

Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 20th May 2021 at 5.30 pm via Zoom

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

Apologies: There were no apologies from committee members

Officials: Phil Blewitt (NETA MD), Lesley Graham (College Principal SRC), Phil Hastie (Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure), Erika Marshall (Group Director of Marketing), Gary Potts (Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships), Ben Robinson (College Principal Bede), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation), Peter Wood (Interim Group Director of Quality) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

In attendance: For item 1 only: Tony Pattison (Group Assessment and Standards Development Manager) and Angela Stevenson (Group Teaching and Training Development Manager)

SIC21/21 Agenda Item 1 – Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment - Presentation

The Chair welcomed Tony Pattison and Angela Stevenson to the meeting and explained that their presentation would focus on a range of underperforming courses, as requested by members at the previous meeting.

The Group Assessment and Standards Development Manager explained the rationale for selection of a sample of underperforming courses in the current and previous academic year and outlined progress made in resolving performance issues. Data had been the starting point for performance assessment, though about 20 other possible criteria had been identified. Twelve courses had been selected in 2019 – 20 and in 11 of these the issues identified had been addressed. In 2020-21, 14 courses had been selected and all issues identified had been addressed appropriately or resolved. The College Principal Stockton Riverside College (SRC) outlined the quality review processes undertaken in identified programmes at SRC and the range of actions taken to address concerns. Key themes from a Quality Team perspective had been identified, including staffing, information, advice and guidance (IAG) and the impact of COVID-19, particularly on apprenticeships. Emerging strengths had been identified including maintaining the performance of staff due to leave employment with the Group; quality reviews of courses of concern; discontinuing underperforming courses; and reviewing curriculum intent and IAG at enrolment. The Managing Director (MD) NETA highlighted examples of positive interventions including the transfer of apprentices from an underperforming subcontractor to NETA-delivered programmes and refocused curriculum intent in scaffolding to improve management of provision.

The Group Teaching and Training Development Manager then outlined a number of approaches taken to drive the quality of teaching and learning. There had been positive feedback from consultants on the use of Teaching and Training Reviews (TTR) with staff able to talk confidently about curriculum intent. Bespoke continuing professional development (CPD) was being delivered and the HR Team had developed training on difficult conversations and performance management to support effective coaching discussions by managers. Standardisation and dual observation activities provided consistency; a Digital Learning Fair had been a showcase for sharing good practice and a Good to Outstanding Group had been established. A specific case study in the Construction, Professional and Service Industries (CPSI) department at SRC was shared, with targeted coaching bringing improvements evidenced in follow-up walkthroughs.

A member asked if any of the courses identified as causes for concern in 2019-20 continued to be of concern in 2020-21. The Group Assessment and Standards Development Manager confirmed that only one was carried over; in the other 11 courses, a range of evidence, including learner surveys and complaints, had been used to confirm the departments' own judgement that improvements had been made. The College Principal SRC confirmed that a new course leader had been appointed and that an in-depth review was ongoing to determine whether this programme area would be offered in the future if high-quality provision could not be delivered.

In response to a member's question, the Interim Director of Quality confirmed that staff regarded as being of concern could be less strong in teaching and learning, undergoing performance management, new to teaching or on hourly paid contracts. He added that the attention to detail as part of the Business Planning / Performance Review (BP/PR) cycle, including having the right people in the meetings so that individual staff could be supported and challenged, ensured constant quality monitoring.

A member agreed that she had been able to see the impact of the strategies outlined, including targeted, bespoke and timely personal development, during her own follow-up walkthroughs with the Group Assessment and Standards Development Manager. Staff looked stronger in their practice and were performing more effectively; she also felt confident that this drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning was sustainable.

A member commented on the value of managers' CPD in tackling difficult conversations and the Chief Executive agreed that coaching had to be backed up by performance management and that managers needed the skills to handle difficult conversations appropriately for the benefit of both staff and students.

Members **noted** the presentation.

Tony Pattison and Angela Stevenson left the meeting.

SIC21/22 Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 25 February 2021 had been circulated and were **approved** as an accurate record.

Members considered the actions arising from previous meetings. The Chair thanked the Group Director of Marketing for the Careers Update included in the papers for information. She also confirmed that an Ofsted Group meeting had been held in March, with another scheduled for July. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure highlighted the ongoing open invitation to members to attend BP and PR meetings and noted attendance by committee members at PR3 and BP2 sessions. The Clerk confirmed that dates for the next set of Learner Forums had been circulated on the Chat function and would be included in the Governors' Digest to be sent out the following day. Members **noted** that all other actions had been completed or were to be considered at this meeting.

Agenda Item 3 – Quality and Performance Update

SIC21/23 3.1 – Group Performance Outcomes 2019 – 20

The Interim Group Director of Quality had circulated the Group performance outcomes for 2019-20 and highlighted to members that these outcomes had been compared against the last published Qualification Achievement Rates (QARs) and National Rates (NRs) (2018-19), an academic year not affected by COVID-19.

