

New College Corporation

Student Achievement and Standards Committee

25 February 2008

Minutes

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

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

1 Apologies

Miss Brown, Dr Ali.

2 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Student Achievement and Standards Committee of 12 November 2007 were confirmed.

3 Declarations of Interest

None.

4 Quality Report 2007

Mrs Vingoe introduced the report (copy in the minute book) for the Committee, explaining that it sought to draw together summary College performance data and a commentary in order to provide an overview of the progress and achievements of the College in 2006/07.

She noted that substantial parts of the report had previously been considered by the Committee at meetings earlier in the year. She drew the Committee's attention to the executive summary included in the report which highlighted key sections.

On **New College students** Mrs Vingoe pointed to the graphical representation of 16-18 full time admissions covering a five year period. In debate, members commented favourably on the use of graphs to represent data (pages 13-14 in the report). In response to questions from Mr Pickerin and Mr Hopkins on variations in admission numbers from partner schools and New College returners, Mrs Tyley commented that for New College returners revised data definitions had made year by year comparison more problematic, but that in broad terms in respect of partner schools, New College recruited a marginally lower percentage of students from a marginally smaller cohort. Turning to the section of the report on student profile (pages 16-17 in the report) Mrs Vingoe noted the proportion of full time 16-18 year old students of minority ethnic heritage at 9% was higher than the local population figure. Mrs Vingoe and Mr Clark noted the significant proportion of students in receipt of Education Maintenance Allowance. Mr Clark referred members to the tables in the report (page 62) showing the intake profile by GCSE score and comparative data for sample colleges, noting that the New College score of 5.3 was relatively low, but not entirely dissimilar to other colleges.

Referring to the section of the report on **student experience** (page 21) Ms Rosser summarised the processes involved in initial guidance and assessment and the negotiation of individual target grades for students. She reviewed the summary of student perceptions, highlighting the principal year to year variations from 05/06 to 06/07. In response to questions from Mr Boulter on the perceptions and usage of computers within the College, Mrs Tyley commented that student perceptions had been assessed before the completion of the work undertaken to upgrade College IT equipment.

Dealing with the section of the report on **standards of teaching and learning** (page 26 in the report) and the curriculum area grade profiles arising from the College observation of teaching and learning scheme, Mrs Vingoe and Mr Clark commented on the significant proportion of unsatisfactory grades in Social Sciences. Mr Clark noted that the curriculum area included a number of different subjects with inconsistent grade profiles. A number of unsatisfactory grades had clustered in particular subjects often associated with part-time staff in those subjects. In response to questions from Mr Pickerin, Mrs Tyley noted that there had been some staffing issues, subsequently addressed in the areas referred to.

On **quality and performance** in curriculum areas (pages 28-30 in the report) Mr Clark and Mrs Vingoe referred to the graphical representation of success rates 16-18 long level 3 courses 2002-2007, and drew the Committee's attention to the improvement in 2006/07, effectively 'narrowing the gap' between College success rates and national rates.

On **supporting students**, Ms Rosser summarised the elements of the 'Every Child Matters' framework and the work undertaken to support students in a holistic manner. She noted that the College holds the Investors in Careers kite mark, and will be seeking to renew matrix accreditation in 2008. The accreditation provides external recognition of the College's work in careers advice and guidance.

On **student achievement** (pages 49-59 in the report) Mrs Vingoe pointed particularly to data (not previously presented to the Committee) on the latest value added measures for the College. Mr Clark commented that the latest information showed a situation in which value added measures had broadly improved at AS level, but there had been a drop at A2 level. In response to questions on the matter from Mr Hopkins and Mr Boulter, Mr Clark noted that the ALIS value added measure was a very sensitive instrument, and was capable of indicating somewhat abrupt movements from small changes in data and that changes in single subject areas can impact on overall results. Nevertheless the measures were useful in identifying areas for further work, and the evidence suggested that the College may well need to do more to ensure that the transition from AS to A2 is one that challenges, motivates and 'stretches' learners more. Mr Clark also reported that the LSC targets for 'full' level two and level three results were not yet fully defined.

In concluding remarks Mr Clark drew the Committee's attention to the very positive statements about the New College student body contained in the executive summary of the report.

After commending all those involved in its production the Committee resolved to receive the report.

