

The Corporation Board of Accrington and Rossendale College

**Minutes of a Meeting of: The Curriculum & Quality Standards
Committee**

Date: 11th February 2014

Location: Conference Room, Broad Oak Centre



confirmed

Members Present:

Mr S Ireland	Chair of the Committee and Independent Member
Dr M Lee	Independent Member
Dr A M Coyne	Independent Member
Mr Steve Cox	Independent Member
Mr R Grigorjevs	Independent Member
Mrs S Taylor	Principal
Miss T Landon	Staff Governor

In Attendance:

Miss W Higgin	Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality)
Mrs J Crowther	Director of Learner Services
Miss G Atherton	Director of Curriculum Development and Delivery
Mrs B Tootell	Head of Quality & Standards
Mr A Armiger	Clerk to the Corporation
Mrs N Tattersall	Minuting Clerk

Apologies were received from:

Draft Minutes Prepared by: NT-AA
Draft Minutes approved by the Chair:
Minutes Approved by the Committee:

Date:
17-02-14
19-02-14
17-06-14

.....*Steve Ireland*.....
Chair

C&QSC

The Chair welcomed members to the meetings and advised that Item 13/14-2.9 would be taken first.

13/14-2.1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

13/14-2.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13/14-2.3 Minutes of Meeting held on 19th November 2013

The minutes from the meeting held on the 19th November 2013 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Resolved

13/14-2.3 to approve the minutes from the meeting held on 19th November 2013

13/14-2.4 Matters arising not otherwise on agenda

The Clerk to the Corporation updated on the progress of the following resolutions:

C&QS 13/14-1.4 - the Chair of the Corporation Board and Principal have not yet met due to a range of commitments but were scheduled to meet later in the week to outline a schedule of meetings.. Once this schedule has been set out, the Clerk will invite Dawn Goodbier and Samantha Tennant to attend a student governor update with the Chair and Principal at one of these meeting

C&QS 13/14-1.8 - the updated Quality Strategy will be reviewed at this evenings meeting.

C&QS 13/14 1.9 - Board Members had attended and observed a Special Measures Meeting.

C&QS 13/14-1.11 - the Clerk has liaised with Board Members about participation in observations and 3 members have advised they would like to take part. These observations are likely to take place in the 3rd/4th week of March 2014.

Resolved

13/14-2.4 to note the above actions.

13/14-2.9 Safeguarding our Learners Update

The Director of People and Performance presented an update on Safeguarding College Learners and began by reminding members that she would become the Designated Senior Person (DSP) for Safeguarding following Mr Tallon's retirement. Miss Lisa Hartley, Personal Development Manager will remain as Deputy DSP and continue to manage day to day referrals and lead multi agency discussions

Mrs Higham noted that safeguarding referrals reflect a wide range of issues and increasingly referrals are primarily as a result of staff training and increased confidence in identifying and responding to issues. Mrs Higham advised members that a significant number of college learners have a range of complex needs rather than just one issue. Mental Health and Accommodation continues to see high safeguarding referrals.

Since the previous report to the Committee in November 2013, no referrals have been made to the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), but many referrals are at Level 2 and Level 3 of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and unfortunately can't just be simply dealt with and signed off. They tend to be referrals which need on-going monitoring, support and intervention which, for the college, is resource intensive. However, she noted that a primary concern of the College is to ensure that wherever possible learners are safe and therefore able to achieve.

Mrs Higham advised members that for the remainder of this academic year the safeguarding team will be trying to measure how much resource goes into Safeguarding with the help of Pro Monitor which not only records, tracks and allows staff to report on referrals but also tracks time spent by staff on each referral. This will allow the college to review its approach to managing the increasing workload and identify where changes to staffing the provision are needed.

Safeguarding training continues to be rolled out to all staff and with more and more face to face training undertaken. Mrs Higham said that this has had a real impact on staff allowing them to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the process. Areas of further training and guidance have been identified around "industrial language" and workplace and classroom "banter". Mrs Higham asked members to consider how their own training should be structured so that Miss Hartley can plan for the event. It will take place at the Board's Development event in May, 2014.

The Framework in which the College operates, "CAF" has now been updated which has prompted the College to look at all policies and provide more guidance for staff. Mrs Higham will bring back any major changes identified to members in her next report.

In relation to learners with criminal convictions, the Progression Guidance team are currently carrying out risk assessments at enrolment in order to identify learners who may pose a risk to staff or learners. Due to increased numbers of learners declaring criminal convictions and the impact on the work load of the guidance team, it has been agreed that all front line staff involved in enrolment will be trained to carry out the initial scrutiny and questioning.

