

TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE



MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 2014

GATESHEAD COLLEGE

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 16 October
2014

Author: Clerk

Action: Approve

Status: Open

Present: Ivan Jepson (Chair)
Judith Doyle (Principal)
Catherine Dennis
Mark Taylor
Nick Hurn
Chris Toon

In attendance: Tim Poolan
Andrew Robson
Gillian Forrester
John Gray
Darren Heathcote
Samantha Pritchard (acting Clerk)

T/1 Welcome/Apologies

Ivan Jepson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from David Mitchell. It was noted that Mark Taylor would be joining the meeting late due to teaching commitments.

The Chair invited members to declare any interests on any item on the agenda. Nick Hurn declared that Maths and Science teaching at the College is carried out by staff from Cardinal Hume where he is Head.

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.

T/2 Minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 18 June 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 June were accepted as an accurate record.

T/3 Matters Arising

It was noted that Malcolm Fraser of OFSTED would be attending the College on 25 November to provide further support and challenge. There were no other matters arising that were not substantive items on the agenda.

T/4 Teaching Learning & Assessment – overview of progress towards improvement

Gillian Forrester (GF), Strategy Manager, Teaching and Learning Development took the committee through the report. Overall there was a general trend of improvement in almost all areas. The aim this year is for sustainability for the long term.

Discussion and Challenge

The Principal asked for feedback on where there had been the most improvement. GF confirmed that Engineering and the Built Environment had seen a big improvement. It was noted that putting an area under scrutiny clearly assisted in driving improvements. Everyone was now taking responsibility for poor performance.

It was noted that there was some inconsistency between the way in which the data was being presented to the committee compared to the way in which it was presented to staff and that this would be addressed but that in all cases the aim was to have accurate data presented in a way that is easy to understand.

The Chair noted the importance of everyone being observed. He asked how the College is focussing on areas that require improvement. GF confirmed that there are monthly reviews with heads of groups regarding interventions that are taking place. There are regular learning walks to ensure staff are supported to improve and to recognise that this is an ongoing process. Curriculum managers are responsible for improvements. The College is also keen to celebrate outstanding performance with certificates. Teachers now understand that expectations have been raised.

The Chair asked about the challenge represented by Maths and English. GF confirmed the Maths and English team are working with lead practitioners and will report back on the quality of teaching and learning within Maths and English.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

T/5 Strategic Oversight of Teaching, Learning & Assessment

Chris Toon, Deputy Principal: Curriculum and Quality (Deputy Principal) led a discussion on achieving high quality teaching and learning.

Nick Hurn (NH) explained that within schools there was increased levels of partnership working between organisations, sharing ideas and support and providing an objective view and expertise, and that this was working extremely well.

The Deputy Principal confirmed that he wanted to develop teachers' ability for self-improvement and to improve confidence and capacity. He also suggested governors be invited on learning walks in order to give assurance through practical examples, rather than just on paper, that good standards were being achieved. It would also be an opportunity to hear lead practitioners judgements and to see the facilities in use.

The Chair noted that whilst he did not have an educational professional background, he would be able to see whether a lesson was engaging and motivating to students, but that he would have to rely on others to comment on the quality of the teaching and the standard of delivery. He was willing to invest in this idea in order to have a better understanding.

GF felt that talking to students was key and that it would allow governors to see the complexities around delivering English and Maths, particularly to disengaged students.

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The Principal confirmed that it would provide context to governors for their scrutiny and for challenging the executive. She confirmed that David Mitchell was also keen on the idea.

NH commented that governors in the schools sector are often linked to a certain strategic area or group, and that the onus is on staff to invite them to observe certain activities, and then that governor produces a report on their visit. This gives governors the opportunity to confirm to Ofsted that they have seen lessons and therefore have a firm confidence in figures presented to them by the executive.

NH recommended that dates were put in the calendar to ensure that it happens every term.

Catherine Dennis (CD) suggested that a named governor be allocated to a specific area to allow a relationship to develop, and noted that many staff don't know who the governors are. It will also give the opportunity to hear the learner voice.

