

MEETING OF THE EDUCATION & STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 24 JUNE 2019 AT 4.30 PM IN T019/20 AT NEWCASTLE COLLEGE

Present: Alan Aston (Chair), Karen Dobson, Francis Tunney
In attendance: Carol Thomas (Director of Curriculum & Performance), Lesley Morrey (Director of Student Engagement & Partnerships), John Prescott (Clerk), Joy Smith (Deputy Clerk)

19.2.1 Election of Chair

It was agreed to deal with this item at the next meeting.

19.2.2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Lesley Rollason, David O'Neill, Lynsey Shearsmith and Jeremy Pert.

19.2.3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19.2.4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 March 2019

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

19.2.5 Matters Arising

19.1.1 – HE at NSCG

It was agreed that the new framework of Governor responsibilities, introduced through the Office for Students, would be taken straight to the Corporation meeting in July.

JP

19.1.8 - AoC Events

John agreed to circulate any information on forthcoming events and encouraged members to register on the AoC website.

JP

Karen added that since the merger of the West and East Midlands AoC the Governor focussed events have been particularly sparse, and those that had been arranged in the past were on a Saturday which is not always convenient.

19.2.6 NSCG Learner Data Report

Carol took members through the final data report for the academic year.

Members noted that retention across the group is 94% which is an improvement on last year, with Year 1 A Levels standing at 96.2% but Year 2 at 84.4%. The Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) data is showing 82.9% at year 2 nationally, so we are above the national figure, but not where we want to be for this cohort, and this does impact on the whole College figure.

Predicted achievement was discussed along with the College's approach across the various areas of curriculum. Full time classroom achievement is 87.9% which is slightly lower than last year, however, we are working to maximise this. Work based achievement rates are traditionally high and we are still awaiting the final results. Whole college anticipated achievement at 88.8% is a very good outcome, particularly because of the impact of the Year 2 A Level.

Karen reported on the information we now have access to through our membership of SFCA and members noted the value added scores we have at A Level which we will take steps to improve. Members also noted that the prevalence of unconditional university offers have negatively impacted on value added, however, the biggest influence appears in the section of students who do not know what they want to do post-college. Data shows that we have more students with no known destinations this year, and in addition we do have a surprisingly high number of students who come to college at initial Open Events with no real idea about what course they want to follow. Research is showing that students with a conditional offer of a higher grade have a better impact on value added. Karen added that the regular feedthrough of information from the SFCA is proving to be very useful with our A Level work; they are a very proactive organisation and are more effective than the AoC at the moment.

Regarding attendance for full time students, members were pleased that this is in the high 80% and 90% range. A few areas falling below were noted and Carol explained that on both sites the teams are battling with a small number of students who consistently affect the attendance data.

Members considered the final overall summary of lesson observations. There have been 318 observations overall this year, with 92% good to outstanding and only a very few where actions were required. Broken down by site, good to outstanding grades achieved were 93% at Newcastle and 88% at Stafford. Carol reminded members of the decision to subdivide grade 2 and this has been reviewed at the end of its first year of operation. We have found that it has encouraged those within the band to seek development.

Members noted the outcomes of the latest learning walks. Carol explained that vocational level 3 had been revised with the inclusion of QRT time. This has been in operation for over 2 years and confusion over this does still arise in the learning walks, along with inconsistency in students' understanding of Prevent. Lesley advised on the steps we are taking to update students on this.

Carol added that next year we will undertake more walk-throughs in the tutorials. Francis raised the issue of students not knowing their targets and Karen advised that this information is shared widely through a variety of sources but still some students say that they do not know them. One explanation could be a mis-match of language and terminology used and we will address that, along with adopting a different approach to feedback.

Referring to standards of behaviour, it was noted that there is little evidence of classroom disruption and where there is, the staff will take action. The example of different approaches to mobile phones was cited. Staff will all be tasked with taking ownership and responsibility for the behaviour of the class in front of them, as there have been a few cases where, for example, English or maths teachers have left classroom discipline to the curriculum area staff of the students they are working with.

Regarding the point raised about the Newsletter being out of date, it was noted that going forward we will publish things a couple of weeks in advance so that Friday tutorials are not too late to inform students of planned activities.

