

**Minutes of the
Academic Standards and Quality Development Committee
held on Tuesday 7 March 2017 at 8.00am
in Room 814 at the Matthew Boulton Campus**

Present:	Apologies:
Veronica Docherty (VD) (Chair)	Jenni Ord (JO)
Keith Horton (KH)	Henry Millin (HM)
Andrew Cleaves (AC)	
Sonia Crook- Lake (SCL) (from 8.30)	
In Attendance:	
Louise Jones (LJ)	
Liam Nevin (LN)	
Tony Dennant (TD) (for item 6)	
Jan Myatt (JM) (for item 9)	

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Jenni Ord and Henry Millin.

Declarations of Interest

There were none save for those already recorded in the Register of Interests.

Item 1 - Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 6 December 2016

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting

Matters Arising and Action Log

The action log was noted

Item 2 – Ofsted Findings

LJ introduced the item and advised that the Ofsted report had now been received and checked for accuracy, with some minor amendments being referred to Ofsted.

In summary, the feedback from the inspection was in line with the College's SAR, and the inspector had stated that the College was broadly doing the right things to improve teaching and learning but that the impact of these measures had yet to be seen. The Post Inspection Action Plan was now in development and it was expected that this would be discussed with the FE Commissioner in the forthcoming visit.

The challenge for the College was that too many staff think that teaching standards in the classroom are acceptable when they are evidently not, and there needed to be a shift in expectations of basic standards. Particular emphasis was needed on improving "value added" and more effective use of performance management and the College needed to be delivering "good" by September to ensure that it would attain "good" in the next inspection.

VD stated that she was not surprised by the grade but was disappointed in some of the basic weaknesses found in classroom standards, including behaviour and learner progress. Weaknesses identified with in-year progress and lack of differentiation also reflected weaknesses in basic teaching standards. Given that these issues did not appear to have been identified by the College's Observations Team this also suggested that there was a problem in that area also.

LJ stated that the Observations Team were not sufficiently skilled at judging classroom performance and plans were being developed to reduce the team and refocus on high quality observation and coaching with directed observations and learning walks that will drive support and improvement.

VD noted that classroom sizes were running at an average of 15 so it was not the case that quality was being impaired because staff were adapting to teaching larger classes.

KH stated that the report reflected some deep seated issues that went beyond classroom management, attendance and behaviour.

The Principal advised that the issues were not new and the College had been working to address them for some time. Considerable investment had been made in the training and development of the Departmental Managers over the last year and the challenges over next six months needed to be seen as part of that continuum. However, the pace of improvement needed to quicken and it was important to address complacency over the current standards in the classroom, which too many staff thought were acceptable.

VD asked whether teaching staff had sufficient exposure to excellent practice to understand the expectation of this standard.

The Principal advised that the inspection had confirmed that there were pockets of excellence in every department and these now needed to be used more as exemplars.

KH asked whether there were grounds for optimism in the feedback and LJ advised that in the leadership feedback there were ten bullet points only two of which highlighted areas for improvement.

The Principal summarised that in his judgement PDBW and leadership and management were at the higher end of "requires improvement" but 16-19 provision, teaching and learning assessment and outcomes for learners was at the lower end of that category.

VD stated that it was important for the College to have a firm understanding of the starting position of students in order to measure progress, particularly given that competition from other providers may in recent years have influenced the ability mix of student cohorts at the College.

The Principal advised that this year there had been a much stronger filter on entry requirements and this had reduced recruitment and class size, and LJ advised that this would be strengthened further through initial and diagnostic assessment to measure the starting point of students.

The Principal stated that it was now necessary to determine how to create the climate that will facilitate the changes necessary and that the Committee's view on this was sought.

VD stated that consideration needed to be given to staff morale in engaging them in the changes and encouraging lecturers to reflect on what was impeding excellent delivery. Also, there was a need to reflect on the complexity of the College's planning processes and whether these were providing the necessary focus.

The Principal stated that the challenge to simplify the planning framework was accepted and was already being worked on, but in his judgement this was not the root cause of the issue.

KH added that if staff mistakenly believed that their classroom performance was good it was not possible for them to re-imagine themselves as performing to an excellent standard and this did require utilisation of those who were delivering excellent lessons as a benchmark and a comparator.

There being no further discussion

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Item 3 – Quality Improvement Plan Update

LJ introduced the report and advised that the format had been amended to reflect the feedback from KH and VD in the recent meeting. There were some improvements to note, in particular attendance was slightly higher than last year, and significantly better for Maths and English, retention was higher and there were good achievement rates in Maths and English resits. The results of the Big Teaching and Learning Survey had also recently been published and this confirmed that students understood target grades, which was another positive step.

KH stated that the RAG rating and commentary were now clearer and the changes made had been helpful. It was notable that some of the actions, particularly in relation to theme 2 would require review in light of the Ofsted feedback.

LJ agreed and stated that the Post Inspection Action Plan would be integrated into the QIP.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Quality Improvement Plan update be noted.**

Item 4 – Mid – Year Review of Complaints

LJ introduced the report and advised that there was further work to do to link complaints data with performance management. Complaints were now a feature of termly review board meetings so that they could be addressed in this context.

