Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 17th February 2022 at 5.30 pm via Teams

Governors: Sam Beel (Staff Governor), Phil Cook (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Vanessa Housley, Dot Smith (Chair), Anne Vickers, Simon Wood and Gary Wright

Apologies: Katy Ludgate and Mark White

Officials: Phil Blewitt (NETA Managing Director), Jason Faulkner (College Principal Redcar and Cleveland College), Lesley Graham (College Principal Stockton Riverside College), Phil Hastie (Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure), Gary Potts (Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation), Peter Wood (Interim Group Director of Quality) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

For agenda item 1 only: Kimberley Cutler (Head of Construction, Professional and Service Industries, Stockton Riverside College) and Christine Wiley (Group Head of Apprenticeships)

The Chair welcomed Kimberley Cutler and Christine Wiley to the meeting.

SIC22/1 Agenda Item 1 – Presentation – Apprenticeships

The Head of Construction, Professional and Service Industries (CPSI), Stockton Riverside College (SRC) and the Group Head of Apprenticeships gave a presentation, circulated to members after the meeting, which covered the following:

- Curriculum Intent:
  - Based on market analysis, Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) local priorities, grants and incentives and employer feedback
  - Examples:
    - [REDACTED]
  - Responsive to employers' needs but balanced against financial viability
  - Development of short document, *Understanding Apprenticeships – What to expect as an employer,* to supplement a comprehensive employer handbook
- Implementation:
  - Example delivery schedule for the Team leader programme, tracked using Smart Assessor, with End Point Assessment (EPA) at 18 months
  - Support for apprentices' enrichment and behaviour and attitudes, including digital brochures and Apprentices' Wellbeing Week
- Impact:
  - Feedback from learner and employer forums and surveys, with employers confirming that they received good advice and support during COVID
  - Increased apprenticeship recruitment, with growth over the last four years even with the impact of COVID
  - Apprenticeship recruitment by month for the last four years

- Additional support and reviewing:
  - Continuous CPD and Process Internal Quality Assurance to keep pace with changes to apprenticeships, including the move from Frameworks to Standards
  - Regular best practice sessions held every three months, linked to the Apprenticeship Group Improvement Plan
  - Use of real-time reports from Smart Assessor to monitor student progression

A member commented on the positive employer feedback from 'Find an Apprenticeship Training Provider', with 29% rating Etc. Excellent, and asked about how feedback themes were identified, including those perhaps less positive. The Group Head of Apprenticeships explained that the online survey had gone live almost a year ago but, having identified that some employers were unable to access it digitally, assessors also provided hard copy questionnaires; managers and supervisors at different levels in organisations had also been encouraged to attend employer forums. She added that, for example, the one-page guide outlining what employers should expect had been developed in response to employer feedback. The Head of CPSI added that assessors and apprenticeship managers had developed good relationships with employers and would also act on informal feedback. The Group Head of Apprenticeships highlighted that members of the Business Development team had been available during COVID-19 to explain all the guidance to employers which had strengthened employer relationships and mitigated declines in apprenticeship growth.

A member asked if increased remote working had led to the development of new job roles, particularly in higher level apprenticeships, and the Group Head of Apprenticeships explained that the impact had mainly been seen in working practices and delivery, including hybrid working for some apprentices.

A member commented that apprenticeships was an area of focus through a Group Improvement Plan (GIP), and asked what the key improvement drivers would be to move from Good to Outstanding. The Group Head of Apprenticeships felt that this would be improving consistency in the areas identified in the GIP, such as on marked work and high-quality logging of the learner journey against the curriculum plan.

A member asked if achievement challenges affected any particular group of vulnerable learners and the Group Head of Apprenticeships explained that there had been no specific impact and that employers being in and out of lockdown had had an impact on all apprentices. The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships added that [REDACTED] apprentices were currently receiving Additional Learner Support (ALS) and that the Learning Support team recorded all interventions; the Group Head of Apprenticeships added that many learners would have come through work-based academies and other interventions before joining an apprenticeship programme.

