

ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY 17 APRIL 2013

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13
February 2013

Author: Clerk

Action: Approve

Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Keith Cann Evans
Tom Cantwell
Gail Etherington
Darren Heathcote
Vivien Shipley
Allan Steele
Mark Taylor
Richard Thorold

In attendance: Judith Doyle
John Gray
Gwyneth Jones
Kevin Lewis
Andrew Robson
Clare Sample (Clerk)

1. Welcome/Apologies

David Mitchell welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no formal apologies. The Chair announced that Brian Rapkin had resigned from the Committee and he was thanked for his past contribution. The Chair said that he had no plans to replace him in the short term until the Board decided what was happening with the governance system.

The Chair invited members to declare any interests on any item on the agenda. No interests were declared at this stage in the meeting; however, members noted that should the direction of debate on any item result in a potential conflict of interest, this should be indicated during the meeting. Members were also reminded to advise the Clerk of any changes to be made to declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2013

An amendment was made to the third paragraph of page 3, where the reference to Quality Improvement Plan should have been Post Ofsted Inspection Action Plan.

There was a query about the second last paragraph of page 5 where the Principal had commented on the success rate increasing from 57% to 93%. A Governor asked whether the figure of 93% was accurate. This figure will be checked and if it is inaccurate the minutes will be updated.

The Chair said that the four items listed in point 8 would be covered in the meeting today although they were not specifically listed on the agenda.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising which were not substantive items on the agenda.

4. Common Inspection Framework Overview

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality, Judith Doyle (JD) gave a verbal report. JD and the Principal thought it was appropriate to provide an overview of the Common Inspection Framework.

Outcomes for Learners

- None of the judgments are based on data alone.
- Inspectors look at retention, progress and whether the learners go on to further learning or into sustainable employment. Sometimes mid programme some students take up an apprenticeship. This can affect the college data but it may be the most appropriate course for the student.
- If “Outcomes for Learners” is not judged to be outstanding this will not necessarily “limit” the overall effectiveness grade. This is a slight change from before.

Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

- Expectation that high quality teaching and learning drives up learners’ progress and achievement.
- Wide range of evidence drawn from across the provider is used in conjunction with lesson observations to determine whether the provider is outstanding or not.
- Strong focus on Maths and English and how each learner is developing their functional skills – the college were criticised in this area in the past.

Effectiveness of Leadership Management

- Normal limit to number of times a provider can be judged as “requires improvement” to two consecutive inspections before it is considered to be “inadequate” for overall effectiveness. However, progress will be considered and the judgement of inadequate will not be automatic.
- Strong focus on Performance Management of delivery staff and its impact.
- No contractual requirement to provide a self-assessment report. Gateshead College have chosen not to publish a self-assessment report.

A Governor asked how many colleges have been through the new system. JD was unsure of the exact figure but South Tyneside is one of the colleges. The Principal reported that a college in Kirklees had moved from a Grade 4 to a Grade 2 within eighteen months (with Grade 1 in Leadership and Management). The Principal thought that it would be worthwhile for staff to visit this college and learn from them. Another Governor commented that the Ofsted report was worth reading.

JD offered to bring a further report to the April 2013 meeting with analysis on why certain colleges receive certain grades to help the Committee better understand the gradings and how Gateshead College are doing.

The Principal said that he proposed to bring in consultants (who have been Ofsted Inspectors) to come in and review how the College is likely to fair under the new system, with a particular focus on Work Based Learning, Teaching and Learning, Leadership and Management and Self Assessment.

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The Principal reported that some colleges are able to limit their SAR to 30 pages and he was interested to know how they do this.

At the next meeting the Principal expects to be able to report back on the outcome of the consultant's review, depending on availability of those people.

The staff are generally expecting an Ofsted inspection any time from September 2013 although the Principal thinks it is more likely to come after Christmas.

A Governor asked what the College were doing to prepare for the move to GCSE English and Maths. JD said that the College did not currently have enough staff to deliver GCSE English and Maths; there were only five staff across the College who could deliver this at the moment. The College is already addressing this issue and looking at whether to recruit new staff, retrain current staff or work alongside local schools. Cardinal Hume School is one of the highest performers for English in the country. It was recognised that teaching GCSE English and Maths is a specialist area and retraining staff would probably be the least likely option that the College would take.

