

MINUTES

Curriculum and Quality Committee
MS Teams
Tuesday 19 March 2024 at 18:00

Date and timings: 18:00 to 20:02

Location MS Teams

Present (Governors): Rick Olver (Chair)
Gerry Bender (GB)
Denise Brown (DB)
Sue Leonard (SL)
Jo Brooker (JB)

Clerk to the Corporation Lana Jackman (LJ)

Minutes Carrie Brown- College Group Clerking and Policy Officer

In attendance Adam Fahey (AF) Deputy Principal
Roland Anderson (RA) Vice-Chair **by Chair's invitation**
Nicki Kelly (NK) College Principal- Southend College
Matthew Twitchett (MT) Executive Director- Quality, Teaching and Learning
Hayley Phare (HP) Executive Director- Curriculum
Jayne Sheehan (JS) Vice Principal- Innovation
John Newton (JN) College Principal- Basildon College
Sharon Dunphy (SD) Deputy Executive Director for Quality
Brad Brooks (BB) College Principal- Thurrock College
Aimee Bose (AB) Head of Teaching and Learning

Apologies
Quorum (4)

Item

0. Agenda

1.0 Preliminary items.

1.1 Apologies for Absence.
None.

1.2 Declarations of Interest.
There were no other new declarations of interest other than those already standing **(in accordance with the requirements of section 177 of the Companies Act 2006).**

1.3 Urgent items of other business.
There was no other urgent business notified in advance.

2.0 Minutes of previous meeting.

2.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

2.2 Matters Arising.

There were no outstanding matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting 21 November 2023 that were not discussed elsewhere on the agenda.

3.0 Ofsted Monitoring Visit.

AF gives the Committee an update of the recent Ofsted Monitoring Visit noting that SECG had one 'Significant Progress' and two 'Reasonable Progress' grading.

AF notes that the draft report has been received and there has been a request to review two sections, particularly one section around Level 2 business learners not knowing how to keep themselves online which SECG have requested is removed from the report as this was not discussed at any point during the monitoring visit and therefore is not appropriate to be included in the report.

SL notes that she was pleased with the outcome and thanked staff for their work on the visit.

4.0 Safeguarding.

4.1 Termly Update.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the termly update.

JB notes that the caseload is around 20% of the student cohort. JB notes that the new Safeguarding Referral progress has been a success- well received and well utilised by staff who are really buying into the new approach. JB details that SECG is seeing a significant increase in the use of ProMonitor confidential comments facilitating staff to build a holistic picture of learners and their support needs. JB notes that the new referral process resolves the Ofsted comment in December 2022 which stated that staff found the previous referral process clunky and a challenge to navigate. JB comments that there are areas for improvement in addition to areas of best practice but the new process is a large step in the right direction.

SL notes the increase in the number of learners starting with a social worker and asks about the impact on the staff resources? JB responds that the team is managing however there have been some staff issues this term with two staff being on maternity leave and one leaving however the maternity leave is ending soon and a new team member has been recruited.

GB asks about the serious incidents and asks if any of these involve knife crime? JB confirms that none are incidents with a weapon. The serious incidents are mainly around substance misuse where young people have bought in substances on their person.

RO notes that front line staff are taking on more responsibility of safeguarding for the initial actions and not immediately passing concerns onto the safeguarding team.

JB leaves the meeting 18:21.

5.0 Quality and Learner Experience.

5.1 Current Learner Performance- including attendance, achievement, retention and milestones.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the Current Learner Performance paper.

AF detailed the key figures noting that attendance is 86% marginally above target and retention is at 96.4% again above target and higher than this time last year. AF confirms that there are no withdrawals waiting on the system so the retention is a true figure.

AF notes that English and Maths are weaker areas. AF notes that assessment in level 1 English and Maths is poorer and is pulling down overall predicted achievement rates. AF adds that assessment progress is at 83% but this is very close to the 80% bench mark. AF continues that a lot of work needs to take place between now and the end of the academic year to ensure SECG does not dip below the bench mark.

AF gives a detailed account of the GCSE E&M mock exams noting the English attendance at 83% and Maths at 81% both figures were targets and above that of last year. AF notes the improvement in high grades 18.6% for English and 8.9% for Maths- these figures are moving in the right direction but have room for improvement.

RO asks what is the specific issue with the Level 1 English and Maths? MT responds that there is a lot of portfolio work that learners need to work through and some learners are not finding this the most interesting way of learning. MT adds that there have been some staffing issues that have also impacted this area- these are being actively reviewed. MT notes that SECG moved the deadline forward to the end of March for the completion of the programme to facilitate additional time for learners to complete.