Work placement online software is providing us with some very useful information on how many students are working towards achieving the pilot target of 315 hours for which we have funding. The information we gather shows employer feedback, employment sectors and how many students have been placed. In addition, it gathers student perceptions on the impact of work placement on their career progression. Carol advised that the new rules are 315 hours minimum work placement, which is a significant challenge, particularly in some areas of the curriculum. The team is working hard to build relationships with employers and also change the mindset of students and parents, encouraging them to see the value of the scheme and share the responsibility for sourcing placements.

Lesley gave an update on Safeguarding and Prevent across the Group. She confirmed that numbers are comparable with last year, but we have had no Prevent referrals this year although we have had students who have triggered Prevent discussions following a firewall breach. Lesley advised that the Police are concerned that there has been a decline in referrals from HE and FE and we are working with local Counter Terrorism Units to show how we are recording and dealing with these students. Members considered the comparison in this year's data across the different categories and the information relating to students in receipt of financial support. Karen advised that the College is increasing the income threshold to £23k pa in line with the increase in the national minimum wage. Lesley advised that the number of students in receipt of ALS was 109 at Newcastle and 68 at Stafford and she outlined the significant exam support arrangements offered. The numbers of students in receipt of EHCPs was also considered and members were pleased to note the improvement in all areas of support at Stafford.

The latest Maths and English position was noted and Carol reported on the new initiatives introduced to bring about improvements in these areas. GCSE exam attendance has been good but members again noted the significant amount of work undertaken by College staff to ensure this and the huge numbers of students involved.

Karen reported on the complications with the information in work based provision. Non-levy work is routed through Axia Solutions Ltd and this will need to be included in the figures. We currently have 78.6% retention on our ILR, against just over 80% for the previous year. Karen explained the areas affecting this figure and particularly that the decision to discontinue with CADCOE at Stafford has had an adverse impact this year. Karen added that the end point assessment impacts as the dashboard data can show students as behind until they have gone through that. Areas where apprenticeship classroom attendance needs to be improved were noted and Carol advised that the teams are working to address this issue. It was noted that attendance at Stafford is better than at Newcastle and Lesley advised that generally Stafford students do appear to be more polite and responsive than their North Staffordshire peers.

Members noted that the new Ofsted Common Inspection Framework (CIF) shows a change of approach in many areas with data no longer bring the main priority. A significant focus will be on inspectors getting into classrooms, talking to staff, managers and students and understanding the curriculum offer and its impact on our students. Francis advised that in schools where the new approach has been trialled, there have been issues where middle managers have adversely affected the overall Leadership and Management grade. He quoted 2 schools locally where Leadership and Management should have been graded Outstanding but it was not because of middle-managers being unable to articulate everything they needed to. It was noted that no information has been shared yet about governor involvement in future inspections but members will be updated as soon as we know. Carol added that the new CIF will be a significant focus for this year's Stay Days and we will also provide some governor training early in the new academic year.

Members noted the changes in the requirements of the Work Placement Capacity and Delivery Fund following the feedback provided.

Members were delighted to note that NSCG has won Silver in the BTEC College of the Year awards and also congratulated the four members of staff who have also received Teacher of the Year awards along with the six students who received Student of the Year awards. In addition, the students who had achieved third place in the Regional Skills Build competition and the student shortlisted for the 2019 Chamber of Commerce Awards were also congratulated.

Members were pleased to note that the College has been chosen to deliver T Levels for 2021-22 in Early Years.

Carol advised that we are the only Office for Students registered college in Staffordshire. Through this new scheme, a banded model of fees will be introduced which will be more beneficial to us, however, membership of the OfS is more expensive than our previous HEFCE commitment.

Members noted the pleasing levels of HE attendance across the Group and Carol advised that work is now underway on setting the programme of viable provision for next year.

Finally, the summaries of the latest TLARs were considered and Karen confirmed that some tweaks will be introduced next year in order to refresh our approach. Lesley advised that from September we will provide information to the Committee on levels and numbers of student disciplinaries and a column on bullying will be added to the Safeguarding reports.

19.2.7 Feedback from Members' Attendance at AoC Events

No events had taken place.

19.2.8 Any Other Business

a. Annual Art Exhibitions

Alan congratulated the Art Department on this year's exhibitions.

b. Foundation Awards Event

Alan commented on the fabulous work undertaken by the Foundation Studies Department and the achievements of the students and the individual distances travelled which had been evident at the recent awards event. It was agreed to show an excerpt from the video at the forthcoming Corporation meeting.

c. Future Content

Carol asked members to let her know about anything they would like to be included in future reports for consideration by the Committee.

19.2.9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.