

B O S T O N C O L L E G E

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 APRIL 2016

1. PRESENT

Helen Wright (Chair), Stephen Brown, Rowan Dalton, Jayne Mitchell and Chris Pett

Also in attendance: Fiona Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality) George Harrison, Ben Webb (nominee governors), Janet Hemmant (Vice Principal: Corporate Services) and Vicki Locke (Quality Manager)

Attendance 100%

Helen welcomed Ben and George to the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2016 were read and approved.

Helen Wright queried the cessation of recruitment in plumbing apprenticeships but Fiona Grady advised that this was now about to resume. Helen also queried the reference to ownership of apprenticeships. Fiona explained that this was about programme areas taking full responsibility for apprenticeships since for some areas which had had lower numbers of apprentices this had seemed to be a lower priority than the rest of their work. Progress is now being made with this.

3. LEARNER PROGRESSIONS AND DESTINATIONS

Fiona Grady presented a report on learner progressions and destinations. She explained how the data was gathered and also that there were some issues about the completeness of the data published by the DfE.

Stephen Brown queried the rates of follow up on destinations. Fiona explained that this was dependent upon getting hold of the leavers but that the number of successful responses was around 75%.

Chris Pett asked for further information about the section on progression and destinations of leavers of HE. Fiona explained how the data is collected by a national organisation and that the breakdown of answers relates to the individual responses by the learners.

Stephen Brown queried the reliability of the information in section 4 which compared Lincolnshire colleges with the national figures. Fiona said that it was difficult to know how accurate the figures might be because it was unclear how the results are obtained.

Jayne Mitchell asked whether the College knew geographically where the students progressed to and Fiona advised that that information is collected but not analysed. Amanda Mosek thought that it would be useful to look at this given the localism agenda.

Ben Webb raised a query about the variety of progression routes taken by learners. Fiona advised that this is often influenced by whether the learners can progress into work with the qualifications they achieve. There are also some learners who don't get the necessary grades to progress. Ben also asked whether there were any areas of good practice which

could be shared across the College and Fiona advised that most areas do know why they do not have full progression.

Helen Wright asked if the KPIs will be developed to include more progression measures but Fiona advised that this is difficult because of the complexity of destination options for further education learners.

Stephen Brown commented that he found the analysis of destination categories useful even if the data was not entirely accurate.

4. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015/16 UPDATE

Fiona Grady presented a report giving updates on key performance indicators.

It was noted that the reported college attendance was disappointing and that there was a drop in adult retention on GCSE evening classes as the focus has been on supporting the significant increase in full-time learners undertaking English and maths.

Jayne Mitchell pointed out that many of the KPIs marked as Amber were still better than the 2014/15 performance and asked what opportunities existed to make them even better. Vicki Locke advised that it was difficult for many of the KPIs to be turned round at this point in the year.

Ben Webb asked about the figure for learners progressing at or above target. Fiona advised that this was not an entirely objective measure but that that figure was likely to increase as learners' progress to completion of their courses. Having noted that the analysis of this did not include the four areas using VITAL, Stephen Brown asked if Members could be advised about the performance of learners using the VITAL system. Vicki Locke explained that the College was working on a suite of reports to allow the monitoring of these groups. The system had been installed in August and it was only now possible for management reports to be created. Stephen asked if the Committee could be provided with information on the planned reports so that they were aware of this development. Vicki advised that teething problems with the VITAL system had been ironed out in the more reliable areas and Helen Wright asked when reports from the system might be available. Vicki advised that some should be able to be viewed by the June meeting of the Committee.

5. 2015/16 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN SUMMARY UPDATE

Fiona Grady presented a report on performance against the Quality Improvement Plan which was reviewed by the Committee.

A particular discussion took place about the Functional Skills performance where a number of learners were struggling to bridge the gap between Level 1 and Level 2. The Committee was advised that some changes were being made ready for next year for delivery of GCSE English and maths where it was felt that the delivery needed to be more focussed so there will be time devoted to this in the staff development period.

Helen Wright asked when the College knows the numbers for English and maths and Fiona advised that these were not actually known until September enrolments. Fiona explained to the Committee that rooming was being rationalised for the next academic year as were days of attendance.

Chris Pett asked about the learners' attitudes to taking English and maths and Rowan Dalton and George Harrison both confirmed that many learners did not want to do GCSE maths and/or English.

Helen Wright asked how the schools were coping with this and it was noted that with GCSE specifications getting more rigorous the numbers affected in College were likely to go up. The effect on schools was limited by their entrance requirements.

In response to a query from George about the impact on progression Fiona Grady advised that learners might be negatively affected in achieving their qualifications if they felt that this meant they had to go to the next level in following year.

Stephen Brown asked about the timetabling of so many maths and English classes. Fiona advised that for 2016/17 all maths and English would be delivered on the same day for groups of learners and that Ben Webb would be the AP promoting the standardised delivery. Good practice is to be shared and a standardised approach should make this delivery less arduous for staff. Information on what is being taught in maths and English will be shared with Programme Area Managers to allow consistency with the learners' work in their main programmes. Fiona Grady stressed the need to create a team of staff specialising in this delivery.

Helen Wright queried the Ofsted view on English and maths and the Committee was advised that this was the main reason why many colleges were getting poor inspection outcomes. Fiona advised the Committee that the College will be lucky to maintain last years' GCSE A-C rates.

Stephen Brown advised that he had seen the standardised approach working quite well elsewhere. Vicki Locke told members that Ofsted wants to be sure colleges are doing the right things quickly enough in addressing the issues in English and maths.

6. MID-YEAR SURVEY

Vicki Locke presented a report on the mid-year survey.

It was noted that the response rates were reasonable but the profile of responses was quite spiky. The overall picture is an improvement.

With regards to a question about how well prepared for work or future study do learners feel, Helen Wright asked about the lower rating by ESOL learners. Fiona Grady advised that this had been looked at and it was felt that the learners may be misinterpreting the question as their progression rates were good.

Jayne Mitchell asked whether there had been any change in the response rates and Fiona Grady advised that the response rates were often highest where learners were made to do the survey since PAMs took this very seriously now. Vicki advised that there was some correlation between response rates and attendance patterns.

Rowan Dalton asked about the declining scores for feeling safe. Vicki and Fiona Grady explained that the reasons for this are not clear although this was an area on which significant work was being done through the learner engagement groups.

Chris Pett left the meeting at this point.

7. RETENTION UPDATE

Vicki Locke presented a report on in-year retention.

Helen Wright queried the retention rates in Hair and Beauty and the impact management absence may have had on these. Fiona Grady advised that this area had been low on numbers and had therefore had a lot of late starts which were always higher risk learners.

She advised that there is also some impact, depending upon the strength of the staff team, if a manager is absent.

Jayne Mitchell suggested that the impact on the statistics of the small numbers in traineeships might need to be looked at. ●

8. COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS

Helen Wright asked if Members felt that there was anything more which could be done to interest other governors in the work of the Standards Committee. It was agreed that further consideration should be given to this at the next meeting. ●

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 15 June 2016.