



NOTES OF MEETING OF THE STANDARDS BOARD

Date: Tuesday 22nd September 2015
Venue: The Blackpool Sixth Form College
Room: Committee Room
Time: 17:15 – 19:00

Present: Mr J Boyle (Chair)
 Dr P Anderton
 Cllr D Clapham
 Mr M Cobandag
 Ms J Gray (Principal)
 Mr M Hodgkinson

Together with: Ms S Benson (Assistant Principal: Academic)
 Ms T Cooper (Assistant Principal: Vocational)
 Mr A Lloyd (Vice Principal: Information Systems and Resources)
 Mrs A Pickup (Director of Finance & HR)
 Ms G Yeadon (Deputy Principal)

Mrs K Buddle (Governance Administrator, FCAT)

Apologies: Apologies for the meeting were received from Mr D Berry, Mr J Corry, Mr G Curry, Ms T Fish, Ms W Middlemas, Ms J Trembles, Mr N Webster and Mr P Welsh.

		Action
1.2015	<p>Preliminaries The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Standards Board.</p> <p>Due to the high number of apologies, the meeting was not quorate. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed to go ahead with the meeting as planned and make recommendations to the Corporation regarding any formal resolutions that would be required. The Chair asked that any 'Action Points' that might be identified at the meeting be acted upon as though they were requested by a quorate meeting.</p>	
2.2015	<p>Declarations of Interest None.</p>	
3.2015	<p>Consideration of any items of urgent business None.</p>	



4.2015 **Training on Equality and Diversity**

The Deputy Principal provided a training session for Directors on equality and diversity. Directors considered the reasons for monitoring against the following key equality categories:

- Closing the Gaps students – those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those not from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Gender – male and female students
- White students and students from other ethnic backgrounds
- Students with learning needs and those without learning needs
- Students with disabilities and those without disabilities.

They were informed of the college's requirements to demonstrate that discrimination, including any inadvertent discrimination, in terms of teaching, learning and outcomes, did not take place to students across the groups. The college was committed to narrowing the gaps in terms of outcomes for these students and received Government funding to help with this. It was noted that monitoring took place to identify the performance of all students across each course to ensure that any gaps were narrowed and that no particular student group was being treated unfairly.

The Deputy Principal presented data in respect of each of the groups and Directors discussed the implications of these identifying challenging questions that might be asked for each. Currently, only two years' worth of data was available to view for closing the gaps students but, next year, this would increase to three to match the other groups and making it easier to see trends.

The following findings from the current data were highlighted:

- The college successfully reduces attainment gaps at pass rates in the vast majority of programmes for all equality groups
- The college successfully reduces attainment gaps in Level 2 BTECs for all equality groups and is working hard to reduce attainment gaps in Level 3 BTEC, A2 and GCSE where the vast majority of gaps have closed or are closing for the majority of groups.
- The college is reducing attainment gaps in many cases for four of the five groups (closing the gaps, ethnicity, learning need and disability) where the vast majority of gaps have been closed or are closing, and is particularly successful in respect of learning need and disability.
- In 20% of all 69 measures, there is no gap in attainment, and in 42% the gap is less than 1% point.



The Deputy Principal drew Directors' attention to the fact that at upper higher grade level (A/A* or Distinction*), closing the gaps students were doing less well and the gap had widened significantly to over 2% making this a priority issue for the college.

In response to a request from Directors, the Deputy Principal agreed to RAG (Red Amber Green) rate the gap from the previous year on the next report to show direction of travel in particular areas.

A number of events that had taken place over the previous year in celebration of diversity were also shown on the presentation.

Questions from Directors

In response to a question about the definitions for different categories of students, the Deputy Principal explained that these were national categories and that groups were chosen by the college based on national equality and diversity groups, funding available and Ofsted requirements.

Asked if Eastern European students were monitored within the ethnicity category, the Deputy Principal confirmed that this was the case. Directors had been provided with just the headline data but, where a significant gap arose, this was broken down further into a number of subsidiary groupings in order for staff to analyse the impact of teaching across specific groups of students. The groups are identified on the Individual Learner Records (ILRs) to enable the college to monitor performance of all students.

Asked about how the college monitored Level 3 BTEC performance across the first year of the course, the Deputy Principal explained that although the data presented to Directors was at headline level for all Level 3 BTEC, where a significant gap arises, this was broken down further to ascertain exactly the year group, the course and the students that require swift intervention.

