

Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 19th November 2020 at 5.30 pm via Zoom

Governors: Sam Beel, Phil Cook (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Stacey Durham, Vanessa Housley, Katy Ludgate, Dot Smith (Chair), Anne Vickers, Mark White and Gary Wright

Apologies: There were no apologies from committee members

Officials: Liz Boynton (Group Director of Quality), Jason Faulkner (College Principal RCC), Lesley Graham (College Principal SRC), Phil Hastie (Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure), Gary Potts (Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships), Ben Robinson (College Principal Bede), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

The Chair welcomed Stacey Durham and Katy Ludgate to their first meeting as members of the Standards Improvement Committee.

SIC20/49 Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 1 October 2020 had been circulated and were **approved** as an accurate record.

Members considered the actions arising from previous meetings. Vanessa Housley confirmed that her learning walkthroughs had been arranged for the following week and Dot Smith added that she had participated in two remote learning walkthroughs with the Group Teaching & Training Development Manager the previous day. The College Principal Stockton Riverside College (SRC) confirmed that final Boards had not yet been held for the outstanding PGCE students; she would provide a further update at the next meeting. The College Principal Bede gave an update on the Personal Progression Coaches. The Chair confirmed that she had attended the Redcar & Cleveland College (RCC) Self-Assessment Report (SAR) meeting and that the Corporation Vice Chair had attended the Group SAR; she added that the SAR process remained as rigorous when held online. Members **noted** that all actions had been completed, deferred or were to be considered at this meeting.

SIC20/50 Agenda Item 2 – Ofsted Interim Visit

The Chief Executive gave an update on the recent Ofsted Interim Visit; all governors had received an email summarising the themes covered and initial feedback on the visit and the Clerk agreed to forward this to Stacey Durham. He confirmed that he and the Group Director of Quality would review the recently received draft report and that the final report would be published by Ofsted possibly before Christmas. The Group Director of Quality added that interim visits did not result in an Ofsted judgement.

In response to a member's question, the Chief Executive explained that this visit would have no impact on the timing of the Group's next full inspection, which was still expected to take place in the 2020-21 academic year, though there could be delays due to the suspension of Ofsted inspections under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF).

The Chair thanked the senior management team (SMT), Etc. staff and stakeholders for their input to the interim visit. The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships confirmed that representatives from the NHS, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Thirteen, PD Ports and Career Ready, including two Etc. governors, had highlighted many positives of their work with Etc. during their meetings with inspectors.

Members **noted** the update.

Anne Vickers joined the meeting.

SIC20/51 Agenda Item 3 – FE Self Assessment Report

The Group Director of Quality outlined the pragmatic approach taken to the self-assessment process for 2019-20 in light of interruptions to normal Group activity and difficulties in evidencing against the Ofsted EIF. Self-assessment reports (SARs) focused on progress pre lockdown; the response to lockdown, including support for vulnerable learners, centre assessed grades and student and staff satisfaction; and key financial and quality outcomes. The evidence for each department had been reviewed during Performance Review (PR) 12 meetings culminating in the 2019-20 Group SAR proposed grades of 'Good' for overall effectiveness, all four key aspects and all four types of provision. These grades had been agreed by a panel at the Group SAR meeting, which had been attended by the Vice Chair of the FE Corporation.

A staff governor agreed that the Group SAR accurately reflected achievements in her own curriculum area and the areas identified for improvement, including a focus on attendance. A governor commented on the quality of the Group SAR, including triangulation of information and the staff and student voice; she reflected on the need to prioritise support for learners' emotional health and wellbeing, a current focus of work at Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC). The College Principal Bede, also Strategic Lead for Student Services, agreed that the Group would need to continue their focus on student wellbeing over the coming years and that the current restructuring of student services would build increased capacity and support in anticipation of this. He added that Bede Sixth Form had received funding to take part in the Mental Health Trailblazer Project.

