

## Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 10 April 2025 at 5.30 pm, H202 Redcar and Cleveland College

<b>Committee members:</b>	Lydia Jones (Co-opted FE student), Dot Smith (Chair), Jane Spence (Co-opted member), Kirsty Wharton and Gary Wright (Safeguarding Link Governor)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Liz Dixon (Staff Governor) and Grant Glendinning (Chief Executive and Group Principal),
<b>In attendance:</b>	Ofsted Group members for item 2 only, via Teams: Louise Davies, Amanda Olvanhill and David Watson
<b>Officials:</b>	Rebecca Cadden (Vice Principal Curriculum, Stockton Riverside College), Sarah Johnson (Vice Principal Curriculum, Redcar & Cleveland College), Patrick Jordan (College Principal Bede Sixth Form College), Rory McIntosh (Curriculum Manager, NETA Government Funded), Alys Tregear (Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing), Peter Wood (Group Director of Quality) Sarah Thompson (Group Director of Governance) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

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### SIC25/18 Agenda Item 1 – Welcome, apologies for absence, declarations of interest, notification of items of other business

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and a round of introductions took place; the Chair thanked Rory McIntosh and Alys Tregear for attending to present items on behalf of the Managing Director NETA and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, respectively. Ofsted Group members had also been invited specifically for agenda item 2, *Ofsted feedback*.

Apologies for absence had been received from Liz Dixon and Grant Glendinning and were **accepted**.

Gary Wright declared an interest as a senior manager working across the North and South Tees NHS trusts; there were no further declarations of interest in items on the agenda. There were no items of additional business notified.

### SIC25/19 Agenda Item 2 – Ofsted feedback

The Group Director of Quality gave a presentation outlining initial feedback from the recent Ofsted inspection and the proposed new Ofsted framework (*committee members' questions and comments in italics*):

- The group's current Ofsted grade profile - Outstanding overall with Effective Safeguarding and Strong Contribution to Skills
  - *What proportion of colleges Outstanding?* Probably 10% though perhaps not all with so many individual areas graded as Outstanding; Outstanding felt to be more difficult for college groups to achieve.

- Summary of inspector comments from feedback meetings shared:
  - One inspector commented that they'd never been part of an inspection of a provider so humble despite being so exceptional.
  - Student examples: an inspector witnessing one student correcting another for swearing in a corridor; during the maths deep dive, a student saying they loved the college so much they would just walk round the building for pleasure.
  - Student focus groups – every student talked about the group's culture and could articulate safeguarding measures, the local context and members of the safeguarding team; comments that every staff member cares and all concerns were dealt with.
  - Single Central Record: favourable comments on the software package used and the quality assurance it provided.
  - *Tone of voice: we're not brash or showy but is this the time to support other local colleges to be outstanding?* Probably the right time to embrace the systems leadership agenda; currently bidding for evidence informed practice project funding
  - The Vice Principal (VP) Stockton Riverside College (SRC), also Ofsted Skills nominee, reported positive comments from stakeholder meetings.
  - Staff had confirmed that they hadn't done anything different during the inspection week and managers felt they had strong areas to put forward all week. *A member commented that students would have taken confidence from seeing business as usual.*
- New inspection framework: strong focus on developing high quality teaching and training and staff development and its impact. In the leadership inspection toolkit, there was also emphasis on leaders actively pursuing their own professional development and acting as role models for staff. It was noted that there had been some negative feedback to the Ofsted consultation so it was possible there would be changes.
  - *Was it true that Ofsted planned to stop deep dives and put more emphasis on data and what would the implications be for observation of teaching and students?* Possible that the inspection would be spread more widely and have a broader focus but it would still incorporate classroom visits and work scrutiny; however, the methodology for carrying out inspections was not yet clear
  - *Would 18 to 20 evaluations be confusing to parents/carers, employers and students?* Agreed that confusing and possibly contradictory so the group would need to think carefully about how crucial information and key messages were communicated to our communities and stakeholders.
  - Example framework for exceptional curriculum leadership shared, noting that this would inform the structure of staff development programmes.
  - *Had the inspectors asked about the research used to inform current Continuing Professional Development (CPD)?* Inspectors hadn't probed this in the leadership and management meeting though may well have seen enough during deep dives and been able to triangulate. The leadership and management inspector also didn't ask about governor challenge having probably gained sufficient evidence from the governor meeting and minutes.
  - Teaching, learning and assessment at the group – moving forward: more of an evolution as processes already well embedded, with different evidence informed

resources used for different departments and subjects. The group had also had two case studies published in the Department for Education's (DfE's) Powerful Pedagogy.

