

Boston College

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2022

1. **PRESENT**

Daran Bland (Chair), Ruth Catlett, David Fannin (to item 6), Claire Foster, Paul Tomlinson and Nick Worth.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Kimberley Jones (governor), Heather Marks (Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality) and Kelly Harris (Assistant Principal: Performance & Quality).

Apologies for absence were received from Helen Rumbold.

Attendance 75%

2. **PRESENTATION**

Linda Radford (Curriculum Leader: English, Maths & ESOL) joined the meeting and gave a presentation on strategies to further improve English and maths using progress indicators.

Daran Bland asked how challenging it was to deliver these courses to non-native speakers. Linda advised that this was a challenge but there were also issues arising from teacher assessed grades. She anticipated that next years data would be more meaningful. Most learners are having to take GCSE maths because there are limitations on functional skills even if this might be more suitable for them.

Reflecting on learner feedback, Nick Worth asked about the impact on attendance if learners became demoralised. Linda acknowledged this issue and advised that it can also be difficult for staff. Learners having to take English and maths have to attend college on an extra day which is not popular. Ofsted recognises that colleges are having to backfill gaps left elsewhere in the education system.

Linda explained that a small change in the GCSE English curriculum has proved beneficial to learners. She explained intervention plans and gave an update on a specialist AOC meeting she had attended. Daran asked when the impact of interventions was likely to be seen. Linda ran through the process of reviews with learners which leads to predicted grades.

Linda Radford left the meeting

3. **ACTION LOG**

Members reviewed progress on items listed in the committee's action log.

4. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 28 September 2022 were reviewed and approved.

5. **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2022-23**

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

Heather Marks ran through the KPI details. She highlighted that retention was a focus of attention and appeared to reflect the challenging economic climate. A deep dive is planned to look at retention and progress in Higher Education. She was pleased to note collaboration

between curriculum areas on improvement strategies. Work experience progress and impact are also an area of focus. Kelly Harris advised that there is live tracking of work experience and learners are out in workplaces. Heather suggested that last year's data would have reflected post-Covid impacts.

Nick Worth asked about issues with behaviour and safety outside of the classroom. Kelly advised that the college had worked to raise the profile of safeguarding issues and this awareness may have exposed concerns. Learners were expressing some concern about the behaviour of others.

Stretching targets for apprenticeships were noted. Paul Tomlinson asked if achievement percentages were for completing and passing which was confirmed. Paul asked why apprenticeship achievement is so low. Heather suggested that this needs unpicking and noted that it was a national issue. Paul commented on the difficulty of recruiting apprentices and Kelly suggested post-Covid impact could also be affecting this.

The proposed KPIs for 2022-23 were approved..

6. LEARNER VIEWS

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Performance and Quality.

The report identified key features of the learner feedback. Kelly Harris noted that feedback around learner experience was good. One issue being addressed is to ensure that the experience of induction for late enrollers is of the same standard as that for other learners. Nick Worth asked if the reduced numbers attending taster/induction days was reflected in scores elsewhere and it was confirmed that there was a link.

Daran Bland asked whether the number of learners who did not know how to report safety concerns reflected an issue with the process or with learner confidence and Paul Tomlinson asked how concerns were followed up. Kelly advised that learners can raise concerns through VITAL which allows the college to go back to them about issues raised. Heather Marks advised that the Student Council plays a role but the college was also looking at other ways of enhancing feedback to learners.

Daran asked how learners could see that something was happening about behavioural issues. It was noted that students will see the impact of disciplinary processes and that these are currently being reviewed. Ruth Catlett suggested that changing behaviour at tutor level before it escalated was important. A discussion took place about the impact of learners having to stay in education on behaviour.

The committee noted with interest the individual learner comments.

David Fannin left the meeting during this discussion.

7. HIGHER EDUCATION PERFORMANCE – ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2021-22

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

Heather Marks advised that the review is undertaken as part of the annual self-assessment process. Key strengths and weaknesses were identified. The high standards of teaching and learning and concerns about enrolment trends were particularly noted.

Daran Bland asked if Ofsted would look at Higher Education and it was confirmed that it would not. The Office for Students has alternative arrangements but the previous provider of this service no longer has the contract and details of alternative arrangements are awaited. It was confirmed that Derby University also reviews quality.

In response to a query from Daran about course viability, Heather confirmed that the college needs a strategy for growth. Claire Foster identified that one concern is about group sizes. She pointed out that provision has to be good for students to perceive that they are getting value for money. The college offers programmes which give levels of support not typically offered in universities. A push towards higher technical qualifications was noted. The committee also noted that ONS reclassification may affect how the college deals with Higher Education.

Paul Tomlinson asked about the funding for private companies to deliver courses. It was explained that colleges also have access to funding opportunities. The government is trying to reduce providers to reputable suppliers. Claire suggested that the colleges job is to be more commercial and not just provide a traditional offer.

Nick Worth asked about feedback on resources. It was reported that there had been issues over IT and Wi-Fi which had restricted capacity. Upgrades had been implemented over the summer and the IT team has been supporting learners and continuing to work on issues. It was noted that not all learners had attended induction sessions which addressed IT access. Improvements to the library were also noted.

Claire identified that data sources for Higher Education were not yet good enough and the college had a commitment to invest in data. Daran commented on the good verifier feedback in the report.

8. ENGLISH AND MATHS OUTCOMES

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

Heather Marks advised that there is now a report specifically reporting on progress from grade 3 to grade 4. The data suggests that performance is on a par with the sector and ahead in some areas.

9. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Members received a report from the Assistant Principal: Performance and Quality.

Kelly Harris advised the committee about the college's 42 day retention strategy and work to retain learners. Daran Bland asked about tracking of leavers and Kelly advised that the college tries to identify where learners go but this is ultimately a parental responsibility. Heather Marks highlighted gateway meetings where curriculum leaders can look at learners at risk of leaving. Scrutiny from the Executive has focused attention on this work. It was noted that there are a lot of wider issues such as transport. Claire Foster identified that the retention strategy worked best when Learner Services and curriculum teams work together on an approach which works for learners. Individual examples were quoted and it was noted that there were still issues relating to Covid. Retention will be the subject of review at CMR.

The committee noted information provided on developmental observations which had been carried out.

10. SELF ASSESSMENT

It was noted that the college SAR would be presented to a meeting next week.

11. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would be held on 8 February 2023.