



Halesowen College

Minutes of the Performance Review Committee Meeting

held Thursday 11 March 2010

Present: Liane Purnell (*Chair*), Gloria Smith (*Vice Chair*), Duncan Bryson, Neil Hobson, Claire Smith, Daniel Willetts

In attendance: Keith Bate (*Principal*)
Mary Higgins (*Director of Planning and Development*)
Di McCathie (*Director of Student Services*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

Presentation: External Accreditation, College Standards and Performance

Paul Bywater the College Customer Services Manager gave a presentation on Customer Service Excellence and The Matrix Standard.

The College had been reaccredited with the new quality mark under The Customer Service Excellence (previously the Charter Mark) process following a rigorous two day inspection. Key strengths of leadership and communication together with good student knowledge and support methods to help them achieve were revealed. Two key recommendations were to set more targets for discrete areas of the student journey, such as a part-time student's first experience of the Booking Centre and to increase mechanisms for advertising what the College has done to improve services.

The College had been inspected for The Matrix Standard over three and a half days including activities on College Open Day but focusing on specific areas of Student Services and Train to Gain. The process had been interview driven across a wide range of roles including staff, students and partners. Inspectors were impressed with levels of student participation and the importance of the learner voice, student awareness of course value and progression with marketing, in particular value of affidavits from current students, the commitment of Personal Coaches and the strong team ethic across the College. Recommendations for improvement included further refinement of the student handbook, organisational needs analysis for Train to Gain to address some operational sequencing issues, development of observation in student support areas and gathering student feedback on more specific and discrete areas of the student journey.

Members discussed in detail the relationship of the quality standards in relation to targets and measures of performance within a changing context under the new Ofsted approach to inspection. Getting the customer journey right with resulting customer satisfaction was seen as key.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Alan Taylor, Pam Thomas and from Paul Bridgewater.

Keith Bate explained that Ann Jordan from University of Worcester had been invited but was unable to attend on this occasion.

2 Declarations of Interest

Liane Purnell and Gloria Smith declared standing interests in relation to partnership working arrangements between the College and their respective employers Newman University College and Prospects Services Limited.

3 Minutes of Meeting held 17 November 2009 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held 17 November 2009 were approved as a correct record.

Under Matters Arising: Presentation on Revised Ofsted Handbook and the Common Inspection Framework, Di McCathie updated members on the illustrative grade characteristics for safeguarding, where all relevant staff 'should understand safeguarding, including any recent changes to legislation, and fulfil their responsibilities very well.' This represented a change to the previously reported specification of Local Safeguarding Children Board Level 2 training.

4 Internal Inspection Reports

Mary Higgins presented the reports on behalf of Paul Bridgewater. The internal inspection process formed part of the quality assurance system where intensive periods of observation and checks were conducted in a supportive climate. Boards of Study and external expertise had also been utilised. Each inspection had been undertaken against hypothesis constructed with reference to the previous Common Inspection Framework key questions. Future reports would refer to the new framework. The outcome was an improved pattern of success rates but variable added value performance. Results under areas of key questions three, four and five reflected the position at inspection and staff teamwork. The need for further consideration of both Equality and Diversity and differentiation were also revealed.

Neil Hobson asked if there were any areas of repetition on recommendations and Liane Purnell noted some recurrent themes on differentiation and 'stretch and challenge'. Duncan Bryson asked about the formulation of the hypothesis for testing. In response, Mary Higgins and Di McCathie explained that the hypothesis were based on an area self assessment and distance travelled. Mechanisms for sharing and disseminating good practice took time to impact.

Liane Purnell commended the areas of exemplary practice also in evidence.

Claire Smith asked how issues were identified based on not seeing reference to specific areas such as resources. Di McCathie explained that comments on resources would only be flagged up if it was a particular strength or weakness.

The reports were received.

5 Retention and Achievement Targets

Mary Higgins presented the proposed retention and achievement targets comprising some challenging but realistic increases. The targets had been arrived at with course leaders and reflected some course variability. Vocational courses already with high achievement levels were set targets to increase further. A Level courses included increasing targets encouraging students to achieve high grades.

The Performance Review Committee resolved to recommend to Corporation the adoption of the Retention and Achievement Targets 2009/2010.

6 Student Applications 2010/2011

Keith Bate reported on the initial trends on student applications. Currently 3696 applications had been received against 2735 in the previous year representing growth across all areas. The College needed to consider capacity including infrastructure, potential to change timetabling, quality assurance and integrity, to arrive at a conclusion on recruitment levels.

Members considered information on applicants by school, local authority areas, course and subject and Equality and Diversity. The predicted demographic drop had not affected Dudley. Gloria Smith reported that Dudley had the highest student stay on rate of 92.7% of 2009 school leavers across the Black Country.

Duncan Bryson asked about criteria affecting capacity, including class sizes and staff hours. Keith Bate explained the financial/funding model balance where lack of growth meant actual funding cuts. Keith Bate also explained how tolerance levels were projected.