- The difference the group makes on acknowledged areas for development had been evidenced by how far apprenticeships had come; the Good judgement for apprenticeships recognised that, although the data was on an upward trend, it did not yet reflect the full impact of the changes.
- The group would continue to drive improvements and avoid complacency.
- Once the new inspection framework was finalised, plans could be consolidated and launched during summer CPD in time for the 2025-26 academic year.

Members **noted** the update and commended the quality team for already looking forward rather than resting on their laurels. It was **agreed** that a letter of thanks should be sent to the Apprenticeship Council from the committee acknowledging their work which had resulted in a strong Good judgement for apprenticeships.

*Louise Davies, Amanda Olvanhill and David Watson left the meeting.*

### **SIC25/20 Agenda Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 23 January 2025 had been circulated and were **approved** as an accurate record. Members thanked the Governance Team for the quality of minutes which captured the tone of meetings well.

The action progress log had been circulated and was **noted**.

- The VP Curriculum SRC noted she had met with Liz Dixon, exploring possible efficiencies in Skills Tracker, work experience tracking. ProMonitor and bursary; changes had already been made to, for example, bursary systems with other improvements to be put in place for the start of the next academic year.
- It was noted that the suggested demonstration of the progress monitoring tool would take place at the committee's next meeting.

### **SIC25/05 Agenda Item 3 – Managing risks**

An update on the risks particularly relevant to the committee – Strategic Risk 8: Curriculum Development and Strategic Risk 9: Quality of Student Experience and Welfare – had been circulated.

The Governance Support Officer clarified that both the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and the Risk Management Group (RMG) had felt that an [REDACTED] risk appetite for Strategic Risk 8 would be appropriate but that ARC had also wished to seek advice from this committee. It was noted that, as governors could have confidence that the quality of education was strong, there was scope to be innovative and more open to curriculum development opportunities. Members also noted that the slow pace and drip feed approach of government reforms caused some frustrations for curriculum planning.

Similarly, it was noted that RMG and ARC had proposed a [REDACTED] risk appetite for Strategic Risk 9; both the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing and the Group Director of Quality felt that this was appropriate, noting the embedding of a relatively new

Student Experience team and the continuing challenging environment for students. Members noted the importance of the welfare of vulnerable learners with any undue risks avoided. It was, however, noted that the net risk score of [REDACTED] was quite high and **agreed** that the net risk score should be reviewed by RMG, including possible additional controls to address the mismatch with risk appetite. It was acknowledged that the net risk might need to remain higher with the release of a new Ofsted framework.

Members **noted** the risks relevant to the committee and **confirmed** their support for the proposed [REDACTED] risk appetite for Strategic Risk 8: Curriculum Development and [REDACTED] risk appetite for Strategic Risk 9: Quality of the Student Experience and Welfare.

## **SIC25/22 Agenda Item 5 – Quality and performance update**

The Group Director of Quality presented an update on quality and performance data including in year attendance and retention; national achievement rate tables for 2023-24; and priorities for the coming year in relation to ‘at risk’ apprentices’ achievement and high grades and value added. Attendance had been recognised as a strength by Ofsted.

It was highlighted that predicted achievement for apprentices in Construction, Engineering and Service Industries (CESI) at Redcar and Cleveland College (RCC) had fallen [REDACTED] since last reported. [REDACTED] support was being provided for issues delaying achievement [REDACTED] Predicted achievement was expected to improve. The Group Director of Quality also flagged that Electrical was being supported by a Rapid Improvement Plan (RIP).