A discussion then took place around social media interest following a recent incident involving a college learner. Members asked if the college had a Media Strategy. The Principal confirmed that it did and that all senior management had previously had media training which may be due for updating. The Chair commented that give the speed of change relating to online media, it may be opportune to update the Media Policy. Dr Coyne asked if there was a benchmark for what was happening in other colleges. Mrs Higham was noted that Miss Hartley may be aware, through her networks, of what other colleges were doing but there would certainly be an opportunity to look at sharing best practice.

The Director of Learner Services noted that the college has an E-safety group that continually monitor learner behaviour and the number of incidents has reduced from 16 in 2012/13 to currently 3 this year, which supports the work the college has been undertaking. Following further discussion members

Resolved

13/14-2.9

i) to note the report; and

ii) The College Senior Management Team to review the College's Media Policy and Training.

13/14-2.5

The College Quality Strategy

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the updated College Quality Strategy, which had previously been reviewed by members at the last meeting. Miss Higgin highlighted the changes that had been recommended by Dr Lee made and members were in agreement that this could now be recommended to the Corporation Board for approval.

Resolved

13/14-2.5 To recommend the College Quality Strategy to the Corporation Board for approval

13/14-2.6 College Learner Update including Attendance, Retention and Withdrawals

The Director of Curriculum Development and Delivery presented members with an update on the number of college learners and attendance, retention and withdrawals of students. Miss Atherton guided members through her report beginning by looking at learner numbers on programmes highlighting where the college had concerns, where learner numbers had met or exceeded expectations and the actions the college was taking to recruit additional learners.

Mr Grigorjevs commented that given the low recruitment in some areas, was there an overall strategy for deciding what curriculum areas to review remove or keep open. Mrs Taylor replied that it is a complex issue but suggested that this could be looked as a sessions as part of the Strategic and Development Event in May 2014

Miss Atherton then moved on to

Learner Attendance

The overall college attendance for 16-18 year olds and 19+ non-apprentice learners is at 83.8% against a target of 90%. Miss Atherton told members that this situation is mainly attributable to registers not being marked as efficiently as they should be i.e. staff ensuring that a correct mark is used for learners not in class rather than just marking as absent. Miss Atherton noted that learners not in class are able to catch up with missed work via the college's Virtual Learning Environment but it is still a priority to emphasise to learners the importance of attending college.

Retention of Students

Due to the lack information from the SFA Data Service the college has been unable to analyse its retention data with its in-house systems. The latest retention information has therefore been worked out manually and currently stands at 94.2% for 16-18 year olds and 99% for 19+ learners in FE.

Retention within two faculty areas has given cause for concern, ie dropping below a target set of 95%, but the college has the destination data for the students who have left and therefore understands the reasons for the withdrawals and the reasons are generally positive ie learners have gone into employment. As the college historically loses approximately 5% of 16-18 year old learners between January and June the predicted retention rate will be expected 0.8% below the overall target of 90%. If this were the case members were advised that this could affect this year's success rates. It was imperative therefore that the college worked with its learners to ensure that this did not happen. Miss Atherton noted that retention for HE learners is currently at 96% against a target of 85%

Dr Lee commented that if a number of learners had left college to either enter or continue employment as explained the college be penalised for this in its success rates. The Principal advised that it would, however the college has a robust system for obtaining destinations data and if it can prove a learner is in employment then

this will go in our favour if inspected. If a learner leaves their programme early due to gaining employment the college looks to work with the employer to try and get the learner back into college for a day release to ensure a programme of study is completed which will benefit all concerned.

Following further discussion members

Resolved

13/14-2.6 to note report, the issues presented and the college's work being carried out to resolve those issues

13/14-2.7 Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment – Current Position

The Head of Quality provided members with an update on the current profile of Teaching, Learning and Assessment within the college. Mrs Tootell reminded members that lesson observation plays a key role in the quality assurance of teaching, learning and assessment and in 2012/13, the college had a “good or better profile” of 81%, which is comparable with other colleges. The college looks at the Good or Better profile rather than outstanding observations.

The college process of “walkabout” observations also forms a key part of the Quality Assurance strategy and has been successful in raising standards since its introduction in 2010.

Mrs Tootell then updated members as follows:

Teaching & Learning Analysis – current position

77 unannounced graded observations have been undertaken compared to 54 last year. It is expected that by half term 100 will have been carried out. The good or better grade profile currently stands at 70%.