Members **noted** the presentation and thanked the Group Head of Apprenticeships and the Head of CPSI, SRC.

Kimberley Cutler, Christine Wiley, Simon Wood and Sarah Thompson left the meeting.

SIC22/2   **Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 18 November 2021 had been circulated and were **approved** as an accurate record.

Members considered the actions arising from previous meetings, all of which were not yet due, in progress or on the agenda for this meeting. Progress against actions was **noted.**

Agenda Item 3 – Group Improvement Plans 2021-22

A summary report and appendices providing the Group Improvement Plans (GIPs) following Performance Review 3 (PR3) had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

SIC22/3   **3.1 – Teaching and Learning**

The Interim Group Director of Quality invited members' questions and members noted in particular the positive retention data as of December 2021 and the embedding of the Leading the Curriculum CPD programme, with strong staff engagement.

A member asked if there had been any significant changes in the number of staff on support plans and the Interim Group Director of Quality outlined that ten staff had recently moved out of support plans, demonstrating the positive impact of the coaching model. Of the smaller number of staff remaining in support, most were either new to teaching or making the transition from industry to teaching and only required low level support.

A member commented that, for apprenticeship provision, 69 walkthroughs had taken place and 30 out of 40 assessors had been observed against a target of 100% of assessors to receive a walkthrough within the first term; the Interim Group Director of Quality explained that this had partly been due to the impact of COVID, with scheduling delayed in the first term, however, with a renewed focus this term, only two observations were currently outstanding and these were scheduled to take place the week beginning 28th February. The GIP would be updated to reflect this following PR6.

In response to a member's question, the Interim Group Director of Quality explained that improvements in work scrutiny were ongoing and part of a longer term journey to embed the process into annual cycles; sharing best practice across the group aimed to develop more sophisticated approaches to feedback, including audio and video.

A member asked about the use of Pro Monitor for students with low attendance and whether the targeted interventions had been effective. The Interim Group Director of Quality explained that each curriculum team was using targeted impactful interventions in response to attendance and progress concerns. The College Principal SRC added that, for example, detailed data was considered in CPSI quality meetings and that staff were proactive and had systems in place to drive improvements. A member commented that attendance had been a key focus of a recent Ofsted inspection in the Stockton Local Authority area and other themes included exclusion, safeguarding, COVID context, improvements and remote education.

A member asked if there were concerns about meeting any of the targets in the GIP and the Interim Group Director of Quality confirmed not and added that the language of teaching and learning at the group had evolved, with a focus on the craft of teaching and not just data.

SIC22/4 **3.2 – Value Added**

The Interim Group Director of Quality invited questions on the Value Added GIP on behalf of the College Principal Bede.

Members noted the strong progress made on the Value Added GIP, with most areas for improvement RAG rated Green, and only two, both relating to the use of the ALPS (A Level Performance System) tracker, currently Amber rated. A member asked whether, as not all Level 3 courses were included in the GIP, any analysis could be done on apprenticeships' value added. The Interim Group Director of Quality explained that it could be possible to look at EPA data such as distinctions, particularly on first attempts at assessment, but he added that there would be no external benchmarking available.

SIC22/5 **3.3 – Apprenticeships**

The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships reported on positive progress against the GIP and highlighted that achievement of EPA distinction grades had reached the target of 30%.

SIC22/6 **3.4 – Missed Learning**

The Interim Group Director of Quality invited questions. Members noted the strong focus of the Missed Learning GIP on learners' resilience and wellbeing. The Interim Group Director of Quality confirmed that the next update would be following PR6, with a focus on the impact of the College Collaboration Fund (CCF) project which provided sports activities, including girls only sessions, and mental health support.

Members **noted** the progress update on the four Group Improvement Plans following PR3.

SIC22/7 **Agenda Item 4 – Progress Update on Areas for Improvement 2021-22**

As requested by committee members at the meeting held on 23rd September, an update had been provided showing progress on college areas for improvement 2021-22 not including in the GIPs; i.e. improvements specifically at department level.

