

Agenda No: 02



CURRICULUM AND QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY 19 MAY 2021

Report: Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 24 February 2021
Author: Clerk
Action: Approve
Status: Open

Present: David Mitchell (Chair)
Andy Cole (Interim Principal / CEO)
Aneela Ali
Sarah Stewart

In attendance: Deni Chambers
John Deary
Tracy Foreman
John Gray
Helen Hepple
Ivan Jepson
Kevin Marston
Keith Oxspring
Andrew Robson
Suzanne Slater
Chris Toon
Richard Ward
Tom Bradley (part attendance)
Phil O'Neil (part attendance)
Vicky Cross (part attendance)
Sally Cooper (Clerk)
Suzanne Clark (Minutes)

CQ/31 Welcome / Apologies / Conflicts of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from John Hogg and Sarah McBean.

There were no conflicts of interest declared at this stage. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts that arose during the meeting.

The Chair advised that there will be additional items added to the agenda previously circulated. These include a discussion on Ofsted and an update on College reopening plans.

CQ/32 Minutes of the last meeting dated 3 December 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 3 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to clarification of minute CQ/19 identifying the impact of restrictions on the College's sport academy programme, to reflect that the programme has been impacted to an extent due to the Covid restrictions, but has nevertheless been able to continue operating. It was agreed that the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality would look to update this.

CQ/33 Matters Arising

The Chair confirmed that presentation of the curriculum plan to the Board took place during the Winter Conference earlier in the month.

A report on apprenticeships is included on the agenda.

The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that monitoring visits for T Levels have been cancelled. The College is awaiting further information in relation to this.

CQ/34 Curriculum Planning

The report was presented by Deni Chambers, Assistant Principal followed by departmental presentations delivered by Phil O'Neil, Vicky Cross and Tom Bradley.

A member commented on the enthusiasm coming through from the presentations indicating that they give a very good understanding of the work of the College. The member recognised the importance of the ability to be flexible in light of the current pandemic whilst meeting learner needs.

In response to a question from the Chair, Vicky Cross advised that employer feedback has previously been collected and considered on an ad-hoc basis but it is planned to introduce more formal steering groups. The Business Development team will be supporting with identification of employers to form the steering groups to enable the College to give an active response to local and regional needs. The business department have good developed relationships in place with employers already but the steering groups will formalise this. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality confirmed that very strong links with industry have existed for a long time and it is felt that the new strands will help to focus employers on the support they can give the College.

The Chair advised that he was delighted to hear the positivity and enthusiasm for the future in relation to Music and Performing Arts. A member commented that this was an area in which she was keen to understand how the College was looking to work across the sector. She felt that there were very good examples of linking programmes to giving learners the employment edge and an understanding of sector requirements which very much link to the recent FE whitepaper.

The Chair asked how governors might be part of the curriculum planning process. A member suggested that the report presented, outlining the process, could be shared with other governors which would highlight the importance of curriculum planning. The Chair felt that this would be a good follow up to the discussion at the Winter Conference. The Chair indicated that he would welcome a further progress report to keep governors updated on the process. It was confirmed that there is further review of departmental plans which would enable updates to be provided. The Assistant Principal also indicated that governors would be welcome to attend the planned meetings if they would find it useful. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality added that the plan is to take governors on the curriculum planning journey through the Curriculum and Quality Standards Committee. The process is very fluid and it is hoped that the team will be able to demonstrate each aspect of the planning schedule. The Chair stressed that it was extremely important for governors to

understand the link between the processes for curriculum planning and budget setting. The Interim Principal / CEO indicated that the next stocktake visit will likely be more forward-looking including a focus on curriculum planning, which would also tie in. In turn, the next recommendations are likely to be aspirational and focused on this key area of work.

Action: Report to be shared with the Board to show the curriculum planning process.

Action: Progress to be reported on at a future meeting.

The report was noted.

Tom Bradley, Phil O'Neil and Vicky Cross left the meeting at 4.55pm.

CQ/35 Apprenticeship Update

The report was presented by Suzanne Slater, Assistant Principal.

