

New College Corporation

Student Achievement and Standards Committee

23 February 2009

Minutes

Present: Mr A Pickerin (Chairman)
Dr S Ali
Mr G Clark
Mr P Boulter
Mr D Hopkins

In attendance: Mrs B Tyley
Mrs E Vingoe
Ms A Rosser
Mr P Taylor (Clerk)

1 Appointment of Chairman

Mr Pickerin was appointed Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.

2 Apologies

None.

3 Confirmation of Minutes

After the correction of typographical errors the minutes of the meeting of the Student Achievement and Standards Committee of 29 September 2008 were confirmed.

4 Declarations of Interest

None.

5 Draft Quality Report 2008

Mrs Tyley introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee, explaining that it sought to provide an overview of the progress and achievements of the College in 2007/08, using a cross-section of data to enable readers to gain a broad insight into the nature of the College and its life.

Mrs Tyley summarised the main features of the report and drew members' attention to the report's executive summary. She noted the positive achievements set out in the report, in particular the increase in College success rates and value added measures. She commented there had also been some very impressive individual student achievements which are not so readily identifiable in aggregate whole College data reports. She noted also the positive learning experience provided by students and the positive student feedback received.

Turning to the detail of the report, Mrs Tyley highlighted the main elements of the Self Assessment for 2007/08, with improvements in self assessed grades in almost all areas across the College.

On the student profile data set out in the report she drew the Committee's attention to the average GCSE points score on entry, and the growth in student numbers at level 3, noting within this overall growth there had been a fall in the number of students undertaking BTEC National Qualifications. On the section of the report on 'complaints' Mrs Vingoe commented that the increase in the number of complaints from 2006/07 to 2007/08 reflected in part the fact that the College systems for recording complaints had improved, and noted that the overall number remained very low for a college the size of New College. Commenting on the 'gifted and talented' programme, Ms Rosser noted that the programme aims to support those with particular talents and encompasses students with special gifts in art, music or drama that cannot be readily identified by examination scores.

In debate on the report, Mr Boulter commented particularly on the College's intake profile by GCSE point score in comparison with other colleges shown at Annex A, Table A3 of the report. He felt the relatively low number of high achieving students was evidence of more able students being 'creamed off' by other institutions in the area, and commented that pressure from other institutions was bound to become intensified as a consequence of the latest post-16 developments and proposals in the area. He noted that these developments would present a marketing challenge for the College. Mrs Tyley acknowledged this, but commented that over a quarter of New College entrants already had an average point score above 6, and that this proportion had increased in the previous year.

Mr Hopkins was joined by all members of the Committee in congratulating all those involved in the production of a very impressive and informative report.

The Committee resolved to receive the report.

6 Teaching and Learning 2007/08

Mr Clark introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee explaining that it provided a summary of the College Observation of Teaching and Learning Scheme in 2007/08, and the outcomes of the process in respect of standards of teaching. He summarised the planning for the observation schedule in 2007/08, noting that it involved a differential approach, prompted mainly by a fall in the proportion of 'good' or better teaching and learning observed from 2005/06 to 2006/07. He drew the Committee's attention to the detail of the initial and second cohorts selected. He noted the importance of discussions following the observations and the focus on the use of agreed development points to help teaching improve and develop. Mr Clark confirmed that the proportion of good and better teaching observed in 2007/08 had risen to 75%, and summarised the overall quality of teaching and learning and described the characteristics of both 'better' and 'weaker' teaching and learning, noting that effective feedback to students is a vital part of the former.

In response to a question from Mr Boulter, Mr Clark noted that the College was not able to access the considerable new funding available to secondary schools for continuing professional development.

Mr Clark noted that the gradual shift from an emphasis on 'teaching' to one where priority is given to 'learning' was inherent in the College Teaching and Learning Strategy adopted in 2004, and commented that this shift is reflected in the new Ofsted Handbook for Inspecting Colleges (September 2008) and includes the development of a medium term 'Learning Strategy' for the College.

The Committee resolved to receive the report and to note:

- 1 The operation of the Observation of Teaching and Learning Scheme in 2007/08;
- 2 Overall improvements in the standards of teaching in 2007/08;
- 3 The evaluation and implementation of College strategies and policies in the sphere of learning and teaching.

7 Improvement Planning 2008/09

Mrs Vingoe introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee, noting that it provided an overview of the improvement planning process adopted in 2007/08 and the key outcomes. It also proposed a different approach for 2008/09 to ensure that a sufficient whole College focus on student achievement and progression is maintained. She summarised outcomes for 2007/08 and the key elements to be incorporated in the Quality Improvement Plan 2008/09, including the key targets and success indicators set out in the appendix to the report.

In response to a question from Mr Boulter on the potential for the inclusion of a target for recruitment of more able students, Mrs Tyley commented that such an issue was more a matter for College marketing initiatives rather than quality improvement. Mr Hopkins commented that the 'Key Skill' target included in the 'Support for Students' section was particularly ambitious in the light of performance in 2008. Ms Rosser noted that although the target would be challenging, she felt it was realistically achievable, given the number of students currently undertaking 'Key Skills'.

After further comments on the detail of the report, the Committee resolved to:

- 1 Receive the report; and
- 2 Note that a new Quality Improvement Plan will be presented to the Committee's next meeting

8 Quality Improvement: Update February 2009

Mrs Tyley introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee explaining that it provided an overview of current external drivers affecting how College performance is managed and reviewed, and provided an update of current year priorities. Mr Clark drew members' attention to the key elements summarised in the report of what can be termed the 'New Improvement Agenda' and noted the emergence of new modes of measuring the performance of Colleges involving the use of financial and achievement data as well as the results of student feedback. Mrs Tyley reviewed the main strands of the quality improvement strategy for 2008/09 comprising: teamwork; management and action groups; teaching, learning and assessment; monitoring student progress; intervention and support; and learner engagement.

In debate, Mr Hopkins welcomed the wide promotion of peer observations over the last term, commenting on the positive impact of peer review. Mr Clark described the main elements of the teacher support and development activities, including the College's membership of the '3 Counties Professional Development Partnership'.

The Committee resolved to receive the report.

9 Areas of Concern

Mrs Vingoe introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee, noting that it provided an overview of current data and improvement actions in the three areas causing 'serious concern', the six causing 'some concern' and six further areas where 'potential concerns' are identified. With the permission of the Chairman and concurrence of the Committee, Mrs Tyley tabled information which superseded that shown in the tabular section of the report. The revised data included the results of more recent student target grades achievement assessments. Mr Pickerin noted that the 'learner numbers' referred to course leavers and could not be equated with the number of students leaving the College.

Mrs Vingoe and Mrs Tyley reviewed the progress made in the identified areas, and noted that work is currently underway to finalise a short term action plan bringing together interventions required to maximise student achievement.

After questions from members and satisfactory responses from Mrs Tyley and Mrs Vingoe, the Committee resolved to receive the report.

10 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Student Achievement and Standards Committee will be held at 6.00pm on Monday 1 June 2009.