



Mission Statement: *Inspiring learning, developing character, building futures*

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS BOARD OF BLACKPOOL SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Date: Monday 5th December 2022
Venue: The Blackpool Sixth Form College
Room: Committee Room
Time: 5.00 pm

Present: Ms Debbie Taaffe (Chair)
 Ms Jill Gray (Principal)
 Mr Nick Andrews
 Mr Alistair Burr
 Cllr Don Clapham
 Mr Kellen Collumbine
 Ms Caroline Coyne
 Ms Tabitha Davey
 Mr David Gascoigne
 Mr Jeremy Mannino
 Mr Alistair Burr
 Ms Hannah Critchley

Together with: Ms Gail Yeadon (Deputy Principal)
 Ms Tina Cooper (Vice Principal: Vocational)
 Ms Amanda Crumblehulme (Assistant Principal: Business Support)
 Mr Stuart Ormson (Assistant Principal: Student Support)
 Mr David Williams (Head of Student Support)
 Ms Ciara Gregson (Governance Lead-FCAT) Minute Taker

Apologies: Mr Ray Baker
 Cllr Callum Baxter

Absent: Ms Sukie Woodhouse

		Action
61.2022	Preliminaries The Chair opened the meeting welcoming Directors and attendees, in particular newly appointed Directors Nick Andrews (Support Staff Director) and Kellen Collumbine (L6 Student Director). Apologies were received and accepted from Callum Baxter and Ray Baker. Sukie Woodhouse was also absent.	
62.2022	Declarations of Interest No new interests were declared.	
63.2022	Considerations of any items of urgent business No items of urgent business were raised.	
64.2022	Confirmation of Quoracy Quoracy was confirmed.	
65.2022	Minutes of the meeting held on 20th September 2022 The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting and signed accordingly.	

66.2022	<p>Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda</p> <p>54.2022 Staff Survey Report</p> <p>Communication survey and action plan: directors to receive more specific communication feedback on 'you said, we did' at the next meeting.</p> <p>Behaviour: The impact of the pandemic is evident in the lower maturity levels demonstrated by students across the sixth form sector. Other local colleges have reported similar concerns with increased suspensions and safeguarding referrals. Higher levels of sexual abuse allegations and mental health issues are the key issues reported.</p> <p>Feedback from discussions with other sector leaders indicated improved behaviour in the new lower sixth cohorts and students reporting their belief that behavioural issues stemmed directly to inhibited social interactions during the pandemic. Staff feedback indicates a significant improvement in behaviour in this academic year, although retention of students may have impacted this.</p> <p>57.2022 Safeguarding</p> <p>It was confirmed that safeguarding training around local issues was scheduled for a later date and the LA were planning to introduce a new training course around local risks and trauma.</p>	
67.2022	<p>SEND</p> <p>Directors were provided with an update from Dave Williams (Head of Additional Learning Support), item 9.1 on the agenda.</p> <p>The challenges of the past year were discussed in relation to the change of leadership within the Focus Centre and the increased demand for social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) support and the high percentage of safeguarding concerns. The increased demand resulted in increased demand for exam access arrangements. Directors were invited to ask questions.</p> <p>A director questioned the market share of students with SEND applying to Blackpool Sixth and what other provisions were available for students with high needs. It was explained that the majority of students with SEND apply to Blackpool and the Fylde College who have more accessible entry requirements and lower-level vocational courses to meet their needs.</p> <p>Directors asked if the SEND Code of Practice had been expanded to reflect the impact of Covid and if more allowances were being made. After confirming that no updates to the code had been made, Directors held lengthy discussions about SEMH numbers, the use of assessment tools to determine needs and a wider reflection taking place across the town.</p> <p>Concerns about the potential negative impact on aspirations were debated against the possibility of validation of needs for young people. Directors were reassured that the transition processes, which include assessment tools alongside prior knowledge from secondary schools, were effective in identifying the needs and support for incoming students.</p> <p>A director asked about comparisons between SEND and non-SEND student outcomes and how many students with SEND take the next step into higher education. Highlighting that GCSE outcomes show non-SEND students with a 6.1 grade point average against SEND students with a 5.5 grade point average, outcomes therefore evidenced improved performance at KS5.</p> <p>Explaining that the focus on positive destinations rather than HE, therefore including apprenticeships and work placements. Proportionately, there would</p>	

be little difference between SEND and non-SEND students, although data could be provided for more accurate comparisons. There had been an increase in the number of students with SEND opting to take a gap year, which evidenced the challenges faced following the pandemic as applications were made at a time further lock downs were a possibility.

A Director suggested the college consider updating their terminology to reflect the national terminology of 'child looked after' (CLA) rather than 'looked after child' (LAC). This led to discussions regarding the negative connotations when categorising children.

A Director questioned how the college ensure parents have the confidence that their children will be supported and provided with equal opportunities in the future, when faced with a large number of categories which may hold negative connotations. The board were informed that there had been significant changes to the level of pastoral provision and support as key workers aimed to develop independence, and provide active support for those who need it most.