In relation to the action to improve learner recruitment diversity, the Managing Director NETA highlighted that the Gender Innovation in Engineering (GINE) programme had restarted post-COVID, with a group of [REDACTED] girls from [REDACTED] Primary School currently engaged in the programme; initial feedback from the school had been excellent, with a tour of NETA and employer site visits planned and a final feedback session at the end of the programme. In response to a committee member's request at the Governors' Strategic Conference, work was underway on including metrics and benchmarks in the NETA improvement plan.

A member commented that the GINE project should be promoted to other Stockton-on-Tees schools and suggested that the Managing Director NETA present to both the Closing the Gap cluster, for Pupil Premium leads, and the Education Matters forum, for primary headteachers.

The Managing Director NETA **agreed** to liaise with Vanessa Housley and suggested that it would be best to schedule this after the final feedback session with Preston Primary School.

The College Principal Redcar & Cleveland College (RCC) highlighted improvements in college attendance and the establishment of a working group to explore innovative approaches to student engagement, including the use of Sir William Turner Foundation funding to reward both attendance and progress. Staff would be invited to submit student nominations after the February half-term, with a mini-rewards event planned.

The College Principal SRC reported that she was pleased with overall progress on the areas for improvement identified.

A member asked about the impact of potential over-inflation of centre assessed grades in English and maths by schools and the College Principal RCC confirmed that many students taking English and maths resits had difficulties with focus during exams and increased anxiety about essay writing in English. Staff were also reporting gaps in students' maths knowledge on technical courses.

Members **noted** the comprehensive overview of all identified areas for improvement and the progress updates provided for areas not covered in Group Improvement Plans.

SIC22/8   Agenda Item 5 – Quality and Performance Update 2021-22

The Interim Group Director of Quality had circulated an update on quality and performance for 2021-22, including monitoring of attendance and retention with interventions and support put in place, best and worst case apprenticeship retention and predicted overall and timely achievement, and strategies to support and challenge teaching and learning areas for improvement.

A member asked about the variance in attendance on Prince's Trust provision 16-18 and 19+, with 16-18 below 2020-21 and 19+ well above. The College Principal RCC, also lead for Prince's Trust, explained that, although Prince's Trust programmes were delivered termly, attendance data was reported cumulatively and that lower numbers on courses often led to a disproportionate impact on attendance data; it was also the case the Prince's Trust students were often those most disadvantaged and disengaged thus attendance rates required contextualisation. In response to a follow up question, the College Principal RCC confirmed that there were only [REDACTED] 19+ learners at Bede which had a disproportionate impact on attendance data. A member suggested that it would be useful to indicate small cohorts in future updates. Etc.'s 16-18 attendance was [REDACTED] higher and 19+ attendance [REDACTED] higher than those colleges included in the Association of Colleges' (AoC's) recently published benchmarking data. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure added that attendance at English and maths also compared favourably against the AoC survey at [REDACTED] for 16-18 and [REDACTED] for 19+. The Interim Group Director of Quality highlighted that the impact of COVID self-isolation on students had also been a focus, with the tuition fund being used for catch-up sessions and provision of recorded sessions, such as TikTok videos for hairdressing students.

Members **noted** that key performance indicators and teaching and learning were strong across the group but that the impact of the pandemic continued to pose a risk to apprenticeship and education and training achievement rates and was a key strategic focus.

SIC22/9   Agenda Item 6 – Destinations of Vulnerable Learners

The Interim Group Director of Quality explained this report had been provided following a request by members at a previous meeting; sustained destinations data for education and training and apprenticeships had been provided for learners in disadvantaged postcodes, those with social workers, looked after children (LAC), care leavers and those from ethnic minorities. A member commented on the value of receiving data broken down at this level, which demonstrated that the significant majority of vulnerable learners achieved positive destinations; members noted that some 19+ cohorts showed the least positive sustained destinations and the actions being taken to prioritise support for these cohorts.

Members **noted** that the group's curriculum and support processes had a considerable impact on the positive destinations of vulnerable learners.