AF adds that there is a possibility that some curriculum areas will not meet the March deadline but the additional 'buffer' time will be used to ensure that these areas do complete before the end of the academic year.

GB asks for clarity around the Level 1 E&M and if the results are the same for each campus, are the failings the same in each campus and how these results break down? AF notes that the progress (not results yet) differs by College and also by curriculum areas and where the curriculum teams are good there is definite improvement and the deadlines are met.

GB adds that he is concerned that the deadlines are not being met which he feels could be problematic in the long term if the messaging around the deadlines is different, for different Colleges, and different curriculum areas. AF responds that the shift in deadlines is simply an application of realism to the situation, the deadline was moved forward to facilitate additional time to ensure all learners complete by the end of the academic year. AF confirms that the deadline was not in name only but SECG is being realistic about who will meet it; this has not been communicated with the teams and is only an internal discussion with himself, MT and the College Principals.

SL asks if SECG is looking to learn from other institutions for the E&M problems particularly East Kent which may have a similar demographic? AF notes that East Kent deliver Level 2 qualifications over 2 years and this has a mixed result, it works for East Kent but it has been a disaster in other colleges (this is not a one size fits all model to follow). AF adds that he is going to Barnsley College and Bexhill College to review their practices.

DB adds that she mentored a Principal at East Kent Colleges group and noted that the E&M attendance was not as good as at SECG. DB details that East Kent Colleges group is in small bespoke areas where they only have one option for FE. DB adds part of this is a discussion between the inspections team which so far haven't been willing to listen to the narrative at SECG.

SL asks about the ESOL progress noting that while there is improvement why is this still below target and what has been done to improve this? HP responds that part of this is around when progress is measured- ESOL is currently sitting exams this week and next week and ESOL has a different schedule to other courses as it is delivered in a way to get the best results for these learners (one skill at a time).

SL asks about the impact of the tuition fund. HP responds that SECG has received the interim reports from external agencies for tuition fund with higher engagement from one supplier than the other. HP details that the learners have been engaging specifically at Southend College and this has seen an improvement in outcomes.

LJ asks about the different approaches to raise attendance and asked for clarity regarding the comment in the report that the vocational staff support in raising attendance? LJ details that East Kent Colleges Group have a three pronged approach to improve attendance. HP responds that at SECG there is a whole team approach to improving attendance for E&M. HP details that attendance is a national issue at the moment; SECG attendance is strong and this needs to be converted into achievement. The College Principals gave some examples of how this works at their specific sites.

RA asks if mock examinations are a national requirement? RA details the importance of mock examinations to give learners a benchmark as to where they are. HP responds that this is not a national requirement but these have wider implications for SECG that are positive as learners are supported to

understand the process and the ability to identify learners needs that may have not been met in prior settings to ensure that they are met for the exam. HP concludes that the wrap around is incredibly important.

5.2 QIP Monitoring.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the QIP monitoring report.

MT notes that the QIP is a living document that reflects the SECG current position and measures the impact. This will be building in a compliance aspect and driving action as swiftly as possible. MT notes that the apprenticeship and partner predicted data are improving. MT adds that learners have a much better understanding of the Extra+ offer.

SL comments that in the paper it states that no staff were identified within the TLARs requiring a four week plan and notes her surprise at this, given that learner feedback regarding some teaching was less than positive in December/January. AB responds that teachers were performing better for the TLAR monitoring. MT adds that managers can raise concerns about staff performance to AB, HP or himself and additional learning walks and learning visits will take place for these staff.

RO asks if the PDR six month review target for full compliance of 29th March will be met? MT confirms that this is the target that is being worked towards and HR monitor the progress towards this but everyone is aware of the importance of meeting this target.

RO asks how the effectiveness of the middle manager training will be measured? MT and AF note that this is an ongoing process that will be measured via PDRs. AF notes that the middle managers training is to really review the *art of the possible* in terms of expanding their portfolio into adult provision and the wide range of other funded and none funded provisions. AF notes the challenge of measuring impact on a rolling programme but ultimately the results at the end of the year will be what staff are held accountable for.

