

ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE 2013

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17 April
2013

Author: Clerk

Action: Approve

Status: Open

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

In attendance: Judith Doyle
John Gray
Gwyneth Jones
Tim Poolan
Andrew Robson
Clare Sample (Clerk)
Paul Unwin

1. Welcome/Apologies

David Mitchell welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Richard Thorold and Darren Heathcote.

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 interests.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 February 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 13 February were accepted as a true record.

Matters Arising

Judith Doyle and the Clerk confirmed that the reference to the accuracy of the figure in paragraph 2 had been confirmed and the previous minutes updated accordingly.

Judith Doyle updated the Committee in relation to the comments on page 2 regarding the proposal to bring in consultants. There will be six consultants coming in from Monday 22 April 2013. This is not a formal inspection but they will act as "critical friends" to the Curriculum Team. Three consultants will come in next week. One will look at SSA 7 Hair and Beauty and generally at self-assessments across the College. John Dunn will look at

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Construction. Bernard McDonald will look at SSA 15, Business, Leadership and Management and Performance Management. The following week Janice Crowley will look at SSA 9 – Arts, Media and Publishing and the low success rates and provide support to some of the wider Teaching and Learning Observations. Bradley Lightbody will look at the College's processes and at moderating the effectiveness of the grades. Beverley Carter will carry out observations and support to the team generally. JD will provide detailed feedback on the Teaching and Learning observations from the consultants to the June meeting. In response to a Governor's question, JD confirmed that this will be a one-off, as going forward; the Curriculum Team will have the capacity to be self-critical, more effective and evaluative. The Chair commented that it was an experienced team of people coming in and he was looking forward to hearing the feedback at the June meeting.

One of the Governors asked for an update on the meeting proposed by the Principal to review the format in which reports are brought to the Committee as mentioned on page 4 of the minutes. JD reported that it had not been possible to get all of the Governors together. However, she advised that Vivien Shipley had given very detailed and useful feedback to her which had been fed back to the Chair. The result of this advice will be seen in the reports presented to the Committee later in the meeting. JD thanked VS for her feedback to date and told the Committee how useful it had been. The Chair confirmed that, in relation to the reference to the Teaching Learning and Assessment Report Update on page 8 of the minutes, the full report would come to the June meeting but that the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality had an update for today's meeting.

3. Performance Report – Overall College

Judith Doyle, the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality presented a Performance Report on the Overall College to the Committee. She explained that it was a detailed report and was in a different format as a result of the advice received from Vivien Shipley on how to get a greater degree of clarity so that the Board can understand the performance of the College. In addition to this report, the Chair had requested a full performance report for the last five years for the full Board and then at every Board Meeting to report by exception. JD recommended that a similar style report should come to this Committee, RAG rated with reporting by exception so that the Committee can have a focussed discussion on the subject.

JD explained that she did not intend to read every section of the report but highlighted certain areas.

JD explained the Success Rates table. This shows three years' worth of data covering 2010/2011, 2011/2012 and a prediction method used for 2012/2013. She had compared current retention with previous data and also compared it to last year's outcome. The achievement rate is likely to be better than that predicted on the table. JD explained that she has taken a prudent approach to the predictions. There has clearly been an improvement in success rates and significantly so in the long courses. In particular, levels 1 and 2 show significant improvement for 16-18 and LL3 has improved although not as much as the College would have hoped. JD explained that for some areas there are no national rate figures as yet. One of the Governors explained that these figures are in the Qualification Success Rates (QSR) and she could explain after the meeting where to find them.

The overarching statement is that the College is predicted to improve significantly at long level. Staff are working very hard to ensure that the retention figures do not slip and are dedicated to doing this by supporting students on a daily basis.

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JD explained the different presentation of the graph. Both the Chair and Governors had been keen to have these so that the Governors can see trends clearly and compare against NR trends. One of the Governors commented on how easy it was to read.

In relation to the tables, the Chair said he liked the way that only certain areas of concern were RAG rated. He agreed that if everything was RAG rated it would be difficult to read. A Governor agreed with this but said that he would like to see level 3 RAG rated. Another Governor suggested including a final column looking at the difference between the College success rate and the national rate and then RAG rating this column only.

All Governors agreed that they found this format much easier to understand and they liked the three year trends. The predicted success rates were also very helpful.

JD indicated that the results evidence the fact that there was no complacency in the College. Targets had been set high and managers have to explain the data every Friday morning in the Performance Review meetings.

