

**CHELMSFORD COLLEGE
QUALITY AND LEARNERS COMMITTEE
9 FEBRUARY 2016**

Minutes

PRESENT: Angelika Baxter (Chair)
Andy Sparks (Principal)
Heather Clarke
Barbara Vohmann
Susan Hughes
Luke Hain (Student Governor)

IN ATTENDANCE: Penny Petch (Head of Teaching & Learning)
Caroline Williams (Deputy Principal)
Elaine Oddie (Chair of the Corporation)
Alison Davies (Director of Curriculum, Moulsham Street)
Marco Iciek (Director of Learner Development & Inclusion)
Mark Emerson (Director of Information Services)
Rob Millea FCA (Clerk to the Corporation)
Jo Seward (Assistant Clerk)

462. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Sarah Noble, Steve Houghton and Marie Kemp (Observer).

463. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Barbara Vohmann declared her interest as a staff member at Anglia Ruskin University. There were no other declarations made.

464. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2015

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 10 November 2015 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

465. MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk reported the appointment of Steve Houghton, new governor, to the Committee.

Training for governors on observing learners ITEM 456

Governors are not to join the observation team as this is a management responsibility but there is to be a session after the next Board Meeting on

giving governors greater insight into how observations are carried out and to help governors in carrying out Learning Walks.

New HE partner ITEM 453

A new provider is being sought and it may be done through the shared services company with South Essex College. Arrangements with ARU are being decoupled but students currently on programme will not be affected and will be fully supported.

Student Satisfaction ITEM 454

There is nothing to report on this matter and this will be brought back to the next Meeting by way of a report regarding decline in student satisfaction.

ACTION: MI

466. RETENTION, ATTENDANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

The Deputy Principal presented a Report on in year KPIs covering the items noted above.

The key points noted were:

- Retention for both 16-18 and 19+ students remains high at 95% and 96% respectively, in line with the same point last year
- The SSAs of concern regarding retention are Public Services, Child Development and Well Being and Sport, Leisure and Tourism
- Overall attendance rates have been maintained compared to last year at this stage but rates at entry level and levels 1 and 2 reflect the poor attendance at GCSE and functional skills classes in respect of English & Maths
- Poorer attendance in non GCSE or functional skills SSAs reflects staffing issues
- All retention levels are above the most recently published rates nationally

There are no published benchmarks for attendance nationally.

It was noted that students coming in with a GCSE grade D are still required to study when they arrive in College to achieve a grade C.

Governors enquired about measures being used to achieve good attendance and punctuality. Staff are vigilant in chasing students who are late or whose attendance is slipping. Sometimes, staff 'walk' students from one class to another.

Unfortunately with English & Maths, there is a degree of disconnect because students do not want to study these subjects and do not appreciate the requirement to achieve a GCSE C grade in each of the two subjects.

Every student's progress is reviewed during six-weekly staff reviews and where relevant, the College Intervention Officer is involved in supporting and monitoring students at risk for whatever reason.

There is a clear correlation between attendance, progression and engagement of students and poor teaching practice (e.g. Sport and Public Services), which is being addressed in part through better leadership from the new academic restructuring, which was announced yesterday, and is now being implemented. This particularly affects Level 2 students. Management need to be encouraged to be closer to students and more accessible.

In the light of the importance of attendance, the Committee **AGREED** that a KPI be established for attendance specifically for English & Mathematics GCSE and Functional Skills and trends here be included on the Governors' Portal so that governors can track what is happening.

ACTION: CW

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

467. TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT

Penny Petch (Head of Teaching & Learning) presented a Report providing the Committee with an overview of the progress of Teaching, Learning & Assessment.

The focus of the Report was on lesson observations, the College excellence programme, Learning Walks and this year's TLA Developments.

To date, 48% of all observations are good or better, 4% lower than at this stage last year, reflecting a large influx of new teachers this year. Observations include agency staff, if being used. The Report drilled down to good or better observations by Sector Skills Area.

The vast majority of staff have been observed once this academic year and interventions and support have been applied to those teachers needing improvement. Results of observations are not disclosed to the staff being observed, but used by management to monitor performance and progress.

A number of common training needs have been identified – differentiation, sharing of lesson aims and objectives, showing visible progress and questioning techniques.

Good practice noted in observations included development of English & Maths skills, questioning techniques, high standards and expectations and differentiation.

Ten teachers are on Notice to Improve and are part of the College's new Achieving College Excellence Programme (ACE). New teachers are monitored through the College's probationary system.

A reduced number of Learning Walks have been done this year although 82 have been done and 60 more scheduled soon. Governors carried out a number of Walks last Friday at the Governors' Development Day.

