Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 18th November 2021 at 5.30 pm via Teams (remote meeting technology)

Governors:	Sam Beel (Staff Governor), Vanessa Housley, Katy Ludgate (Staff Governor), Dot Smith (Chair), Anne Vickers and Gary Wright
Apologies:	Phil Cook (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Mark White, Simon Wood (prospective co-opted member)
Officials:	Phil Blewitt (NETA Managing Director (MD)), Natalie Chapman (Programme Area Leader English and Maths), Jason Faulkner (College Principal Redcar and Cleveland College), Lesley Graham (College Principal Stockton Riverside College), Phil Hastie (Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure), Ben Robinson (College Principal Bede), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation) and Peter Wood (Interim Group Director of Quality)

SIC21/50   Agenda Item 1 – Presentation – Delivering high achievement rates through blended learning, face to face and digital platforms

Natalie Chapman, Programme Area Leader English and Maths, provided a presentation around delivering high achievement rates through blended learning, face to face and digital platforms. She highlighted curriculum intent in respect of English and maths programmes, which was focussed on preparing students for their next steps in employment or education. The Group's underpinning ethos was ensuring the right course for every learner; this was identified through assessment, with functional skills courses offered to learners that needed to develop skills, and GCSE courses offered to Level 3 learners or learners that had previously completed functional skills. The COVID-19 pandemic had brought about an increase in adult learners, many reporting that they wanted to help their children.

Curriculum implementation was managed through a fit for purpose staffing structure, including two progress coaches. Delivery models aligned to the new inspection framework and focussed on recall, routine, revise, ready and repeat. Functional Skills learners were offered two one-hour sessions weekly, as well as intensive revision classes before exams. Due to national lockdowns, the Group had made use of online learning. This included development of a Teams page for all learners, online revision classes, recording of sessions and piloting of live streaming. There had been high viewing numbers for recorded sessions, with live streaming accessed by 240 additional learners. In addition, 78% of students had regularly engaged with weekly homework. Staff were able to view a breakdown of engagement for each learner and were also able to provide online feedback.

Collaboration between Stockton Riverside College and Redcar and Cleveland College staff included development of a shared Teams site, a groups maths CPD day, sharing good practice, for example, in relation to online maths provision and tracking systems, use of a buddy system to allow teams to share expertise and discuss concerns and a GCSE maths masterclass. The

buddy system had been very positively received by staff and there had been very good student engagement with the GCSE masterclass, with students commenting that they had enjoyed sessions with different tutors.

In terms of impact, quality data showed that outcomes were above national rates and student feedback was also very positive. No appeals had been received, evidencing that robust assessment processes were in place. Examples of student success were given, [REDACTED].

Governors thanked the Programme Area Leader for the presentation, commending the progress achieved in maths and English and the inspiring student stories. A staff governor highlighted the positive impact of progress coaches visiting different curriculum areas to gain more understanding of vocational areas in order to help students relate maths and English to their vocational areas. In response to a governor's query, the Programme Area Leader reported that no national data on achievement rates had been published following reforms to functional skills but national rates were reported as declining, so the Group expected their improving results to be positive. Governors were also pleased to note high levels of student engagement and the Programme Area Leader highlighted that the team had been an important link to the outside world for some students throughout lockdown. Governors were pleased to note the ways in which COVID-19 had been used as a catalyst to improve and drive forward performance.

Members **noted** the update and thanked the Programme Area Leader for the presentation.

SIC21/51   Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 23 September 2021 had been circulated and were **approved** as an accurate record.

Members considered the actions arising from previous meetings.
- In response to a query, it was confirmed that 'perfect day' had been achieved in relation to Self Assessment Reports.
- The College Principal Stockton Riverside College reported that, following a rigorous process, Kim Cutler had been appointed as Head of Department for the department of Construction, Professional and Service Industries and was expected to take up post in January 2022. Bev Cross would continue in post throughout a handover period.
- The College Principal Bede reported that debating was a key element of the curriculum at Bede across all subject areas. Debating competitions were held and this was impacting positively on student confidence.

