



Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Wednesday 22 March 2017 at 5.30pm in Room 301

Members present: Ms L Brown, Mr D Craig, Mr P Cook (Principal), Ms R Hodgson, Mr D Johnson, Ms D Merrett (co-opted member) and Mr M White (Chair)

Officials: Emma Booth (Work Based Learning Manager), Liz Boynton (Head of Quality), Mark Flannery (Director of Students), Mick Hickey (Deputy Principal), Jason Faulkner (Assistant Principal, Curriculum), Sarah Thompson (Clerk), Becky Wolfe (Head of Higher Education, Health and Care) and Phil Hastie (Vice Principal: Corporate Planning and Performance)

Apologies: Mr N Dart (staff governor) and Ms M Elliott (Director of Business Development)

Members expressed their sympathy for all affected by the Westminster attack.

Under Item 4, Mark White declared an interest as a director of the Education and Training Foundation.

A round of introductions took place.

SIC17/1 Agenda Item 1 - Minutes of Previous Meeting

It was **agreed** to approve the circulated minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meetings held on 19 October 2016 and 9 January 2017.

Updates against agreed actions were noted.

SIC17/2 Agenda Item 2 – Higher Education (presentation)

The Head of Higher Education (HE) Health and Care reported that the College's higher education provision would be inspected by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) on 16 and 17 May 2017. The inspection team would be made up of three reviewers, including one student reviewer, and would consider areas such as academic standards, compliance with the UK Quality Code, effective governance oversight and consumer protection. In advance of the inspection, the

College would be required to present a provider submission and a student submission. The provider submission would confirm compliance with Teesside University procedures and use of a clear assessment policy and robust assessment procedures, detail the three year recruitment trend, learning and teaching assessments, and attendance and success rates, and provide information on student engagement, external examiner reports, six yearly review of programmes and students' awareness of complaints and appeals processes. All areas were positive, for example, recruitment had improved compared to a downward trend across the Tees Valley; all HE staff were graded at least good with one exception; higher education attendance stood at 90%; and higher education success rates had risen since a dip in 2014/15. A student submission would also be provided, and this would be via a podcast. The Corporation Chair would be meeting with inspectors as governors' representative.

In response to challenges, the Head of HE, Health and Care clarified that the College offered higher education provision in education, health and social care, performing arts, sport, computing and business. Teesside University was supportive, although there were some differences in approach between different schools. The quality of higher education within the College was at least of a good standard and steps had been taken to improve any under-performing areas. In year retention was also very good. The only area of concern was the proportion of students progressing to professional employment.

In response to a further challenge, the Head of HE, Health and Care clarified that the student submission would detail students' views on services and outline the way the College took into account student comments and concerns. It was confirmed that any issues raised via the Principal's Learner Forum in relation to higher education had been resolved and students had been happy with the feedback provided. It was also confirmed that the College's Higher Education Centre was used for the majority of higher education teaching, with some teaching also taking place in specialist facilities, such as the laboratories. However, this was explained in terms of the nature of the College's programmes and a large proportion of students studying foundation programmes and progressing to university or other higher level College courses.

Members received and noted the information and it was **agreed** that progress with the QAA inspection would be considered at the next meeting of the Standards Improvement Committee.

SIC17/3 Agenda Item 3 – Review of key curriculum areas (Child Care and Health and Social Care)

A report had been circulated providing information on the curriculum areas of Child Care and Health and Social Care, which had been highlighted to governors as areas requiring particular improvement. The Deputy Principal highlighted that, while outcomes were different across the two areas, staff in both areas faced similar issues in respect of behaviour, mental health issues and administrative problems, i.e. in relation to timeliness of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for students going into work experience. In response to members' challenges, it was confirmed that delayed DBS checks could result from multiple name changes or insufficient forms of identification and delayed checks could delay placements where students would be working with young children and vulnerable adults. It was confirmed that this was not an issue related to the College's safeguarding arrangements.

Members challenged action to address behaviour and attendance issues and the Head of HE, Health and Care reported that behaviour management training had been provided to staff and increased walkthroughs were being undertaken. The Deputy Principal reported on a range of actions to address low retention arising from, for example, non-attendance at English and maths, mental health issues and student concerns. This included appointment of progress coaches, earlier DBS checks, improved information, advice and guidance and peer observations.

