



MINUTES OF THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING

Held At Esher College

Tuesday, 24th April 2018, at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Clarissa Wilks (Chair)
Darrell Bate
Ian Leigh

Daniel Loughlin
Karin Rowsell

Helen Odhams – Deputy Principal (Advising Officer)
Dan Hards – Assistant Principal (Advising officer)
Rebecca De’Ath - Clerk to the Corporation

1. BUSINESS INTERESTS IN AGENDA ITEMS

No business interests were declared.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Paul Collyer and Emily Thomas.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH OCTOBER 2017

There was a typographical error in the header references on pages 2-4. Other than this, the minutes were approved as a true record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

QS1-001: Progress of learner groups – action will be taken for the autumn meeting to capture 6.1 statistics alongside 6.2 data for the same cohorts, and to identify the number of students in each group to determine whether the data is skewed, or is significant.

QS1-002: CIF Action Plan – action completed (see item 7, below).

QS1-003: Committee autumn meeting date (see AOB, below). Members were given handouts of the Numeracy Strategy and Quality Assurance guidelines at the meeting. One Governor also requested electronic versions.

ACTION: Deputy Principal to email Governors who requested electronic copies of the Numeracy Strategy and Q&A guidelines.

5. UPDATE ON COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT GROUPS

The Deputy Principal explained that different working parties in the College developed various quality initiatives. She felt it would be useful to inform the meeting of the work of the three key parties: Departmental SAR working party, Assessment and Feedback working group, and the Marking Records group.

Departmental SAR Working Group:

The current focus of this group is for the Deputy Principal, Heads of Departments (HODs) and MIS staff to develop the SAR documentation to ensure it is fit for purpose for the new linear curriculum. Seeking to avoid repetition within the document and reviewing the grading system have also been a key focus within this review.

Governors asked her questions to ensure their understanding of the proposed grading system, and were further informed that this reflected the OFSTED grading model. The meeting agreed that the new system was more focussed and informative. There was discussion around the grading of individual areas in the SAR that it is proposed will be graded 1-4 and Governors wondered whether Departments might seem to be static if receiving the same grade for a number of years, as opposed to being on a longer grading range which would more likely reveal those Departments on an upward journey. A governor suggested that the College might adopt the OFSTED category covering a “capacity to improve”, alongside the 4 grades. This would show confidence in a Department’s upward improvement, and could be effective in recognising the work of new Departmental Heads who might not yet have been in post long enough to have gathered several years’ worth of scores.

Asked whether there was a process in place to alert the SMT beforehand to the unlikely event of an entire cohort not being on track to pass their progression exams, governors were informed that there was a reporting procedure in place which would inform HODs what level of students might be risk, and Progress Review 3 would also identify those at risk of underperformance.

The meeting concluded that the work of the SAR working party sounded very positive. Governors asked whether they might receive some summary documents (and, for example, a sample of the Top Sheet) which could serve to acclimatise those of them assisting in the annual SAR Joint Review.

ACTION: Deputy Principal to provide committee members with a selection of documents to add detail to what had been reported at this meeting, once it had been agreed.

Assessment and Feedback Working Group

The College’s EQR Lead and Divisional Director heads up this working party. The College already has a clear assessment strategy, with each Department being required to demonstrate how it has adopted this strategy and therefore his group are examining how to develop assessment and feedback, with particular reference to the impact of curriculum reform for A levels and BTEC qualifications. The working group looked at feedback from students, the EQR process and learning walks and have now developed a number of key areas to focus on for further development. For example, how to best manage student expectations about the assessment and feedback processes and closing the feedback loop. Staff who are part of the Assessment and Feedback group will be leading sessions during the summer INSET period with all teaching staff and these discussion will be used to inform, in part, how the college-wide assessment strategy will be developed.