In response to a question about comparisons with other colleges, the Deputy Principal reported that benchmark information had not yet been made available for further assessments to be made.

Asked if the college had many students with English as an additional language, the Deputy Principal confirmed that there was a small group of these (probably less than 1%) and that these were provided with additional learning support as required.

In response to a request about participation in future celebratory events at the college, the Deputy Principal agreed to work with the Marketing Team and the Clerk to ensure that Directors received invitations.

GY/KB



Challenges

Asked if the widening gap at upper higher grades was an issue for the college, the Deputy Principal acknowledged that it was, especially as the gaps at the pass rate (E+ and Pass+) and high grades (B+ or Distinction+) were narrowing. Actions were in place to address the anomaly.

Asked about whether actions were in place to address anomalies in particular subject areas, the Deputy Principal confirmed that subject review meetings were scheduled to consider individual subject matters including equality and diversity issues. The Heads of Department were tasked to look at these in detail and provide support where improvements were needed.

5.2015 Equality and Diversity

Directors received and noted the Equality and Diversity Results Report for 2015 (Paper 5.1).

The Principal explained that actions to address issues were included on the College Action Plan and that this would be brought to each Standards Board meeting for Directors to see progress made.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal for her Report and the training session provided.

6.2015 Principal's Interim Report

The Principal outlined the key points from her interim report (Paper 6.1). Directors were made aware of the fact that, the college's mission statement was now included on all Corporation documents.

Student recruitment currently stood at 2206, just three below the college's six week target. This was particularly pleasing as there were fewer potential students in the area to recruit. The numbers, therefore, show an increase in the market share for the college and there is still potential to increase this further through late enrolments.

Thanks were extended to the Vice Principal and the Estates team on the completion of Phase 5 of the Accommodation Strategy. The new build included an area for the Maths Department and a staff lounge. An official opening would provide additional publicity for the college.

The Principal reported that she had commenced visits to high schools in the area with a view to promoting the college and improving links.

Directors congratulated the Principal and college staff on the recent excellent exam results and on the provisional success rates which were 3% higher than the previous year and 4% above the national average.

Questions from Directors

Asked if she felt the college's recent exam success had helped to generate numbers, the Principal replied that she thought it had had a significant impact. The challenge for the college, however, was to maintain students in order to ensure funding longer term.

Asked if the building work at the college was now completely finished, the Vice Principal and Director of Finance and HR explained that although planning permission had been approved, student numbers would need to increase significantly for any further building projects to be viable.

7.2015 Teaching, Learning and Leadership

7.1a A Level Results

Directors received a report from the Assistant Principal (Academic) on the A Level results for 2015 (Paper 7.1a).

The overall pass rate had improved by 3.37% for AS Level and 0.83% for A Level. High grades had improved considerably to 38.9% for AS Level and 51.8% for A Level (above the college target of 3% point's improvement). There was also a significant increase in upper high grades to 16.1% for AS Level and 19.9% for A Level, up by 1.77% and 2.78% respectively.

In terms of added value at AS Level, the college had moved to Band 2 (the top 10% nationally), which was excellent news.

Questions from Directors

Asked to explain the value added scores, the Assistant Principal explained that these were based on students' attainment at GCSE prior to them attending the college and were calculated, using a formula, on how much additional value the college had managed to provide for students in their time here. The data is analysed by ALPS (Advanced Level Performance Systems) across AS, A Level, BTEC and Pupil Premium groupings in order to identify comparisons at national level.

The Vice Principal explained that the ALPS results did not favour colleges that provided mixed qualification programmes (A Levels and BTECs) because scores were based on students achieving 3 straight A Level qualifications.

However, it was still one of the few measures that provided a comparison with other colleges at national level, especially by subject. As there had been an increase in students taking a mixed programme this year, ALP scores for the college had declined on last year's results.

Challenge

Asked if she thought the reason for the seemingly poor ALP score had been adequately explained on her report, the Assistant Principal: Academic acknowledged that this could be made clearer and to include a statement on this in future reports.

7.1b A Level Success Rates 2015

Directors noted a report from the Assistant Principal: Academic on the A Level success rates for 2015 (Paper 7.1b). These had improved by 3.9% at AS Level and by 0.73% at A2 Level. Both AS and A Level results were above the national average and show a three year improvement trend.

Questions from Directors

In response to a question about the calculations for the pass rates, the Vice Principal explained that these had to be divided by the number of students actually completing the courses which was why it was unlikely that the college would be able to post a 100% pass rate. Although retention of students had declined slightly at AS level it still remained at 90% – 95% which was encouraging in a highly transient population.

