

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**held on 23 November 2023 at 09:30**  
**at Sparsholt College**

**<sup>1</sup>PRESENT** G Davies (E); J Milburn (P); J Orlowski (St); A Rowley (E); C Wilson (E) (Chair)

In attendance: D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education  
R Price, Director of Learning & Quality  
A Robertson, Governance Co-ordinator  
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)  
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)  
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

**APOLOGIES & MEMBERSHIP**

124. Apologies were received from R Palmer and H Perry.
125. The Chair welcomed A Rowley to her first meeting of the committee. The Chair noted that it was G Davies' last meeting as his membership of the committee ended on 31 December 2023 and thanked him for his contributions to the committee's work.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

126. There were no interests to declare.

**MINUTES**

127. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.
128. College estate (minute 65/23): The Principal reported actions which were underway to enhance WiFi capacity across the Sparsholt campus.
129. Vet nursing (minute 72): The Vice Principal & Dean of HE confirmed positive communications had taken place with the RCVS and there were no matters to bring to the committee's attention.
130. Learner safety (minute 100/23): It was confirmed that the 'Settling into College' survey to seek feedback about whether learners felt safe at college was run in the first three weeks of term and the results and follow up actions were reported in the Healthcheck report.
131. There were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN**

132. The committee had received the report of the Head of Corporate Governance proposing the committee's forward business plan for 2023-24, following the review of the committee's performance and terms of reference in June.
133. The committee noted the updates to the annual plan and proposed management reporting responded to strategic developments and current areas of performance focus.

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

134. **Resolved** – that the committee’s forward business plan for 2023-24 be approved.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION**

### HE Quality & Performance

135. The committee had received for scrutiny and assurance the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (HE) on the performance of HE provision in 2022-23 and year to date 2023-24, including results of the National Students Survey (NSS) and with reference to the Office for Students (OfS) quality related (B3) conditions of registration (and TEF measures).
136. It was noted that the student recruitment data had been scrutinised by the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee and a summary was provided for the committee’s information. Members discussed the increase in University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) students with declared learning difficulties and disabilities (41% at the point of application) and the availability of externally provided DSA (Disabled Students Allowance) support and resourcing strategies for internal support. It was noted that there was an upward trend in the FE and HE sectors as a whole but that providers with a land-based curriculum offer had a higher proportion of students enrolling with support needs.
137. The committee reviewed the analysis of continuation, completion and progression data, noting that reducing the number of withdrawals was a priority for 2023/24.
138. The committee discussed the NSS outcomes, noting a slight decline in participation since the previously year but that participation remained above the sector average. UCS’s major strength in teaching continued to be confirmed, with the ‘teaching on my course’ measure scoring 89% positive responses and comments about the commitment of the teachers to the students. Areas for improvement identified were around the student voice, differentiating the HE experience, and organisation of the timetable, and actions were already in place or underway to address these.
139. The committee noted confirmation of compliance with the OfS guidance on blended and online learning, including in relation to meeting conditions of registration, and with clear communication to students of the UCS offer in line with consumer protection law. Asked about the response of students to on campus delivery of teaching, the Vice Principal & Dean of HE and the HE Student Governor confirmed this was generally positively perceived but that the cost of travel was an issue for some students. It was noted that the sector was lobbying the Government about the financial pressure on students, with maintenance loans not having increased, and the college also made available bursaries and hardship funds to assist.
140. The committee was assured by the report and discussion of the management commitment to HE standards and the quality of the student experience.

## **FURTHER EDUCATION QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE**

### FE Self- Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

141. The committee had received the College’s draft FE Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2022-23 and FE Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2023-24, together with an accompanying report from the Head of Learning & Quality and the Vice Principals Curriculum.

142. The Principal reported that the draft report of the Ofsted inspection in October had been received and that the college had submitted comments to Ofsted.
143. The Head of Learning & Quality drew the committee's attention to the process which had been followed this year in developing the SAR, noting attendance of governors at the Curriculum Areas SAR reviews, as well as a member of the Landex Quality Committee.
144. The Vice Principals (Andover & Sparsholt) highlighted key points from the SAR, giving examples of areas which had improved from the previous year following interventions and areas where further development needs had been identified, together with the actions in place to address these.
145. The committee commended the evidence improvements where previous challenges had been identified and then resolved through management actions, both in relation to specific curriculum areas and general improvements such as punctuality.
146. The committee discussed the disappointing outcomes from synoptic assessments in some land-based areas due to the impact of higher grade boundaries and the Vice Principal (Sparsholt) outlined the approaches which were being adopted to improve results for 2023-24.
147. Responding to members' questions about the use of student survey results with teachers, it was confirmed that these were shared and that positive feedback was celebrated and development support provided if relevant, with an understanding of the context for each subject/cohort. Members also sought additional information about the impact of the TALO process, being assured that it was intended to be both rigorous and supportive.
148. The Head of Learning & Quality praised the curriculum leaders and the teaching staff for their positive engagement in the SAR and TALO processes, as well as the work of the learning coaches.
149. The committee noted the update on the measurement and development of 'soft skills', with progress reviews by the staff during the year and Professional Learner surveys at the start and end of the year to measure distance travelled. The survey results were also detailed in the Healthcheck report. Another new initiative was the creation of a POD (Personal Opportunities & Development) space on each campus, used for activities such as careers advice and student councils.
150. Members also discussed the value added (ALPS) data for A Levels and BTECs.
151. The committee discussed the proposed SAR grading for Leadership and Management, recognising that the grade was informed by assessment of the evidence in relation to the Ofsted grade descriptors and criteria and considering whether all the criteria had been fully met and the consistency with the outcomes in relation to the Effectiveness of Education.
152. The committee also sought additional clarification about the proposed grading for Additional Learning Support being lower than for Effectiveness of Provision for Learners with High Needs, and the Principal explained that the difficulties with filling vacancies for LSAs had meant the college had fulfilled its legal obligations but had not been able to deliver wider learning support at the levels it wished to, although the pay strategy for 2023-24 was directed at resolving this.
153. The committee went on to review the QIP and the Head of Learning & Quality drew members attention to some of the actions, highlighting the role of the Curriculum