Progress against actions was **noted.**

SIC21/52   Agenda Item 3 – Higher Education Self Evaluation Document

The College Principal Stockton Riverside College presented the circulated Higher Education Self Evaluation Document and clarified that this would be used as an internal document. The document would be shared with Teesside University and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

in the event of any QAA visit but no visit was currently scheduled. 12 months' notice of any QAA visit would be provided.

There was a mixed picture in relation to higher education provision and a comprehensive action plan had been developed and would be presented to the next meeting of this committee. Four courses had been of concern in 2020-21 and all had improved. One course remained a concern, primarily due to historic issues around retention. The outcomes of the National Student Survey had been disappointing but this had been undertaken during a lockdown period and the impact of COVID-19 on students was recognised. There had been particular frustration among Counselling students who were very keen to apply their knowledge more proactively. An internal student survey prior to lockdown had shown very positive outcomes. A number of areas were showing good outcomes that were above national rates. The committee Chair reported that she had met the College Principal Stockton Riverside College and Higher Education Programme Area Leader to discuss the Self Evaluation Document and Action Plan and had been very reassured that appropriate action was being taken.

Governors queried whether the Group had reviewed marketing to take account of the wider impact of COVID-19. The College Principal Stockton Riverside College confirmed that she had discussed the Group's approach to marketing with the Group Marketing Director. She highlighted that there had been an increase in full-time students and a reduction in part time students, which reflected employer and employee concerns about job security, and also a reduced appetite for young people to leave home to undertake higher education courses. Nationally, higher education numbers were increasing but there had been a fall in higher education student numbers in Teesside and campaigns focussed on 'study local' were in place but would take time to impact.

There had been a further impact following the merger of TTE and Middlesbrough College, as TTE learners were progressing to Middlesbrough College rather than Stockton Riverside College. The impact of this had been a reduction of [REDACTED] of learners on Higher National Certificate (HNC) courses. Action taken by the Group included creation of an Engineering Partnerships Officer post.

Members thanked the College Principal Stockton Riverside College and HE Programme Area Leader for the update and were pleased to note many positive outcomes, including in relation to academic standards. The HE Programme Area Leader was now also lead for Higher Level Skills and was undertaking walkthroughs with departmental leaders.

Members **agreed** to recommend the Higher Education Self Evaluation Document for approval by the FE Corporation.

(Sam Beel left the meeting during this item.)

SIC21/53   Agenda Item 4 – Group Improvement Plans Update

The Interim Group Director of Quality presented the circulated report and final Group Improvement Plans for 2021-22. He clarified that updates against each Group Improvement

Plan (GIP) would be considered as part of the Performance Review process and reported to the Standards Improvement Committee. The following interim updates were provided:

Apprenticeships
The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships reported that the 2021-22 Apprenticeships GIP was focussed on teaching and learning. To date, 45% of assessing staff had been subject to the teaching and learning review process, Continuous Professional Development had been rolled out and use of Smart Assessor was beginning to become embedded and this was becoming a helpful management. Quality assurance checks were commencing.

Value added and high grades
The College Principal Bede highlighted that use of Teacher Assessed Grades in 2021 had resulted in higher target grades for students. The impact of the GIP would be clearer following Performance Review 3.

Teaching and Learning
This would be covered through Item 5, Quality Update.

Missed Learning
The Interim Group Director of Quality highlighted the impact of missed learning on areas such as work experience, relationships with employers and learners' lost confidence. The Business Engagement team was supporting in these areas. There was also a focus on mental health resilience and a College Collaboration Fund project was being undertaken in relation to this. Governors were pleased to note the focus on mental health and well-being. Governors queried how progress would be monitored in some less quantifiable areas of the Missed Learning GIP and the Interim Director of Quality highlighted that attendance, retention and destinations data, as well as learning walkthroughs would evidence the impact of support for learners. Consideration would also be given to impact of removal of support, and whether learners were able to manage independently,

Members **noted** the final Group Improvement Plans for 2021-22 and the progress updates.