RESOLVED to note the contents of this report

5. Learner Responsive Performance Monitoring Report

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality, Judith Doyle (JD) said that the purpose of the report was to update the Committee on learner responsiveness college performance during the academic year 2012 to 2013. JD explained that the data showed where the College are regarding current retention. The long level programmes have had poor retention. The figures show a comparison with this time last year. The highlight is that retention this year is significantly better in most areas and in some areas 10% better. She explained that a number of important strategies are linked to retention. She proposed that in future she would report by exception i.e. only the areas of concern.

Post Easter, the focus will be more about achievement as well as retention. The College now has an online prediction system which is building up a rich set of data. This was introduced towards the end of the last academic year and the predictions were fairly accurate which is encouraging.

JD explained that Area 11 showed an area of concern around HEFC (Access to HE) programme for adults. There were opportunities to move learning opportunities which may have an effect on results. Within HEFC there is an enhanced prediction system to ensure that students are on the most appropriate course for them. There are 70 students within this cohort and potentially four or five will be likely to change courses during the year. This may have the effect, within the report, of retention rates rising and this is a reason why. JD confirmed that this was all within the SFA rules and only affected a small percentage of students.

With HEFC students there are issues around progress. There are focussed intervention strategies in place, some staffing changes and the College are working hard to support these learners.

JD explained the RAG rating system. Red shows concern; Amber shows some concern, not as far above the national average as the college would like; Green shows no concern. She pointed out that these colours were not based on actual figures.

Long Level 3 (LL3) is still a concern. Two years ago there were significant improvements in A and AS levels which masked the true LL3 results. The report now separates out the

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figures, for the purpose of the Committee. However, for Ofsted there will be one figure for LL3.

In terms of Intervention Strategies, the College are looking at the performance of teachers through unannounced observations and learning walks. The Performance Management process will kick in very quickly and teachers are very clear about their expectations. The College also works with senior managers. John Gray, Strategy Manager, Learner & Customer Services and his support team are working very closely to support those students who are at risk.

The Chair asked what the College did to spot any slippage in figures before they become amber or red. The Strategy Manager – Quality and Performance, Andrew Robson explained that it was the responsibility of the Retention Achievement Co-ordinator to look for these kinds of trends and attendance and work with course teams to ensure that appropriate interventions were put in place. In terms of 'at risk' programmes, there is a very vigilant approach to any programmes that appear to be faltering e.g. students' poor attendance can be used as a precursor.

A Governor pointed out that the comparison with last year's figures was not at exactly the same point in time. Last year's figures were at the end of March. The Principal advised that by the next meeting the College would be able to do a 'like for like' comparison with this time last year. It was suggested that going forward there is monthly reporting so that a 'like for like' comparison can be done at any month.

One of the Governors asked why there was such a huge increase in students in certain years on the very short courses. JD and the Principal both commented that the figures depend on employer responsiveness. At one point there were a few hundred extra qualifications and this affects the figures significantly.

Another Governor commented on the continuing concerns with LL3 courses and asked at what point there would be an improvement or a decision to remove the course altogether. The Principal confirmed that he was keen to remove courses that did not improve. He advised that he had already removed a significant amount of the curriculum from SSA 1 – Health, Public Services and Care. Courses will need to be removed particularly where teaching staff continue to be at level 3.

The Chair confirmed that the Committee would give a strong endorsement to support the Principal with removing any courses that fell into this category.

A Governor commented that under the new Ofsted system, there were always good reasons why students did not stay but they were always to do with teaching, learning and assessment. She said that the report contained very helpful data. Attendance levels would also be helpful to have as would monthly reports. She thought it would be helpful to explain that LL3 and All Long are all vocational courses and this would make it easier for the reader to follow. She thought it was not easy to assess trends against national averages and would like these including for retention and achievement.

The Principal suggested that it would be helpful if he could have a meeting with the Governors and review the format in which reports are brought to the Committee so that the College were providing information that the Governors wanted to see.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

ACTION: JD to invite Governors to a meeting to discuss methods of reporting

Mark Taylor left the meeting

6. At Risk Programmes Report (Long Provision)

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality, Judith Doyle (JD) explained that the College produces this data on a weekly basis. This report is an additional report specifically for the Committee. There are a range of reasons why courses are at risk. These are identified by a number of factors e.g. success rate for the previous year, learner attendance (current year), learner voice / survey results, current retention, curriculum redesign, staffing changes and learner progress.