5.3 Learner Destinations Report.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the Learner Destinations Report.

RA asks about the ESOL destinations? HP responses that for ESOL they are looking at destinations into other curriculum areas and look to ensure that these learners go into internal progression. HP notes that the adult ESOL is a problem area due to housing issues and political matters around adult ESOL. HP notes that these learners are being rehomed very swiftly at the moment (within 2-3 days). JS add that the work force adult skills destinations are a challenge to obtain so SECG are looking to do Job Clubs and the SECG Job Fairs.

5.4 Welcome to college survey- Adult and Apprenticeships.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the welcome to the college survey paper.

MT highlights that the apprenticeship data is lower than liked- noting that a carpentry cohort did not complete the survey due to having agency staff during the survey period.

MT details that this is the first year that adult survey has been split and no questions with a score below 85%.

There were no further questions on the report.

5.5 AI in teaching.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the AI in teaching paper.

AB adds that staff will receive a second session on saving teachers time with AI on Friday. AB notes the positive feedback from staff on the first sessions and SECG is now building momentum in terms of upskilling staff with their digital capabilities. AB details how AI is reducing the time staff spend on administrative tasks, and will facilitate them spending more time engaging with learners and developing innovation teaching and learning strategies. AB details that with the use of these emerging technologies

SECG needs to draft policies in accordance with the staff strand and the learner strand. AB notes the policy being developed so far does line up with the principals for the use of AI in FE Colleges paper.

RA asks about the prioritisation for the AI products noting their expense and the SECG financial constraints? AB notes that she is looking for bids and grants to fund the software noting that the 'How To' platform was funded via an SDF bid.

LJ notes that some learners can become socially distant with AI and asks about pastoral care and if there is a strategy and/or policy being drafted to reflect this; and in terms of the comment around critical thinking mentioned in the report, how would critical thinking be encouraged by AI? AB responds that the policy will have a learner focus in terms of how they will be prepared to keep themselves safe when using these tools. AB details that for critical thinking it will be around teaching learners the academic skills to critically prompt the AI. AB adds the learner follow up to promote the critical thinking skills is that they might then have to do a pitch, they might have to analyse their report and report it back to a vlog recording they create.

There were no further questions on the report.

6.0 Curriculum Planning 2024/25.

6.1 Governor Curriculum Scrutiny.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the Governor Curriculum Scrutiny report.

HP notes that the report is slightly out of date with the AEB offer being reviewed with a deadline of Friday and HP adds that 16-19 has a deadline for before Easter. HP adds that this will be uploaded onto Forecast within the week.

RO expressed a wish that Governors could see the scoping document at the start of the process in future years.

There were no further questions on the Curriculum Scrutiny report.

7.0 Centre for Innovation- update.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the Centre for Innovation report.

JS notes that SECG will meet the AEB target. JS details that SECG should double its apprenticeship achievement this year and the PEDS have reduced substantially.

RO asks if SECG is obtaining more employer engagement? JS responds that SECG has a number of events upcoming including an engineering event to promote the HTQs and Level 4 apprenticeships. There is also a logistics event jointly hosted with the Chamber of Commerce and also a construction event in the pipeline. This is in addition to the Early Years event to talk about the Early Years apprenticeship.

There were no further questions on the Centre for Innovation update.

8.0 Higher Education update.

8.1 HE recruitment strategy (updated numbers).

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the HE recruitment strategy.

SD notes that the SECG recruitment figures are lower than last year 372 compared to 434 using figures released on Monday- some of this is due to the reduction in Access to HE courses. SD notes the 200 HE learners target and typical conversion rate of 45% therefore the HE team is focused on getting the maximum number of conversions this year detailing the array of measures to achieve this.

There were no questions on the HE Recruitment Strategy.

9.0 Performance Measures.

The Committee **REVIEWED AND NOTED** the Performance Measures paper.

RO thanked AF for this report as it gives the Governors everything in one place.

AOB

JN feedback on a competition that SECG learners took part in with Connectwise (a networking and cyber security company) around an extended project to present to a Board of Directors, cybersecurity and network analysts and the top three learners were invited to the Head Office in London to present. This is the build in working experience, career development and curriculum development. JN noted the SECG learners came 1st, 2nd and 4th which was a huge achievement for them and SECG won the College award in addition. JN continues that two of the learners have been offered jobs from this opportunity. The Committee congratulated JN and the learners.

10.0 Governance matters.

10.1 Committee oversight of risk- item deferred.

11.0 Committee Evaluation.

The Committee Evaluation to take place via email outside of the meeting.

13.0 Dates of future meetings.

Tuesday 14 May 2024 16:00 Southend 7E.03

There being no further business the meeting ended at 20:02 hrs

Signed.....Dated.....