Asked if the transfer of students across courses impacted on retention figures, the Assistant Principal confirmed that this was not the case.

Asked about whether the college would be reviewing its Curriculum offer in light of changes to the format of A Level qualifications, the Assistant Principal: Academic explained that twelve of the college's A Level subjects had been reformed this year. The remaining subjects would be reformed by 2017. The college would need to consider its BTEC provision too and to make decisions about future programmes of study in light of the changes.

Challenges

Asked if she thought the college should be providing more focus on student retention (currently there was only one action on the action plan in respect of this), the Assistant Principal: Academic acknowledged that there was an opportunity to increase activity in this area and agreed to revisit the action plan with a view to strengthening this section.

Asked about the reasons for poorer performance in some of the subject areas, notably French, German and Spanish at AS Level, the Assistant Principal explained that there had been changes to the examination board in these subjects which had impacted on some results. In addition, the number of students studying modern foreign languages was quite small and any change (up or down) would also affect results.

However, the need to improve performance had been identified and actions were included in the action plan. Further challenged on this point, the Principal explained that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was looking at good practice taking place across other colleges and hoping to replicate this where possible. Longer term, the college needed to decide which foreign language subjects to retain as options as it was getting difficult to justify value for money for small numbers of students on some courses.

7.2a BTEC Level 3 Results 2015

The Assistant Principal: Vocational outlined the key points from her report on BTEC Level 3 results (Paper 7.2a).

There had been a 100% pass rate on all BTEC courses. High grades had increased by 1.38% to 91% and there had been a significant increase in upper high grades by 4.5% to 79%. The ALPs value added score had increased from 1.19 to 1.20, maintaining grade 2 overall. The biggest improvements were in achievements of Diplomas (equivalent to two A Levels) and Extended Diplomas (equivalent to three A Levels).

There had been some decline in results from the previous year, particularly in the achievement of high and upper high grades and strategies were in place to address this.

Questions from Directors

Asked about the changes to BTEC assessments, the Assistant Principal: Vocational confirmed that these would impact on the current Year 2 cohort. The data was showing a slight decrease in results towards the end of Year 1 but this was not particularly significant and the college was confident that performance could be maintained.

Asked about the impact of results on employment opportunities in the engineering sector, the Assistant Principal: Vocational confirmed that those students achieving upper high grades in the Extended Diploma, in particular, would be in a good position to take up engineering as a career. Those that were taking engineering as a single subject were not achieving as well and would be unlikely to aspire to engineering careers. The Principal explained that this was the sort of issue that needed to be taken into consideration when deciding the curriculum offer in the future. Directors agreed that it was useful to understand the context behind the figures and asked for future reports to include this information.

7.2b BTEC Level 3 Success Rates 2015

Directors considered a report from the Assistant Principal: Vocational on the BTEC Level 3 success rates (Paper 7.2b). Apart from a very small fall in achievement in some areas, results were very positive, maintaining the 100% pass rate. Students taking double and triple BTEC subjects had performed particularly well.

7.3 Report on GCSE Results

The Assistant Principal: Academic outlined the key points from her report (Paper 7.3), highlighting the fact that the GCSE results were the best ever achieved by the college and were significantly higher than the expected national average in A* - C grades for re-sits. High grades in English had improved by 7.42% and in Maths by 12.43%. Success rates had improved in English by 2.3% and retention on the English and Maths courses had also improved.

Questions from Directors

In response to a question about Functional Skills, the Vice Principal explained that prior to this year; some students were enrolled on to functional skills courses as preparation for GCSE courses in English and Maths. However, this had not proved particularly successful and students were now registered straight away on to GCSEs if they hadn't already achieved these qualifications.

Asked about the importance of English and Maths, the Principal confirmed that Ofsted would scrutinise study programmes put in place for students by the college and that achievement of GCSE English and Maths to A*-C grade level was an integral and important part of these programmes.

7.4 Report on Level 2 Plus Results

The Assistant Principal: Vocational presented her report on the Level 2 Plus results (Paper 7.4) highlighting the increase in high grades in English and Maths GCSEs and in the Level 2 Certificate of Enterprise and Employment and the Certificate of Personal Finance.

Question from Directors

Asked if a Grade C was really classed as a high grade, the Deputy Principal confirmed that it was. Government was focussing on achievement in English and Maths and A* - C grades in these, and other GCSE subjects, were recognised as good passes.