A member asked about actions to be taken in relation to curriculum areas highlighted in section 5 of the SAR and in the data tables as areas for improvement. The College Principal SRC explained that a focused monitoring plan was in place for the [redacted] department, including external consultant support; she agreed to update committee members on progress at the next meeting. The College Principal RCC explained that Basic Skills achievement rates had been impacted by functional skills reforms and that nationally pass rates had fallen by almost 20% in 2019-20. Published practice papers used to prepare

learners for the first set of exams had differed from the actual papers and a staff governor added that, in response to this, staff had developed their own practice papers. The Group Director of Quality confirmed that, in response to [redacted] achievement and retention rates for subcontracted apprenticeships, a strategic decision had been made by the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships to close to new starts.

A member asked about the specific issues facing Looked after Children (LAC) and the Group Director of Quality explained that the move to remote learning had been difficult for this cohort and that each learner was often enrolled on multiple courses, creating a greater impact on the data. The data would be reviewed to identify specific areas to monitor.

The Chief Executive explained that section 7 of the SAR outlined the areas of focus for the Group Improvement Plans (GIPs) currently in development for 2020-21 which would be assigned to named leads; there would be an update on the five GIPs at the next meeting.

Members **agreed** to recommend approval of the 2019-20 Group FE SAR and the proposed Group grades for overall effectiveness, key aspects and types of provision to the FE Corporation.

SIC20/52 Agenda Item 4 – Group Improvement Plans Update

The Group Director of Quality highlighted that her report gave a final progress update on the six 2019-20 GIPs and focused on those actions identified as priorities following lockdown. Good progress had been made and, although Centre assessed grades (CAGs) indicated significant positive distance travelled, value added would remain a key area of focus due to the lack of external moderation and testing in 2019-20. Five areas for improvement in 2020-21 had been identified through the 2019-20 SAR process.

In response to a member's question, the Group Director of Quality confirmed that each curriculum area had an improvement plan which aligned to the GIPs; these had been developed through departmental SARs and would be closely monitored through the performance review cycle.

Members **noted** progress on the areas of improvement in 2019-20 and **agreed** to recommend approval of the 2020-21 areas for improvement to the FE Corporation.

Agenda Item 5 – Quality Assurance

SIC20/53 Agenda Item 5.1 – Quality Assurance of Online Learning

The Group Director of Quality explained that lessons learned from lockdown had identified the strategies needed to promote high levels of learner engagement, including ensuring Teams sites were in place for every course, thorough student induction, learner surveys to establish learners' confidence with and access to technology, and sampling of the quality of online delivery through learning walkthroughs. Additional intensive support was available to teaching and training staff from digital learning coaches, with funding provided through the College Collaboration Fund (CCF). Feedback from Learner Forums had indicated that the majority of 16 – 19 learners preferred face to face delivery; the reasons for learners' reluctance to have their cameras on had also been explored. An evaluation of

differences in both attendance at and the learner experience of remote and on site provision would take place during PR3.

Members discussed the reasons for learners' discomfort with cameras, including feeling self-conscious of their appearance or their surroundings, and the importance of tutors being able to see learners in order to monitor engagement and learning. It was felt that learners being ready to be on screen was a crucial element of work readiness and that it was important to help learners feel more comfortable with being on camera.

A member highlighted the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) research on effective remote teaching and asked if the Group was confident that learners had access to appropriate technology, including devices, broadband and platforms. The Group Director of Quality explained the Technology Innovation Group's (TIG) role in sharing good practice and research; she agreed to establish whether the EEF's research had been shared. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure confirmed that the Group had supported learners by allocating devices and providing contributions to monthly data costs; assistance was targeted appropriately to support as many learners as possible. Through Microsoft 365 licences, all students could download Teams and other applications on to multiple devices free of charge.

Members **noted** the update.

SIC20/54 Agenda Item 5.2 – Subcontracting Quality Assurance

The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships outlined the subcontracting consultation carried out by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) that had resulted in ten proposals; these had been considered by the Finance and Employment Committee in terms of financial and strategic compliance. He explained that, as the Group wished to continue subcontracted provision delivered at a distance, such provision would be a focus of the audit process by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and form an important part of the subcontracting Standard. It was therefore proposed that Subcontracting quality monitoring would be reported to the Standards Improvement Committee twice a year, providing information to governors on the visits, checks and activities undertaken as part of the Subcontracting Quality Cycle.

