

ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY 18 JUNE 2014

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 May
2014

Author: Clerk

Action: Approve

Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Keith Cann Evans
Catherine Dennis
Judith Doyle
Gail Etherington
Darren Heathcote
Nick Hurn

In attendance: Gillian Forrester
John Gray
Gwyneth Jones (Minutes)
Emma Moody (Clerk)
Tim Poolan
Andrew Robson

1. Welcome/Apologies

David Mitchell welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Tom Cantwell, Mark Taylor and Ivan Jepson who planned to be an Observer at some of the meetings.

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 Wednesday 12 March 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2014 were accepted as a correct record, once the following amendments were made.

AR referred to page 3 under Progress Report Update SSA 5 Construction and said that the wording needed to be amended to read 'Area 5 (Classroom based learning) was one of the areas under scrutiny by the Ofsted visit and it had been graded internally as an inadequate Grade 4. It was subsequently graded as a Grade 3 overall as the inspector thought there was a clear foundation to build on for the future'.

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Gillian Forrester (GF) referred to page 5 under Teaching, Learning and Assessment Report, Discussion and Challenge and said that the wording needed to be amended to read 'they had buddied up teachers with observers which had resulted in almost marking them before they went out to teachers'.

GF also referred to page 6 and said that the wording needed to be amended to read 'that 169 paired observations had been completed up to now'.

3. Matters Arising

Ofsted Inspection

The Principal advised that she would be giving a verbal report on the Ofsted visit which had taken place on 10 April 2014 later in the meeting.

HE Access update

Tim Poolan (TP), Strategy Manager, Curriculum, referred to page 3 and explained that the College was changing the delivery model for Access to Higher Education (HE). The new Access to HE offer was on the College Website. John Deary, Curriculum Operations Manager, IT/Generic Skills/HEFC and Denise Sims, Curriculum Leader, IT/Generic Skills/HEFC were developing the sessions. They had looked at previous learners and developed two models which covered areas such as Science, Health, Social Sciences and Computing. A range of job outcomes had been identified including Health, Midwifery, Media and Computing. If Access to HE learners progress to HE programmes their access fees are waived. This could result in high performing learners going to Russell Group Universities. This was going to replace all previous Access to HE provision in the College. The Chair asked about successful outcomes in relation to the Access to HE Diploma and the Principal replied that in recent years, quality across the sector had been very mixed. Andrew Robson (AR) indicated that it would be more intensive as it would be a one year programme. It would be in keeping with the College's strategic plan around employability.

The Principal said it would attract adults with complex lives. They were marketing this because a lot of Level 3 Adult does not secure funding. If a candidate is successful with HE Access and goes on to university the loan is wiped out. Catherine Dennis, Teaching Staff Governor, asked if there was an age bracket for funding for this programme and Darren Heathcote, Learner and Customer Services Manager, replied that it was 24 or over.

The Chair asked if the programme would start in September 2014 and whether it would be tailored to meet the specific needs of adult groups. The Principal replied that an indication of numbers and how well the programme was going could be provided at the September meeting, which was agreed.

English and Maths Report

The Chair referred to page 6 and commented that a report on English and Maths would be coming to the June 2014 meeting.

4. Ofsted Visit 10 April 2014

The report and the record of discussion are 'closed to public access' until such time as it is considered to be no longer sensitive

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The Chair advised that he wanted to take item 6 about the Post Inspection Action Plan next on the agenda.

Deputy Principal Recruitment

The Chair then mentioned the vacant Deputy Principal post and explained that Judith Doyle, Keith Cann Evans and himself were on the selection panel for the recruitment. The post had attracted 32 candidates and they had held long-list interviews for 10 people on 8 May 2014. They had decided that 3 of these candidates should be invited to short list interviews on 21 May 2014. If they do appoint they will be in a position to recommend to the Board at the meeting on 22 May 2014. Each candidate would have to give a three month notice period so they would start in September 2014.

The Chair referred to the agreed next steps on the Ofsted feedback letter and the request from Malcolm Fraser to have a possible meeting with the members of the Academic Standards Committee. He advised members that the Board meeting on 22 May 2014 would be devoting a lot of its time to the Teaching and Learning Quadrant.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the verbal report

5. College Performance Report

Andrew Robson (AR), Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance introduced the College Performance Report. He explained that the report contained data for 2013/2014 showing the current retention levels for the whole college and by SSA; current attendance data; and current A level and GCSE performance.

