

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
QUALITY & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
held on Tuesday 23rd November 2021 at 10.30**

Present: Mr Dan Brown (Student Governor), Mr Dan Lodge (Principal), Ms Hari Gunturu (Student Governor), Dr Grant Powell (Governor), Mrs Clare Ruaux (Staff Governor), Dr David Skipp (Chair of Governors), Mrs Helen Smith (Governor), Mrs Beverley Valley (Parent Governor)

Apologies received: Rev'd Lisa Barnett

In attendance: Mr Rob Hussey (Vice Principal – Curriculum), Ms Andrea John (Vice Principal – Pastoral), Ms N Whitehead (Clerk)

Chair: Dr Grant Powell

The Chair welcomed Mrs Beverley Valley to her first Q&C meeting. He explained that the agenda had been designed to allow a focus on a small number of key strategic items with no consent items. Members were content with the information received and what was being asked of them.

1. **Declarations of interest:** There were no declarations of interest.
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd June 2021** were approved.
3. **Matters Arising.** None
4. **KPI Health check report: Education**
Paper: KPI Health Check - Education November 2021

The VP (Curriculum) explained that he hoped to allay any potential concerns that students were behind in their studies following the Covid disruption. In fact students' progress was comparable with that at a similar point in 2018/9 before the pandemic - for both academic and vocational courses. In detail:

Academic (A-level): 2A students were achieving a higher % of high grades in 2021 compared to the same point in 2018 (the last pre-COVID examined year). Covid disruption to GCSEs was however impacting on value-added although this might be helped by the DfE's commitment to some recalibration of results in summer 2022, to be set mid-way between those in 2019 and 2021;

Vocational (BTEC, EYE Dip and Music Practitioners): There was a similar situation in terms of high grades and value-added for Level 3 BTEC and other Level 3 vocational courses. The Level 3 BTEC picture was complicated by the reformed RQF qualifications that nationally were demonstrating to yield 10% lower high grades than the unreformed QCF qualification.

No national data sets were yet available for **T levels**.

Transition (BTEC L2): Transition students were struggling to achieve the same % of high grades at PR1 compared with 2018 owing to a change in the cohort as a result of GCSE grades during Covid. Therefore, transition students might be expected to achieve more muted results than in pre-COVID years. Transition students might however be prioritising their GCSE retakes over their Level 2 BTEC (one GCSE equivalent) course.

GCSE (English, Maths and Biology): Outstanding high grades were evident at PR1 for GCSE students. These could be slightly optimistic at this stage but the GCSE results had been on a dramatic increase over the past 4 years. GCSE English and GCSE Maths at Collyer's were now more than double national averages at final outcomes.

Target grades had been set according to 2019 results when last examined at a national level.

Questions were raised with regard to:

- **The students' sense of lost learning:** The VP (Curriculum) explained that this problem was recognised and, in February, the exam boards would be issuing advice to help students target their revision. The student governors commented that practice in exam conditions was the other issue but the College had been responsive in addressing these concerns;
- **A uniform picture across the College's transition L2 courses** noting that further interrogation of the data was needed to identify possible anomalies as well as the potential for greater recognition of 'merit' grades as the passport to L3 courses.

The VP (Pastoral) explained that:

Attendance data for 2021-22 was being presented alongside attendance rates for 2018-19 to provide comparison against a data set from a pre-Covid year given that remote learning in 2020-21 had contributed to higher than usual rates. For all 3 cohorts attendance was down by an overall average of 2.6% with reported absence owing to sickness 1.1% higher at this point in the current year than the average for 2018-19. Some but not all absence was Covid related (with 85 positive cases reported by PR1).

With regard to **retention**, this was significantly higher at PR1 for Transition students than in 2018-19 and also 1.3% higher than last year at the same point. PR1 data for 1A and 2A L3 courses showed a modest increase compared with broadly comparable figures for the past two years. Members noted the possible reasons for the increase including the return to full-time face-to-face teaching and pastoral care, more rigorous course entry requirements and reduced number of students on Transition programmes.

Members looked forward to the emerging picture over the year.

5. **College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2020-21 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2021-22**

Paper: Draft College Self-Assessment Report 2020-21 and College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2021-22

The Chair introduced this item as being the most significant on the agenda and the result of a considerable amount of work. The draft SAR reflected 'outstanding' performance in all areas whilst not being complacent about the scope for further improvement as demonstrated in the QIP. The Committee had an overall remit for endorsing the documents with the focus on the curriculum and pastoral areas with the F&GP Committee having examined the Business and Operations and Community sections the previous day.

a) **SAR 2020-21**

The VP (Curriculum) explained that the SAR reflected performance for the previous academic year whilst focussing mainly on areas for improvement. The value-added graph demonstrated the significant progress made in recent years with outstanding results pre-Covid sustained through fair Centre-assessed grades (CAGs) and TAGs. The QIP reflected both areas for development from the SAR and the College's new strategic plans.