The Head of Quality and Deputy Principal reported that the impact of action in Child Care was now visible and recent classroom observations had shown evidence of learners being stretched and challenged. However, the impact on outcomes would not be seen until 2017-18. Ms Brown reported that, during a recent learning walk within Level 2 Child Care, she had been very impressed with the well-planned lesson and had observed no low level behaviour issues. Staff changes would be made within Health and Social Care to ensure improvements were achieved.

Members received and noted the information.

SIC17/4 Agenda Item 4 – English and Maths Improvement Plan

An update to the English and Maths Improvement Plan was tabled and the Deputy Principal clarified that this related to data as at 21 March 2017. The picture was positive with improvements in both projected achievement for 2016/17 and attendance. The Deputy Principal highlighted that projections were based on detailed evaluations of individual learner performance and projections for both English and maths GCSE performance were above the 2015/16 national rates. This

demonstrated good progress. Projected achievement for 19+ learners was also above the 2015/16 national rate.

Attendance continued to be an important factor and was improved in the current year compared to 2016/17. This demonstrated the positive impact of progress coaches, particularly when working with targeted learners. 64% of English learners and 65% of maths learners had improved attendance following intervention by progress coaches.

A member challenged the College's engagement with schools in respect of English and maths and the Assistant Principal highlighted that staff had visited feeder schools to discuss lesson plans and undertake walk throughs. The Assistant Principal also highlighted the positive impact of a behaviour management strategy within English and maths. Members discussed the importance of an integrated approach to ensure young people understood the relevance of English and maths.

The encouraging report was received and noted by the committee.

SIC17/5 Learning Walks

As noted under Item 3, Ms Brown had undertaken the first of three planned learning walks on 21 March 2017. Work was underway to develop a programme of learning walks and supplementary activity, for example, meetings to discuss examination results. Prior to the learning walk on 21 March 2017, relevant safeguarding checks had been undertaken. The learning walk had included reviews of classes in English and maths, Child Care, Health and Social Care and the Diploma in Creative and Computing and no issues with behaviour had been observed, either inside or outside of classes. No safeguarding risks had been identified and Ms Brown had been assured that there was a strong understanding of safeguarding among students.

Ms Brown reported that she had been particularly impressed by the inspirational provision for the BTEC Diploma in Creative and Computing and the Head of Quality highlighted that film and television was a flagship area for the College. Ms Brown also commended the Level 2 Child Care session, which had been the largest class reviewed. She commented that all members of the class had been fully engaged in the feedback on presentations and there had been a very good discussion at the end of the lesson. Attendance had also appeared good. The Head of Quality reported that this course was subject to a two week review programme to measure the impact of interventions. No issues had been identified in the Health and Social Care lesson observed.

Three English lessons and one maths lesson had been observed. In the English lessons, attendance had appeared poor at around 55%. Engagement was also poor, resources were not engaging and technology was not working. Students were not working at a level appropriate to achieve a grade C at GCSE and there had been some examples of incorrect use of terms. While the maths lesson had been better than the English lessons, stepped change was required in both areas. The Head of Quality reported that she had undertaken a further joint learning walk with the Head of English and maths on 22 March 2017. Lessons had improved, although some issues remained, including a behaviour management issue in one class.

Members stressed that investment in high quality resources would allow the College to baseline provision and the Deputy Principal clarified that the quality of resources had not been a specific area of review. It was requested that the Head of Quality and Deputy Principal ensure the Programme Area Leader and Head of Department understood that additional resources could be obtained.

The Deputy Principal and Head of Quality thanked Ms Brown for her time and input and the added value she had provided.

Members thanked Ms Brown for her report and it was **agreed** to consider learning walks as a standing agenda item at future Standards Improvement Committee meetings.

SIC17/6 Agenda Item 5 – Value Added

A report had been circulated providing an update on progress in improving value added. It was highlighted that the vocational picture was very positive, with the main area of concern being Computing. At SRC Bede, a recent review had given rise to concerns regarding the large number of students unable to speak with confidence about achieving an aspirational grade, or the work required to achieve higher grades. However, there was evidence of considerable progress overall at SRC Bede. The next progress meeting would take place at the end of March 2017 and this should provide projections for A level provision. In response to governors' challenges, the Deputy Principal highlighted that work was still needed to fully embed systems and processes and the Head of Quality highlighted that there were indications that students' knowledge of target grades had improved. On the basis of data, including graded observations and walk throughs, it appeared that expectations were high and learners were being challenged. However, value added was a very difficult area to forecast and the limits to quality assessment monitoring systems meant that it would not be possible to confirm improvements to value added until final, analysed data was published.