5 Ofsted Monitoring Visit – January 2008

Mrs Tyley introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee, explaining that it provided information on the monitoring visit undertaken by Ofsted on 21 January 2008, and included an update on other external reviews of College activities including an Ofsted Thematic Survey visit, Learndirect inspection, BTEC risk assessment and Matrix re-accreditation.

Mrs Tyley set out the context for the monitoring visit, and noted that it was undertaken with a changed purpose and style and a new reporting methodology, reflecting that previously used for failing schools and colleges. The new approach utilises an 'exception basis', focusing on areas previously identified for improvement. She described the challenging nature of the inspection's investigation and drew the Committee's attention to the findings set out in the report. She identified the concerns arising from the inspector's judgements, including those relating to students' progress and level of challenge. Mr Clark commented that the language used in the report was considerably harsher in tone than that used in the HMI feedback session at the conclusion of the visit.

Mrs Vingoe summarised the successful outcome of the BTEC Centre Risk Assessment visit undertaken on 30 January 2008, and the preparations made for the forthcoming Ofsted Inspection of Learndirect for March 2008, and the Matrix re-accreditation scheduled for April 2008.

After satisfactory responses from Mrs Tyley and Mrs Vingoe to members' questions on matters of detail within the report, the Committee resolved to receive the report.

6 Quality Improvement Plan 2007/08 : Update

Mrs Tyley and Mrs Vingoe introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee, explaining that it presented a mid-year review of progress against the Quality Improvement Plan approved by the Corporation in December 2007. She noted that it identified good progress in a number of areas, particularly an improved OTL grade profile, together with development plans and support for some staff, and a revised student target setting process, supported by quick checks, progress reviews and improved reporting and follow up.

Mrs Tyley drew the Committee's attention to the section of the report (Section 2.7) covering the Observation of Teaching and Learning scheme and the improvements recorded. She commented that there remained a need to accelerate further the work to secure improvements.

On the sections of the report (Sections 2.5, 3.2 and 3.3) dealing with student targets, progress reviews and quick checks, Ms Rosser reviewed progress being made, and the increasing emphasis being placed on the effective use of feedback and short term targets for students. In response to questions from Mr Boulter on the relationship between the College student target setting and that used in schools for pupils, Ms Rosser commented that the College endeavours to use the same language as used in schools, and noted that negotiated targets can be revised in the light of progress.

Mrs Tyley commented that the mid year student achievement data in the form of January A level module results will be available shortly, and will be significant for assessing progress.

In debate, Mr Hopkins noted the encouraging progress made in many areas covered by the report, and identified in particular the large rise in HE applications.

The Clerk reported that the proposals on Governor Self Assessment presented to the Corporation in October 2007 had been accepted, and the first reporting cycle was scheduled for October 2008.

The Chairman commended those involved on the production of the update, and the Committee resolved to receive the report.

7 Areas of Concern : Update

Mrs Vingoe introduced the report (copy in minute book) for the Committee, explaining that it provided an overview of progress in the three areas of 'serious concern' some causing 'some concern' and three causing 'potential concerns' identified in 2007/08. She reported that new management arrangements had been established in many of the areas, and detailed monitoring of progress had been undertaken by curriculum area leaders concerned and reported regularly to the Vice-Principal and Quality Manager. On ICT and CLAIT, Mrs Vingoe summarised the progress made, noting in particular: improved monitoring and follow up of students in Applied ICT and A2 ICT; the development of a wider choice of modules in CLAIT; tighter course management arrangements and improved sharing of good practice in AS computer studies; and improved arrangements for course management in AS Design. However, there remain several matters where progress has been less marked, including: achievement in Applied ICT; student time management in A2 ICT; attendance in CLAIT; and retention in AS Design. Mr Clark commented that courses in this curriculum area are relatively complex to plan and manage, since they involved a mix of theory and practice which not all teachers found straightforward to accommodate.

Mrs Tyley and Mrs Vingoe summarised briefly progress made in the area of concern in Category B and C.

The Committee resolved to receive the report.

8 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee will be held at 5.30 pm on Wednesday 25 June 2008 to consider a limited agenda, with the subsequent meeting to consider the normal full agenda being set for 6.00 pm on Monday 29 September 2008.