The Chair indicated that he was very encouraged by the feedback from the recent Ofsted monitoring visit, and asked when the positive impact of recent developments will be seen. The Assistant Principal advised that the team are beginning to see the impact of changes to oversight, leadership and management and the synchronisation of off-the-job training. Over the coming 3-4 months there should be a clear indication on whether changes have had a significant impact. Staff are working extremely hard on progress reviews and the quality team have a real focus on this area currently. Trainers and assessors have started to use the new apprenticeship portal and supportive audits are being undertaken to give feedback and identify any areas for improvement at an early stage. Staff and managers are working together to devise a CPD plan, where required, on an individual level.

The Chair asked for an update on what is being done to support practical activities which have been badly affected by COVID. The Assistant Principal advised that a large number of apprentices in hair and beauty have been put on a break in learning due to being furloughed. Delivery in engineering and construction has continued in a controlled way and the sequencing of learning has been changed to reflect the restrictions. Small numbers of learners have been attending College to complete practical activities. Activity will be increased from 8 March 2021. Delivery on some programmes has been flipped to undertake more knowledge-based activities until practical activities can resume.

The Assistant Principal reported that she was pleasantly surprised by the best-case forecasted achievement rates adding that staff should be commended for continuing to undertake regular progress reviews. Assessors and employers are doing everything they can to support learners in very difficult circumstances. She felt it extremely important that Ofsted recognised and saw the levels of improvement being made during their recent visit.

A member questioned whether any scenario planning has taken place on a worst-case scenario basis, and whether there are any mitigations planned for this. The Assistant Principal advised that there are a proportion of apprentices who have now passed their planned end date. Managers are working with delivery teams to look at contingencies for these learners. Some learners have been brought into College in small groups to catch-up. Weekly performance reviews scrutinise the progress of each learner on a weekly basis to identify apprentices at risk of not achieving on time. There are some instances where College staff are required to shield and this is also impacting on the College's ability to deliver in some areas. It is an area that managers are very conscious of, and each learner is being reviewed on a case by case basis.

The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality added that there are likely to be some issues around the timely achievement rate. This measures whether apprentices complete within their planned end date. All current apprentices were recruited prior to COVID. The College

is therefore focusing on working with learners to achieve. Timely achievement is not an issue in terms of minimum standards and it is hoped that the regulators will not be overly critical in relation to timely achievement data given the circumstances. The Chair recognised that this will be a sector wide issue.

The report was noted.

CQ/36 Performance Report

The report was presented by the Assistant Principal – Standards and Performance.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Assistant Principal advised that the College was awaiting information from national sources on the approach that will be taken for assessment. It is expected that there will be a different approach to the previous year which will be centred around teacher assessment.

A member commented on the clarity of the report and felt that the focus on student learning and progression should be commended.

The report was noted.

CQ/37 Quality Oversight of Remote Learning

The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality gave a verbal update indicating that the team were looking to ascertain how additional evidence can be provided to governors to give assurance on the quality of oversight of remote learning. He stressed that the College's delivery model is very strong and delivers exceptional outcomes indicating that he was disappointed with the commentary from Ofsted following their recent visit. It was confirmed that 30 learning walks have been undertaken since returning in January. The Head of Quality Improvement advised that the learning walks are showing that engagement is very strong and staff are working extremely hard to maintain levels of student progress. Key elements coming through from the feedback are the strength of planning. Real innovation is taking place and staff are supporting their colleagues to do this. Some practical elements have moved online including live demonstrations for catering and hair and beauty. It was felt that the speed at which staff have upskilled has been phenomenal. The Lead Practitioners network is also having a significant positive impact. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality added that the College has been looking to challenge staff. The team are working on producing a clear articulation of the quality assurance processes in place. There is confidence that these processes help to achieve great outcomes. It is hoped that this will give the Board confidence that staff are doing everything they possibly can to support learner progress. Enhanced progress and monitoring reviews are taking place fortnightly during lockdown to ensure that learners continue to make progress.