Marking Records

College staff use a database designed by an external company to record student marks. It is not intuitive hence some staff do not use it, the database will also be discontinued in 2020 by the

Provider. Discussions have been held with staff as to their requirements of a new system, and the IT Department have produced a mock-up as a way forward. As the design and development of a new system is a huge investment, before proceeding any further, the IT Department is researching whether an external off-the-shelf version can be acquired instead.

Governors asked the Deputy Principal the following questions:

Q: What systems do other S7 colleges use? Some use an external off the shelf system and others have developed their own in-house system.

Q: Could you develop an in-house solution and sell it to other colleges? It is possible, and has been done elsewhere but that would be a huge investment and is therefore not currently part of our thinking.

Governors made the point that should an in-house database be dependant on an IT Director's knowledge, if the Director subsequently left the College, the knowledge base would move with them, which would be a risk. It was also suggested that costs other than pure cash costs would be incurred (liaison time with third party providers, training costs etc) which would have to be built in to the programme.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal for her informative update.

6. STUDENT RETENTION REPORT 2016/17

The Assistant Principal explained that the report summarised key retention data and draws conclusions about trends, and identified key strengths and areas for development. The overall conclusion was that the College has an excellent overall retention rate and A level rates were close to 5% higher than school sixth forms. Areas for improvement were to review and re-define "reason for leaving" categories, to ascertain why in-college retention rates had dropped slightly over the last 3 years, and to review the impact of Progression Events on maximising two-year retention.

Governors sought clarification from the Assistant Principal as follows:

Q: What do you mean by "enumeration"? This is the point in the academic year from which students are counted for funding purposes. This is normally mid/end of October.

Q: What is the "summer timetable"? When students came back after the AS exams at the beginning of June to start the 6.2 year and participate in Wider Skills Week.

Q: Am I right in thinking that learning progression is based on a set number of hours tuition linked to funding, and if a student drops a subject and falls below the minimum level of hours, funding will be affected? Yes, but only a handful of students have a study programme with less than the 540 hours required for a full-time programme. Alternative options to top-up on 6.1 or 6.2 programmes are available.

Q: In Table 2 are the "Between year retention" percentage figures a percentage of the total numbers in the College, or the number in the year? The figures are not sensible unless an explanation is given as to how they are calculated. We will look into this further to gain clarification.

ACTION: Assistant Principal to clarify how "between year retention" percentage figures are calculated.

Q: Table 3 demonstrates that some students enrol onto 6.2, but then do not stay. Why is this? After publishing the report, I investigated this further and the majority of these students left due to mental health or entering employment/apprenticeship. In addition, of these 33 students, 23 of them left before or on the day of re-enrolment.

Q: I am confused by what the College is trying to capture here. The government measures are based on Learning Aims; yet here the measurement is “bodies”. This retention report has built upon tables used in previous reports, but there is clearly issue with including Retention Factor/QAR and in-house College data. If we were to agree a new approach we would have to reset all benchmarks, but there is obviously more than one methodology at work.

The Chair suggested that governors needed to know two sets of data: the ramifications of students who leave college for funding purposes and the student wellbeing aspect, and this could be captured both ways (via the government methodology and the College’s own statistical findings). In terms of calculating the data to meet government requirements, it was suggested that the terminology of “retention rate” be replaced with “drop-out rate” to more accurately reflect the situation. The government focusses on Learning Aims over the 2-year period, but the College could also produce a separate report capturing more in-year detail that focuses on reasons for leaving.

The meeting agreed that there were benefits to simplifying the list of “Reasons for Leaving”, and avoiding the duplication of several categories. It was noted that different audiences might require different Leaving data – e.g. governors may not require as much detail as the SMT, for example.

The Chair concluded that this had been a really interesting discussion, and governors had challenged the information that they were presented with. In sum, however, the retention rates were very good, and no significant risks were identified from either the drop-out or retention data reported. She observed that a lot of worthwhile detailed work had gone into this report, and there was much to congratulate the College on.