He referred to the extra column which provided a comparison of where retention was at 30 April 2013. Long provision met the criteria for good colleges and was above or in line with the national rates. However, he highlighted a couple of pockets of concern which has been presented to the Committee previously. 19+ retention at Level 3 was an area impacted upon by legacy provision and required careful monitoring. A breakdown indicating the effect of the legacy provision for HEFC & Electrotechnical was included in the report.

He referred to the criteria that Ofsted set for Good colleges which means that success rates of the large majority of groups of learners are likely to be in line with or above similar groups of learners nationally, with the majority above. The report was prepared on this basis so that a comparison could be made.

They were focusing on improving Long Level 3 and a lot of work was being done to address issues especially on 'at risk' learners. They were following up with those learners and supporting them to get over the line.

A levels were stronger in 16-18 than 19+; value-added was not as good as it needed to be. A specific report on it needed to come to the Committee in the future. AR said that compared to last year there had been a slight improvement on attendance.

He advised that 13/14 YTD Retention was 91.6% and it had been impacted by functional skills. He said that details for the Achievement section would be recorded in the future.

Discussion and Challenge:

The Principal said the Committee had spoken at length about 16-18 Long Provision as the College used to be above the national rate on Long Level 3; they were pushing to

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secure improvement at Long Level 3. They were focusing on what every single learner was doing on a daily basis so that the end success rate would be significantly higher. By the June meeting, the figures would be nearer to the 'actual' rather than 'predicted'.

AR said current focus was on the national rate for Further Education; moving forward they needed to look at other comparable rates.

The Chair referred to the Attendance table and commented that most Curriculum Areas had improved but not Teaching & Learning. GF indicated that there had been issues with the Department this year; they were looking at 100% achievement and also looking at the way they record attendance. Gail Etherington, Lead Practitioner, Foundation/LDD/ESOL said that it did not reflect how the College had adapted its methods of delivering the curriculum to meet the needs of students. GF said they had great relationships with schools in the region.

AR advised that they were looking at categorising non-attendance and including it in the Action Plan from September 2014. A Governor suggested monitoring it and find out why it had been going up.

John Gray (JG), Strategy Manager, Learner & Customer Services, advised that enrolments were higher this year with 230 full-time students and 60 part-time students. The Principal said that as a College they supported students very well. They took into consideration the circumstances of a young person who could not come into College and they could be supported by online working.

JG indicated that attendance was really low but they managed to collect the work and bring it back in; they would go the extra mile for their students. The Principal said there was a correlation between learners who attend achieving well. Gail Etherington said there was evidence to support this, they would push on sharper and group profiling would tell its story there.

The Principal advised that as part of stretch and challenge, the College had a detailed profile of every student; this allowed the teacher to target their delivery specifically to that student.

AR referred to the Reports by SSA and highlighted that SSA 5: Construction had been affected by legacy provision as there were issues on attendance for Level 1 and 3 and also for SSA 11: Social Sciences. These two had been highlighted by Ofsted as underperforming areas.

The Chair commented that outside of legacy issues there were no reds for Predicted Success Rates. AR replied that reds were where there had been a low achievement in previous years. A governor commented that he felt having a measure of predicted achievement rates would be good. The Principal said for the next meeting in June 2014, they would look at this.

AR said that attendance, target, action plan and stretch target were included as part of the profile information for any individual learner held by Gateshead College. He referred to the Apprenticeship reports by SSAs for timely achievement and explained that they are based only on learners who have left the programme. Classroom based learners can only go downwards but Success rates for Apprenticeships can go up and down. The information contained in the table covered the Number of leavers to date, Current Success Rates and Best Case Success Rate. The end result will be somewhere between the Current Success Rate and the Best Case Success Rate.

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SSA 1: Health, Public Services and Care and SSA 15: Business, Administration and Law timely success had been a problem but a lot of work had gone into supporting learners and to date this academic year looks better for both areas. They are above national rates, which had been an issue previously, and there are no areas of major concern at this point in time.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

6. Post-Inspection Action Plan

The report and the record of discussion are 'closed to public access' until such time as it is considered to be no longer sensitive

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

7. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Report

Gillian Forrester (GF), Strategy Manager, Teaching, Learning and Assessment introduced a report which updated the Committee on progress towards improvement in Teaching, Learning and Assessment since the last report which had been taken to the March 2014 meeting.

The College had set out a range of targets in its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Improvement Plan. It was not just about preparing for Ofsted as they had set out to reduce 'requires improvement' judgements; needed to focus on the improvement of English and Maths; and improve stretch and challenge which was a key issue.