The Chair indicated that governors were challenged by Ofsted in relation to this. Governors have an awareness of oversight but were asked how they would know that it is having an impact. The Chair felt that this discussion would help governors to build a more comprehensive picture. A member commented that, in essence, this was exactly what governors needed to be aware of. The discussion has given an awareness of how the College has been able to maintain this despite COVID. It is felt that the work will very much translate into performance and achievement rates. The member commented that any way in which the reporting to governors can be enhanced would be welcome. The Assistant Principal indicated that he will work on this to enable an analysis of any areas for development to take place. He would also look at how this could be reported, potentially by way of an infographic to give a very visual overview. It was stressed that at the time of the Ofsted visit remote learning had only been taking place for two weeks. There had been limited time to build the level of detail that Ofsted were looking for. A member commented that as a newer member of the Committee, she would welcome a dashboard which gives a

snapshot of the key metrics. She felt that this would give governors a good understanding of progress. The Chair indicated that there is a wealth of data in this area and recognised that it is difficult to portray this in a simple format. Members agreed that the infographic proposed earlier would be very welcome. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality indicated that the agenda would usually include a more qualitative report from the Head of Quality Improvement. This will be reviewed once the infographic is created.

Action: Assistant Principal to create infographic to show key data and reporting information to the committee.

The update was noted.

CQ/37 KPI Report

The report was presented by the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

The Chair commented that the report showed an improving picture since the previous meeting. A member agreed with this and indicated that governors were very much trying to identify the key metrics which would be relevant for reporting to the Board. The member asked what progress would have been made but for the impact of COVID. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that a key challenge currently is attendance but this is very much to be expected having moved to remote learning. Sub-contracting is also a challenge as one of the College's key partners has been unable to work. Anything below target is due to the impact of COVID. During the pandemic, progress has been consistent and it is felt that improvements will materialise towards the end of the year.

A member asked whether any of the KPIs represent student satisfaction. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that this is not included within the KPIs. Very positive student feedback is available. The team are looking to review the regularity of student feedback and when it is collected as there are currently initial student surveys and end of year surveys. There is not a fluid score at present. The KPIs presented within the report are those that can be reported on throughout the year. Consideration will be given to this as part of the infographic being developed, which will be able to show the 'net promoter' score. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality is looking to have more student engagement in Committee meetings.

The report was noted.

CQ/38 Ofsted

The Interim Principal / CEO reported that as part of preparation discussions for the recent Ofsted monitoring visit, the College were presented with an opportunity around the next inspection. Due to COVID, all inspections were currently paused. A monitoring visit took place in October which was focused on COVID preparations. A further visit took place in January and this was described as a provider monitoring visit. The College has now been asked whether it would want to waive the opportunity for a 'requiring improvement monitoring visit' (RIMV) which would lead to the next visit being a full inspection, or whether the College wishes to retain the RIMV. As recruitment for a new Principal is ongoing the Interim Principal / CEO has looked to determine whether this is a reversible decision which it is not, meaning that the decision will, in effect, bind the future Principal. Initially the team were advised that it was a governance decision, requiring governor approval, but the documentation since received requires sign off by the executive. The College has only been given five days to respond, indicating that it could not realistically be required by Ofsted to be a governance decision. The Interim Principal / CEO and Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality have discussed this at length and recognised that there are pros and cons for both options. One advantage would be the potential for a full inspection earlier, to move the College out of 'requiring improvement'. A negative would be a lack of explicit feedback that would come

from an RIMV on progress, particularly in relation to apprenticeships. In addition, there is no certainty of when to expect an inspection and whether or not waiving the right to the RIMV would expedite the timescales for the College's next full inspection. There is a view that sufficient progress around the College's recovery has been made to support the achievement of a good grading at the next inspection, if this took place in 6-12 months' time.