Recognising the level of professional development through an ongoing training plan, Directors were informed of the aim to have at least one member of staff trained in sign language. As courses have only been held virtually and staff preference for in person training, it remains a future development.

The Directors thanked DW for his report and he left the meeting.

68.2022

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

7.1 Directors received the achievement rates report for consideration and directors were invited to ask questions.

Highlighting the 8% drop in retention last year, a Director challenged what steps have been taken to mitigate further drops. Retention continues as a key focus area for the college with the development of a focused action plan that generated further strategies. A more detailed discussion would be held during the next agenda item, although it was confirmed that staff were digging deeper through fortnightly team meetings in an attempt to gain greater understanding of individual student circumstances.

Referencing the improvement in overall results between 2019 and 2022 at the bottom of table 4.1, a Director challenged that the categorised data in the report appeared to show a decline in results. Staff were questioned whether the table or report provided the accurate picture. It was explained that the conflicting data was a result of retention rates combined with pass rates. Staff acknowledged more analysis was required to fully understand the outcomes and implications. **It was agreed that further analysis would be undertaken and reported to the committee.**

SLT

Asked what the working assumption on results was, it was confirmed that the pass rate had increased. The government applied benchmarks as a half-way safety net between centre assessed outcomes and external exam outcomes. There had been an assumption that the reintroduction of external assessments would negatively impact outcomes, however the pass rate in 2021 was lower.

Directors were informed that the Government had announced that summer exams would be more equal to 2019 exams, some small adjustments would be made to prevent a hard landing in some subjects.

Asked for clarification on the learning aim, it was explained that it referenced students' programme of study i.e. 3 A levels, double BTEC/CTEC and an A Level or triple vocational qualification. Whilst possible for a student to choose a pathway with multiple learning aims, a main aim is required for funding purposes.

Directors were reminded of the complexities of the achievement rates and that the most important factor was the cause behind the outcomes such as a high pass rate combined with low retention rates would be of concern. Likewise, a high pass rate with low added value would indicate students were not achieving their expected grades. Agreeing that further checks were required on the data provided in the table before resubmission to the standards board.

A Director questioned whether the return to in person learning could be impacting students and whether additional teaching support or extracurricular activities could support retention. Explaining there appeared to be a positive impact and increased social opportunities through the menu of extracurricular activities available this academic year.

Referring to table 4.2, a Director highlighted inconsistencies in the data with 2018-2019 data not adding up. Staff confirmed the data was correct at the time of collections, although possibly a data cleanse had since been undertaken. It was agreed the data would be rechecked alongside the achievement data as there were possible mid-year tweaks.

Directors were informed the transition to RQF in BTEC/CTEC had been positive and pride in students' preparation for assessments throughout the pandemic. The results evidenced the achievements and to further develop processes, vocational staff were collaborating with A Level staff to develop exam techniques to enhance support for students. Unlike other sixth form centres, Blackpool Sixth were able to continue with internal assessments during the pandemic ensuring that students were receiving appropriately assessed grades.

Protective services (formerly public services) and travel and tourism are in their first year of teaching and music will transfer across from September 2023.

Directors noted that some of the big hitting subjects were of concern, it was explained that curriculum heads will review the progress review grades noting any blue subjects or declines in comparative grades from previous years. Data monitoring meetings were taking place at the time of the meeting therefore specifics were not available for the committee. Reassurances will be sought and action plans implemented where required.

7.2 Directors received the in-year ALPS report for consideration and were invited to ask questions.

Directors were provided with clarification that the reports were not like for like comparisons with previous reports as the data provides a snapshot of the progress grades rather than predicted grades which are provided later in Year 13. Appropriate interventions will be applied to subjects with high levels of blue grades to ensure gaps in learning are filled.

Staff deliberated on the timing of the meeting as details would not be available before January when mock exams had been completed. Directors were advised that when comparing with previous years they should be considering changes from red to blue and asking for the cause. These could relate to

changes in the curriculum such as new topics or that the students are studying a more challenging aspect of the course.

The Principal suggested that the meeting be moved to January for the next academic year. Noting that the committee is not due to meet until May, she explained that data lacking context was better than receiving no data.

It was agreed that the committee would receive interim updates by email after the meeting.

SLT

Recognising the challenges and uncertainty around the reports provided, a Director challenged whether the assessment calendar was serving the students and parents effectively and whether there it was reviewed annually particularly in regard to the lengthy time period between finishing mock exams and students' receiving grades. It was explained that results were published after Christmas to ensure students did not spend Christmas uncertain of their course choices whilst no teacher support was available.

Questioning the value of fluctuating progress grades for students, it was explained that different reporting grades had been explored and progress was deemed to be more effective than predicted grades. In year support was reviewed to ensure student welfare was front and centre during publication of progress grades. Students are aware that the grades are not reflective of the end of year outcomes.

Asked if progress grades helped to motivate students, it was confirmed that they could be motivational although the impact was individual to each student.

Asked why mocks could not be held in January, it was explained that the college cannot run mocks alongside official exams. The Principal agreed that this could be communicated to students to provide context behind the decisions.