7. REVIEW OF COMMON INSPECTION FRAMEWORK ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES

The Deputy Principal had been asked at the last meeting to provide context as to how the College chose the targets for the CIF Action Plan. The starting point is the Common Inspection Framework, but also we look at current common themes arising from OFSTED inspections across the Sixth Form College Sector and issues arising from discussions with S7 colleagues. Topics for the Action Plan reflect information gained from the sources stated above and link to areas that the College needs to continue developing or develop further at that time. Senior management then prioritise the targets. Current areas of focus include; groups of learners, PREVENT and British Values, student destinations, numeracy and work-related learning. PREVENT was high on the agenda and ways in which we develop the requirements of this agenda is ongoing.

Student Destinations was an important focus for OFSTED, and the College has developed a new Destinations database to support the collation of students intended destination when they leave the College. The meeting was informed that there was a 2 year lag in the College receiving DfE Performance Data relating to students sustained destinations. One governor stated that Ofsted would expect the College to have collated destinations again after 6 months of students leaving the College. They suggested that the College should collect this data by contacting students 6 months after they have left Esher to ask them to confirm their final destination. The Deputy Principal explained that the College has a clear record of students intended destinations and received information about students sustained destinations from the DfE, albeit lagged.

There was a discussion about whether it was in fact the role of the College to collect such destination

data at this time. This might be a risk analysis exercise for the College, in terms of the resources required to obtain this data, versus the value of the information.

Numeracy Strategy – the College had already developed a Literacy Strategy and a Numeracy Strategy was the next focus for the College, aimed at developing numeracy skills in students across all subjects. Asked whether there were any strategies already produced that S7 colleges could share with Esher, the Deputy Principal replied that, as far as she was aware, there was not.

Work-related learning and employability – again, high on Ofsted’s agenda and as a result, the College is seeking ways to develop further work-related learning opportunities. A new initiative this year is for all BTEC Diploma students having the opportunity to undertake a week’s work experience.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal for her helpful report.

8. EXTERNAL QUALITY REVIEWS 2017-18

This was the third year of the annual review process of external scrutiny by peers. This academic year involved the Drama Department, and a review of cross-college assessment and feedback.

The outcome for the Drama Department confirmed the College’s own findings. The Head of Department and the Divisional Director received a full copy of the report, and actions fed in to the department SAR and QIP.

Asked how suggestions for improvement are followed up, the Deputy Principal explained that at the end of the review, the entire Department is invited to hear the findings (not just the Head of the Department), so they are aware of what is required. The HOD would report back on action being taken via their interim SAR report and the QIP and SAR processes (which the SLT check for the following year).

The cross-college review for assessment and feedback addressed several questions posed by the College with the aim to develop assessment and feedback processes due to curriculum reform. A significant number of strengths were evidenced. The Teaching and Learning Group were focussing on developing certain areas identified for action and will be fed in to College INSET in June.

The meeting agreed that the EQR process was valuable for enabling an external review of peers, and noted the fact that outcomes were fed directly to the College’s working parties. Furthermore, the Esher members of staff who went out to review other colleges gained skills and enhanced their CPD as a result of their experiences.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- What happened to the Growth Mind Project? This ran for a year and a half, and the results were discussed by staff at the last INSET day. The project came to a natural close.
- Darrel Bate offered to pass on some reports about retention that he had which might be of use to the SLT.
- The Deputy Principal asked if members had any particular agenda items for the next meeting in November 2018. It was agreed that the Deputy Principal could draft the agenda in the first instance, then seek governors’ comments, and that the College SAR should be reviewed by this committee prior to it being presented to the Corporation.

C	7	CIF Action Plan Review - governors suggested how the College might obtain firmer destination data to satisfy OFSTED requirements.
S		Recognition by governors however that the college's expenditure on resources to capture such information should be weighed against the value of that information to the College.
C	8	External Quality Reviews - governors queried how areas identified for improvement by the reviews were actioned and tracked.
S	9	AOB – a governor offered to share some reports with the SMT which they would find useful.
C		Governors wanted to know the outcomes of the Growth Mind Project.