Teaching & Learning by Faculty

The college good or better target is 85% and one faculty, Sport and Leisure, has done exceptionally well in achieving 92%. Creative, Business and Care and the Studio are areas of concern for the college. A large amount of the Creative, Business and Care faculty is in special measures and it is thought that through this process and continuing support for the staff the matter will be successfully resolved

Observations including Performance Management

18 members of staff have received either a grade 3, which requires improvement or grade 4 which is inadequate, to date. Some of these have received a second grade 3 or 4. Mrs Tootell advised that the observation process stipulates that any member of staff who receives a grade 3 or 4 will be subject to a second observation within a 3 week period. A second grade 3 or 4 will trigger support from HR. Staff are also supported by a Mentor (Advanced Practitioner) and additional staff development is available on a rolling programme which happens weekly. Mrs Tootell advised members that these staff are closely monitored to ensure that all actions are being taken to raise their standards of teaching as quickly as possible

Mr Grigorjevs asked what happened to staff that go from a grade 4 to a grade 1. Mrs Tootell confirmed that resource are made available to allow another observation to be undertaken within a few weeks and “walkabouts” in that member of staff classes are also carried out to ensure consistency of teaching.

The Chair asked about the methodology of putting in place an Advanced Practitioner to work with members of teaching staff. The Advanced Practitioners are put in place to provide support for staff and meet with them to discuss the outcomes of

observations and identify the weaknesses. Training is organised and checklists of different resources available to assist are also provided. After 10 days the Advanced Practitioner will also go into a class unannounced for a developmental observation, which although is not graded the staff member is advised what grade would have been awarded.

Observations are now also undertaken in Community Programme areas and the good or better profile for staff teaching these were reported as: General College staff 80%, Protocol National (part time agency staff) 52%, Community 67% and Apprenticeship programmes 100%.

Walkabouts

Mrs Tootell told members that there are still issues being identified around learners wearing their ID badges and additional concerns around staff starting classes on time. Staff Development Day on 14th February 2014 will provide targeted sessions to remind staff of the “basics” of teaching in the college.

Assessment Management

The management of assessment is monitored through the self-assessment review process. In October 2011, the score was 37% good or better, October 2012 89% and it currently stands at 85%. Programme areas perceived to be higher risk received feedback from assessment audits on a more frequent basis.

Mr Cox asked about the Studio and that presumably this was under a different Ofsted framework. Mrs Tootell replied that the college replicates the two different frameworks required.

Dr Coyne asked how learners react to the observation and walkabout process. Mrs Tootell advised members that learners are used to staff dropping into classes to undertake focus groups, walkabouts etc and find it more natural than previous announced observations. However, there are some learners who are nervous and much quieter than normal but students are generally supportive of the staff and the process

The question was asked about who the team of observers were. Mrs Tootell confirmed there were 17 in total – Advanced Practitioners, Heads and Deputy Heads of Faculty, the College Quality Auditor, Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality), the Director of Learner Services and herself. The college has recently introduced an additional 3 teaching staff members who have excellent grade profiles.

Following further discussion members

Resolved

13/14-2.7 to note the Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Update report

13/14-2.8

Curriculum Team Progress – Current Position

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) began her report by reminding members that the annual Self-Assessment Review had been presented at the last meeting of this committee and also at the December Board meeting. The College has self-assessed at a Grade 1 overall; however there are a number of teams below this level. Miss Higgin advised that 10 teams were graded 3 and 4 and these have been placed into the Special Measures process. Apprenticeships and the Studio are also in special measures which takes the total to 12 areas in Special Measures. Half of these teams are making reasonable progress, but the remaining half still require support to improve progress.

The Chair advised that he and Miss Landon had attended the Performing Arts Special Measures meeting as observers and commented that it was extraordinary and the attention to detail was tremendous. Mr Ireland was delighted at the progress Performing Arts are making and the way staff are involved positively in the process. Mr Ireland enjoyed the experience and would encourage other Board members to take the opportunity when possible to attend one of these meetings.

In terms of performance, a breakdown by team was provided within Miss Higgin's report, but a few key areas were highlighted for members

Apprentices - although this team is making progress there are still concerns relating to a number of areas ie., "paper free" (electronic logging of work) and its fitness for purpose. An external consultant (practicing Ofsted Inspector) has been appointed to support the team and the College is optimistic Apprentices will soon be out of Special Measures

Access to HE - this is now out of special measures.