SIC21/54   Agenda Item 5 – Quality Update

The Interim Director of Quality presented the circulated report and highlighted that meet and greets with learners were continuing and were including questions similar to those which could be asked by an Ofsted inspector. This was providing good learner feedback and allowing the Group to address issues. As one example, learners had highlighted issues with WiFi and, as a result, technicians would be more visible and would help students to get set up with WiFi, for example, on their phones.

In relation to teaching and learning, it was positive that staff had the confidence to explain the strategies they were using and why, for example, interleaving learning. Work was continuing to improve the coaching model; in most cases, teachers and assessors were working with a coach on a specific area. [REDACTED] Governors were pleased to note that the Group was able to provide focussed support for pedagogy. Governors queried whether it could be appropriate

to review induction to ensure this was rigorous and the Interim Director of Quality highlighted that each new staff member had mentor and coaching support and was also part of a 'new to Further Education' group, as well as part of the departmental staff development process. With some colleagues, for example, those with an industry background, there was a lot of strength in relation to rapport and respect from students but the lack of teaching experience meant that more support was required in relation to this. In response to a further query, the Interim Director of Quality confirmed that all staff were subject to a probationary period.

Governors queried [REDACTED] attendance at Bede in the 19+ cohort. The College Principal Bede clarified that this was a very small cohort of nine students [REDACTED]. There were no concerns and the college made every effort to ensure all students remained fully engaged and had the best opportunities.

Members commented that it would be helpful to better articulate risks, both in relation to this report and more widely.

In response to further queries, it was confirmed that there was no further indication as to when an Ofsted inspection was likely to happen. Regionally, Bishop Auckland College was currently being inspected and East Durham College had achieved an Ofsted grade of 'good'. Published inspection reports confirmed the focus on teaching and learning and did not indicate any likely lines of inquiry that were of concern for the college.

The update was **noted.**

SIC21/55   Agenda Item 6 – Subcontracting Quality Monitoring

The Group Vice Principal Business Innovation and Partnerships presented the circulated report outlining data for 2020-21. He confirmed that there were no areas of concern and monitoring visits were taking place. The Group was no longer working with some subcontractors, for example, Orangebox and Flexi, but South Tees was a new subcontractor and the first cohort was now in progress. Governors commended the procedures in place which provided a high level of monitoring, support and guidance. The Group Vice Principal Business Innovation and Partnerships highlighted that a new subcontracting standard was being introduced Some actions would be needed and the picture was evolving. A further report would be provided to a future meeting of the committee.

The update was **noted**.

SIC21/56   Agenda Item 7 – Pastoral Update

The College Principal Bede presented the circulated report providing an overview of induction, tutorial, enrichment and quality assurance arrangements. He reported that, on further investigation, it had been identified that the apparent low delivery of induction and mandatory tutorials at Stockton Riverside College related to incorrect recording [REDACTED] Delivery of mandatory tutorials in November was expected to be at least 90% across all Group sites. Governors commended the high level of delivery in relation to induction.

Governors thanked the College Principal for the update and **noted** the report.

SIC21/57   Agenda Item 8 – Destinations of Vulnerable Groups

The Interim Group Director of Quality presented the circulated report and confirmed that work was ongoing to identify additional data sets, for example, destinations for students with a social worker. Governors confirmed that the analysis was very helpful. In response to a query regarding formative use of data, the Interim Group Director of Quality highlighted that further work was needed to identify whether there were particular issues impacting in relation to amber / yellow-rated groups. The College Principal Redcar and Cleveland College highlighted that learners with Education and Health Care Plans moving to social care were noted as a negative destination in relation to government data, even where this was an aim of an Education and Health Care Plan. This would always be an issue and the Group had a clear narrative relating to this.