The Chair thanked both Assistant Principals for their reports and congratulated all staff on the exceptional results.

8.2015

Staff Survey

The Director of Finance and HR presented a report on the findings of the recent Staff Survey (Paper 8.1). The survey is carried out every two years and returns are anonymous. Results had been arranged by department where possible, but those from smaller departments were grouped together. The response rate to the survey had increased by 7.2% on the previous round which was encouraging. 85% of staff had stated that, overall, they were happy with their work place.

Some of the issues raised had already been addressed, including the development of the new staff lounge, extended staff briefings and the introduction of a half termly staff newsletter and a staff forum to help improve communications.

Questions from Directors

Asked if the departments where staff were less than happy correlated with the performance of those departments, the Director of Finance and HR confirmed that this was the case in respect of Maths. It was expected that matters would improve now that the Vice Principal had taken over the role of Head of Department.



The Vice Principal confirmed that he had identified some cultural issues within the Department and that he was already addressing these. There were also a few issues to address within the Humanities, Science and Social Science Departments.

Asked if the college had responded to staff on the issues raised within the survey, the Director of Finance and HR confirmed that this was the case.

Asked about what the college was doing to help maintain the morale of teaching staff, the Principal explained that, as it was not possible to provide everyone with promotions, it was important to ensure they received opportunities to develop their skills and experiences whilst at the college, and so continuing professional development was a priority area.

The Chair thanked the Director of Finance and HR for her report.

9.2015 College Action Plan

The Principal provided a summary on the final progress of the Strategic Development Plan for 2014-15 (Paper 9.1) and introduced the College Action Plan for 2015-16 (Paper 9.2).

In terms of the 2014-15 Plan, 28 of 34 objectives had been achieved. Those that had not been achieved had been transferred on to the current College Action Plan as appropriate.

The College Action Plan was a live document and some actions had already been completed. Others were time dependent across the year. Targets for the college, including attendance rates and achievement grades, were incorporated into the plan. The SLT had worked hard to ensure that targets were realistic and achievable. The Principal formally thanked the SLT for the work done in readiness for the start of the new academic year.

The Chair thanked the Principal for her report.

10.2015 Special Measures

The Director of Finance and HR provided a verbal update on the progress of those members of staff on informal support plans and professional improvement plans following a recent review by the SLT.



Of three teachers currently on informal support plans, two would remain on these and one would move to a formal support plan. Another member of staff who had recently been on an informal support plan had now left the college. A member of staff currently on a formal support plan would move to the next stage in the process.

Two new members of staff had had their probation periods extended and were being supported by their respective Heads of Department and a SLT member.

Five departmental support plans in place would be lifted as there was evidence to prove that issues were now being addressed.

The work of 23 individual members of staff was being reviewed as results in their areas during the recent exams had been poor. Of these, 13 had poor results in just a few areas of their work and support was being provided through the performance management review process. Five others had since left the college.

In terms of A2 Level results, the work of 11 members of staff was being reviewed. Of these, two had now received support plans, three had since left the college and issues for the others were being addressed through the performance management review process.

A review of support staff had also been carried out and a few instances of poor performance had been identified. Again, these were being addressed through performance management.

11.2015 Safeguarding

Directors received the Annual Safeguarding Report (Paper 11.1).

The Safeguarding Director praised the training he had received and the work in place to maintain safety at the college.

The Directors found the report to be comprehensive and passed on thanks to the Head of Student Services who had written the report.

Questions from Directors

In response to a question, the Deputy Principal explained that the term 'LADO' was an acronym for 'Local Authority Designated Officer'. This is the official to whom allegations or concerns about safeguarding transgressions by adults in a school or college are forwarded. Amanda Quirke is the current LADO at Blackpool Council.

12.2015 Review of Risks

No additional risks were identified.



13.2015 Any other business
The Principal emphasised the importance of celebrating and publicising the recent exam results which had been exceptional and had seen hard work rewarded. The Chair offered to write a letter of thanks to staff for their dedication and endeavours.

JB

Directors were invited to attend the Autumn Concert scheduled to take place on Monday 11th November 2015.

14.2015 Confidential items
The Chair asked students and members of staff to leave for the next item which was deemed confidential and minuted as such.

15.2015 Date and time of next meeting
Wednesday 25th November 2015 at 5.15pm

Signed:

Chair:

Date:
