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Standards & Quality Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday 24 January 2024
Time: 2.00pm
Venue: Boardroom

Present:

Dr Sue Lomax (Chair)
Andrew Fawcett
Dr Bill Webster (Principal)
Dr Gill Waugh
Tom Martin
Claire Garth
Chris Ball
Dr Gill Smallwood
Ming Fong
Adeeba Gulzar

In Attendance:

Dr Andrew Roberts (Governor)
Kate Flood (Governor)

Deborah Bradburn (Clerk)
Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Tracy Clarke (Assistant Principal - Curriculum Design, Information and Technical Services)
Catherine Langstreth (Assistant Principal – Curriculum & Stakeholder Engagement)
Karen Westsmith (Assistant Principal – Curriculum & Quality)
Jill Hebden (Minute Taker)

1. SECTION A - BUSINESS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

1.1 Election of Committee Chair

Members were invited to put forward a nomination and elect a Chair for the Committee.

Dr Sue Lomax was nominated.

RESOLVED:

Dr Sue Lomax be elected Chair of the Committee for the current academic year.

1.2 Welcome to Members/Officers

Members were welcomed to the meeting, which commenced at 2.02pm.

Dr Gill Smallwood, Ming Fong and Adeeba Gulzar were welcomed to their first Standards and Quality Committee meeting.

1.3 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Gulnaz Brennan.

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1.4 Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare any interests in relation to any item on the agenda.

1.5 Request for an item to be unstarred

No requests were received.

1.6* Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 June 2023

The minutes of the meeting held 20 June 2023 had been previously circulated to Members for consideration.

Agreed: that the minutes are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication.

1.7 Matters arising from the previous minutes

The action progress log was presented. The actions from the previous meeting had been included on the agenda.

2 SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

2.1 Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP)

The Deputy Principal presented the PIAP with the following points highlighted:

- Points of improvement that had been identified through the Ofsted report had been used as action points within the PIAP and allocated to a member of the Senior Management Team.
- Actions were underway and progressed through the Senior Management and College Management Team meetings.
- There was a recommendation for a Task and Finish Group to review actions and progress made that would be reviewed at Board level.

Governor Questions:

- Will the PIAP be shared with staff across the College?

Yes, the PIAP was given to curriculum managers. This will continue in further detail and be shared through team meetings as it is important that staff are aware of it to drive delivery from the floor upwards.

- How did we as a Committee and Board miss the issues? How did we achieve an outcome of 'Requires Improvement' when 'Good' was expected? How adrift are we from the fundamental issues?

At the end of the last academic year, we were in a similar place to other colleges in Greater Manchester. At the last Standards and Quality meeting a stabilisation in staffing was reported in the English and maths team and we were making better progress as reflected in the MiDES report. In Term 1 recruitment had increased across all Greater Manchester colleges and this started a ferocious approach to recruitment that resulted in key members

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of staff leaving that was not expected. Ofsted were not concerned with the College being above national rates and were indifferent to the starting points of our learners, volume in foundation studies and to us responding to our community agenda in meeting the local skills needs. We acknowledge that there was some poor teaching, learning and assessment seen during the inspection, mainly, though not wholly as a result of agency staff. Through the PIAP members will see that structural changes are needed in order to combat some of the staffing issues which have been reported over the last couple of years. We need the right organisational pay structure and to identify the benefits that the College has over other colleges.

- How are other colleges able to pay such higher pay rates?

It is likely that some of these organisations will start to feel the pinch as that level of pay is not sustainable. It is essential to get the right level of pay structure by reviewing those areas that are further away from learning and delivery.

- The structure and its sustainability need to be reviewed, but would that be enough?

It is the attraction of new staff to the College as well. We are working with other HR providers to look at how we attract individuals from the locality and we are working with a number of employers to seek additional assistance in some other specialist areas ie. fractional appointments of those still working in industry and offering an area of interest to those who may not have thought about it previously.

- Will addressing the staffing issues resolve everything noted in the Ofsted inspection?

If staffing is stabilised the work undertaken on solidifying the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment will be much more effective. There will be SMART target setting and value added at Level 3. There was staff discontent over workload and we are looking at how administrative tasks can be minimised or removed from teaching staff.

- Looking at the 90% target for attendance and the actual attendance figures, how realistic is this?

The target cannot be dropped below 90% or it will not be ambitious enough for our learners. Prior to the Ofsted inspection the Assistant Principals had a data review with AoC who went through all the data lines and reported that we were above average for the sector. Achievement lines were the same or better than some providers.

- From an inspection point of view, is 17% of learners gaining a Grade 4 in the maths resit acceptable?

The issues highlighted around English and maths during the inspection came from discussions during the affinity groups. It will be made clear from enrolment to both students and parents who will and won't be submitted for a resit in November to ensure there isn't any miscommunication next year.

- How effective are our early warning systems?

Our self-assessment report is based on last academic year, not based on when Ofsted came in. After reflecting hard on this, we don't think that we got this wrong and are confident in our approach to self-assessing last years work and the outcomes. The issue we face from the end of the last academic year to the first term of this academic year was related to

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staffing. Due to a number of staff leaving and some sickness issues creating cover problems where we had to rely on agency staff.

- The 'deep dive' into the quality of education is welcome as the issues identified in this area were not expected. What are the marketing plans over the next 2 years?

The approach to 'deep dives' has been altered and there will be a structured approach involving managers across different areas that will mirror the way the Ofsted inspection was conducted.

Work is underway with an external marketing company to look at our marketing and communication strategy. We will have an overarching message of 'Why Bolton College' highlighting those areas that we excel in.

- Do we have plans to use and share the good practice highlighted in the Ofsted report?

Yes, we are engaging with the Head of Quality and discussing areas of good practice identified through the inspection that can be shared as well as any good practice identified through the 'deep dives'.

- The only way to measure quality is through close scrutiny, how is this being taken forward? How is quality assurance of agency staff built in?

One aspect of the PIAP has indicated a requirement to meet with budget holders and have a discussion around moving agency staff to permanent positions. However, we do need to retain some level of flexibility for cover purposes. The point should be made that there are some brilliant agency staff. Action is taken when we identify agency staff that aren't of the standard and quality expected.

- How many staff vacancies are there at the moment?

That information can be provided. It is high and increasing.

- Do we deal with one staffing agency?

No, Bolton Talent Solutions has had some impact but not as much as we had hoped, but this is a work in progress.

- How many agency staff are there at the moment?

Circa. 85 agency staff that equates to 20%.

The Committee noted that an increased level of scrutiny of agency/temporary staff should be included in the PIAP to ensure quality and value for money with additional work required to ensure learners understood the importance of attendance.

RESOLVED:

The Committee recommended a Task and Finish Group that was constituted of independent governors to monitor and support actions on the PIAP.

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ACTION:

- Identify where staff members had left the organisation and where they had gone to.
- Share with the Committee where good practice was shared.
- Detailed information on the College staff vacancies.
- Identify members of the Task & Finish Group.

2.2 Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Quality provided an update on teaching, learning and assessment, and the following points were highlighted:

- There would be detailed reporting on teaching, learning and assessment at all Board meetings.
- 'Deep dives' would be introduced across all curriculum areas that would include the staff and learner voice.
- The area identified for 'deep dive' would be notified a week in advance and asked to choose a course for 'deep dive'. Assistant Principals would look at data and analysis in choosing another course that presented a cause of concern. The 'deep dive' would take the same format as an Ofsted inspection.
- The outcome of all 'deep dives' would be reported back to the Board supported by a qualitative analysis of the teaching, learning and assessment.

Governor Questions:

- Will there be a review of formative assessments?

Yes, this will also be carried out as part of the performance enhancement review and through walkthrough narrative in order to build up the evidence base.

- It is important to make sure that the introduction of a new quality assurance process is to address the issue in teaching and learning. Is there a timescale for the sampling?

In future years we would conduct 'deep dives' in Term 1 and Term 3, this year it is likely to be Term 2 and Term 3 and will be completed before the Easter break.

- Will this increase staff workload?

Staff won't be asked to do anything outside of what they should already be doing as part of their role. The focus of the 'deep dive' won't be on individuals but the whole department and will feed into the departmental Quality Improvement Plan. The introduction of the 'deep dives' has been delivered to a number of teams through team meetings and curriculum leaders and Heads are happy with the process. Some curriculum leaders weren't involved in the inspection in terms of 'deep dives', this will give them some experience in that arena. Feedback from staff at this point has been generally positive.

- Have we analysed the results of the BLUE system, in particular for those areas identified through Ofsted?

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The BLUE system is good and the 'deep dives' alongside will balance well. Teachers need to be able to reflect on their delivery and take ownership of their improvements. One key area that we did well on was that the College was a calm and settled environment with good learner behaviour. A focus of BLUE has been working with students to settle and engage with learning post pandemic. Initial feedback on the BLUE system has identified one criticism in the amount of time it requires of staff, this is being re-evaluated for the next academic year. There will be an opportunity for Board Members to be involved in the 'deep dives'.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Teaching, Learning and Assessment update.