A member indicated that she had also expected that there would be more time to make this decision and that the College were being asked to decide without all required information being available. The member asked what restrictions are currently on the College as a result of being a 'requires improvement' college. The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that there has been no impact at this point. As a result of COVID, some restrictions which would ordinarily be imposed in relation to bidding for project work have been removed. Ofsted are currently a year behind on inspections. If a RIMV is requested it could likely take two years for the College to have a full inspection. It is felt that the impact of COVID on student data would limit the College to being unable to achieve anything higher than a grade 2. The Interim Principal / CEO indicated that as a requiring improvement college, the College could be precluded from certain bids around non-grant funding and the ability to lead those bids. It should also preclude the College from delivering T Levels, although at present both of these restrictions have been waived. However, it was recognised that rules can change at any moment in time meaning these restrictions could be re-imposed on the College in the future. There is evidence that being graded outstanding does very little in terms of learner recruitment and it can be seen more as a badge of honour within the sector, rather than having significant tangible benefits. By contrast, a good grading would be beneficial in terms of work with key employers, and staff and student engagement. The Chair recognised that some very positive feedback had been received recently. The 'requiring improvement' grade was very much led by a specific set of circumstances and it was indicated, at the time, that the College's financial challenges had potential to have an impact on quality. The Chair expressed a view that he would be willing to waive the RIMV in order to achieve a good grading. He felt that the team were ready for re-inspection. Another member commented that they would hope that waiving the visit would lead to a sooner inspection, although Ofsted had not confirmed this position, adding that if the Executive Team are confident that the College is in a position to achieve a good grade then this should be agreed rather than waiting two to three years. She felt it far better to move to a position where the College can be seen and recognised to be good. Another member indicated her agreement with the comments made advising that she would be content to go with the approach of having a full inspection as early as possible, and thereby waiving the RIMV. Governor support was confirmed for the Interim Principal / CEO to respond to Ofsted. The Interim Principal / CEO suggested that the Clerk circulate a note to other governors to describe the discussion, confirm the agreed approach and give governors until noon on Friday to respond with any concerns. A member agreed to this approach and felt that, for the wider Board members, it would be useful to set out the recommendations.

Action: Clerk to circulate a note to governors outlining the discussion and agreement made, and seek confirmation of governors' approval of the same.

Ivan Jepson left the meeting at 6.00pm.

CQ/39 OfS Consumer Law Evaluation

The report was presented by the Assistant Principal – Standards and Performance.

Aneela Ali left the meeting at 6.05pm.

The Chair commented that there appears to have been a robust process in relation to this. In response to a question from a member, the Assistant Principal advised that this is the first time the College has received a request of this nature. It very clearly links to the COVID pandemic and has been sent out to all colleges and universities delivering HE programmes.

The Chair asked whether there have been any specific issues raised by learners. The Assistant Principal indicated that there are regularly issues that students encounter which go through a mitigation process. There is a standard process in place which has been followed during lockdown. There is also a student complaints process. There have been no complaints to the office of the independent adjudicator which is the formal process for HE. There has been one internal complaint from an HE student that has been investigated and followed up. The Director of Student Experience advised that he has oversight of the complaints process and gave assurance that all internal complaints are fully investigated. He was confident that the College has been appropriate in its response.

The report was noted.

CQ/40 Any Other Business

The Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality gave an update on the reopening of the College on 8 March 2021. The team are currently planning for the additional logistics around the return. The testing requirements have changed from those originally planned for a return in January. Contact testing has been removed and there is a requirement to provide three lateral flow tests to all learners, including apprentices and adults, which has raised the number of tests required significantly. Testing should commence before learners are in contact with anyone else. The team are also in communication with the ESFA to put forward a proposal around the return. The plan is to bring back learners for their full entitlement from Monday 8 March 2021 with measures in place including social distancing, enhanced messaging to learners around keeping themselves safe and reinforcing the requirement to wear a facemask. There is a particular challenge around non-compliance with wearing facemasks as current guidance is these will now need to be worn in the classroom, at least until Easter. Some learners appear to be using the green lanyard scheme, indicating an exemption to the wearing of a face covering, and there is concern that this could be used inappropriately by some students. Staff working with high needs learners have now received their first vaccine. Non-relaxation of current guidance around testing may have an impact as this is a very real challenge. In response to a question from the Chair, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Quality advised that there is a meeting planned with the Trade Unions on 25 February 2021. There is a feeling of disappointment that teachers are not being prioritised for vaccinations. The College is as COVID secure as it was previously and infection levels are currently low. Work is planned with staff to transition them having been out of College for a long period of time. The Chair recognised this as a challenge and felt that the College was responding very well. A member commented that she will be very interested to see the level of cultural acceptance and shift in relation to the restrictions.

CQ/41 Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 19 May 2021 at 4.00pm.