SIC22/10   Agenda Item 7 – Higher Education and Skills Quality and Improvement Plan Update

The College Principal SRC, also strategic lead for Higher Education (HE) and Skills, introduced the previously circulated update and HE and Skills Improvement Plan. She added that HE applications for 2022-23 were being closely tracked, with twice monthly meetings with the Group Director of Marketing and the marketing team to drive applications. New developments for 2022-23 included requesting location approval for engineering HNC provision at NETA.

A member commented on Mechanical Engineering student satisfaction concerns at RCC and whether there had been any sharing of feedback in preparation for the new engineering provision at NETA. The College Principal SRC had ensured focus groups had been held in response and actions raised to rectify concerns;

A member commented on the positive results from the HE Student Survey 1 (HE SS1) and asked if the College Principal SRC thought that the results from the current National Student Survey (NSS) would be as positive. The College Principal SRC explained that, as student satisfaction rates from HE SS1 for the cohorts in scope had been excellent, she believed that this would be reflected in the NSS and added that work was ongoing at SRC to improve evening catering and a HE common room would be opening after February half term.

Members **noted** the update and that the quality of the group's HE provision remained strong.

SIC22/11   Agenda Item 8 – Subcontracting Quality Monitoring

The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships highlighted from his circulated report that, in particular, Adult Education Budget (AEB) funded subcontracted provision was performing well, with positive relationships with subcontractors. However, subcontracted provision with Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service Limited had not recruited well and was unlikely to continue in 2022-23.

A member asked if subcontracted apprenticeships with Flexi Training and Teesside University would continue given quality concerns and the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships confirmed that contracts at Flexi Training were currently winding down. Teesside University apprentices returning from Breaks in Learning would complete their programmes before the contract was wound down.

Members **noted** the subcontracting quality monitoring update.

SIC22/12   **Agenda Item 9 – Work Experience and Industrial Placements Update**

The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships presented a report on the Work Placement Excellence Journey, implemented from September 2021, and current performance against targets for work experience, industrial placements and preparation for employment. He added that, since meeting papers had been circulated, [REDACTED] Bede students had secured industry placements with the National Horizons Centre. Key employer partnerships had also been outlined in the update, with the Business Development Industrial Placement Lead focused on securing work placements; placements with dates to be confirmed had not been included in progress tables and included construction placements with Keepmoat and Kier Construction.

He highlighted that the work experience completion percentage tended to pick up in the second half of the academic year and, in response to a member's question, he confirmed that this was due to the curriculum delivery plan and programme design. He added that departments also needed to get to know students before organising suitable work placements. The College Principal SRC confirmed that she had regular meetings with the Group Business Development Manager to discuss current and future work placements and that progress was positive and regularly monitored. She also highlighted the plans in place for [REDACTED] Level 2 and 3 Construction students to go on placement on Kier Group's Egglescliffe School project after half term, with the College Principal RCC noting that securing construction placements could be challenging.

The Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships highlighted that the target for industrial placements had been increased this year due to the increased A Level recruitment and was challenging but that actions and interventions were being taken as outlined in the report. In response to a member's question, the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships confirmed that work experience was one of the Gatsby benchmarks for 16-18 study programmes and, though industrial placements were not a mandatory part of qualifications, these were developing as part of plans for T Level delivery. He added that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had been sympathetic to the challenges for colleges in providing the full 45 days of work placements during COVID but completion of placements was being carefully monitored and any underperformance against target rationalised to reduce the risk of funding clawback.

Members **noted** the update.

SIC22/13   **Agenda Item 10 – Pastoral Care Update**

The College Principal RCC presented the previously circulated report on pastoral care on behalf of the College Principal Bede; he highlighted that it focused on the curriculum review of personal development in January 2022, learner survey results in relation to personal development and actions taken in response to areas for improvement identified. The update also outlined work on addressing the issue of sexual violence and harassment through the tutorial programme, introduction of forums for safeguarding conversations and staff training on the effective delivery of sensitive topics, and an overview of the CCF project, including the appointment of three Wellbeing Coaches.

