

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE
held on 9 March 2015 at 9.30 am

¹PRESENT Miss E Freshwater-Blizzard (St); Mr J Charles (C); Mr N Hopkins OBE (E); Mr T Jackson (P) (absent minutes 11-16/15) Ms M Kamara-Aspin (E).

In attendance: Mr S Barlow, Assistant Principal - Teaching, Learning & Assessment
Dr B Coulson, Higher Education Quality & Development Manager (HEQDM) (present to minute 20/15)
Mr P Daniel, Head of Student Support (present to minute 30/15)
Ms L Nicholls, Quality Improvement & Performance Manager (QIPM)
Mr M Simmons, Vice Principal
Mrs S Simpson, Clerk to the Governors

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies for absence were accepted from Mr Holm and Miss Moraviec.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. None to declare.

MINUTES

3. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Growth in HE Student Numbers (ref. minute 151/14)

4. The Principal explained that the current OFFA agreement precluded the College from raising Higher Education tuition fees until September 2016 and therefore fees had not been increased as planned in the 2014/15 budget.

COLLEGE HEALTHCHECK

5. Members were invited to comment on any matters in Healthcheck report no. 2015/02 not covered on the agenda.
6. The student governor asked what would count as a compliment since she was aware of having thanked staff herself and could not see this reflected in the data. It was explained that only formal written complaints or compliments were recorded in the Healthcheck statistics. The Committee concluded that it would be cumbersome to try to record informal complaints and compliments but that there were other ways of testing how well the College was regarded, such as through questionnaire feedback.
7. Reference had been made to an issue with an Associate contractor. The Assistant Principal TLA explained the current position. The College had ensured the learners completed their programmes but there was an outstanding matter related to completion certification that was still to be resolved. There would be no new starts with the company identified and the data issues would not continue beyond the current year.

¹ (C) = Co-opted; (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (St) = Student

HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNER PERFORMANCE

8. The Committee had received the report of the Higher Education Development & Quality Manager (HEDQM) on progress with implementation of the action plan arising from the annual Higher Education review. The report concluded that good progress was being made in the enhancement of learning opportunities for HE students through continuous investment and forward planning, and that students are integral to the improvement process.
9. In response to a request for clarification of an action point, the HEDQM explained that the College had 10 external examiners for HE and therefore it was necessary to run standardisation workshops for all components of assessment, including verification.
10. The HEDQM praised the University of Portsmouth's (UoP) involvement in College CPD for HE staff on ethics and research protocol. Integration with the UoP quality framework was also planned so that data analysis could be provided by UoP. Approval had been given at Stage 1 for a third Masters programme (Applied Zoo Biology).
11. The Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor for Student Experience had visited the newly opened HE Student Lounge; it had been clear that UoP valued Sparsholt's Associate College connection. It was confirmed that Sparsholt's separate HEFCE contract reduced the risk of working with just one University partner.
12. The report introduced a new campaign entitled 'Aim Higher – Progress Further' devised by College management to stimulate further progression from Further to Higher Education.

FURTHER EDUCATION LEARNER PERFORMANCE

13. The Committee had received the report of the Assistant Principal TLA on progress with the FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and the impact of Student Support on FE learner performance. Reference was also made to FE performance data in College Healthcheck report no. 2/15. Overall progress was reported as being good and external validation of this position had come from the annual Landex peer review (held the previous week) and from BTEC and Matrix reviewers.
14. A report on each area for improvement in the QIP had been given, with red-amber-green rating for progress. The Committee discussed in detail those rated amber (none rated red).
15. Development of data sharing between land-based colleges to enable value added to be calculated more easily for learners following land-based programmes was expected to be in place by the end of 2015-16. This would support fulfilment of an objective to raise the number of high grades and to raise achievement of 16-18 year olds and Level 2 learners on studying land-based courses.
16. The report included Student Support metrics for the current year showing referral rates for 'Cause for Concern' (C4C) by area of learning, as well as retention of learners by assessed severity. Comparative data for the previous year was not available but the intention was to provide trend analysis in future reports as an indicator of progress. Retention rates were thought to be excellent at 83.3% for those in the exceptional concern category.
17. The Committee acknowledged the challenges presented by the Government's policy in respect of learners who had previously achieved a Level 2 Functional Skills qualification but were now required to study GCSE English during the current academic year. This had

increased the numbers of learners to be taught from 60 at Andover College in 2013-14 to 500 across both campuses in 2014-15 and staff were praised for their response. The logistics of managing the examination provided a further challenge, with 20% of the cohort requiring special arrangements.

18. The College's approach to Teaching and Learning observation was discussed in detail. No notice observations were to be introduced from September 2015 with a risk based approach being taken, based on previous performance outcomes. The aim of this was to enable quicker intervention to take place on an individual basis. Members asked whether there was a risk of missing poor performance through this risk based approach. The range of performance indicators in place that would flag up potential problems was explained.
19. The report included a table of mock examination results in 2015 for AS and A2 levels which had been RAG rated in comparison with 2014. The Assistant Principal TLA assured the Committee that the number of courses given a Red rating was not a cause for concern but reflected the Head of Faculty's high expectations. In some cases low numbers on the course produced RAG rates based on statistically unreliable data, for example A2 Maths. Where individual students' results had been concerning the Vice Principal and the Assistant Principal TLA had met with the students and their parents to identify issues that could be resolved and to encourage better performance.
20. The Committee endorsed the view that the College is making good progress towards achieving the improvements identified as necessary within the 2013-14 Self Assessment Report and that the changes to quality assurance and improvement within the College are having the desired effect. Members also supported the conclusion that the increasing flexibility of College leaders to respond to in-year quality indications is having the desired effect in ensuring that the current performance of the 2014-15 cohort of College learners is ahead of that for the comparable point of the previous academic year.

STUDENT SUPPORT

21. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal and the Head of Student Support providing information on the strands of activity that support the learner experience and summarising the impact of the Student Support team in the Autumn term 2014. The Head of Student Support introduced the report saying that 2014-15 had been the most difficult year to date in terms of the number and complexity of cause for concern referrals.
22. The Committee discussed the types of issues behind the referrals, 12% of which related to mental health. Staff CPD on recognising and responding to mental health issues was planned. An increase in issues caused by poor parenting was a worrying trend and one that was mirrored nationally. The report had included two anonymous case studies to demonstrate the scope and impact of Student Support. It was confirmed that both students were still attending the College and doing well. Members found these studies and subsequent discussion extremely useful and requested that they be shared with the whole Board.
23. Members were pleased to hear of the success of the campaign by staff, students and governors to retain the SRE (Sex and Relationships Education) Clinic at Andover College, which had been withdrawn by the local health authority in response to budget cuts. The Clinic was a useful mechanism for identifying Safeguarding concerns as well as enabling students to access a service that was otherwise difficult to reach.

24. The Principal summarised discussion that had taken place at a meeting of Hampshire Principals about implementation of Government policy on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) where local authorities had become both commissioner and funder. In some cases student applications were being referred to as ‘placements’ and there was concern that colleges may be drawn into meeting the needs of the local authority rather than the individual. The burden of managing 35-40 individual Education, Health and Care Plans on behalf of the College across a number of different local authorities was considerable and did not appear to produce a better service for students or parents than the previous arrangement.
25. The counselling service had been expanded and was managing to run without a significant waiting list this year. It was suggested that it may be possible to provide work placements for trainee counsellors as a means of increasing resource.
26. A new online Safeguarding training package had been launched and staff had been notified that they should complete it. Governors would also be requested to complete the training to refresh their knowledge or as part of their induction.
27. The Committee commended the Student Support team for their professional approach and management of external links for the benefit of students. The team was thought to be exceptional and members wished to draw the Board’s attention to their achievements.
28. **Resolved** – that it would be helpful to receive a formal report at the next meeting identifying where progress within the overall grade of Outstanding had been made by the Student Support team.

