

**Minutes of the
Academic Standards and Quality Development Committee
held on Tuesday 6 February 2018 at 8.00am
in Room 814 at the Matthew Boulton Campus**

Present:	Apologies:
Veronica Docherty (VD) (Chair)	Dan Zastawny
Keith Horton (KH)	
Andrew Cleaves (AC)	
Mohammed Albukair (MA)	
Sonia Crook- Lake (SCL)	
In Attendance:	
Louise Jones (LJ)	
Liam Nevin (LN)	
Elaine Bonar (EB)	
Alison Jones (for item 3)	
Tony Dennant (for item 7)	
Jessie Elbaz (JE) (for item 7)	
Hazrat Islam (HI) (ESFA Observer)	

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Dan Zastawny

Declarations of Interest

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

Item 1 - Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 7 December 2017

It was noted that Sonia Crook Lake was present at the meeting but had been inadvertently omitted from the record.

With this amendment the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting

Matters Arising and Action Log

The action log was noted.

With the consent of the Chair items of business were taken in a different order to the agenda.

Item 2 – Post Inspection Action Plan

LJ reminded the meeting that the PIAP focussed on the themes highlighted at the last Ofsted inspection and the three critical themes were one, two and three in the report. In respect of the first theme *“learners do not make sufficient progress at level 3”* these programmes were showing good attendance and retention rates but there was some concern around the percentage of students who were identified through observations as making good progress. The current

percentage of 69% was too low and improvements were needed to get to target. There was a rapid improvement project underway to address this.

A similar observation was made in relation to the percentage of students who would recommend the College to a friend and the percentage of students who were on track to achieve their ambitious target grades.

VD stated that a significant number of students were not making good progress and asked how confident LJ was that sufficient progress would be demonstrated prior to the exams. LJ advised that the focus of observations had moved from what teachers were doing to what impact it was having on students, and this had been a challenge for some teachers. Where insufficient progress was being demonstrated teachers were being paired with coaches, and the number of progress and learning coaches had been increased to improve impact and pace. These steps were appropriate to drive the necessary change.

VD asked whether the impact of learning and development coaches would be sustainable and EB advised that training and support was being provided but if improvements were not demonstrated, performance management measures were being introduced.

LJ added that unannounced observations were also now being undertaken where other indicators of performance such as student satisfaction and attendance were causes of concern.

VD asked how learning walks featured in the performance measures and EB advised that these were undertaken by Curriculum Managers and if problems were identified these were fed through to Departmental Managers who used the information as part of their performance management data.

KH noted that 63% of students were noted as making good progress through observations but that 88% of level 3 qualifications were captured on Markbook. This didn't give the sense of whether good progress was being captured on Markbook.

EB advised that observations were a snapshot in time whereas Markbook was a tracking tool whereby all assessments were measured against targets set. However, Markbook did identify students who were not on track. This was a key tool because assessment performance was driving intervention whereas last year it had relied upon the subjective opinion of teachers.

KH stated that the purpose of the question was to gauge whether the teams had the information needed to identify the extent of progress with each student. LJ advised that the dashboard data was very comprehensive and allowed for reports by qualification type, by College, by department and by departmental manager. There was a "getting to good" project meeting every two weeks with Heads of Faculty and Department Directors that scrutinised the performance of departments and all teaching staff within them.

KH asked what was required to get this indicator to "green" and whether the Executive were confident that it could bridge the gap. LJ advised that the target was 85% on target to achieve an ambitious target grade, and that the current figure of 37% was considerably short. However, a substantial increase in this figure was expected by Easter.

EB reminded the Committee that this was an ambitious target and that in context even 60-65% would show a substantial improvement in the College's ALPS score.

The Principal noted that some further work was therefore necessary to address this challenge by showing how a target in the 60s would improve the College's performance scores.

In respect of theme 2 LJ advised that an analysis of personal development objectives had been done for each team where there were performance issues and this had raised some issues with clarity of personal objectives which Departmental Managers had been tasked with addressing. In addition, a "heat map" had been prepared for each area with a risk rating based on the numbers of staff whose performance was a concern. Whilst support was being given to improve

performance in those areas, it was likely that formal performance management would be necessary for a small number of teachers.