A member asked about the relatively low attendance at Skills Academy and the Group Director of Quality explained that a Quality and Enhanced Learning Review (Q&ELR) had evidenced that Skills Academy students faced considerable barriers, including being Electively Home Educated (EHE) and at risk of exclusion. It had also provided assurance that Skills Academy staff worked on attendance in fine detail, using sophisticated strategies. The data reflected the nature of the students with low numbers, only [REDACTED] learners, also skewing the percentages. Case studies for Ofsted inspectors had demonstrated that Skills Academy learners had had lower attendance rates at school, evidencing that interventions were starting to have a positive impact. It was also noted that attendance rates had improved over the year and the committee agreed that this demonstrated the impact of the Attendance Strategy. The VP Curriculum RCC highlighted that work on attendance was never complete and that plans for the following academic year involved using data more effectively; the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing added that, when working with vulnerable cohorts, the safeguarding and welfare teams used attendance as an indicator of potential contributory issues.

A member asked about the Ofsted gradings for the three General FE (GFE) colleges above Etc. in the national achievement rates table; it was confirmed that Burnley and City of Wolverhampton colleges were both graded Good and Nelson Colne College Outstanding. It was noted that Etc. was the top performing college group in the north east for overall achievement rates, with Education Partnership North East (EPNE) the region’s top performing college group for 16 to 18 achievement.

Members **noted** the quality update, including the areas for concern flagged and the impressive overall achievement rates placing Etc. fourth highest nationally for overall achievement rates and 6.2% above the national rate.

#### **SIC25/23 Agenda Item 6 – Group Development Plans 2024-25**

The Group Director of Quality presented updates on the Group Development Plans (GDPs) following Quarterly Review 2 (Q2), noting that, through an open and honest self assessment, this suite of four GDPs had been developed. He added that colleagues owned, led and drove the actions in GDPs and had been able to evidence this during the Ofsted inspection. For example, value added at Bede Sixth Form had become an inspection focus but managers could evidence that the issue had not been ignored and the improvement measures put in place. The Chair commented that the Self Assessment Report (SAR) had been graded Good overall at the start of the academic year which demonstrated the progress made over the year.

##### Attendance (Lead: VP Curriculum RCC)

Acknowledging that work on attendance was never complete, the design of next year's attendance strategy was underway. Having seen their impact, expectations panels would be held each term and RIPS used where there were concerns over behaviour and expectations. Recognising that attendance was often an indicator of other issues, developments would focus on understanding the communities served by the group's colleges. Members were pleased to note the improved communications with parents and the strong progress made.

##### Enhancing the Curriculum (Lead: Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing)

Recognising the previously disjointed tutorial and enrichment offer, key themes had been introduced for each half term and the Student Experience and Wellbeing team were working more collaboratively with curriculum teams. The strength of the offer had been recognised by Ofsted. Quality assurance processes, with regular and timely checks, had been crucial in ensuring consistency and the knowledge checks introduced at Bede would be rolled out across the group. The plan also had flexibility to respond to emerging national and local risks, for example, sextortion and the Adolescence series. A student Affinity Group had also been introduced to align with the staff Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Group and there were more opportunities for students to take part in social action. Overall, the GDP had created solid foundations for enhancements next year.

A member asked if tutors felt comfortable with tutorial delivery and the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing explained that tutorial delivery workshops were delivered and also made available as recordings; managers were also identifying staff with development needs and more timely release of resources enabled tutors to prepare better.

In response to a member's question about adult learners' awareness of and access to the PAM Wellbeing app, the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing confirmed that

this had been followed up, with classroom visits held to help raise awareness; the team were also working with Smoothwall on presentations for students on online risks.

#### Stretch and Challenge (Lead: College Principal Bede)

Good progress with this GDP raising the visibility of value added and high grades was noted. Though in its infancy, staff compliance with OneGrade was excellent reflecting its ease of use. Department for Education (DfE) performance tables for 2023-24 had now been incorporated and would provide real comparative data; these were mainly for academic courses but did include other courses such as T Levels. A High Grades Council, based on the Apprenticeship Council model, had been launched with its first meeting the previous week.