Travel and Tourism – due to staff instability this area struggled to recruit. Staffing has now improved and the Travel and Tourism team are making inroads into improvement. Miss Higgin noted that there are still concerns, but that she was cautiously optimistic about the teams continuing improvement

Professional Construction – Miss Higgin advised members that there was still work to be done with this team before it would be out of special measures

Hairdressing - Mr Grigorjevs commented that this area had grade 4 in every category except feedback from learners. Miss Higgin noted that the grade 4 was due to staffing issues, but that the students general supported staff and were happy on their the programmes A new Head of Faculty with specific hair specialisms and a Deputy with a background in hair have now been appointed. Previously Hairdressing has been a flagship area of the college and that the College was working hard, to ensure it gets it back to that position.

Miss Higgin informed members that attached to her report was a paper relating to the Studio, as this is part of the special measures process. The College is expecting a monitoring visit by Ofsted but no details have yet been received.

After reading the report on the Studio, Dr Lee said the overall impression was that the Studio wasn't doing too well. Miss Higgin commented that standards were initially set high and that the College is aware of exactly what the issues are and is monitoring and support through the special measures process. Dr Lee asked whether the College was confident that having identified the issues they can be put right. Miss Higgins was confident and wanted to assure members that the right support is currently in place for all staff and learners. She wished members to note that the group of learners involved have been exceptionally challenging, but when you take into consideration the vocational element of the learners programme, they are doing well. The Head of Studio and Head of Quality are putting together a portfolio of the distance travelled by each learner. There are lots of ways the learners can achieve, but strictly in terms of GCSE attainment this has proved challenging.

Dr Coyne said that a "one size fits all" strategy is not always the way forward and we should be asking what the added value is that the College has provided the learners with rather than just what GCSEs the students may achieve. She felt, as she was

sure others would, that the distance travelled for these learners is really important. The Principal commented that these young people have achieved far more in terms of academic and non-academic aspects than they would have done if they had stayed in a main stream school. These learners have also had access to fantastic work placements throughout the two years they had been with the school.

Mr Grigorjevs noted that he has been involved from the start with the Hyndburn Studio School and understands how traumatic it has been at times, but that it is reassuring that the College has a handle on it and can pin point the concerns and what it is doing about them. Mr Grigorjevs went on to say that he felt it was now about looking to the future as the College has regained support from local schools. Mrs Crowther noted that the College has a robust Year 11 programme which is not GCSE focused and the learners do astoundingly well on that

Dr Lee said that he was reassured by what he had heard and that essentially it's a matter of presentation that the College needs to be careful about.

The Chair thought that it would be nice to see some case studies and hear about the learners who have come through the studio. Mrs Higgin said that she would arrange this for the next meeting

Resolved

13/14-2.8 To note report and the actions being taken in respect of Curriculum team progress

13/14-2.10 Learner Voice

The Director of Learner Services provided an overview of the key areas relating to Learner Voice. The methods of engaging with learners are becoming increasingly more creative as previously learners have been reluctant to voice their opinions so engaging with learners has been difficult.

Mrs Crowther advised that learners now have 11 different ways in which they can have their voice heard and these are promoted around college. Mrs Crowther noted in her presentation that a very productive way of engaging with learners who are "wobbling" on their programmes was to get them involved in the College's Student Council and Student Ambassadors programme. In 2012/13 student ambassadors engaged with 80 learners which resulted in a success rate of 92.7% for that group of learners. To date 100 learners have been engaged in these activities

A Corridor Council has also been set up to engage with learners and get them more involved in enrichment activities. These take place on a weekly basis across the different campus sites. The Hub also remains a centre for college enrichment and this continues to offer a wide range of services to learners. Mrs Crowther reported that the Enrichment Team has also recently been facilitating Driving Test Theory support for learners. Members were also informed that learners have been involved with staff interviews recently, which is a way of continually engaging with the learner and developing them. Engaging with learners has seen an impact on learner retention.

Members asked if the college was able to compare engagement against other colleges and Mrs Crowther advised that the college is working to obtain comparative data. The Principal noted that she had seen in the past how apathetic some of the learners were getting and now it was clear college learners are becoming far more engaged and it was her belief that learner engagement has improved by 100% compared to a year ago. The recruitment of a Student Representation Officers have helped to drive this.

Resolved
13/14-2.10 to note the Learner Voice Report

13/14-2.11 Complaints against the College - "Getting it Right"

The Head of Quality & Standards updated members on the suggestions, compliments and complaints received at the college via the "Getting it Right" process. The number of suggestions, complaints and compliments received during 2012/13 was 103, which represents an increase of 64% compared to 2011/12. This increase may be attributable to learners increasing expectations in addition to increased awareness and accessibility of the Getting it Right process.