In response to a question from Daniel Willetts, Keith Bate explained the proposed consultation on moving to half day blocks of teaching to reduce gaps in the day and assist staff with clearer blocks of time to undertake other duties. Daniel Willetts explained that the absence of a clear study day could impact on students who were required to take on work experience placements to advance to their preferred Higher Education courses. Keith Bate agreed that this and other potential issues arising from consultation needed consideration. This could perhaps be addressed through the whole year cycle and negotiation with HE providers to enable elements such as work experience placements to be addressed.

Neil Hobson noted the importance of not allowing growth to have a negative impact on the reputation of the College.

It was agreed that an update would be brought to the next meeting of the committee.

Action: Keith Bate

The report was received.

7 Safeguarding/Child Protection Annual Report

Di McCathie presented the annual review incorporated into a Safeguarding report. The report made clear reference to the three key government publications outlining the College statutory and moral duties and the key areas of commitment for the Corporation. Di McCathie had met with Gloria Smith to review the report to be presented.

Di McCathie further reported on the events and training undertaken to raise staff awareness including aiding the identification of children and young people at risk and reporting concerns. Four hundred staff had recently taken part in a safeguarding update. Students were also being made aware under Every Child Matters. The Principal had also attended Safer Recruitment Training by the Dudley Safeguarding Children Board.

Three cases had been referred to a Local Authority and the College had liaised with Social Services on one other case. There were no allegations against staff.

Under the Vetting and Barring Scheme the College was addressing how staff would be registered and how registration for students taking Health and Social Care courses would be addressed in addition to the continuation of CRB checks.

The position of Further Education representation on the Dudley Safeguarding Children Board had now transferred from Di McCathie to a representative from Dudley College.

Liane Purnell asked what was being done to counteract online grooming. Di McCathie reported on training for staff and tutorial activity to raise student awareness and notices had been placed in the Learning Resource Centres.

In answer to questions from Neil Hobson on Data Protection and information sharing with regard to a raised profile for safeguarding Di McCathie reported no changes to reporting levels.

The Performance Review Committee resolved to recommend to Corporation the Annual Report – January 2010, Safeguarding/Child Protection (including Vulnerable Adults) for approval.

8 Academic Support

Di McCathie reported that 72% of Halesowen College full-time students had received support. Retention of students receiving PSD support was better than the whole College average but retention for GCSE Maths and English had fallen.

There were no issues arising from Equal Opportunities monitoring.

Planned action included a review of the enrolment procedures for GCSE Maths and English.

Liane Purnell asked about staff capacity. Mary Higgins reported that this was being reviewed to bring areas together as Key Skills was being replaced with functional skills specifications brought in from September 2010. Keith Bate reported planned recruitment and training.

The report was received.

9 Value Added

Keith Bate addressed Paul Bridgewater's report on College Value Added performance across a range of external information.

Results from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Value Added Report for Level 2 Qualifications endorsed the Ofsted inspection results that Level 2 provision was outstanding.

ALPS (Advanced Level Performance Systems) BTEC performance supported that all BTEC provision was very strong.

Under ALPS A level provision the College measured 5 on a 1-9 scale equating to Very Good.

The CVA (Contextual Value Added) score for the whole College had continued to increase, standing at 1002.1. With variability across the College there remained room to improve this score.

Liane Purnell asked that a future report could focus on areas of very good practice and areas requiring support.

Action: Paul
Bridgewater

It was agreed that Neil Hobson would discuss the use of Value Added information with Paul Bridgewater.

Action: Neil Hobson

The report was received.

10 Student Focus Groups

Di McCathie explained that a new format had been introduced and a new Stakeholder Research Manager had provided fresh insight into the surveying of student focus groups. The student responses were valued in association with other feedback mechanisms.

Responses indicated that the College reputation was largely spread by word of mouth and that Open Day was the biggest source of information. Induction was seen as generally good. An action plan was being circulated to staff.

The report was received.

11 Functional Plans

Keith Bate presented the update on functional plans within the context of the College strategic framework. Risk assessments had been undertaken with no risk to impair achievement of plans identified.

The update on the Curriculum, Equality and Diversity, Marketing, Quality, Student Support and Teaching and Learning Functional Plans was received.

12 Post Inspection Action Plan

Keith Bate presented the updated plan outlining progress on actions being undertaken.

In response to questions from Liane Purnell it was agreed that the Clerk would circulate the Finance and Resources Committee report on the Annual Staff Development Review.

Action: Clerk

In looking at success rates and actions focused on increasing high performance grades Duncan Bryson referred to streaming of classes, expressing the view that this could have a negative effect on aspirations of lower streamed students and could create more challenging groups.

Mary Higgins recognised these concerns but indicated that there was no intention to favour higher ability students. This was more a focus on providing better differentiation, support and routes to more flexible pathways.

Members discussed ways of monitoring student achievement. Mary Higgins stated that the College must make sure that all groups were subject to stretch and challenge and that equality of opportunity data should be monitored.

The report was received.

13 Any Other Business

The Clerk shared the letter of thanks received from Brian Mitchell.

14 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10 June 2010.

Closed: 8.25pm