The College will continue with the strategies detailed in the Strategy for Improvement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The Post Inspection document had been amended following advice from the HMI Lead Inspector, Malcolm Fraser.

The Teaching & Learning Development Team will continue to provide CPD but they had put a lot of time into one to one coaching.

They will continue with the review of learning through the observation of teaching, learning and assessment procedure. To date the team have carried out 241 reviews of learning in college based provision, a huge increase, and 34 reviews within work based learning this academic year.

She referred to the observation data as of 25 April 2014 attached to the report and said this showed a good or better profile of 74% this academic year. She explained that there were 2 sets of data because some teachers had not been observed this year. The ambition was to observe every teacher in the next academic year. Some teachers were carrying good or better profiles from the previous year (82% across a 2 year period for college based provision). This was in comparison to a 63% good or better profile at the end of 12-13 (1 year data only) and 74% good or better profile on 2 year data reported in December 2013. Hard work, one to one coaching and performance management was having an impact. There were less inadequate lessons as the College was dealing with underperformance more robustly.

They had done an awful lot of work to improve the quality of feedback to teachers post observation and always gave some suggestions for how areas can be improved.

A new procedure was introduced in May 2013 to tackle underperformance in the classroom. Teachers with inadequate grades are supported to deliver outstanding

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teaching and learning. Some teachers have decided to leave the College as they cannot deliver the standards.

The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Forum allowed the sharing of good practice across different areas of the College.

Discussion and Challenge:

The Principal said the key was knowing where the issues to tackle were. The unannounced nature of observations sends a message of what she expects; rehearsed and practiced was not a true reflection of what is going on. The Chair enquired why it had not been possible to observe every member of staff. GF replied that they had concentrated a lot of resource on re-observation work within Curriculum Areas; re-observations within 3 months or 1 month with a support action plan. They were looking to increase resources next year. Gail Etherington advised that people on Grade 1 or 2 would not get re-observed but there would be internal Learning Walks to reassure that the quality is still there.

A Governor commented that out of 40 different areas, statistical observations showed that the most popular grading was Grade 2 and another Governor said this grade covered a broad band. The Principal said the need was to focus on teachers who fell below Grade 2 and GF indicated that there had been underperformance at the start of the year but this had improved.

A Governor enquired whether it was easier to be a Grade 1 in some areas than others as there were considerable differences with three or four areas where 30% had achieved a Grade 1 whilst in others it was only 7%. The Principal replied a practical subject such as Catering could tick the boxes a little bit easier as students were more engaged.

The Chair requested that another report should be brought to the June 2014 meeting.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

8. SSA 5 (Construction) Progress Report

Tim Poolan (TP), Strategy Manager, Curriculum, gave a verbal progress report on SSA5 Construction. He indicated that this was his third report to the Committee and in light of where they were he would focus on impact.

They still had the 19+ legacy issue which was affecting retention at 19+. The team were aiming to convert the current retention rates into success rates and no one would leave without achieving.

In terms of current retention at 16-18 they were on target with LL1 (96%), LL2 (93%) and LL3 (100%). These figures were now the success rate targets for the team.

More than 500 targets had been set for 300 learners and only 26 learners were set to achieve below target (about 5% of targets). This translated to about 3% of learners but they would be working very closely with them.

Attendance is consistently better and is 2% higher than last year. Attendance dropped a month ago (as it did last year) but the team were able to make interventions and get back on track.

In terms of observation grades, the Workforce Profile for Construction is currently 94%

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good or better. Of the 7 observations undertaken this year, 6 were good or better and 1 was a Grade 3. There were no inadequate observation grades in this area.

There are currently 17 learners flagged as 'at risk' in this area but none of them are RAG rated red in terms of expected outcome. Only 6 are rated amber and 11 are rated green.

Overall the area is showing evidence of significant and sustained improvement, building on a solid grade 3 judgement in the last inspection. They are looking forward to having a positive rather than negative performance in the future.

The Chair commented that this was brief but encouraging feedback. The Ofsted feedback had been quite positive; he thanked TP for his report.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

9. Any Other Business

There were no items for discussion.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair listed the reports that would be brought to the next meeting:

- Performance Report (Andrew Robson)
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Gillian Forrester)
- Quality Improvement Plan
- English and Maths

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 June 2014 at 4.00pm. [The date was later changed to Wednesday 18 June 2014 at 4.00pm]