The majority of Getting it Right suggestions, complaints and compliments come through either:

- ✧ Paper forms
- ✧ College website
- ✧ Smart phone application
- ✧ Virtual Learning Environment – since its introduction in March 2013, 14% of all getting it right comments have been received via the VLE

Mrs Tootell, confirmed that in 2012/13 there were no significant areas of concern to investigate. It was also noted that no complaints had been received from learners located at the Globe Centre or Stubblelee sites and very few had been received from Apprentices.

In terms of this year, to date the college has received 61 Getting it Right forms and it has also seen an increase in the number of bullying cases reported although these are not necessarily linked to the college, they are often reported to the college. There are some concerns around the timeliness of the turnaround of responses and the quality and handling of complaints, which is being addressed by the Quality Team.

A number of actions are now in place, which were highlighted by Mrs Tootell:

- ✧ Manager responses are required within a 15 day timeframe and any who don't meet this requirement are forwarded to the relevant senior manager.
- ✧ Complaints made against staff are now sent directly to HR to review in the first instance.
- ✧ Further promotion of the Getting it Right process to both learners and staff including development and awareness raising of the college Smartphone application.
- ✧ Celebration of compliments/good practice work and displays around college.
- ✧ A Listening Tree is being installed in reception where learners can hang their comments "You Said We Did".
- ✧ "You Said We Did" is also being introduced for staff as well as this is an area that has been neglected for some time.

Mr Grigorjevs asked if some of the complaints received relating to teaching relate to teams in special measures. Mrs Tootell said that this was sometimes the case and it was pursued as part of that process

The Principal advised that the college receives approximately 10 compliments a week and it needs to look at better ways of recording these and advertising them.

The Chair commented that he echoed Mrs Taylor's thoughts. It was apparent that the college took the effort to home in to find out what the problems and resolve

them, but shouldn't be afraid of shouting about what it is good at and find a way to celebrate more.

Resolved

13/14-2.11 to note the Complaints against the College report

13/14-2.12 Student Disciplinary Policy

The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) began by saying that she hoped that she would be able to bring to this and subsequent meetings college policies that related to this committee to ensure members could gain a better understanding of current and newly produced policies used in college. Miss Higgin presented the Student Disciplinary Policy to members

Miss Higgins began by advising members that the Student Disciplinary Policy focuses on three areas

- ✧ Learner Absences
- ✧ Progress
- ✧ Discipline

Miss Higgin noted that she felt that this policy could also be described as a retention policy in disguise. After having reviewed the policy with the curriculum team, Miss Higgin advised that this policy remains fit for purpose, but some of the operational procedures need to be tightened up. The way the policy is applied in some areas relating to "misconduct" is inconsistent i.e., people's interpretation and therefore tighter procedures and consistent use of them needs to be established. Close monitoring of the use of the policy will help to ensure this. A staff development session relating to the policy is being planned for managers and staff.

Resolved

13/14-2.12 to note the Student Disciplinary Policy

13/14-2.13 Ofsted Briefing for Committee Members

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented a briefing of the likely questions members may possibly be asked during an Ofsted Inspection. Miss Higgin noted that this briefing had been put together by the Head of Quality, Mrs Tootell. If members were in agreement, Miss Higgin suggested that a "Mocksted" takes place with an independent person in June to help members get prepared for possible inspection.

Members were in agreement that this was an invaluable document and it was agreed that all committee members and other board members should take the opportunity to review the briefing and fill in additional answers to the questions posed from their own experience on the board.

Following a review of the document, discussion turned to the concept of board members "challenging" the College's managers in the light of questions which might be posed in an inspection.

Members felt they often had difficulty with "challenging" the college's managers because, due to the way this college's Corporation Board works, a trusting relationship had developed over the years between the Senior Management Team and members and very often there isn't the need to "challenge". Dr Lee was keen to say that this was not to say that members were complacent, far from it. It was clear that members understand the ideas being put forward by the management team and trusted the information presented.

The Chair reminded members also that they as a committee and other Board members are being given opportunities to “go behind the curtain” and being invited in to attend meetings such as Special Measures and Self-Assessment Review and will be taking opportunities to observe teaching observations . All of this enabled members to experience these processes first hand rather than just be told they are happening. Mr Ireland stated that members are not afraid to question, but it’s all about transparency in the first place. Dr Coyne reiterated that the trust of the college management has always been based on transparency of information received by members.

Following further discussion

Resolved

13/14-2.13 i) to note the Ofsted Briefing paper presented; and
ii) that the Clerk to the Corporation will organise for the Ofsted briefing paper to be circulated to all Board Members for their review

13/14-2.14 **Dates and Times of Next Meeting**
Tuesday 17th June 2014

The meeting closed at 7.05pm