JD then focussed on the Retention and Achievement report. These follow the QSR data style and are in a new format. JD explained that the data had been taken out of the main table and presented trends and NR separate from success so that it is clearer. Following a Governor's question, she confirmed that the figures were end of year. However, if required, she would be able to provide year to date figures next year.

One Governor suggested that it would be worthwhile drawing attention to the areas that Governors should note e.g. level 3 courses. It was suggested that it would be helpful to report year 1 figures for the level 3 courses to show whether there were improvements in the new courses.

JD then focussed on the Attendance section. She explained that there needed to be some improvement here. Unfortunately the College's data is not sophisticated enough to pick up students who are not in the classroom but are working elsewhere. This information is provided manually by teachers who can explain where their students are when they are not physically present. The College is also putting in place a series of Learning Walks which involve talking to learners and looking at registers to get information about where learners are. Overall there is still a decline in the Attendance YTD when compared to last year and JD acknowledged that this is not good enough.

The Chair asked about the attendance rates for Automotive. Andrew Robson replied that there was a typo in the report and that attendance last year was 85% and not 94%.

Gail Etherington shared her experiences of gathering this information with the Committee. She agreed that more sophisticated reporting methods would be welcomed as a lot of students were doing good work but not necessarily in the classroom.

JD then focussed on SSA 15 Business, Administration and Law. It was acknowledged that there was a lot of red highlighted in this area mainly in the 19+ and LL3 courses. Achievement and Retention were very poor last year. This year achievement is likely to be much better. There are significant increases in the predicted success of this SSA with a particular impact on retention.

Andrew Robson explained that the College predicts achievement for each individual learner and then aggregates it. He expects the LL3 to improve. One Governor commented that this was good evidence of the level of close monitoring of individual students which was taking place. Another Governor acknowledged that there was a lot more green than red when compared to last year.

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A Governor asked whether the improvement in SSA 1 Health, Public Services and Care would be quick enough. JD suggested bringing a report on SSA 1 to the next meeting. Again, it was suggested that year 1 data was provided for the LL3 courses.

JD then focussed on Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning. She reported that improvements were likely to be seen this year. She suggested a further report on this at the next meeting. The consultants will be able to report on this area. One Governor recommended that this area needed RAG rating, predictions and commentary provided. There was then some discussion as to whether Kevin Lewis or a member of his team should attend this Committee meeting. JD will speak to Mick Brophy, Managing Director, Business, Innovation and Development regarding who should attend the meeting. A Governor commented that some of the figures in this area were alarming and wanted to know if these included apprentices pushed out by the demise of North East Apprenticeship Company Ltd. This area needed to be looked at particularly as it made up 30% of the total provision.

It was agreed that JD would produce a detailed updated report with the suggested amendments to include Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning. Going forward she would present data and include the national rates.

RESOLVED to note the contents of this report

4. Performance Report – AS/A Level

Paul Unwin, Head of 14-19 Partnerships, presented a Performance Report on A Level Provision. The data from 2010/2011 and 2011/2012 showed improvements in success rates of plus 4 and plus 9 overall. The challenge is to maintain this. PU explained that this year's predicted rates are a top down approach where the number of students' retention is multiplied by last year's achievement rate. There has been a slight reduction in success rate.

The predicted success rate is a bottom up approach. PU has asked teachers for each individual predicted grade and the likelihood of that student passing. If any student is 'at risk' they have not been included as likely to pass. There is a better success rate at AS Level and slightly less at A2. Overall the results are likely to be similar to last year.

PU expects the AS Level achievement to improve. Last year it was quite weak down 3% or 4% and predicted rates should improve to previous levels if not slightly better.

A Governor asked which system was more reliable in relation to predictions. PU responded that it was difficult to say. This was the first time he had asked for individual predictions for each term. It is harder to predict in the first term and easier as the year goes along. However, it is always hard to predict if students will struggle on the day in an exam. By the end of the year he will be able to evaluate how accurate the predictions have been.

A Governor said that it was important in this area to bear in mind national rates including those of sixth form colleges. There was no reason why the College's students should do any worse than students at sixth form colleges.

PU then explained the Predicted Success by SSA table. He explained that the learner numbers are missing and therefore it is hard to see what to compare the numbers of students 'at risk' to e.g. SSA 2 Maths and Science is the largest area with 204 starts and SSA 6 IT is the smallest with 17 starts. These figures will be included in the future. Each of the students identified as 'at risk' will have an action plan and will be monitored on a

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weekly basis by the Curriculum Manager and subject teachers to ensure they meet their potential. In response to a question, PU said that SSA 12 Languages has 126 starts and there were less students 'at risk' now than before.