RESOLVED to trial Link Governors with two or three governors, who would then be advocates for the process

T/6 Apprenticeship Outcomes

The Deputy Principal took the committee through the report on Apprenticeship performance 2013/14.

Discussion and Challenge

The Deputy Principal invited comments on the form of the report for future meetings. The Principal asked that exceptional reporting be used, focussing on those areas that have been identified to understand the risks and whether a solution can be identified. NH thought a glossary of terms used would be helpful.

It was noted that it was frustrating that the College had been penalised last year for issues that were outside of its control relating to the particular businesses in which apprentices had placements. A key problem has related to the RAF where apprentices are taken out of the country and therefore timely success figures are affected.

NH commented that if the College is able to produce a case study demonstrating the external factors affecting the College's data, an Ofsted inspector should accept that and should not penalise the college.

The Principal noted that apprenticeships would be a key growth area for the College as it will be high on any government's agenda.

It was noted that South Tyneside Council was linking with engineering companies and aiming to attract able students. It was injecting finance into career colleges which take students from age 14. NH volunteered to find out further information in this regard, as this could be a key threat to the college.

Mark Taylor joined the meeting at 5.45pm

T/7 A-Level final outcomes

The Deputy Principal took the committee through the report.

Discussion and Challenge

NH offered to work with the College on A-levels in areas where his schools have strength including business studies, humanities, English and French.

The Deputy Principal noted that whilst the College has good teachers, it needs support on the skills required to take students through assessments.

The Principal felt it was important also to be able to provide advice and guidance to students as to whether a course was suitable for them. The College is currently considering tasking Rachel Clark, Sabbatical Officer, with research into why the College has not retained as many A-level students as it should.

NH commented that many schools are now opening sixth form colleges under the academies programme and therefore the College needs to be able to deliver to a high standard which will encourage students to attend the College, rather than staying where they are.

The Deputy Principal felt that there needed to be a re-launch to demonstrate the good quality offer available at the College and the facilities it has.

The Chair noted the performance of A-Level P.E. and asked whether the College would have known there was an issue during the year, and if so, how the College tackled that issue.

Andrew Robson, (AR) confirmed that the issue was identified and monitored as it was a programme that was already under scrutiny. Unfortunately the interventions were not successful. Many learners struggled with particular points in the programme which combined various components.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report

T/8 Performance Report

Andrew Robson (AR), Strategy Manager, Quality & Performance took the committee through the report.

Discussion and Challenge

It was noted that the picture was changing daily and that this was an interim picture. Final results would be apparent in about a week.

The Principal asked whether it was all on average or whether there were some spikes. AR commented that there are some differences between subject areas. Some learners can only get 'pass or fail' which will drag down the data. Likewise, students who have only done a year with the College, will also affect the data.

The Chair asked whether the GCSE national average provided relating only the FE sector. AR confirmed that this was the case and that some students will already have had a failed attempt at GCSEs before they come to the College.

It was noted that in relation to English and Maths, the College had performed well at Maths and that English amongst adult learners was good, but that the College needed to look in more detail at English for younger students. It was noted that as the College is forced to put all students through Maths and English due to the change in funding

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methodology, it was inevitable that performance would drop. However this would be the same across the FE sector.

NH commented that it would be good to see key stage 2 data to be able to see the progress that students had made overall. He suggested that the College approach the schools directly for this information. It was noted that some schools are reticent to provide such data and that an alternative might be to encourage students to make subject access requests for the information or to approach the DfE, given that all learners have a unique learner number and the DfE should hold such information.

The Deputy Principal confirmed that he would investigate the possibilities.

The Chair noted that out of 188 observations 81% were graded good or better. Were all of those observations unannounced? GF confirmed that was the case.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report

T/9 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Chair thanked everyone for their hard work.

T/10 Date of Next meeting

It was confirmed that the date of the next meeting would be Wednesday 26 November 2014 at 3.00pm.

[The meeting was subsequently rearranged to Monday 1 December 2014 at 3.30pm]