Members noted the rationale for the overall grade of 'outstanding' which took account of Ofsted criteria, student satisfaction and outcomes as well as softer metrics such as the low volume of complaints and appeals. However further discussion might yet suggest some changes at the more detailed level from

outstanding to good. The *College Ofsted action plan* reflected the assessment and considerable benchmarking (**Action: VP (Curriculum) to share with governors at Planning Day**).

Looking in more detail at the Curriculum and Pastoral sections in the SAR, members noted that:

- Data tables showed **consistent progress** and outcomes close to ongoing assessment;
- **Student evaluations** in 2021 had been more Covid-focussed to avoid burdensome surveys at a time of additional challenges. A proportion had not been happy with the provision though this was thought to some extent to reflect uncertainty and general unhappiness with the situation. The student governors commented on the far lower response rate leading to a risk of polarisation in the responses. Feedback from tutor representatives in RCU discussions had not raised concerns with a general sense that Collyer's had compared well in its handling of the pandemic. All agreed a return to the broader surveys and a c.90% response rate would provide a more comprehensive dataset on which to build future action plans;
- **Parent survey** had been more positive with a comparable level of response - though higher in number than in past surveys;
- **Considerable adaptations had been made to pastoral systems** e.g. a new cause for concern function to help recognise vulnerable learners in particular with responses including the ability to work on site, the issue of laptops and free school meals (FSM) vouchers. On-site events had been replaced by a variety of information platforms with ongoing value identified e.g. in online parents' evenings. Testing systems had been set up and were ongoing;
- **Pastoral Strategy** development had continued alongside embedding the new role of Director of Student Engagement, contributing to the Ofsted review of peer abuse and adaptations to enrichment activities to allow c. two thirds to continue. RCU meetings on Zoom had benefited from the ability to include short topical surveys and information gathering through the chat function. Student progression activities had benefited from expanded staffing and a restructure allowing progress on wider front. The HESA report had again been very positive with former Collyer's students doing really well at university and achieving a higher proportion of higher degrees. It was encouraging too that high needs students received support and performed well. The College would however like to collate more information on other (non-HE) destinations and staff changes in the counselling service meant that the Dialogue report was still outstanding.

Members commented on their admiration for the staff in persevering through the challenges.

b) QIP 2021-22

The VP (Curriculum) highlighted the following themes:

Section 1: Curriculum:

- **Students inexperienced in exam preparation and taking exams** was one of several issues coming out of Covid. The student governors welcomed the forthcoming mid-year exams and the robust assessments in class commenting on the scope for further self-assessment to reduce the marking burden;
- **Curriculum catch-up and support** with subject teams focussing on the issues in each area and providing appropriate support;
- **Teacher assessed grades (TAG) contingency plan** in place. The delay in exam board guidance until the New Year was regrettable in terms of planning. DfE had issued certain criteria for assessment but the most recent proposals were not always practical in a sizeable college, raised complex issues of a level playing field and more particularly concerns about student welfare.

Members explored the issues, for example, in respect of different assessment papers for different blocks. The student governors commented that they were currently working calmly towards the mid-year exams whilst still learning new material and that the imposition of a pre-Christmas assessment, for example, would be extremely unsettling. As such they welcomed the College's consideration of a more staged approach reflecting the delivery of the curriculum and the hope that national exams would go ahead this year;

- **Retention and course changes** with plans for a more strategic approach to reduced programmes to improve consistency and optimise outcomes for students;
- **Enrichment** with a return to a full offer of activities and student participation both encouraged and effectively recorded programme. The Chair sought clarification on the preferred tracking through UNIFROG as that most favoured by students and the more cost-effective route.

The VP (Pastoral) explained that:

Section 2: Pastoral:

- **Parental engagement:** There had been a change in the relationship with parents of 6th form students in recent years with a gradual move to greater involvement with parents. The College was keen to do more to work in partnership with parents. The planned development of a new progression platform was an example of seeking to empower parents in helping the student and gain added value in the support to students through such collaboration;
- **Access to external support** remained crucial. As such there was ongoing investment in the relationship with e.g. CAMHS, the police and West Sussex County Council (WSCC) to ensure an understanding of changing referral processes and effective joint working. In the Horsham context, it was particularly important to be agile in response to emerging risks and patterns in mental health presentations. In response to a question on measuring success in this context, the VP acknowledged this was difficult especially given limited access to strained NHS resources but the College aimed to contribute effectively to maximising access and successful outcomes where help was available;
- **Managing behaviour** with the intention of creating a clearer behaviour policy and procedure more accessible to staff and students and supported by CPOMS which had the scope to be used more widely in recording and tracking concerns. Issues could then be addressed in a more targeted way e.g. through the tutorial programme. In response to a question about off-site behaviour, the Director of Student Engagement had been working with the RCU to identify problems and perceptions and help ensure a fair perspective. It was hoped that pressure from other students would have more clout in addressing poor behaviour. Members received assurance too on the levels of confidentiality in the records with strong firewalls and staff generally able to report rather than access the information with the exception of the safeguarding team. The ability of CPOMS to share information with other schools was also a more secure and efficient method than previous paper-based systems;
- **Delivery of the tutorial programme** would aim for improving consistency of delivery especially on complex topics where some tutors were uncomfortable with the materials. Student feedback had led to a working group to help develop future approaches;
- **Progression of strategic objectives** would focus on more detailed plans for delivery of the new pastoral strategy. This would include a progression programme understandable for all users and extended use of UNIFROG to track engagement in progression activities. The new Careers Adviser was now in post 4 days a week and work experience was planned for all first years after the May half term (self-sourced, online or through paid intern partnership) without any impact on teaching time.

Members noted too the consistent approach to planning in respect of the College's strategic aims for **Business and Operations** and **Community** and thanked the staff, and particularly the VP (Curriculum) as SAR/QIP lead, for these comprehensive plans. The SAR reflected a significant level of achievement in a challenging year and further ambitious developments for 2021/22.

Recommendation: That the Governing Body approve the College Self-Assessment Report 2020/21 (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2021/22 at its next meeting.

6. Examinations Review of Marking Report

Paper: Summary of enquiries about results

The VP (Curriculum) explained that the usual review of national exam marking report was once more not applicable in 2021. The **teacher assessed grades (TAGs) process** had however been more clearly defined by the DfE than the previous year. That was not to underestimate the complexity and rigour required in selecting appropriate evidence, the application of special consideration where required, and the fair determination of grades by HoSs and teachers. Clear cross college guidance had been developed and DoFs and ADoFs supported the VP in applying multiple levels of analysis to ensure that grades were in line with historic data.

It was difficult to gauge the number of **appeals** that would be received in summer 2022. 500 appeals had been received in response to the initial results in 2020 which, following the Government's U-turn, dropped to c. 150. In 2021 there had been 54 appeals following the release of results of which 51 were dealt with at stage 1 (college level), with only 3 progressing to the second stage of the appeals process for exam board consideration. None of these appeals had been upheld by the exam boards, reflective of the accurate and fair determination of TAGs at Collyer's. There had been a similar approach and response across S7. Members noted too the analysis of TAGs determined by sixth form colleges nationally which showed that it was historically lower performing colleges which submitted TAGs with the most inflation. Higher performing colleges had tended to submit TAGs which were optimistic whilst being in line with their historic data.

The staff governor commented on the challenge of assessment against the background of ongoing uncertainty but that she felt confident in the underlying processes and contingency plan if needed.

7. Supporting Learners at Collyer's

Paper: Supporting Learners at Collyer's

Members noted that the **Supporting Learners Statement** had been updated to reflect changes in job titles and minor changes in procedures. It provided information on the college admissions and transfer process for students with SEND and other support needs. It signposted contacts who could provide further advice and guidance and explained the documentation and assessment process for Exam Access Arrangements (EAA). (**Action: Clerk to review level of delegation of the statement**)

8. Any other business

With reference to the QIP, one of the student governors sought clarification on i) the status of the 'one grade higher' initiative which had once more been deferred, and ii) the College's communications in respect of student action plans with further discussion with the VP (Pastoral) proposed. The Clerk and the VP (Pastoral) also responded to a question from the new parent governor about the process for students to raise 'whistleblowing' concerns in the broadest sense.

9. Meeting Assessment

Members commented that papers had been clearly presented and provided assurance on the thorough nature of the College's self-assessment processes with increasingly clear presentation of priority themes, intentions, actions and desired impact. They particularly welcomed the insights from the student governors.

The VP (Pastoral) explained that further revisions to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (following the October 2021 update) would be shared with the Committee as soon as possible in the New Year. The updates were complex given the extensive guidance in the KCSiE as well as efforts to be as consistent as possible with the latest WSCC model policy given significant cross-agency working in this area.

10. Date of the next meeting: Ad hoc single agenda item meeting to consider Safeguarding Policy tba , then Tuesday, 15th March 2022 at 10.30am.

Meeting ended at 12.24

Chair

Date

NCW 27-11-21