The information was received and noted.

SIC17/7 Agenda Item 6 – Work Experience

The Assistant Principal presented his report on the embedding of work experience. He highlighted that, overall, very good progress had been achieved. Work experience placements were planned for more than 900 learners in the year to date compared to 733 learners completing work experience by the end of 2015/16. However, there was a group of Prince's Trust learners with no work experience placements planned to date. The Assistant Principal commended the input of work experience coordinators in some departments.

Members also noted the work experience metrics provided and it was clarified that these had been developed to take account of next steps for learners and the College's reputation. For example, at Level 1, the main aim was to develop employability skills and ensure learners were work-ready. To date, 12 learners had completed an internal work experience programme which had been developed to support Level 1 learners to experience a range of roles within College support departments. Plans were in place for a further 24 learners to participate and the programme had also been refined for learners with high needs.

A governor challenged whether the College had access to adequate employers and the Assistant Principal confirmed that there could be difficulties identifying suitable employers in the appropriate sectors. As an example, aviation learners were unable to access air-side placements but were undertaking placements within retail environments in order to improve customer service and employability skills. Nationally, challenges were recognised in identifying suitable work experience placements for technical qualifications.

Governors challenged how the College evidenced the quality of work experience and supported employers to provide effective feedback, particularly in light of the wide range of employers with differing expectations. It was confirmed that a work experience booklet was used, which was reviewed by both the student and the employer. This included information on employers' responsibilities and advice in relation to holistic support. Work experience coordinators would follow up in any instances where there was concern. The Assistant Principal agreed to review the guidance to ensure this was clear. Members also noted potential issues with students gaining immediate employment from successful work experience placements. The Assistant Principal highlighted that a key factor in avoiding this was ensuring learners had a very good experience in College but that ultimately, gaining high quality employment for its students was a core aim for the College.

Members received and noted the report and commended the significant expansion of work experience and levels of penetration.

SIC17/8 Agenda Item 7 – Apprenticeships

The Work Based Learning Manager presented the circulated report detailing improvements to apprenticeship provision. She reminded members that Level 3 apprenticeship performance had fallen in 2015/16. The College had responded quickly and was confident that action had been effective, particularly in respect of more systematic tracking and monitoring systems, including monthly review of required actions across all departments.

Qualitative data showed improved apprenticeship achievement rates and projections were for timely and overall achievement rates to exceed 2015/16 outcomes. Withdrawals were significantly reduced, with four in the current year compared to 40 in 2015-16. In response to a challenge, it was confirmed that the forecast achievement rates included NETA apprentices and achievement rates would reduce by 5% if NETA was excluded.

In response to a further challenge, the Work Based Learning Manager confirmed that she was pleased with progress achieved to date and felt the College provided a good offer. However, further improvements were still needed to paperwork, Individual Learner Plans, learner aspirations and progression. Further staff development was also needed to ensure learners were retained and offered next steps.

Members recognised that it was important for governors to understand areas of excellence within the College.

Governors received and noted the information and thanked the Work Based Learning Manager for her presentation. It was **agreed** that the Deputy Principal should provide an outline of the highest performing curriculum areas for governors' information (maximum one side of A4, approximately five curriculum areas).

SIC17/9 Agenda Item 8 – College Outcomes

The Head of Quality tabled a document providing new accountability measures for 16-18 year old provision. This outlined College performance against local and national averages and against the performance of other further education and Sixth Form Colleges within the Tees Valley. It was clarified that Stockton Riverside College had performed well across the board other than in maths and English. In response to a challenge, it was clarified that no data was available for Stockton Sixth Form

College and Prior Pursglove College following their merger. Members commented that the data format was helpful.

The information was received and noted.

SIC17/10 Agenda Item 9 – Inspection preparation

A report had been circulated outlining the College's preparation for a future Ofsted inspection and was received and noted.

SIC17/11 Agenda Item 10 – Any Other Business

There were no additional items of business considered.

Members were reminded of the very confidential nature of discussions.

SIC17/12 Agenda Item 11 – Approval of Documents for Public Inspection

It was **agreed** that the agenda, approved minutes and supporting information to Agenda Item 8 would be made available for public inspection. All other items were deemed to be confidential.

SIC17/13 Agenda Item 12 – Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday 17 May 2017, 5.30 pm, SRC Teesdale

(The meeting ended at 7.20 pm)