Assessment Boards (CABs) which take place on a half-termly basis and track learners' progress and will focus on stretch grades.

154. The committee was content that there was a clear relationship between the SAR and the QIP and that the rigor and scope of the actions set out provided a clear plan for driving improvements in teaching, learning and assessment and supporting overall improvement.
155. **Resolved** – that the committee recommend to the Board of Governors that the Self-Assessment Report 2022-23 (SAR) provided a satisfactory basis on which to judge the quality of the FE and apprenticeship performance and quality improvement targets, and that the SAR and the associated Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2023-24 be approved by the Board.
156. The committee added its thanks to that of college management for academic staff responding to the ongoing legacy challenges post pandemic (addressing the knowledge and skills gaps of learners), in addition to managing in-year staff shortages in some areas.
157. It was reported that two learners had won awards at the inaugural Lantra Land-based & Environmental (LBEL) Awards announced in November - Environment, Conservation, Game and Wildlife Apprentice of the Year and Equine and Farriery Learner of the Year.

### Maths and English

158. The committee had received for review and assurance the report of the Assistant Principal English, Maths & Adult Education and the Vice Principals on the performance action plan for English and Maths.
159. The committee reviewed the detailed analysis of outcomes for 2022/23 across both campuses, with reference to national MiDES benchmark data, and the quality interventions in teaching, learning and assessment implemented to improve performance.
160. The committee acknowledged the strategic actions taken to date to improve outcomes but concurred with college management that the rate of improvement had not been good enough, welcoming the evidence that the issues were understood and that a comprehensive action plan was being implemented.
161. Members discussed a number of the actions, commending new approaches to increasing attendance, planning curriculum delivery and timetables, and preparing learners for exams, to maximise the learners' ability to achieve positive outcomes. Support for the small number of students where English was not their first language was also discussed.
162. The Principal reported that colleges had raised nationally the challenge that there was insufficient time to have SEN/other exam arrangements approved for newly enrolled learners before the November resits.
163. The committee was confident in the steps being taken to deliver improvement for 2023/24 and noted that termly reports on progress would follow for scrutiny.

### **PREVENT DUTY**

164. The committee had received the College's updated FE and HE Prevent Duty Risk Assessment/Action Plan for information and assurance.
165. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and the designated Prevent Duty lead for the College Group, highlighted the issue of updated

Prevent Duty Statutory guidance from 31 December 2023, noting that the DfE had confirmed there were no new requirements for colleges.

166. It was noted that the new guidance placed an emphasis on freedom of speech duties under the Education (No 2) Act 1986 and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, alongside the Prevent Duty requirements and members discussed the procedures current in place at the college and noted positive feedback from the HE NSS student survey in relation to freedom of speech. New guidance on freedom of speech requirements was expected from the Office for Students in light of the new legislation.
167. The committee reviewed the Prevent risk register, noting that the controls had been updated to include the new software for filtering and monitoring of internet usage, and the DSL commended the enhanced reporting and review processes in place.
168. The committee sought additional information about the handling of the current Israel – Palestine events in the student tutorial programme and was assured that consideration was being given to whether there were any individual students personally affected by the situation or requiring additional support, noting that this was not currently the case.
169. The committee also noted the update on the development of new lockdown alert systems for staff, using solutions appropriate to the different scenarios which might arise and the nature of a land-based open campus.
170. The committee was assured by the assessment of risks associated with Prevent and the review of the controls in place to mitigate these risks.

#### **HEALTHCHECK REPORT**

171. The committee had received and reviewed the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2023-07).
172. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) explained the new methodology which had been introduced for monitoring and reporting student attendance data and the way in which the RAG indicators were defined in order to enable progress to be clearly tracked. The SLT were considering further refinements to the reporting going forward.
173. The committee welcomed the attention being given to tracking and improving student attendance and the inclusion of the cohort sizes in the data for each curriculum area.
174. The committee discussed the results of the Autumn Professional Learner survey and it was confirmed that actions were in place or planned to raise the learners' confidence in the lower scoring areas.
175. The meeting concluded at 11:45.

*Approved: Quality & Standards Committee meeting 8 February 2024*