Acknowledging the great work and the high compliance across the group, a member asked if the same monitoring process could be used for ungraded qualifications; the College Principal Bede confirmed that OneGrade was being used for these qualifications, with parent reports created based on matching percentage ranges with bespoke interpreted statements. He added that attendance texts were also working well and that attendance data was also pulled into progress reports.

#### Teaching and Learning (Lead: Group Director of Quality)

The plan was currently focused on supporting managers in their observation practice; curriculum leaders involved in Ofsted deep dives had been particularly impressive with their strong understanding of pedagogy, the curriculum and stakeholders.

A member commented on the impressive range of external collaboration and also the development of the group's Teaching and Learning Collective (TLC). The Group Director of Quality confirmed that the TLC had generated real interest across the group, with around 30 staff having already volunteered to act as champions.

Members **noted** the GDP progress updates, recognising the progress made over the year and future plans.

### **Agenda Item 7 – Areas for development update**

#### **SIC25/24 7.1 – Areas for development not included in Group Development Plans**

An update on areas identified for development but not included in the GDPs had been circulated; the Group Director of Quality confirmed that current retention among students with social workers stood at [REDACTED]%. Members also noted that attendance for Looked after children (LAC) at RCC the previous week had been [REDACTED]%.

Members **noted** the update and the positive retention and attendance data for vulnerable cohorts.

#### **SIC25/25 7.2 – Progress in curriculum areas**

##### Maths and English attendance at NETA

The Curriculum Manager NETA Government Funded presented an update; attendance had been just over [REDACTED]% for English and maths in 2023-24 and, as it was hard to

change habits mid-year, a full review had taken place over the summer. At level 2, maths and English learners were grouped together to make timetabling more learner friendly and curriculum teams made more accountable for attendance. A change in staff culture also emphasised the importance of attendance and the need for students to achieve their level 2 English and maths qualifications to progress to apprenticeships. Working alongside the SRC team, there was a renewed focus on attendance in January with non-attendance immediately resulting in a phone call home and buy in from engineering tutors. Current attendance to date for both English and maths was just over [REDACTED]% and was expected to be in line with overall attendance by the end of the year.

In response to a member's question, the Curriculum Manager agreed that parents had appreciated being informed of non-attendance and this parental buy-in had been valuable. Timetabling with subject cohorts and emphasising the importance of English and maths for pursuing an engineering career had also been impactful.

Members **noted** the update, recognising the success of actions taken to improve English and maths attendance at NETA, giving learners a greater opportunity to achieve the grades required to progress.

#### Construction – Redcar and Cleveland College

The Vice Principal Curriculum RCC explained that the development plan for Construction, including wet trades and carpentry and joinery, was owned and driven by the CESI curriculum manager and reviewed through quarterly review meetings, with Q3 taking place after Easter. The plan included increasing work experience and work related activity; greater parental engagement to drive improvements in attendance; timely completion and achievement of apprentices; and providing developmental and meaningful feedback. A RIP had also been put in place in response to significant staffing changes. As a result, attendance had improved from around [REDACTED]% to over [REDACTED]% since January.

A member commented that it was positive to see the range of companies offering work experience and the VP Curriculum RCC added that 30 Etc. students had taken part in a Skills Competition at SRC that day.

Members **noted** the positive impact of the Construction development plan and the resulting enhancements to students' learning experience and personal development.

#### **SIC25/26 Agenda Item 8 – Subcontracting quality monitoring**

A report detailing quality activities with the group's approved subcontractors had been circulated, with subcontractor retention currently at [REDACTED]% and King's Trust retention at [REDACTED]%. Members noted the robustness of subcontracting quality monitoring, the receptiveness of subcontractors to feedback, with strong professional relationships and collaborative working evidenced during the Ofsted inspection. It was also noted that since the last report RelyOn had been inspected by Ofsted, with informal feedback indicating that the visit had been positive.

