Committee.

Members were asked to consider whether the ICCA advisory recommendations arising from the English and maths audit should be included in the English and maths Improvement Plan with no further monitoring by the Audit Committee.

Members **noted** the report and **agreed** to the recommendations made therein.

SIC17/31 Agenda Item 8 – Learning Walks (verbal)

There had been no learning walks to report on since the last meeting.

A governor requested clarification on graded learning walks and the appropriateness of these; given Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman's view that they should be discouraged in schools and colleges. In response to this challenge, the Deputy Principal outlined a process in College whereby consistently good or outstanding teachers were not observed and graded. This focussed observation and grading resources on those staff who had not demonstrated good or outstanding performance and thereby represented a greater risk. The process was described as 'hybrid' and it was felt to be useful for monitoring, challenging and, where necessary, disciplining staff members (although it was noted that an increasing number of staff are moving into the not graded category). New staff would have developmental observations supported by the no-longer observed group. The Principal added that graded observations focussed conversations and facilitated judgement and felt that they were working well. It was felt that the system had been more fully embraced at SRC Teesdale than at SRC Bede although graded observations at SRC Bede had improved as had feedback from learners.

Members **noted** the report.

SIC17/32 Agenda Item 9 – Self Assessment Report Outcomes (verbal)

The Deputy Principal reported on the validation meeting that had taken place on 8th November 2017. Provision had been graded as good with the exception of the adult learning programmes. Grades had been unanimously agreed by all involved including managers and department heads. A background to some of the grades was provided. There had been some discussion, a number of years previously, about the possibility of an Outstanding grade for Effectiveness of Leadership and Management. It was felt that there was evidence of a very strong Good, but that issues around SRC Bede, NETA and value added would prevent an Outstanding grade as there was insufficient evidence of progress in these areas. The process was discussed in some length with particular attention being paid to the subjective nature of the judgement and the important balance which needed to be struck in order to minimise risk. In response to questions from the Chair, the Principal and Deputy Principal furnished further information about the inspection process. It was generally felt that improvements had certainly been made since 2014.

Members **received** and **noted** the report.

SIC17/33 Agenda Item 10 – Committee Terms of Reference and Membership

Members noted that not all items of the terms of reference were currently being undertaken by the committee but governors had agreed to review quality reporting once the College had undergone Ofsted inspection.

The committee **received** and **noted** the report and agreed to recommend to the Corporation that there be no changes to membership or terms of reference at present.

SIC17/34 Agenda Item 11 – Any Other Business

There were no items of Any Other Business.

SIC17/35 Agenda Item 12 – Approval of Documents for Public Inspection (verbal)

It was **agreed** that the agenda and supporting documents for the current meeting be made available for public inspection with the following exceptions:

Information in respect of College performance which would be published at a later date, once final data had been received.

Quality Improvement Plan for RCC and SRC and English and maths audit outcomes which were deemed commercial in confidence.

SIC18/36 Agenda Item 13 – Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 7th March 2018 at 5.30 pm

(The meeting ended at 7.30pm)