INFORMATION AND LEARNING TECHNOLOGY (ILT) STRATEGY

29. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal on progress with implementation of the ILT Strategy. The report concluded that good progress was being made with achievement of the objectives, which were sub-divided into components for staff, students, hardware/software and online learning provision. Fast-changing parameters meant that it was difficult to measure absolute progress, but the Vice Principal judged that the College was proactive and continued to seek opportunities to work with partners in order to take forward different e-learning initiatives.
30. The Vice Principal commented on the effective working relationships between the ILT and IT teams and the importance of maintaining this in order to provide a robust and reliable network for both the student experience and the ability of staff to complement learning with online content.
31. The student governor commented on the increasing dependency on technology for communicating with students which presented difficulty for those who had no access to it, for example cancellation of classes communicated by text message. The Principal highlighted the ‘Wambiz’ initiative as a means of communicating with students without the concerns of using Facebook and other open networks.
32. The Vice Principal provided an update on the Digital Learning Design Diploma developed as a result of an Association of Colleges funded project, and for which the College was one of the first providers. The Vice Principal had been invited by the Solent LEP Principals to champion e-learnification in the region. The M3 Enterprise LEP Principals Group was similarly looking at how to build capacity for learning flexibility into future plans.

QUALITY STRATEGY

33. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal providing an update on the overall Quality Improvement Plan and proposing an amendment to the Committee's current plan of business.
34. Discussion at the last meeting on amending the plan of business had led the Committee to support the proposal in principle but to request firmer details, taking into consideration that a July Quality & Standards Committee meeting could not report to the July Board meeting and therefore there would be a six month gap between the March and October Board meetings when there would be no report on Quality.
35. The proposal centred on the College Healthcheck report as a means of providing information for the July Board meeting instead of the minutes of the Quality & Standards Committee the Board would expect to receive under the current schedule. It was acknowledged that the Clerk had previously advised that the College Healthcheck report should be seen as a dashboard and tool for preparation of agendas rather than as a report in itself. Comment had also been made about the length of the College Healthcheck report and whether this deterred Governors from reading it thoroughly.
36. The Assistant Principal TLA had revised the College Healthcheck to give a clearer picture on performance indicators for quality and it was proposed that the Board would receive that information for June at the July Board meeting. The Quality & Standards Committee would then give in-depth consideration to a report including the full year data, reporting back to the October Board meeting. College management believed this would lead to more meaningful scrutiny by the Quality & Standards Committee in the Summer term because information on the academic year just completed would be available and any areas for improvement identified would be acknowledged by Board members prior to the beginning of the new academic year.
37. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to trial the amendment of the plan of business as proposed, with effect from July 2015, taking into account the consequences described above.
38. The QIPM introduced the February 2015 progress report on the Quality Improvement Action Plan 2014-15, drawing out evidence of progress made.
39. The Committee discussed access to initial teacher training for new staff without L2 English and Maths qualifications. Two existing staff were also in this category and had been referred for in-house training. Consideration would be given to making qualification an essential criteria for appointment but this would not be appropriate in all cases.
40. A question was asked about the 267 training activities described as non-funded CPD for Business support staff. Training needs were identified through the appraisal system and allocated according to a budget prioritised by the needs of the Strategic Plan. Non-funded delivery was mainly delivered in-house and therefore any costs were internal.
41. The Vice Principal commended the Quality Strategy to the Committee saying that the triangular relationship between the Vice Principal, Assistant Principal TLA and the QIPM enabled a quick response focus on the Quality Improvement Plan and best use of the CPD budget.

OUR COLLEGE WAY – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

42. The Committee had received a report of the QIPM and the Vice Principal prepared in response to a request at the last meeting. The report provided examples of interventions

to demonstrate how the College puts in place performance management procedures for under-performing teachers.

43. Two anonymous case studies had been provided and the QIPM explained what had happened since the report had been written. The report had acknowledged that staff required a differentiated support programme to raise overall performance against a multitude of skills and competencies required of an outstanding practitioner. The case studies had demonstrated a range of activities put in place to encourage a shift in performance.
44. The Committee confirmed that the information given had been helpful in demonstrating that appropriate interventions are taken and that 'Our College Way' represents a coherent approach to addressing historical and in-year weaknesses in teaching and learning.
45. The meeting closed at 12.00 pm.