MA noted that teachers may have skills in different areas and working together to reinforce their skill sets would be a positive step. LJ agreed and advised that sharing of best practice was embedded in their working practices.

VD asked whether the increase in contact hours had a detrimental impact. LJ stated that this was an issue across the sector but that efforts were being made to streamline work for teaching staff and the standardisation of English and maths schemes of work was one example of this. In addition the development of Markbook had automated work that teachers previously had to do manually by extracting all relevant information into parental reports.

In respect of theme 3 it was noted that further work was needed on planning for individual learning but in other respects progress was good, including the recent receipt of the Bronze Pivotal behaviour award.

In respect of theme 4 the Committee were advised that the achievement rates for English and Maths re-sit results both showed improvements.

RESOLVED

- **That the Committee note the report.**

Item 3 – Equality and Diversity Strategy

AJ presented this item and handed out a copy the Diversity and Inclusion Maturity model which was used to baseline the College's current performance and its aspirations. The intention was to move the College from a position of compliance to one where equality and diversity are seen as key drivers in culture change. There was a recognition that the College could build on its strengths in leadership, buy-in and commitment whilst acknowledging that more needed to be done on developing staff skills and the confidence to put equality and diversity into practice. In producing the strategy and action plan feedback had been taken from students, staff and Joel Blake, the lead governor for equality and diversity.

In respect of delivery a separate group was not recommended as the actions needed to be integrated into the normal business practice of the College, led by the Executive team.

VD stated that she was concerned that the targets appeared to focus on some protected groups to the exclusion of others and also there was a lack of clarity around the involvement of students. It was not clear whether students had been involved in the design or whether they were just recipients of the strategy.

AJ advised that the first objective was focussed on meeting the diverse needs of students, addressing achievement gaps and encouraging engagement. In addition students were involved in the process through the student council and enrichment officers.

KH stated that not having a strategic group that brings in the curriculum and student voices could be a missed opportunity to provide the necessary impetus given the acknowledgement that the College was not yet operating to a mature standard.

AJ stated that a key objective was to integrate the actions into business as usual and setting up an independent group may detract from that. In addition, the College was already a busy organisation with a tendency towards too many meetings.

SCL stated that there were equality representatives at the Student Council meetings and these existing links could be more clearly identified.

VD stated that the Student Council was a new initiative and the proposals did not appear to be strongly embedded with students.

The Principal stated that the Executive would take the challenge and review how the strategy could better describe the governance arrangements and satisfy the Committee that students had effective lines of communication and influence. However, he also felt that the strategy was much more holistic and comprehensive than the previous iteration, and that it was clear about the gaps in existing practice, and how these needed to be addressed as well as giving greater clarity on the culture and ethos of the College.

VD reiterated her concern that there was a focus on particular actions to the exclusion of others, for example race and ethnic origin and there was no clear flow into curriculum delivery.

LJ referred to page 5 of the action plan and emphasised that the link to curriculum delivery was dealt with under objective 2.2 of the Action Plan.

MA stated that teachers addressed diversity in student working groups in classrooms and faith topics were also addressed with students, so whilst more could be done there was already good practice in the classroom.

KH stated that he understood the thinking behind the organisational management proposal but thought this would work better in an organisation where equality and diversity was already embedded in the organisation. It was not clear that the College would have sufficient strategic drive and oversight with the arrangements proposed.

It was agreed that VD would meet with AJ, Joel Blake and the Equality and Diversity Manager to consider her concerns further, and prior to the next meeting of the Committee further consideration would be given to the governance arrangements. The Committee would consider the strategy again at its next meeting.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Equality and Diversity Strategy be reviewed at the next meeting of the Committee.**

Item 4 – Annual Summary of Complaints

EB introduced this item and advised that there had been a reduction of 30% in complaints compared to the previous year. There had also been a big improvement in the speed of resolution of complaints and the College had introduced a further action where a complaint was substantiated which was to implement an improvement action designed to address the underlying cause of the complaint.