A member asked about the new subcontracting arrangement with Teesside University; noting previous retention and achievement issues with Teesside University apprentices, the Group Director of Quality assured members that the delivery of Adult Skills Fund (ASF) programmes in Transformational Leadership should not face similar issues. The group had been approached directly by the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) to subcontract with Teesside University and two employers were already lined up.

In response to a member's question, the Group Director of Quality confirmed that subcontracting allocations would be delivered and that regular subcontracting monitoring meetings took place. The Group Director of Governance gave the committee assurance that subcontracting finances were reported to Finance, Capital and Resources Committee.

Members **noted** the robust subcontracting quality assurance arrangements, with provision also reviewed during the recent Ofsted inspection, and the positive relationships with subcontractors.

#### **SIC25/27 Agenda Item 9 – Personal Development update**

The Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing presented the personal development update, noting that much had already been covered in previous agenda items. Involvement had increased by 20% on the previous year and, with a more joined up approach, personal development was supporting the curriculum experience more effectively. Observations by Ofsted reflected the hard work and commitment by staff and students to personal development. The following year's programme was already under development building on the progress in both personal development and careers made during the current year.

Members **noted** the progress made over the year and the positive Ofsted feedback on personal development; the committee asked the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing to pass on their thanks to the personal development team.

#### **SIC25/28 Agenda Item 10 – Policies**

The Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing outlined a proposal to defer a full review of the Relationships and Behaviour Policy to the committee's summer term meeting. The intention was to use the current policy, subject to the updating of the named lead manager, until July 2025 and then update it in line with the annual Keeping Children Safe in Education updates. She added that the policy's consistent application ensured that all students, especially those without parental support, were treated fairly. The Safeguarding Link Governor stressed the importance of recognising that there were some parents who either could not or would not offer learners support and ensuring that those without a role model were not disadvantaged.

Members **agreed** minor amendments to the Relationships and Behaviour Policy and to defer a full review of the policy to July 2025 in line with annual updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education.

#### **SIC25/29 Agenda Item 11 – Any Other Business**



The Committee Chair asked if there was any further detail on the government's £625m funding for ten Construction Centres of Excellence; the Vice Principal Curriculum RCC explained that these could be consortiums and that the Deputy Chief Executive Officer had begun initial discussions with other colleges across the Tees Valley on a potential submission. She confirmed that these Centres of Excellence would only be aligned with housebuilding.

Members thanked Dot Smith for her work as committee chair, adding that her leadership had been instrumental in achieving Ofsted Outstanding.

#### **SIC25/30 Agenda Item 12 – Approval of Documents for Public Inspection**

It was **agreed** that the agenda of the current meeting be made available for public inspection; supporting documents were deemed confidential for reasons of commerciality. The Relationships and Behaviour Policy would be made available on the Etc. website and minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

#### **SIC25/31 Agenda Item 13 – Date, time and venue of next meeting**

Thursday 12 June 2025, 5.30 pm, Stockton Riverside College Boardroom

#### **SIC25/32 Agenda Item 17 – Meeting Review and Key themes**

- i) Meeting effectiveness and impact, particularly What went well? Even better if ... :
  - An incredibly positive meeting reflecting the recent Ofsted Outstanding – normal service to resume in June!
  - The attendance and input from the Group Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing and the Curriculum Manager NETA Government Funded had brought different perspectives to the meeting
- ii) Relevant strategic risks
  - Use of GDPs as a risk control giving an open and honest assessment of progress
  - Honesty from management on what needs tackling creating a safe environment
- iii) Key messages or issues to highlight to the Corporation:
  - Recognition of the exceptional Ofsted grade, giving the Etc. an opportunity to provide systems leadership and to influence and contribute to the development of practice across the FE sector for the benefit of staff and students in other colleges
  - Preparations already underway for the next inspection under the proposed new Ofsted inspection framework
  - The positive impact of the Group Development Plans evidenced by the progress made since the start of the year

*(The meeting ended at 7.15 pm)*

**Approved at a meeting held on 12 June 2025**