

B O S T O N C O L L E G E

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2016

1. PRESENT

Stephen Brown (chair), Rowan Dalton, Amanda Mosek and Chris Pett.

Also in attendance: Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Richard Chambers (Head of Curriculum), Paul Collins (Director of Business Development and Fiona Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality),

Attendance 50%.

Apologies for absence were received from Prof Jayne Mitchell and Helen Wright.

Orla McMahon and Kieran Smith did not attend but no apologies were received.

2. ACTION LOG

There were no matters to report on the action log.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 25 NOVEMBER 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 25 November 2015 were reviewed and approved.

It was agreed that the reporting of information on positive destinations to a future meeting should be added to the action log. ●

4. 2014-15 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The committee received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the College's Self-Assessment Report.

Fiona Grady highlighted how the report had been produced and the work of the validation panels. She reviewed the measures which had been looked at as evidence in making the self-assessment evaluations and advised members that it was an in-depth process giving a feeling for the quality of the College's provision. It was noted that Leadership and Management will become the first part of future Ofsted inspection reports because of its impact on everything within the College. The self-assessment report references some of the new Ofsted framework but not in its entirety.

Members noted that the overall grade for effectiveness remained good and that the programme area grades had seen some movement with two areas dropping grades and three improving. 18% of the College's provision is below good at the present time and there will be concentration on improving this position. Partnership provision has been graded as a grade 1 and this is a significant part of the College's adult provision.

The committee reviewed the key strengths as identified in the self-assessment report. Chris Pett enquired about the format of the self-assessment report and Fiona advised that it

is based upon the inspection framework but the actual layout is determined by the College. Chris also asked about the evidence considered on meeting the needs of employers. Fiona said that the programme area reports will have had evidence of meeting employer needs, including employer satisfaction surveys, as part of their review.

The committee considered key issues for improvement. For apprenticeship provision the outcomes showed too much variation between programme areas including some inadequate performance. A significant amount of the poor outcomes related to apprentices leaving their employment.

English and maths is a significant challenge for the College and there is still insufficient information on how other colleges are being affected in terms of performance by the new requirements.

Construction was noted as having been an ongoing concern and retention in 2014-15 was extremely poor as was some of the student experience. Chris Pett asked why construction was such a problem for completion and whether the issues were with the College or with the apprentices' employment. Fiona advised that weak management had been an issue in this area as well as some poor IAG. Plumbing is an ongoing problem relating to the quality of teaching and the most significant issue for the College is getting the right staff.

Fiona advised the committee that the management of teaching and learning is a clear focus of the College with expectations of teachers being well defined. Clarity of expectation including that of sub-contractors is key to good performance. Forcing learners to take English and maths qualifications is proving challenging. A lot of work is being done with employers through the Enterprise Zone and work of the Business Development team. One of the issues is that measures for progression and destinations are not as straightforward as success rates and it is difficult to obtain clear data on performance.

One area which the College has had some success with is the implementation of the Prevent duty which has been dealt with proactively. The Ofsted visit in December 2015 to survey the College's work in this area had an excellent outcome with some outstanding practice being observed.

The committee agreed to receive the self-assessment report.

5. 2015-16 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on the Quality Improvement Plan.

A discussion took place about the delivery of English and maths and it was noted that the College was trying to make sure that students worked on their maths and English independently as well as in taught sessions. Fiona noted that the quality of the teaching is very important and that the College is still working to get all assessors using the available systems effectively. She advised that there were a few issues outstanding about the ownership of apprenticeships. The committee was advised that the College was setting challenging targets for maths and English and that a second maths graduate had been recruited under the support scheme. The English lab has been extended to support English and maths and programme areas are now fully aware of the importance of maths and English including the attendance of their learners at classes. Staff are being supported in the delivery of maths and English through staff development and there is clear reporting on performance in this area all the way up to the Senior Leadership Team.

Stephen Brown asked how the monitoring takes place and how close it is. Fiona responded that there is still further work to be carried out and that the large numbers involved are

challenging with teachers in four programme areas teaching maths and English. She told members that the Head of Curriculum was focussing more of her own time on maths and English provision. Stephen Brown asked if the committee should have an agenda item at the next meeting to focus on maths and English and this was agreed. Chris Pett asked whether learners understood the importance of maths and English and Rowan Dalton felt that their understanding of this was variable. Amanda Mosek advised the committee that the focus on GCSEs is unhelpful in getting students to see the relevance of these subjects. Chris Pett suggested that student motivation and their ability to see the relevance was critical and Amanda confirmed that the College was trying to make learners understand the reasons for studying English and maths from applications onwards.

A discussion took place about value added and it was noted that the College was measuring performance against its own data since the DfE sample is very restricted. Specific issues were discussed and it was noted that performance in the Music area should not be a problem next time around because there had been specific issues in the performance last time. It was felt that Engineering had not pushed learners to achieve higher grades as many of them were not aiming to proceed to University. This provision has now been moved in with Computing to try to improve its performance although results may take more than one year to achieve. There is a need to increase the number of high calibre Engineering students. The Public Services area is now more focussed on value added performance.

In terms of developing whole College performance one area of focus was encouraging innovation and stretching more able learners. The J2O initiative supports and shares good practice and the VITAL monitoring system which is being implemented will give more clarity on student progress as well as linking to Learner Services for the provision of support as necessary.

Chris Pett asked if the College was in transition due to the government's focus on apprenticeships and whether it could cope with significant expansion in this area. Richard Chambers assured the committee that it could and that the College was looking into trailblazers which will bring challenges with them. The fact that the College cannot currently recruit Plumbing apprenticeships is an issue. Fiona Grade advised that the College may need to train some more staff to deal with apprenticeships.

6. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015-16

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality on Key Performance Indicators. The committee noted that it was still comparatively early in the year but that most of the areas were on track against targets. It was noted that the learners reported as being at or above their home targets didn't include those being tracked through the VITAL system and that these areas tended to have better performance.

7. TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE

Members received a report from the Head of Quality which was presented on her behalf by Fiona Grady. Members noted the content of the report on grade profiles and emerging themes.

8. APPRENTICESHIP SURVEY 2015-16

Members received a report from the Head of Quality which was presented on her behalf by Richard Chambers, Head of Curriculum. Richard advised the committee that there were some difficulties in comparing outcomes from the survey where questions had been changed to address the common inspection framework. The response rates were up but there was

still room for improvement. Where there are negative responses meetings are taking place with Managers. Stephen Brown queried the poor responses in respect of the question on feedback improving learner's performance in their day to day job roles. Richard said that he was confident that where the responses are poorer the College is aware of the issues. He felt that staff changes may have already impacted on student views and the responses might be different if the survey was run again. Amanda Mosek suggested that it might be good to go back to learners again to get their latest views. ●

9. EMPLOYER SURVEYS

Members received a report from the Director of Business Development.

Paul Collins advised that the responses to the surveys were very positive on the whole and that this was an area on which there was more focus because the area review process had an emphasis on work with employers. Both of the surveys had had consistent responses. Paul advised the committee that the employer survey had now been revised and would not be anonymous in future and also a short survey was being introduced for employer facing staff to conduct. He advised the committee that he believed that the FE choices survey had shown the College's performance slightly above the national benchmark.

10. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 20 April 2016.