There are also a range of interventions in place. Many of these are about working closely with a member of staff. The College have 30 Lead Practitioners who work with 'at risk' students and their teachers. Managers also need to understand their role in this and the College works with them. The College ensures that advice and support processes are in place. The outcome of this can be brought to the next Committee meeting in April 2013.

A Governor pointed out that expectation of attendance at 85% was too low. There were alarmingly low attendance rates and short courses. There appears to be low attendance but high retention and she questioned whether the intervention to improve attendance was working.

JD said that some activities were not picked up by monitoring e.g. offsite activities and online working from home. The system of monitoring needs to be updated to capture these activities. For example, in Sport, during the Ofsted observations in May 2012 attendance was very low; however, the staff knew exactly where every student was. This good practice has now spread across the College.

The Principal said that it would be useful to know why there is underperformance and why particular courses are under scrutiny and suggested adding a column to this report with the reasons why.

A Governor questioned how attendance and retention figures are calculated. It was confirmed that attendance figures are based on those still retained rather than starter numbers. Andrew Robson pointed out that the figures in the table were all the 'at risk' programmes and it was not an average figure across the College.

The Chair said that he was very encouraged to see that the College knows about these poor figures and appears to have a grip on the situation.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report

7. Employer Responsive Monitoring Report

Kevin Lewis, Strategic Leader – Apprenticeships presented a verbal report.

KL explained that Work Based Learning includes NVQs and apprenticeships. He explained that some QIP actions had been identified and he wanted to remind the Committee of these. The main areas are:

- Partnership and monitoring
- Health and Social Care provision
- Apprenticeship review process

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Update

- Quality Review process embedded
- Monitor all of our partners and subcontractors against KPIs
- Comprehensive due diligence process embedded across provision
- Health and Social care provision is now in-house
- Initiated electronic monitoring and review systems via an iPad or tablet. This allows a real time view of issues
- Look at frequency and method of reviewing apprentices. Different approach for adults and for 16-18s.
- KL commented that when he inherited the provision in May it had been graded one.

WPL

- Statistics based on 322 learners who have reached their planned end date, of which one partner has 175 learners
- Additional 580 learners still in learning – they don't impact on the statistics until they are outside of success
- Significant reduction in volume due to funding restrictions

Apprenticeships

- Statistics based on 271 learners who have reached a planned end date (86 L3, 185 L2)
- 1,041 learners still in learning
- Increase in adult apprentices

The overall success rate is 95.6% against the national average of 90.5% in year timely achievement of WPL is 65%.

Actions

- One high level partner identified as underperforming on timely achievement
- Partner has recruited additional IV resource
- ER performance monitoring meeting introduced

Impact

- Overall in year success 67.5% (NR 73.8%)
- Current in year timely achievement rate of 21.9% (NR 57.1%)

Issues

- Admin issues – 120 learners
- Employer release for functional skills resits – 113 learners (there are problems encouraging employers to release their apprentices to take resits)

Action

- Resolved issue with QA to enable release of certificates
- Seek commitment for employers to release learners
- Introduce claims monitoring process to track learners, three months prior to planned end date

Impact

- Timely achievement rate will rise to 75% (11/12 NR 57.1%)
- e.g January achievement and timely achievement on PMO is 93% (after commitment from Nissan)
- Early identification of potential risk

A Governor said that at a previous meeting it was discussed that when the new national averages came out it would be possible to assess whether the College was right to reflect the effects of the downturn of the economy, tsunami effects etc. It was agreed that a brief update be brought to the next meeting to include the new national rates as a comparison to last year's. The Chair suggested that these figures could be circulated to members and only brought to the meeting if there was an issue. All Governors agreed with this proposal.