Developments being progressed were explained in response to governor questions including Pedagogy Partners (cross College teacher Meetings to share good practice and new ideas), advanced practitioner support, use of English & Maths consultants and Teaching and Learning Days.

The Pedagogy Partners scheme is very valuable and worked well last year and it will be followed through for those who have joined this year. Governors asked about Pedagogy Pulse and were told that this is a monthly newsletter sent to all teaching staff. It will be put on the Governors' Portal. Both these initiatives were complemented by Ofsted during the inspection.

Next steps for the rest of this academic year were included in the Report and included use of student feedback, setting and monitoring of improvement targets, additional TLA training Day, videoing and benchmarking of observations and feedback.

Difficulties in staff turnover (especially in English & Maths, Sport and in ICT) is sometimes a problem and governors expressed their concern over the use of agency staff, even if they can be found in the area required. There is a knock-on effect on student performance from staff turnover. Students don't like lack of continuity. The teaching in Maths is generally better than in English.

Governors need always to have a clear understanding of what the College does well and what they do not do so well.

Governors wanted to know if the College and its staff understand the change of culture in the College and if it is fully embraced. The Ofsted inspection acknowledged where there was joined up thinking and approach, results and improvement does follow. This needs to be rolled out fully and it has its own challenges for some staff and managers.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

468. LEARNER DESTINATIONS 2014-15

This Report was presented by Marco Iciek (Director of Learner Development & Inclusion) and gave an overview of the destination for the learner cohort of 2014-15 enrolments. This information was used in the Ofsted Inspection last November.

Ofsted's comments in precis form were:

Large majority of learners progress to positive destinations when they finish their course

HE students almost all progress to university

Good support for 16-19 students to progress to employment, further course or, where applicable for level 3 learners, to university

Marco highlighted the following points:

- Number of students progressing to apprenticeships is very low – very disappointing outcome – reasons could include lack of knowledge of options available (we do get a number of students on Level 3 Apprenticeships coming from local schools after completing A levels)
- Progress to full time and part time employment has risen (3% to 13%)
- Students continuing in FE was 61% (1285 individuals) but this is lower than in November 2014
- Percentage of students who are NEETs stable at 3%

The College is very successful in collecting the destination data from former students using phone, text messages, etc. (last year around 91% success against national experience of around 85%).

The Committee agreed that the continuing development of student employability skills is vital to measuring destination success.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

469. SUB-CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee **RECEIVED** a Report on Collaborative Provision from the Director of Information Services for 2014/15 and this year's contracts.

The provision last year and this year is to the same partners and involves approximately 200 learners. There is a possibility that this could rise to 300 learners this year. It is limited by the size of the College's Adult Budget.

It has been audited from a SFA compliance standpoint and this went well with no major issues arising. The internal auditors (RSM) have also carried out an internal audit this year, with no issues arising.

The provision is in compliance with the College Subcontracting Fees & Charging Policy, which is a contractual requirement by the SFA.

The value of the contract value for this year will be in the order of £200,000. This is around 1.5% of the College's total turnover, so it is not material in that context.

470. ENGLISH & MATHEMATICS

Alison Davies (Director of Curriculum, Moulsham Street) presented the Committee with a Report on the current position in relation to the delivery of the above subjects and how progress is being made. Governors were aware of the strong focus on this area at the Ofsted inspection last November and its effect in pulling down success rates.

They were conscious of the criticism made by Ofsted regarding Governor Scrutiny over this area, which they judged to be poor (Page 4 of Ofsted Report) and their impact in achieving faster improvement (Page 2 of Ofsted Report).

They were also reminded that the Report highlighted English and Maths as one of the key areas for improvement – achievement too low, ineffective teaching, lack of English & Maths blending in vocational lessons.

Alison summarised a number of key initiatives which have been implemented to drive forward improvement:

- Specialist consultant
- Standardisation of marking
- Controlled assessments
- Greater focus in Progress and Progression Review
- Formal mock examinations
- METIS Learning walks
- Branding approved staff to deliver M&E
- Twitter account for M&E and newsletter for staff
- METIS branding, newsletter and approved staff to deliver

The METIS Newsletter will be placed regularly on the Governors' Portal.

To facilitate these improvements, a formal Intervention Action Plan is now in place.

(Governors were informed of the work which Sarah Noble has been doing in supporting Teaching and Learning in English & Maths and has made a big governance impact – Governors were encouraged to follow her lead in other curriculum areas)

Notwithstanding the above improvement steps, there still remain significant challenges to increase achievement including appropriate staffing, attendance and attitudes of some students and parents, which is not helpful.

