

Minutes of a meeting of the Quality Working Group held on Thursday, 15 September 2016 in FO27 of the College.

Present: Phil Jardine (in the Chair); Tanya Crofts; Robin Talbot (by phone)

Also present: Les Agnew, Governor; Daniel Braithwaite, Assistant Principal, Mark Birschel, Quality Manager, Jane Murray (Clerk).

Apologies: Michael Priestley, Helen Johnson

01/16 Chair Appointment

Agreed –

- 1) that Michael Priestley be appointed Chair of the Committee;
- 2) that Phil Jardine chair the meeting in Michael's absence.

02/16 Declarations of Interest

None received.

03/16 Rationale for the QWG

The Clerk reminded the Committee that it had been set up to address concerns of Ofsted over the extent and focus of questioning by Governors on the curriculum, in order to demonstrate appropriate challenge and scrutiny.

The Committee was reminded of the terms of reference.

04/16 English and Maths Results Update

The Assistant Principal acknowledged disappointment over the functional skills results (learner responsive, apprenticeships results profile would follow), in particular a shift at level 2. It was asked whether this was a general trend and it was felt that that it would be, for the following reasons:

The introduction of the GCSE D grade resit took those students out of the functional skills category; the examination bodies had changed their examination structure and in maths in particular had meant that students needed strong levels of literacy to be able to understand the questions. More locally, there needed to be even sharper diagnostic testing.

It was noted that the benchmark results presented were the latest available (2014-15) and that it was expected that there would be a similar picture nationally to that of Lakes College for 2015-16.

Asked what measures had been taken as result, the Committee received assurance that there had been a more strenuous recruitment process this year with at least two layers of diagnostic testing and a focus on reading ability. Specialist teachers would now deliver the foundation level.

It was asked whether setting and streaming in English and maths was now taking place and the committee was referred to the detailed analysis of the diagnostic testing, which would be reflected into the classroom.

With respect to GCSEs, what was clear was that there was quite a spread of ability within the D banding, which needed to be accommodated and the point was made in response to questioning that this was not always apparent from the information from school.

Turning to the GCSE results, improvement was acknowledged but the extent of the improvement had not been as great as had been hoped for, particularly for maths. Nevertheless, it was felt that the College was on an upward trajectory. Attendance had vastly improved over the past year and further fine tuning with respect to timing had been introduced. It was felt that the tracking system was now quite sophisticated.

Confirmation was sought again that the available information about the student was used in analysis, and it was confirmed that UMS scores, breakdown of performance on papers and the strengths and weakness of the passes were included in the overall assessment.

It was asked what coaching and mentoring was available to staff in assisting students to pass exams.

There was a currently a push to encourage more positive engagement from all teaching staff. The college had some amazing teachers and some who had been teaching the same course for a long time, who would benefit from a fresh perspective.

It was suggested that a coaching culture be fostered and that attendance at CPD events, the interaction and networking this provided, was beneficial in reigniting enthusiasm.

Returning to the results, it was felt that, with some remarks coming through, English was creeping up towards the 30% and not that far out from the monitoring that had been taking place.

For maths, it was accepted that not a clear enough picture had emerged from the mocks. There was more work to be done, more focus, more active booster sessions and more development work to be done with teaching staff.

It was asked where the College sat in relation to other Cumbrian Colleges, but they had not formally shared their results. However, from conversations that had been had, it would not be surprising if they were in a similar position to that of Lakes College two years ago.

The Committee concurred that there had been progress and that while there was still more to do, the College could demonstrate a step change in improvement.

05/16 Post Inspection Action Plan

The next full post inspection action plan would come to the October Board meeting. In the interim, the Assistant Principal took the Committee through the Quality Cycle, with the Committee in particular noting the project plans for each specific theme with a strategic lead, which were regularly reviewed.

It was confirmed that among the project plans were English and maths, apprenticeships, destinations and performance management, and that the plans were the granular version.

(The Committee was later to ask to see some of the projects plans at their next meeting).

Turning to Teaching, Learning and Assessment, the focus this year was to engage staff in professional development, addressing under-performance, to improve classroom practice and to continue this on an on-going basis and to ensure the use of college systems for tracking and monitoring progress.

Les Agnew left the meeting

With respect to performance management, the focus was on a consistency of approach with a 100% of performance management reviews completed to deadline, and in particular to put in appropriate support for the new Course Leaders.

With respect to work experience, there had been change to managing that area and a move to capture a wider picture of work experience. New initiatives included a 'Work Place' station, where students could drop in to look at jobs and careers guidance, and get advice on CV writing etc. It was manned in partnership with employers and Inspira.

Asked about headline data in the SAR, it was expected that there would be an improvement from last year. Level 2 IT & Business continued to be an area of concern.

06/16 Scrutiny Issues

The Committee felt that they would like to look at some of the project plans with the strategic lead. This would include Performance Management; Destinations and English and maths.

It was also agreed that the maths and English 'mock' results be presented to the Board in December.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.