The report was **noted.**

SIC21/58   Agenda Item 9 – Strategies and Policies

Governors **agreed** the following circulated strategies and policies:
- English and Mathematics Strategy for 2021-22;
- T Levels Strategy for 2021-22;
- Teaching and Training Strategy for 2021-22;
- Behaviour Management Policy for 2021-22.

The T Level Link Governor reported on discussion with the College Principal Stockton Riverside College, T Level Strategic Lead, in relation to progress with T Levels. This included promotion to students and the wider population and the importance of clarity in encouraging student applications. The College Principal Stockton Riverside College confirmed that T Levels had been discussed with the Student Engagement Team and the Marketing Team was now further stepping up marketing for T Levels. It was expected that the application target for T Levels would be achieved during the upcoming open evening at Stockton Riverside College as there had been a high level of interest. A member highlighted that careers training for primary and secondary schools incorporated information relating to T Levels.

Governors queried whether the college Group was confident it could deliver against the 42-day work placement requirement. The College Principal Stockton Riverside College highlighted that some areas already provided high levels of placements but there were some areas where issues were expected and the Business Engagement Team had been working on these areas.

In response to a query relating to the digital route, the College Principal Stockton Riverside College clarified that the Group had initially anticipated some starts in this area in the 2022-23 academic year but a decision had been made to move the starts to a different area, in order to ensure the delivery team was in the best possible position. The Group recognised that programme and software development was a very significant employment area. In response to a further query, it was confirmed that the current T Level course did not include cyber security but other options were available and could be considered in future years.

The update was **noted.**

SIC21/59   Agenda Item 10 – Teaching and Training Walkthroughs

A report had been circulated outlining feedback from recent teaching and training walkthroughs and the Chair thanked governors that had taken part in learning walkthroughs (Rob Mitchell, Fabienne Bailey, Gary Wright and Vanessa Housley) as well as the Interim Group Director Quality and Teaching and Training Manager for their support with the process.

Vanessa Housley thanked the Interim Director of Quality for supporting learning walkthroughs, and colleagues for such an open and honest relationship. She reported that she had been able to undertake initial and return visits and had identified progress between visits. She gave an example of a walkthrough in which there had been clear evidence of the impact of coaching, with more evident differentiation, greater student engagement and increased teacher confidence.

Members **noted** the update and thanked governors involved in learning walkthroughs for their support.

SIC21/60   Agenda Item 11 – Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

The Chair thanked attendees for their reports and contributions.

SIC21/61   Agenda Item 12 - 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 8 which were considered commercial in confidence. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

SIC21/62   Agenda Item 13 – Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 17 February 2022 at 5.30 pm on Teams

SIC21/63   Agenda Item 14 – Key Themes

The following key themes were identified:
- Presentation from Redcar and Cleveland College Maths Team on blended learning and digital platforms – COVID-19 as the catalyst for new ways of working, leading to improved quality outcomes
- Approval of HE Self Evaluation Document – noted increase in full time higher education students, impact of TTE partnership with Middlesbrough College in terms of fewer learners progressing to HNC, good outcomes in relation to academic standards and development of comprehensive action plan to address areas of concern

- Noted progress against Group Improvement Plans – pleasing to see focus on mental health and wellbeing
- Noted quality position across Group and subcontractors – meet and greet was ensuring rapid resolution of issues raised by students; no areas of concern in relation to subcontractors
- Received update on induction, pastoral care and enrichment, including delivery of mandatory tutorials – review of reporting undertaken to ensure accurate information available
- Feedback from learning walks, including visible impact of support, for example in student engagement
- Approved quality-related policies and strategies under the committee's delegated authority (English and maths Strategy, T Levels Strategy, Teaching and Learning Strategy, Behaviour Management Policy)

(*The meeting ended at 7.30 pm*)

Approved at a meeting held on 17 February 2022