

Minutes of a meeting of Learning & Quality Committee Held at the College at 4pm on 05 March 2020

Present: Katie Danvers Hewitt, Tim Mason & John Royston-Ford (Chair).

Apologies: Karen Wood (Staff Governor)

In Attendance:

Liz Davies	Quality & Standards Manager
Kara Hall	Learning & Development Manager
Sue Martin	Interim Vice-Principal Quality & Learning
Craig Mincher	Director Employer & Commercial Services
Paola Schweitzer	Clerk to the Corporation

Minutes

1 – Standing Items

001 Apologies for Absence

Karen sent her apologies.

002 Membership

John welcomed members to the first Learning & Quality Committee meeting, noting that it had a critical role to play at this important time. The Committee had one vacancy that would be addressed when the Board was up to full strength. Sue had recently attended a Portsmouth Secondary Heads meeting and wondered whether this group might be an opportunity for governor recruitment. Paola noted that a representative of this group had previously been a governor. It was **Agreed** Sue/Paola would discuss this matter further with Martin/Penny.

003 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2 – Matters for Discussion & Decision

004 **Committee Terms of Reference & Business Plan**

Paper 2592/20/L&Q set out the Committee's Terms of Reference and draft business plan. The Terms of Reference had been referred by Corporation to the Committee for consideration at their first meeting. Several amendments had been made following a meeting between Sue and Paola.

Members noted that the College's educational character (paragraph 1.2) would be discussed at the Strategy Planning Day on 16 March 2020 and that human resource issues would now be considered by Search & Governance Committee. One member asked where continuous professional development (CPD) featured in the Committee's responsibilities to which Sue responded that it was embedded in the Quality Strategy and QIP. There was a brief discussion about the number of meetings per year, with members agreeing to keep this under review. Members considered learner voice and agreed that Liz and Paola would amend the business plan to ensure it was reported on at appropriate points during the academic year.

Members **Agreed** to recommend the Committee Terms of Reference and Business Plan 2020 to Corporation for approval.

005 **Quality Strategy 2017-2020**

Paper 2593/20/L&Q set out the Quality Strategy, updated to reflect the Education Inspection Framework and new management and meeting structures.

The annual quality cycle had been changed to enhance links and impact and to incorporate apprenticeships and HE provision. This had already resulted in improved compliance, greater collaboration and sharing of good practice. The streamlined teaching and learning support structure was more tailored and positive and was primarily delivered through team leaders to reduce the loss of teaching time. There were five Advanced Practitioners, all of whom had remission from teaching. One would shortly receive intensive ProMonitor training in order to become a ProMonitor champion. The College had moved to a non-graded internal lesson observation scheme and this was perceived by staff to be a more supportive and developmental process. Katie raised the issue of CPD, stressing the importance of staff undertaking external professional development. Sue stated that whilst the College couldn't afford teachers to be out of classrooms at this point in time and that there were budgetary constraints, external CPD was taking place through back to the floor days, peer reviews, learning communities with other organisations and visits to other colleges. She noted that Highbury College did a lot more CPD than some other organisations.

Members **Agreed** the updates to the Quality Strategy.

006 **Quality Improvement Plan**

The Quality Improvement Plan provided an overarching summary of the headline

actions required to drive improvement at the College. Sue provided an update on actions (paper 2594/20/L&Q), noting that progress had been made in line with and proportionate to this stage in the academic cycle. Each action was RAG rated, with a commentary on progress in the penultimate column. It was not yet possible to demonstrate impact as the actions had yet to be fully completed.

Members **Noted** progress against the actions in the Quality Improvement Plan.

007 Teaching & Learning Update

The first section of the teaching and learning update (paper 2595/20/L&Q) outlined the observation process and the second section outlined the current position.

All teaching staff have at least one formal core observation a year. They are given notification of these observations. Observations are linked to performance reviews but are not graded. Support is put in place for those not meeting quality expectations and a second observation takes place when support is complete. Development activities include an annual Teacher & Assessor Conference and mentoring. There have been 42 core observations in 2019/20, with eight teachers requiring re-observation. Areas for development included more effective checking of learning, development/embedding of ME (maths & English) and setting of class behaviour standards. Six of these teachers have now been re-observed and are meeting expectations (the remaining two have yet to be re-observed). Unannounced learning walks are supportive and developmental, identifying themes about the quality of education. Feedback is not formally given to staff unless requested. All staff have now had at least one learning walk and strengths and areas for development have been identified.

In response to a question, Kara confirmed that the observations were carried out by qualified teachers and that the plan was for team leaders to carry out observations when they had been in post for longer. Kara reported that teachers no longer dreaded being observed and welcomed the sharing of lessons and good practice. Teachers were not fearful of the imminent Ofsted inspection and there had been a real shift in staff morale. Following requests and feedback from learning walks, Kara had compiled a long list of training and hoped to do more short digital training videos as well as providing opportunities for the sharing of good practice. One member said there was clearly a feeling of improvement and asked what the teaching and learning issues were. Kara responded that time had been spent on getting the schemes of work right as they were of paramount importance in showing the sequencing of learning. Previously there had been a focus on lesson plans and the schemes of work had been very onerous.

Members **Noted** the teaching and learning update.

008 Apprenticeship Update

Paper 2596/20/L&Q outlined the current position of the College's apprenticeship provision which was currently being reviewed under a Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) notice by the ESFA due to the poor rate (60.9%) of successful completions of students who enrolled in 2015/16 and 2016/17. The MLP could lead to a ban on the recruitment of apprentices and therefore posed a serious risk to the College. Appended to the report was the mitigation statement for the ESFA outlining the underpinning issues (use of an external recruitment company and management issues within the College) and quality improvement measures taken.

Members welcomed the fact that apprenticeships were now part of the College's quality processes and in response to a question Sue confirmed that the discussions with the ESFA were positive. The Chair asked about the 233 apprentices passed their end date and Craig clarified that 79 apprentices had achieved, with the majority of the rest still in learning but out of funding. Whilst the College was committed to finishing their learning, it needed to avoid this situation arising again. It was likely that the 2018/19 baseline would drop, however the apprentices that had started this year were doing well and employers were beginning to return to the College. Craig stated the importance of working with businesses to identify opportunities which would impact on their growth aspirations and noted that the Birmingham Office was very effective as staff had the necessary mindset. One member believed apprenticeships needed to be discussed at the Strategy Planning Day in the context of the College's educational character. The discussion concluded with Sue noting that the sector was struggling with apprenticeships and that whilst performance was disappointing, the College was now on the right track.

Members **Noted** the apprenticeship update.

The Chair thanked members for a good first meeting and emphasised the importance of reading papers in advance of the meeting as they were likely to be data heavy.

The meeting finished at 5.30pm.

Date of next meeting 29 April 2020.