Since the last Meeting of the Committee, an ACER health check has been undertaken and this was very positive with good practice being observed. In addition, controlled assessments have been completed and a formal mock examination has recently been sat by students. Both processes are run by the examination team giving a much tighter control over the process. The results are not yet available but will be reported back at the next Meeting.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

ACTION: PP

471. OFSTED REPORT

Members were provided with a final copy of the Report, which is now in the public domain.

472. COLLEGE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2015/16

The Committee were provided with a copy of the latest iteration of the Plan, which incorporates the Ofsted Post Inspection Action Plan, noting that it had been circulated at the Governors' Development Day last Friday.

The Assistant Clerk will circulate copies of the latest version to all Members of the Board.

ACTION: JS

A number of points were raised by Governors and responded to:

- Targets for 2015/16 are not ever set below the latest available National Averages
- The Plan should contain date milestones so that progress can be more easily judged and tracked
- The Plan should show National Averages in the document to facilitate comparison with College targets
- English & Maths National Averages are only for FE Colleges and do not include schools
- Progress will be reported through regular KPI Reports which will be placed on the Governors' Portal in between Meetings

The Committee noted the points raised last Friday, in particular, the means by which they can improve their scrutiny over this key area. These are reproduced below and **AGREED** as elements of the way forward:

- Pre-meetings before Board/Committee Meetings to assist the relevant Chair with directing governors' efforts in the Meeting in challenging and monitoring
- Training for governors as to how to ask challenging questions (external trainer to provide this at the October Governors' Development Day)
- Receiving Departmental presentations at Governors' meetings
- More Learning Walks
- Informal Meetings with students to get a feel for the student experience
- Uploading relevant progress information onto the Governors' Portal so that governors can review this information between Meetings and governor involvement is not driven by the dates of Board/Committee Meetings. This will make review/scrutiny timelier.
- Attendance by Governors at Progression Review Meetings (held around every six weeks or so)

- Governors to direct any questions on the data through the Clerk who will arrange for replies to be given
- Governors to provide short Reports after they have visited curriculum area/departments

It was **AGREED** that Members of the Committee be asked for further input on these proposals once they have seen these draft minutes as to how they wish to effectively monitor progress of the College next to the CIP.

ACTION: CLERK

The Committee noted that Art & Design was an Area of Concern within the College (mainly Art and due to poor staff and staff shortages) and was being closely monitored.

They noted especially the priority on page 5 of the Plan in respect of the role of governors and that 'all learners make the progress expected of them' or, in other words, measurement regarding Value Added.

They asked as to whether lower level managers were fully signed up to the priorities outlined in the Plan and were working as a team and whether there was any inconsistency in the language within the priorities.

This remains an ongoing challenge for management but it is hoped that the tighter academic management restructure (effective today) will have the desired effect of focusing firmly on the role and performance of middle managers who are considered vital in raising standards.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report and **AGREED** the mechanisms for monitoring outlined above.

473. KPIs AND RISK REGISTER

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report from the Director of Information Services.

They noted the following key points:

Risk Register

- Curriculum areas identified as 'At Risk' all have detailed intervention Plans
- Careful monitoring of 'At Risk' areas is in place
- Art and Design is the most challenging
- Review of management structure virtually complete

- English & Maths is a primary focus of challenge
- Good progress in arranging relevant work experience for students

KPIs

- Reluctance of students to engage with English & Maths leading to poor progress by students
- Attendance decline at levels 1 and 2 (negative impact of E&M)

474. SAFEGUARDING REPORT

Susan Hughes (Safeguarding Governor) gave a verbal Report on Safeguarding Matters. She represents the Board on the College Safeguarding Committee. She will provide a short written Report for future Meetings of this Committee. The Safeguarding Newsletter will be placed on the Governors' Portal.

The Committee **RECEIVED** Susan's Report and thanked her for her diligence in this area.

475. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Clerk informed the Committee that he would arrange an external facilitator to lead a session (2 to 3 hours) for the whole Board on 'Asking Challenging Questions' to help them in developing their techniques and abilities in exercising scrutiny over the actions of the Senior Leadership Team in the curriculum & quality area. This will be scheduled for the Governors' Development Day in October 2016.

Governors were informed that the Academic Staff Restructuring was implemented yesterday.

A Governor raised some questions about staff turnover and staff morale and the Committee agreed that this be included on the agenda for the Personnel Finance & General Purposes Committee on 8 March 2016 as part of the regular Report on Human Resources.

476. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 17 May 2016 at 3pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 4.30 pm

Signed.....Dated.....