SLT

A Director reminded the committee that discussions on the effectiveness of data were held at the last meeting when discussing the assessment of teacher performance. They questioned the effectiveness of the data presented when it was deemed to be lacking context in advance of circulation. Agreeing that there were challenges with data at this time, Directors were updated on increased measures introduced to support the assessment of teacher performance. Early warnings were provided for summer outcomes from a cohort who were reliant on teacher assessed grades with no external validation as their KS4 outcomes. Directors acknowledged staff concerns but agreed that the conversations and discussions were important to ensure accountability is maintained.

Directors were reassured that despite all the challenges faced including new qualifications and more difficult exams, detailed goals and actions continued to be recorded for all students. PMs have the facility to drill down into class level and individual student levels for every subject and can review the movement and comparisons to ensure effective discussions and targeted support for students.

69.2022

Attendance and Retention

8.1 Directors received the in-year attendance and retention report for consideration. Highlighting the key foci for the year, Directors were reassured that there had been early signs of improvement on both measures.

In terms of retention, the picture for the autumn terms was comparable with previous years, although the spring and summer terms were the periods that an increase in leavers was identified. This trend continued over the summer holidays into Year 13.

Three key factors were identified:

1. Vulnerable students, students with mental health conditions, physical health conditions, financial implications and personal circumstances.
2. Distances to travel to college
3. Career Aims – leavers changing direction towards a career accessible through apprenticeship, particularly those on vocational courses.

Some students were struggling to engage with the learning which led to prolonged absences, there were positive correlations with inflated teacher and centre assessed grades identified.

Efforts have focused on supporting the most vulnerable students as they were the most likely students to leave their courses in the first term. Increased resources were allocated to the bursary scheme and increased staffing in student support services and safeguarding. More external agencies are involved in the provision of support.

Retention has been added as a standard item on the SLT agenda and weekly leadership team briefing ensuring leavers are reported and patterns including reasons for leaving, subjects studied and the profile of students are identified and analysed. The bursary has been increased as a result of increasing number of students from Garstang leaving early in the academic year, which was not evident at this time last year. The Principal reminded Directors of the challenges faced by students through the last minute decision on the running of exams which had led to increased assessments to ensure teacher assessed grades would be viable. There were more applications from Garstang this academic year, so it may be that there is an issue with the distance for travel.

Staff have met with Blackpool Transport to see if there are any opportunities for reinstatement of the more popular bus services that were removed.

Another local college has reported an increase in Year 13 drop-outs in preference for apprenticeships. Reports are being sorted by school and discussions with local headteachers have suggested that some students undersell their ability to achieve academically and are choosing more vocational subjects.

Positively, retention has improved this academic year and staff have been briefed to ensure they understand the challenges to keep students motivated. They have been tasked with supporting students to ensure they look forward to returning after the Christmas break and that they can see the value to their futures by returning.

A review of enrolment processes is underway to consider any adjustments that would support students to choose the right career pathways. Students with a clear sense of direction are less likely to change direction mid-course.

Data collected from applicants through taster sessions and other incentives support prospective students to access courses that suit their interests and ability. The window to request a change of course has been extended and pastoral teams are reviewing career aims to gain an understanding of why students leave. Examples of reasons provided by recent leavers included

mental health, moving out of area and moving to another provider to access a technical award in line with changing career aims.

Outcomes from student focus groups identified the need for consistency and honesty when discussing the challenges of A Level courses. The balance is particularly difficult when discussing new subjects with staff having to be clear about the expectations whilst encouraging applications and ensuring students are on the right course for their career aims. Staff are required to hold very high levels of integrity throughout the process.

Good practice visits have been undertaken to other sixth form colleges. Rochdale have the best retention rate, although comparisons are difficult as they run very few vocational courses. The only notable difference the same member of staff supported students through the full enrolment process, starting at the interview.

There is a risk that student retention could start to make staff feel increased pressure. There has been an increase in both support and teaching staff leaving the sector to take up mentoring positions in the higher education sector and online which attract better salaries, terms and conditions.

Learning and development (L&D) has been well received by staff. Lesson observations support improvements through positive reflections, on boarding and coaching. The aim is to ensure that staff feel that they are valued and developing professionally, potentially encouraging staff retention.

Trauma informed training has been introduced to provide staff with the skills and tools to understand some of the barriers to learning faced by students. Further details are to be provided for Directors in the safeguarding report.

70.2022

Identification of any new or amended risks

No new risks were noted although it was agreed that staff wellbeing and student retention would continue to be monitored.

Directors were reassured that the announcement of the Principal's pending retirement had not appeared to have caused concern amongst staff.

The board were asked to note the financial impact from increased demands on support services, including factors such as increased exam support which did not attract additional funding.

The Principal agreed to review the meeting schedules for the next academic year and whether an additional meeting would be required in the spring term.

71.2022

Directors were asked to complete their attendance for this meeting on their DPR

72.2022

Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday 2nd May at 5.00pm at The Blackpool Sixth Form College

Signed _____

Date _____