VD stated that the report was an improvement as it was beginning to explore the outcomes from complaints and the learning from these, but there was still more work to do.

KH stated that it been confirmed previously that the College didn't categorise complaints by whether they had been upheld or not but he noted that there was now a categorisation of "substantiated" or "not substantiated" and queried what this meant.

LJ advised that the aim was to try and resolve a complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant, and the "substantiated" category was for internal use to identify for the College where further action was necessary to ensure that there is not a repeat of the incident.

KH stated that the report referred to complaints that were "substantiated" or "partly substantiated" but it was difficult to attribute meaning to these terms without a definition. It was agreed that this would be addressed for future iterations of the report.

Item 5 – Equality and Diversity Strategy

LJ introduced the report and advised the Committee that she was seeking its support for the proposed new quality objectives and the structure within the College to deliver these.

The new Equality and Diversity Strategy group would have a smaller nucleus of more senior people to drive the College strategy and this would be led by LJ and include JO as the current governor link. There were three proposed objectives and these would inform the development of the action plan.

VD noted that there was only one Head of College in the membership of the Strategy Group and queried whether this was adequate to ensure dissemination of best practice.

LJ stated that the steering group was also an important part of the structure because it would make recommendations around objectives, review evidence and evaluate impact.

VD and KH both observed that the proposals were weighted towards equality and that more was required in relation to diversity. It was agreed that this would be reviewed.

KH stated that the third objective needed to be reconsidered in terms of its clarity and its relationship to the second objective, since achievement featured in both the second and third objective. In addition, the third objective was attempting to address three different issues and it was not clear what relationship the actions had to each.

It was agreed that this objective would be reviewed against the feedback.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Committee approve the new approach to leading the development of equality and diversity.**
- **That the first two equality objectives as set out in the report be endorsed but that further consideration be given to the third.**
- **That greater emphasis be given to diversity in the emerging strategy**

Item 6 – Harborne Academy Performance Update

TD introduced the report and summarised the progress update. A mock Ofsted inspection had been undertaken which showed progress in some areas. However, this was generally not rapid enough. Improvement was notable in Maths but English remained a concern and the Progress 8 forecast was negative.

VD noted the considerable number of improvement initiatives and questioned how confident the Board was that the Academy would hit targets with these interventions. TD referred to the forecast in the paper and stated that it would be disappointing if performance fell below this.

VD further asked whether TD was confident that the changes in leadership positions in the Academy were driving improvements.

TD advised that the Board were satisfied that the right Head Teacher was in place, that targeted interventions were being applied to individual students where necessary and that a more effective approach had been adopted to welcoming and settling in students to classes which was addressing some of the low level disruptive behaviour.

KH stated that it would be preferable to see the improvement strategies within the context of targeted objectives and timescales.

TD stated that this would be addressed in the next report, showing RAG ratings against activity.

The Principal thereafter updated the Committee on the current position with the negotiations over the re-brokerage of sponsorship. The main details were noted in the report in addition to which following discussion between the Principal and the Regional Schools Commissioner it was clear that the DfE were leading the process, but that he had made clear that the College's objectives were an orderly transfer that served the objectives of students and which entailed the repayment of the College's existing loan to the Academy. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Item 7 – Quality Development Plan

LJ introduced the report and advised that the purpose of the report was to receive feedback and endorsement of the broad approach to quality development being proposed. Thereafter, she summarised the five themes set out in the paper emphasising that these were concerned with the measurement of performance, whereas the teaching and learning strategy would focus on improvement strategies.

The Principal added that this would be built into the annual business plan which would demonstrate the relationship to the delivery of objectives in a clear and simple way. He proposed to the Committee that this would be presented to the Corporation by way of a schematic to show the relationship between the components of the business plan.

KH asked what the value of this plan was to the College's aim of delivering excellence since it was focussed on measurement and process and not enhancement.

The Principal stated that the Plan was an application of similar principles to those found in ISO 9001 in a commercial setting and represented a shift in the College from quality policing to quality assurance. However, in response to the challenge from KH he agreed that a proposal would be brought back before governors that demonstrated how these proposals fitted into the planning framework and would contribute to the drive to excellence.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That further consideration be given to integrating the Quality Development Plan within the College's overall business plan, demonstrating its contribution to the College's improvement objectives.**

Item 8 – Impact of Change in the Mix of Provision on the Qualification Achievement Rates for 15/16

VD noted that the report addressed the effect of the reduction in short courses in 2015/16 and noted that the qualification achievement rate would have increased by 1% on the same profile of courses as the previous year.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Item 9 – English and Maths Review

JM joined the meeting and delivered a presentation on the developing strategy, challenges and targets.

The Committee commended JM on the speed with which she had identified the issues and the detail of the work already done. It was agreed that JM would return to address the Committee on progress in due course.

Any Other Business

The HEFCE validation letter was noted and there being no other business the meeting was concluded.

Date of the next meeting – 20 June 2017

Signed:..........(Chair)

Dated:.....20 June 2017.....