2.3 Applications, Enrolment & Progress Report

The Assistant Principals presented the Applications, Enrolment and Progress report noting the following key points:

Young People:

- T Level recruitment was 56% against target and remained challenging although overall numbers were higher than this time last year.
- Study programmes were 115% against target.
- Entry requirements for courses by level were being reviewed and would be confirmed for 2024/25 enrolment.
- Work was ongoing with attendance officers who were assigned to curriculum areas across the College.

Apprenticeships:

- 245 new starts were against a target of 370 for the year.
- Attendance was 89.6% against a target of 95%.
- Building Services and Business were being closely monitored and under intensive support.

Adults and Community Learning:

- Recruitment was at 88% of funding with courses still to commence. It was challenging to maximise recruitment funding at this point in the year as courses were shorter and attracted less funding.
- Learners taking out Level 3 loans had reduced with less appetite to take out additional borrowing.
- Stakeholder engagement continued to be strong. The College's main point of contact at the Council was leaving that had been identified as an area of risk.

Higher Education:

- Recruitment remained low at 52% of target. Work continued with the University of Bolton to improve enrolment rates and to review the validation process.

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English and Maths:

- The November resit results for English were in line with the national average.
- There were currently 5.1 FTE staff vacancies in English and 4 FTE in maths.
- Learners with high needs were integrated into study programmes and as a result the Ofsted judgement made would be linked.

Governor Questions:

- The expectation was that new starts would be significantly above target, why is this not the case?

It isn't in all areas; it is clear where there is more stability in staffing and the impact this has had on attendance.

- Is there anything that can be done around timetabling?

It is in the timetabling guidance to try and 'sandwich' English and maths between vocational programmes however this wouldn't utilise the full day. The English and maths class slots that are at the start and end of the day are used for the more motivated Level 3 learners.

- Will deep dives apply to apprenticeships? Yes.

- Where were we this time last year in terms of new starts?

We ended last year with 265 new starts and we are currently at 245 new starts this year.

- Is the target of 370 for the year ambitious enough? Yes.

(Gill Waugh left the meeting at 4.03pm)

2.4 Intensive Support Improvement Update

The Deputy Principal presented the Intensive Support Improvement Update, noting the following key item:

- There had been an increase in the number of areas graded 3, this was indicative that the College had seen erosion in some areas with those areas expected to drive improvements swiftly.

Governor Questions:

- Was it the right thing to do to take digital out of intensive support?

Yes, on the basis of why they went into intensive support. Intensive support is a rolling programme from one year to the next and indeed at any time during the year if a need is identified. Digital was put into intensive support as they had a poor outturn for adults in the previous year which they had turned around.

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- Are digital apprenticeships running?

There is a push on this and we are looking at the appropriate standards to support growth. This is an area that we are looking to compete in through creating the right offer and applying it appropriately to the right organisations.

- Can we go back to the Local Skills Improvement Plan and look what people are asking for and what is already out there?

Digital is of strategic importance and we are working hard at planning the curriculum with an appropriate offer for the future.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Intensive Support Improvement Update.

2.5 Impact of AI on Teaching and Learning

The Deputy Principal presented the College 'Artificial Intelligence Ethical Framework and Use Policy' and informed the Committee that some assessments had been adapted as a result of artificial intelligence. There was a clear onus on the College to analyse written assignments and assess their validity with the need for additional staff training.

Governor Questions:

- Will staff need to assess whether a style of writing is usual for each student?

In certain areas, Level 3 written assignments go through the 'Turn It In' system, we have now purchased an additional part to this system which can assess a great deal of AI generated text. However, staff will need to remain aware of a learner's style of writing and the vocabulary they use and note if this changes to a large degree.

- Can First Pass be used to assist?

The function of First Pass is slightly different however in the future there is a possibility for this.

- Do we teach students about the safe use of AI?

Yes, this is in the programme tutorial but we have to constantly revise and update it as quickly as AI develops.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Impact of AI on Teaching and Learning report.

2.6 College SAR 2022/23

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Quality presented the SAR report and welcomed any questions or comments from Committee members.

Governor Questions:

- Has the SAR been influenced by the Ofsted inspection?

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Not at all. The curriculum SAR panels took place before the inspection which Board Members attended and witnessed the level of scrutiny given to each self-assessment.

- Do we mentor students, particularly those who are at risk of not attending?

The College is engaged with two GMCA funded projects. One is through the concept of personal tutoring; this model provides support and targets Grade 3's. Guest speakers also come in to discuss this within career progression that is applied to a whole learner group.