KH stated that there were a striking number of complaints at James Watt and Matthew Boulton colleges and queried why this was. The Principal advised that Matthew Boulton College had generated some concerns around safety and security that were affecting the perception of the College and a re-launch was planned to address this.

KH asked why ethnicity was not known for so many of the complainants as it would be possible to triangulate details with the student records system to identify ethnicity.

EB agreed to look into the practical steps that could be taken to link the two information sets.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted**

Item 5 - Induction Survey Results

The Principal advised that in the last 24 hours the Company that provided the data to inform this report had advised that there were errors in that data. Accordingly he requested that the report be deferred so that consideration could be given to the nature of the errors and whether they impacted upon the advice and conclusions contained in the report.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the induction survey results be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.**

Item 6 – Employer Survey Results

EB summarised the main findings of the survey and advised that results had been maintained or improved in each areas that the employers were asked about, with particular improvements in overall efficiency, communicating clearly and understanding the organisation's training needs. However, the College was only ranked 6th out of 9 locally.

KH encouraged the Executive to consider how it could within the rules of the survey engage with employers to maximise positive feedback. Given that the College had such positive relationships with employers it was difficult to see how the College was ranked 126th nationally, and it was likely that other Colleges were taking steps that the College was not.

The Principal welcomed this advice and stated that the options would be examined by the Sales Director.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the Committee note the report**

Item 7 – Update on Harborne Academy

JE and TD joined the meeting for this item. VD congratulated JE on the progress made by the Academy and for the clarity of the report before the Committee.

JE advised that since the report was written the data had now been validated and the position had improved further; Progress 8 was now +0.21, English and Maths 9-5 was 32% and 9-4 was 48%. However, it was likely that the Progress 8 measure would decline slightly this year because over half of pupils were in coverage (i.e. had been educated in a UK primary school.)

VD noted that the Academy had invested heavily in the improvement plan and questioned whether this was sustainable. JE stated that the restructure had saved £585k and had been accompanied by delegation of budgets so that departments were responsible for delivering high quality teaching within their own budget. Her only concern was around infrastructure as there had been ongoing problems with the quality of the building including heating and a persistent problem with the legionella bacteria although this had now been addressed.

KH stated that the interventions had been proactive and effective but questioned whether the turnover in staff had resulted in reduction in morale. JE advised that the opposite was true. The

staff at the Academy wanted to be there and were committed to delivering excellent teaching. There had been 31 applicants for the position of Assistant Head and that level of interest in the Academy was the result of the turn around.

It was agreed that a future meeting of the Committee would be held at the Academy.

Accordingly it was

RESOLVED

- **That the report be noted.**

Any Other Business

(i) Briefing note on Achievement Rates Data Error

The Committee were advised that although this matter had been addressed in emails it was important to include it formally on the agenda and to report it to the Corporation as some changes to the SAR had been necessary to address the issues arising.


KH asked for an explanation of the error and LJ advised that it was a combination of three things; firstly there was insufficient scrutiny of a decision to continue the students from 15/16 into 16/17, and an over optimistic view of the prospects of success, secondly a decision was subsequently taken to "complete" the students retrospectively in 15/16 although the record had been closed by that point. The effect of this decision was that the students disappeared from College monitoring records, and lastly the Pro-achieve system did not identify the students concerned.

VD noted that 44 students had failed and questioned what had happened to the other 222. EB advised that this information had been broken down by individual students and could be made available if necessary.

KH asked whether the Executive were satisfied that the same problem could not arise again and LJ advised that there was now a more rigorous process in place which had been introduced last year and following which only 42 students had been allowed to continue. A review of this process had identified that a written record of reasons for continuing students would strengthen controls further and this had been introduced. She had also asked the Data Team to put in place a process for creating an exception report whenever any batch changes were made to data. The College was also awaiting feedback from Compass who provide the Pro-Achieve Data as to why the system had failed to identify the issue.

There being no other business the meeting concluded.

Date of the next meeting – Thursday 8th March 2018

Signed: (Chair)

Dated: 8/3/2018