Another Governor thanked Kevin for his very helpful and clear presentation.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

8. Teaching Learning and Assessment Report

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality, Judith Doyle (JD) presented this report following the Committee's request at the last meeting. The report contains key actions from the QIP and also the effect of the introduction of new unannounced learning observations. It made very stark reading as there has been a significant decline in the number of graded teaching and learning sessions judged to be good or better since the unannounced teaching observations. It is clear the teachers were preparing for their observations in the past. There is some lack of understanding about what the expectations are for learners – with both teachers and managers. There is now a huge focus on this area. Some observations are inadequate although the College do look at other aspects as well, for example, what students tell us during the learning walks. There are a number of actions in place to improve this. There is now a comprehensive CPD package which has been done in a very targeted way. The new delivery framework is not just about CPD but has a focus on changing ideas, expectations and responding to underperformance quickly. There is a lot of sharing of good practice with more Lead Practitioner roles providing coaching and mentoring and with a very different focus. The College is a key part of the Gazelle online project. The College has re-launched the way it develops English and Maths skills e.g. tracking students and supporting them and providing online provisions. There is a focus on making the best use of the resources at the College and monitoring how often they are used. The e-learning team are looking at a more interactive provision. There has also been significant investment in equality and diversity with 132 teaching staff participating in the training.

The Chair said that classroom observations were now part of the process and the College was moving on to unannounced observations; he was concerned by the figures but was encouraged by what the College were doing about it.

A Governor commented that Ofsted had previously said that after observations had been completed the College was not doing enough to support those staff rated as level 3 and level 4. JD and Gail Etherington responded that there was now a support programme which included focussed conversations with the teachers' managers. The teacher was assigned to a Lead Practitioner, the Head of that Group was also involved, an action plan was shared and more importantly intervention was immediate. Re-observations are carried out after two months with those staff graded as level 3 and after one month for those graded as level 4. There is some sign of improvement reported but this process is

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still very new. JD said that more resources will be required to continue with the additional observations. One of the Governors offered his support with this approach.

The Principal said he would be interested to know whether there was a direct correlation between teachers graded at levels 3 and 4 and the achievement rate on that course. A Governor agreed with this approach as Ofsted would want to know why there was underperformance in any area. The Governor further commented that the document needed to be more weighty. It should not just include lessons but also tutorials, guidance etc. It might be helpful to incorporate some of the ALPS and LAT indicators and that learning walks were particularly useful.

After some discussion it was agreed that a further update on this area would be provided for the June 2013 meeting as this would link in with the external audit into the teaching learning review.

RESOLVED to note the contents of this report

9. Higher Education Performance Report

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality, Judith Doyle (JD) presented this report and said that the data was gathered and presented in a way which may be unfamiliar to the reader. She explained that HEFCE have a different way of reporting. She advised that notes about the data were explained at the front of the report. This report looks at data achievement and validation. The College is generally performing at a good level. The feedback from the students is generally good. In some areas students leave the programme early and some programmes are coming to an end. The reason for this is sometimes allocations from HEFCE changes but the College receives good feedback from Northumbria University regarding the provision.

Tom Cantwell, HE Co-ordinator, explained that the current reports were produced by him in Word. In two weeks time there will be a more sophisticated method of reporting statistics. He explained that some areas have 100% achievement. They exceed the national averages even in their worst performing areas. He pointed out that this was a particularly strong area of the curriculum and that there had been six firsts in music and twelve firsts in leadership and management. He explained that due to changes in funding they have the potential to double the numbers which would be worth £0.5m to the College. A Governor commented that he found Tom's report easy to follow and very helpful.

JD explained that the College have considered the fee issue. A lot of the engineering provision is linked to the apprenticeship provision. However, this has been put at risk by changes to the fees and with Nissan refusing to pay these. Apprentices who in the past would have had the option to leave with a higher degree will now have the option to move to an HND.

RESOLVED to note the contents of this report

10. Any Other Business

A Governor commented that almost all new Governors have not had a career in the education system and it would be helpful to avoid education specific terms in the reports. The Principal advised Governors that there was a glossary of terms included in the induction pack.

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It was agreed that the following areas would be reported upon at the next Committee meeting in April 2013:

- A & AS level performance
- Update regarding Ofsted reporting in other colleges
- The results of the consultants' review
- General monitoring performance report and a revamp on the teaching, learning and assessment report

11. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 17 April 2013 at 4.00pm.