A member commented that many performance outcomes, though above NRs, had been below those set in the Master Target File (MTF) for 2019-20 and asked whether the Group could be confident of delivering an Outstanding student experience given this. The Interim Group Director of Quality explained that, although data was important, the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) focused on teaching and learning and classroom practice, rather than historical data. The aspirations of, and for, learners and their destinations would also be key. He added that feedback from recent external consultants looking at High Needs and English had been very positive and that functional skills achievement rates had been impacted nationally by new skills specifications and assessments.

The Chair asked staff governors if their colleagues were all aware of the drive to Outstanding and both agreed, highlighting that staff were increasingly aware of the positives, acknowledging and recording them, as well as actively looking for areas for development and that staff constantly shared good practice, working together and supporting colleagues.

A member asked how staff were being prepared to articulate the impact on learners. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure explained that the major focus of BP was setting out the intent, followed by PR which enabled staff to review provision and talk confidently about impact; staff articulation was also a major part of the Group Management Team (GMT) meetings. The Interim Group Director of Quality added that Ofsted preparation was framed around asking staff questions and encouraging them to talk about the intent, implementation and impact of the curriculum, as well as using case studies to demonstrate student achievement. Teachers were also increasingly encouraged to talk about cognitive science to explain their classroom practice. The Chief Executive outlined the way in which governors' engagement with, for example, walkthroughs, learner forums and BP/PR would allow them to talk confidently about how they had gained assurance of the impact on learners. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure highlighted that the mindset in PR sessions was now less self-critical, with staff talking more about success and

the Chair reflected that this mirrored the shift in the Group's tone of voice to celebrating achievement.

SIC21/24 3.2 – Key Performance Indicators

Attendance data for 2020-21, compared against 2018-19 data, had been circulated. Members asked the NETA MD to pass on congratulations to the NETA team for the positive attendance data, which had been higher in 2020-21 than before the pandemic.

Retention rates for Education and Training (E&T) and Apprenticeships up to May 2021 had also been circulated, with strategies outlined aimed at driving retention and achievement for the remainder of the academic year. In response to a member's question about apprenticeship retention rates, the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships explained that he was confident that they could articulate the factors that had affected apprenticeship retention in 2019-20 and added that the team had worked incredibly hard with employers during COVID-19. At Bede, some apprentices with the fire brigade had been promoted due to a restructure and no longer met the requirements of the apprenticeship or needed an apprenticeship for their new role.

Predicted achievement at PR6 (week commencing 22 February) for E&T and Apprenticeships had been circulated and was being updated during PR9 which had just commenced. The Interim Group Director of Quality added that staff continued to support individual learners to increase achievement rates.

A member asked about programmes, particularly Prince's Trust, where achievement rates seemed low and asked if this was due to start dates or format of the programme. The Interim Group Director of Quality commented that there had been issues when running the data for the report and these were expected to move in line with other achievement rates; plans were in place to improve reporting.

A member asked if consideration needed to be given to data presentation, where cohorts were very small and the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure confirmed that data presentation would be a focus.

SIC21/25 3.3 – Assessment Arrangements 2021

The arrangements for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) had been outlined in the circulated report and the Interim Group Director of Quality confirmed there were no concerns around any curriculum areas, though the Quality team would continue to monitor the process.

SIC21/26 3.4 – Governor Teaching and Training Walkthroughs

Members commented on recent walkthrough activity. Anne Vickers outlined walkthroughs of remote provision at Bede in history and public services in the Autumn term and commented on the excellent interaction between tutors and students, with tutors using a variety of techniques to draw out the more reticent students. She added that she would be keen to attend future learner forums, having previously attended one in her capacity as a trustee of the Sir William Turner Foundation. Gary Wright had also taken part in a walkthrough at NETA with the Interim Group Director of Quality and commented on the

value of seeing provision first hand and talking to learners about their experiences. He referenced one particular student who, following guidance, had transferred from another course with the Group to a more suitable one at NETA. He added that there had been visible improvements in NETA resources over the last twelve months. Vanessa Housley explained her approach as a governor to support teaching and learning improvements; walkthroughs with the Group Teaching and Training Development Manager included initial visits to provision of varying quality, with follow up walkthroughs to see the impact of interventions. She applauded the courage of leaders in taking on this challenge and support and hoped it had proved beneficial to both staff and learners.

Members were encouraged to contact the Clerk in the first instance to arrange learning walkthroughs and this invitation would be extended to all governors.

Members **noted** the update on quality and performance.