Members agreed that the report gave assurance that Etc. had made the right strategic decisions on subcontracted provision and that the response to the ESFA consultation had been appropriate; the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships confirmed that the detailed action plan had been considered by the Finance and Employment Committee. The Chief Executive highlighted the successful work at NETA's scaffolding centre, which catered for a mix of apprentices and commercial delegates; he hoped to be able to share a recent video taken at the centre via the Governors' Digest.

Members **noted** the update and the addition of Subcontracting quality monitoring to the committee's cycle of business.

SIC20/55 Agenda Item 6 – Pastoral Update

The College Principal Bede explained that his previously circulated report detailed the measures that had been put in place for vulnerable learners throughout lockdown and continuing into the start of this academic year. As new Strategic Lead for Student Services, he had been assured that the processes and mechanisms were in place to enable learners to achieve and stay healthy. The Chief Executive agreed that pastoral support was one of the most important areas of the Group's work and that, as the world had changed profoundly and significantly, student support needed to be looked at through a new lens; the review of the structure of student services would enable a new way of working and the interim Group Head of Student Services and the college principals would be working closely together to achieve this.

Mark White left the meeting.

A member commented that Universal Credit claims were at a 24-year high, even in traditionally wealthier areas such as Ingleby Barwick, making it more difficult to group learners and their needs by geographic location. The College Principal Bede agreed that it would be helpful to meet with colleagues at Stockton Borough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council (RCBC) to explore opportunities to work together in relation to supporting learners' emotional health and well-being.

Members **noted** the update.

SIC20/56 Agenda Item 7 – Destinations Update (2018-19)

The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure highlighted the fundamental importance of destinations data and outlined improvements to be made to data capture, ensuring better evaluation of the impact of the curriculum in meeting the needs of learners.

A member agreed that richer data had benefits for curriculum planning but asked if this would require more time for staff to input information. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure explained that curriculum staff already engaged with learners and recorded destinations data both during and after courses; these changes would ensure more effective use of the technology by avoiding data being overwritten and enabling learners to self-capture data. In response to a member's question about how the information was then reported and utilised, the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure explained that the data would be reviewed as part of the existing business planning and self-assessment cycle. In response to a member's request, the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure confirmed that a negative destination was defined by the Group as any learner unemployed or whose destination was unknown and unknown destinations could be reported separately as the data was already available; he added that the proportion of destinations reported in the unknown category was continually reducing and currently represented approximately [redacted] of learners.

Members **noted** the update.

SIC20/57 Agenda Item 8 – Any Other Business

The College Principal RCC informed members that the Pearson National Teaching Awards winners would be announced on the One Show each night the following week and, as silver award winners, the Etc. Prince's Trust team were eligible for the FE Team of the Year award.

SIC20/58 Agenda Item 9 - Approval of Documents for Public Inspection

It was **agreed** that the agenda and supporting documents of the current meeting be made available for public inspection with the exception of the reports for Agenda Items 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 which were considered commercial in confidence. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

SIC20/59 Agenda Item 10 - Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 25th February 2021, to be held in SRC301 or remotely

SIC20/60 Agenda Item 11 – Key Themes

The following key themes were identified:

- Update on the Ofsted interim visit, including key themes and stakeholder engagement
- Consideration of the Group (Further Education) Self Assessment Report 2019-20 and recommendation to the FE Corporation for approval
- Update on progress made in the six 2019-20 Group Improvement Plans and recommendation of the focus of the five 2020-21 Group Improvement Plans to the FE Corporation
- Update on the quality assurance of online learning and the addition of twice-yearly reporting on quality monitoring for subcontractors to the committee's cycle of business
- Pastoral update from the College Principal Bede, now Strategic Lead for Student Services
- Update on 2018-19 Destinations, including developments to ensure improved capture and use of destinations data

(The meeting ended at 7.15 pm)

Approved at a remote meeting held on 25 February 2021