- Is there an approach of targeting 'at risk' learners?

At risk learners are identified through performance enhancement reviews and conversations that are held with individuals and parents/carers; there are a lot of support mechanisms in place.

The Committee noted that seven curriculum areas were down-graded to 'Requires Improvement' from the previous year which evidenced that the issues went further back than this year. It was also identified that personal mentoring could be undertaken in a more vocationally relevant way.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the College SAR 2022/23

2.7 Achievement Rates 2022/23 and Performance Targets 2023/24

The Deputy Principal presented the report that put forward a number of targets that required Board approval. Due to the timing of the meeting in the termly cycle this was retrospective.

RESOLVED:

Following a discussion on the proposed targets and consideration of contextual factors, the Committee noted the achievement rates for 2022/23 and performance targets for 2023/24 and agreed that they would be recommended to the Board for approval.

ACTION:

Clerk / Board

2.8 Start of Year Survey

The Assistant Principal, Curriculum & Quality presented the report, highlighting the following key points:

- Learner views were sought through curriculum area and College wide forums, learning walks, observation of teaching learning and assessment and surveys at key points in the learner journey including FE Choices.
- The distance travelled from the previous year had increased across all areas.
- The response rate had decreased by 16% from the previous year but at 53% was consistent with the average response rate compared with other colleges.

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Governor Questions:

- Are we asking the right questions?

The questions asked are not set by us and the data is collected electronically. The challenge to areas will be to get a higher response rate for the next survey.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Start of Year Survey.

2.9 Student Progressions & Destinations Report

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum Design, Information and Technical Services presented the report, highlighting the following key points:

- 92% of young learners on study programmes had a positive progression or destination, this was 4% higher than the previous year with work ongoing to increase the yield of responses.
- 58% of young learners that had completed a course in 2022/23 returned to learning with the College in 2023/24, compared to 56% in the previous year.
- 85% of adult learners had a positive progression or destination, against 77% in the previous year.
- 55.8% of adult learners that had completed a course in 2022/23 returned in the current year, 4% higher than the previous year.
- 78% of learners that had completed a Personal & Community Development Learning (PCDL) course had a positive progression or destination. This was compared to 80% in the previous year.
- 90% of apprentices that had completed their apprenticeships in 2022/23 had a positive progression or destination, against 94% in the previous year.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Student Progressions & Destinations Report.

2.10 Curriculum Strategic Planning

The Deputy Principal presented the report, highlighting the following key points:

- Board Members were part of an effective planning process around curriculum strategic planning.
- The Standards and Quality Committee and Board needed to remain assured that the College had provided the right curriculum in the most effective and appropriate way to meet the local needs.
- A recommendation that the Standards & Quality Committee undertook a strategic review of how the College met the local needs at the next meeting.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Curriculum Strategic Planning report.

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ACTION:

Strategic review of local skills needs to be considered at the next meeting.

2.11 College Nursery and Pre-school Centre Start Well Report

The Assistant Principal of Curriculum & Stakeholder Engagement presented the report, highlighting the following key points:

- The 'Start Well' report was a voluntary service provided by Bolton Council which identified any improvement activities for Early Years settings.
- Following the visit, a training session had been arranged for staff around modelling language.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the College Nursery and Pre-school Centre Start Well Report.

2.12 Link Governor Scheme

The Clerk presented the link governor scheme report and identified the following key points:

- There was an increased emphasis for governors to focus on core curriculum issues of understanding the learner experience, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and learner performance.
- The link governor scheme would be integrated into the new teaching, learning and assessment 'deep dive' approach with governors invited to attend curriculum 'deep dives' in order to bring them closer to the learner experience. Governors would provide feedback as part of that process with thematic areas covered within the 'deep dives'.
- Governors would continue to attend self-assessment validation panels and other appropriate College events.
- The core thematic governor link areas such as health and safety, safeguarding and finance would remain.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Link Governor Scheme update.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS - FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

None.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Committee Membership

It was recommended that a member with recent FE experience be co-opted to the Committee.



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ACTION:

Recruit a co-opted member to the Standards and Quality Committee.

4.2 Schedule of Meetings

It was noted that the Committee had not met as scheduled as a result of the Ofsted inspection and that the Committee meeting needed to be held earlier in the academic year.

ACTION:

Review of the calendar of meetings.

4.3 Meeting Evaluation

Members agreed that they felt able to contribute as and when required and that the Senior Management Team received the challenge and support needed.

5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 13 March 2024 at 2.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 5.17pm

<p>Chair's Signature:</p> <p>Date: 13 March 2024</p>