SIC21/27 Agenda Item 4 – Subcontracting Quality Monitoring

The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships outlined the range of quality assurance monitoring for subcontracted provision in 2020-21; his report also included quality data by subcontractor. Recommendations had been given to subcontractors to address areas amber RAG rated and had been included in the report. The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships confirmed that there would be no further new starts in subcontracted apprenticeships but those completing these programmes would be fully supported as contracts with the last three providers wound down.

A member noted that in both the report for this agenda item and the Apprenticeship Group Improvement Plan (GIP) there had been references to subcontractors on run-down contracts and asked if this presented any challenges with reference to not meeting employers' needs. The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships felt that employers' needs would still be met; the introduction of the digital apprenticeship service had had an impact on subcontracting apprenticeship provision, with these providers continuing provision without the need for subcontracting through Etc. He added that some previous subcontracted provision had not met Etc.'s strategic intent. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure agreed that the Group had taken a strategic view on all subcontracted provision and the quality of subcontractors. In response to a member's question about subcontracted provision with Teesside University, the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships explained that the university had approached the Group as they had been unable to access non-levy funding and that this provision was time-limited. A member asked what direct support Etc. offered to learners in subcontracted provision and the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships explained that learners' progress was reviewed directly by Etc. staff and all were registered as Etc. learners.

Members **noted** the current performance of subcontractors and quality assurance monitoring activity.

Members took a five-minute break. Mark White left the meeting.

SIC21/28 **Agenda Item 5 – Group Improvement Plans – Progress Update**

The Interim Group Director of Quality explained that a paper summarising progress against the five GIPs to PR6, as well as the full action plans, had been included in the meeting pack. Of particular note in the Apprenticeships GIP, he highlighted that there had been substantial improvements from PR3 in the use of Smart Assessor, evidenced by data at PR6.

5.1 - Teaching and Training

The Interim Group Director of Quality explained that improvements to the destinations process had not yet been marked as completed as the impact had not yet been evidenced but that there had been improvements in the profile of destinations and data collection. Work was ongoing to drive down unknown destinations and positive destinations were generally looking strong and would be useful in driving curriculum intent. The Chair commented on a conversation she had had with the Interim Group Director of Quality about the impact of destinations data informing the curriculum, for example, Bede staff working with Higher Education (HE) staff on the content of second year A level studies in order to help with learners' transition to university.

Following a request from members, the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure **agreed** to provide a destinations update, including the impact of destinations on the curriculum, at the next meeting. A member asked if there was a way of recording aspirational destinations and the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure and Interim Group Director of Quality **agreed** to consider whether this would be possible.

5.2 - Apprenticeships

A member noted the impact of COVID-19 on apprenticeship retention and achievement rates and, given the amber rating for assessor use of Smart Assessor, whether improvements had been made. The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships explained that, as already referenced by the Interim Group Director of Quality, there had been a significant breakthrough in the use of Smart Assessor and he had increased confidence that this would lead to quality improvements if sustained. He added that college principals had fully supported changes to the staffing infrastructure to drive quality improvements.

5.3 - English and maths

In the absence of the College Principal Redcar and Cleveland College (RCC), the Interim Group Director of Quality outlined the use of the Tuition Fund to support bolster workshops and one-to-ones in English and maths to help learners to catch up. The fund would also be used to work with returners over the summer to ensure that progress made was maintained.

A member asked for clarification of the figures given in the PR3 update for the first action [REDACTED]; the Clerk **agreed** to seek clarification from the College Principal RCC and update members. In response to a member's question about ineffective use of the disciplinary process at SRC, the College Principal SRC explained that comments on low attendance in English and maths had not been consistently closed down on ProMonitor and that there had not always been timely progression to the next stage of disciplinary. The Chair requested regular updates to the committee on this.

5.4 - Student Support

The College Principal Bede reported that good progress had been made but highlighted that there had been a delay to the piloting of a half-termly mental and wellbeing student focus group as part of Redcar Headstart programme due to COVID-19; this was expected to be achieved by PR9.

5.5 - Value Added

The College Principal Bede commented that, although the lack of a full examination series for the last two years would continue to make it difficult to gauge progress in value added (VA), progress had been positive with a strong focus on effective teaching practice and promoting a culture of high aspirations in all learners.

In response to a member's question, the Interim Group Director of Quality agreed that the five GIPs combined were driving progress effectively as they represented the right focus for improvement and the action plans had been shown to work well.

Members **noted** progress against the five Group Improvement Plans for 2020-21.