PU then explained the Value Added table. The inspectorate is particularly interested whether students are achieving as well as if they went to a sixth form college. The College needs to know that the students have done as well or better than their peers. Grades are given a number of points. At A Level there are 30 QCA points between each grade so, for example, on the Applied GCE Single Award they are just under half a grade higher than the average.

PU then presented a graph of predicted A and AS Level results. He explained that Ofsted have a 'ready reckoner' for this and when the College has put in their predictions there has been an improvement at A and AS Level. This will depend, however, on how accurate teachers are at predicting levels for students.

One of the Governors requested that reports that were not tabled should either be provided in advance of the meeting or circulated afterwards with the minutes.

A Governor commented that in the past students had made insufficient progress at A Level based on their GCSE results. The data is published on DFE Performance Tables so it is important to get more information on progress included. This provides a real indicator of the level of teaching. JD confirmed that the consultants will look at this area.

The Chair recommended that the Committee should look at this area again in September 2013 once the results are known.

RESOLVED to note the contents of this report

5. Teaching and Learning Update Report

JD confirmed that a full report on Teaching and Learning would come to the next meeting in June 2013 but that she wanted to share progress to date with the Committee. She highlighted that the good or better scores are still very low and way below the College targets. There are more observations carried out on teachers who are grade 3 so this skews the data. There is a slight improvement if only the score for the second observation is accounted. JD confirmed that more teachers are beginning to see some improvement. However, she indicated that 50% is nowhere near good enough and is hoping for some improvement by the next meeting. Because observations are now unannounced, problems are identified and this generates the need for more assessments. In response to a question, JD confirmed that there is generally a few weeks between the first and second observation. Gail Etherington said if there were significant issues then more time was sometimes needed between observations to implement strategies because to re-observe too soon could sometimes be more damaging for the teacher.

The Chair suggested returning to this matter at the June meeting.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

6. Ofsted Reports Update

JD presented a verbal report regarding Ofsted reports undertaken since the revised Common Inspection Framework 2012. She explained that she had read Ofsted reports from one 'Outstanding' college (Walsall College); four 'Good' colleges (Bromley College

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of Further and Higher Education, Northumberland College, Shipley College, Kingston College) and four 'Requires improvement' colleges (Boston College, Redcar and Cleveland College, Leeds College of Building, New College Nottingham).

JD read out some of the comments that were made about each of the colleges and particularly the ones that reflected what Gateshead were hoping to do.

One of the Governors commented that the Grade 1 and Grade 2 reports commented on strategic priorities on Teaching and Learning and Achievements. He felt that some of these comments were not prominent enough in Gateshead College's Strategic Plan. JD confirmed that she had discussed this exact point with the Principal and had spent the last two days revising the Plan in line with these Ofsted reports. The updated Strategic Plan would be presented at the next Board meeting on 8 May 2013.

Another Governor commented that it was clear that English and Maths runs through every part and this was an area which needed to be revisited.

The Chair enquired about information about student destination. JD replied that John Gray, Strategy Manager, Learner and Customer Support; Nadine Hudspeth, Director of Marketing and Communications; David Leath, Funding and Data Manager have been working on this area. John Gray explained that the strategy will be presented to the Leadership Team shortly. They have been collecting information on where students want to be compared with where they end up. Nadine Hudspeth has commissioned a company to collect data from students who have left the College. They have also carried out a survey of 30 colleges across the UK (including 10 Gazelle Colleges) to see what other colleges do regarding student destination.

The Chair commented that a report on student destination would be useful in the future. He thanked the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality for her summary.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

7. Any Other Business

JD reported that Price Waterhouse Coopers, the College's internal auditors, have issued the first two of their audit reports. One is around Quality and the other is around Learner Engagement Strategy. She explained that there are some learning points and proposed that she share these with the Committee at the next meeting.

The Chair summarised the items to bring to the next Committee meeting in June 2013:

- Presentation of the audit reports
- A further update on the performance report
- Feedback from the consultants particularly in relation to Teaching and Learning
- A report on Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning

JD formally thanked Vivien Shipley for her recent help and support. She explained that Vivien had been very supportive and her comments were particularly well informed.

8. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 19 June 2013 at 4.00pm.