SIC21/29 **Agenda Item 6 – Pastoral Update – Disciplinary and Student Behaviour**

The College Principal Bede, also strategic lead for Student Services, explained that the focus of his report was on the promotion of positive behaviour and management of disciplinary actions. Since the disruption to education caused by COVID-19, the Senior Management Team (SMT) had been aware of the rise in low level disruption on learners' return. This had been mirrored in other education sectors, including primary and secondary, with pupils often less mature than would be expected at transition stages. The current Behaviour Management Policy had been found to be suitable but would only be effective if applied consistently; commonalities across sites had been identified, including the need for consistency of initial sharing of expectations, reinforced during the year, and consistent reinforcing of behavioural expectations on college sites. An induction programme had been developed by the Student Support and Wellbeing team centred on Ready, Respect and Safe and would be delivered at curriculum and department level and revisited during the year through the tutorial and enrichment programme. Another focus would be the consistent recording and application of the disciplinary process across the Group in order to inform practice and policy change.

A member commented on the work of the Schools' Active Movement including a national survey of primary schools looking at wellbeing and behaviours. She **agreed** to send the information to the College Principal Bede.

Members **noted** the pastoral update focused on the promotion of positive behaviour and management of disciplinary actions.

SIC21/30 **Agenda Item 7 – Higher Education Update**

The College Principal SRC, also strategic lead for Higher Education (HE), gave a verbal update on HE recruitment figures for 2021-22, with improved overall recruitment since her update

was circulated. New initiatives included collaborative Higher Degree Apprenticeship development opportunities with Teesside University and partnership work with the Arc in Stockton and Billingham Forum on Repertory Performance development. A stand-alone HE and Skills department would be in place for 2021-22. The Chief Executive added that this department would include all provision at Levels 4, 5 and 6, both prescribed and non-prescribed, in order to provide a unified approach to the development of higher education and skills across Etc.

In response to a member's question about appropriate professional expertise and qualifications, the College Principal SRC confirmed that those teaching at Levels 4 and 5 would need the minimum of an undergraduate degree and that those teaching at Level 6 would need a postgraduate qualification.

Members **noted** the update.

SIC21/31 Agenda Item 8 – Destinations Update

The Interim Group Director of Quality confirmed that, at the committee's request, Destinations data for 2019-20 had been presented to show 'not known' destinations separately to negative destinations.

A member asked if the quality of the data had improved following improvements to processes and the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure confirmed that the changes allowed data to be captured and retained at four points, including a requirement to record intended destination as part of the enrolment process; the changes had also made the process easier for staff.

A member asked for a definition of 'negative destination' and the Interim Group Director of Quality explained that this captured those Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). Members discussed whether this would necessarily be a negative destination if, for example, a learner had enrolled on a course in order to develop their own skills or support their family, for example, IT skills to support home schooling rather than for employability, and whether such intended destinations could or should be captured. However, as the curriculum intent of education and training was to help learners into employment or with progression, rather than specifically personal development, an intended goal of personal development would need to be by exception. A staff governor commented that information gathered for case studies and the Self Assessment Report (SAR) reflected the richness of the impact of courses on learners that could not necessarily be demonstrated in the destinations data alone.

Members **noted** the update.

SIC21/32 Agenda Item 9 – Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

SIC21/33 Agenda Item 10 - 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 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 which were considered commercial in confidence. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

SIC21/34 Agenda Item 11 – Dates, times and venue / format of future meetings

Members **agreed** the following proposed dates for 2021-22

Thursday 23 September 2021, 5.30 pm

Thursday 18 November 2021, 5.30 pm

Thursday 17 February 2022, 5.30 pm

Thursday 26 May 2022, 5.30 pm

Members discussed preferred format, with those present supporting two meetings to be held remotely and two in college; the Clerk **agreed** to email all committee members to confirm.

SIC21/35 Agenda Item 12 – Key Themes

The following key themes were identified:

- Presentation from members of the Quality Team on a sample of courses including interventions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- Group performance outcomes 2019-20, key performance indicators 2020-21 and assessment arrangements 2021 considered, including feedback from governors' recent teaching and training walkthroughs;
- Subcontracting quality monitoring update;
- Group Improvement Plan progress updates (Teaching & Training, Apprenticeships, English & maths, Student Support, Value Added);
- Considered Pastoral care update focused on disciplinary and student behaviour, including induction, support and monitoring arrangements;
- Updates on Higher Education and destinations;
- Papers received for information - Innovation Panel, Self-Assessment and Master Targets Schedule and Careers.

SIC21/36 Information Only Items

Members **noted** the following reports given for information:

Item 13 – Innovation Panel Update

Item 14 – SAR and Master Targets Schedule

Item 15 – Careers Update

The Chair asked that any questions or comments be sent to the Clerk or Governance Support Officer in the first instance and that responses would be collated and circulated to all committee members. The Interim Group Director of Quality clarified that, with respect to the report for Item 14, a Group SAR would also be produced. The College Principal SRC highlighted that the GCSE English team had been nominated for the TES Further Education Award for outstanding GCSE resits provision; the award would be announced the following

week and some of the team's work had been supported by the Innovation Fund. Members requested an Innovation Panel Update as a main agenda item at the next meeting.

(The meeting ended at 7.40 pm)

Approved at a meeting held on 23 September 2021