A member asked about the lower response rate, to the question 'I take part in additional activities' in the recent Learner Survey. The College Principal RCC explained that the college principals had looked at this in more detail and it appeared that students viewed their study programme as a whole learning programme and did not consider enrichment an additional activity. One of the Areas for Improvement from the curriculum review was therefore to highlight to students activities additional to their core programme.

Phil Cook left the meeting.

A member commented that, having recently attended a Learner Forum at RCC, he had been able to triangulate reports to governors with students' own comments and that the student voice reinforced the information provided at meetings, particularly with reference to safeguarding.

Members **noted** the update on personal development and the innovation and learner voice used by Student Support and Wellbeing to shape this vital area of provision which ensured learners were fully prepared for their next steps.

SIC22/14   **Agenda Item 11 – Innovation Panel Update**

The College Principal SRC, lead for the Innovation Panel, had circulated a report on the ten projects awarded Innovation funding to date and their impact and the excellent outcomes from innovative approaches to curriculum delivery. These included the Gender Innovation in Engineering (GINE) project encouraging primary school aged girls to engage in engineering; the Thrift Shop designed to recycle donated clothes and shoes, support students and provide independent living skills development for Foundation Learning students; and the Sofia Wind Farm model developed by engineering students at RCC. Just over £20k of funding had been allocated to date, with the most recent round of applications closing on 11th February; eight applications had been received and innovation panels would be held after half term. The College Principal SRC **agreed** to provide details of these for any governors wishing to attend.

In response to a member's question, the College Principal SRC confirmed that the applications had been spread across group sites.

Members **noted** the update.

SIC22/15   Agenda Item 12 – Governor Learning Walks

The Interim Director of Quality explained that the report had provided a summary of governor learning walk activity with feedback and observations from learning walks undertaken. He encouraged members to contact him or the Group Teaching and Training Development Manager to arrange walkthroughs. The Chair added that governors could also take part in other learner voice activities, such as learner forums. Guidance for learning walks had been developed and would be shared with the FE Corporation at their next meeting on 10th March.

Vanessa Housley outlined the learning walk activities she had undertaken this academic year, involving visits to 25 lessons in total, and their value in evidencing the impact of coaching and mentoring on teaching practice. She had been able to triangulate evidence for a range of provision, confirming that the strategies put in place were having a positive impact.

Members **noted**:
i) completed learning walks and associated feedback;
ii) arrangements for learning walks;
iii) that all governors would be reminded of the value of learning walks and encouraged to undertake these at FE Corporation meetings.

SIC22/16   Agenda Item 13 – Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

The Chair thanked attendees for their reports and contributions.

SIC22/17   Agenda Item 14 - Approval of Documents for Public Inspection

It was **agreed** that the agenda of the current meeting be made available for public inspection; supporting documents were all deemed confidential for reasons of commerciality. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

SIC22/18   Agenda Item 15 – Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 26 May 2022 at 5.30 pm, Redcar & Cleveland College Board Room (H202)

SIC22/19   Agenda Item 16 – Key Themes

The following key themes were identified:
- Apprenticeships: How we do it! presentation from the Group Head of Apprenticeships and the Head of Department: Construction, Professional and Service Industries
- Progress updates on the four Group Improvement Plans (Teaching and Learning, Value Added, Apprenticeships, Missed Learning) and on areas for improvement identified in college Self Assessment Reports but not covered by Group Improvement Plans
- Considered sustained destinations 2019-20 of vulnerable groups (learners in disadvantaged postcodes, learners with social workers, Looked After Children, Care Leavers and from ethnic minority groups) with the significant majority of these students having sustained positive destinations
- Update on Higher Education and Skills, including progress on Improvement Plan

- Update on Subcontracting quality monitoring, including details of actions taken in response to quality concerns
- Consideration of current performance in relation to work experience, industrial placements and preparation for employment, including the introduction of the Work Experience Excellence Journey to provide a standardised and measurable approach cross-Group
- Pastoral update focused on Personal Development, with outcomes of the recent Curriculum Review/Deep Dive and actions taken in response to areas for improvement identified
- Update outlining the impact and positive outcomes of Innovation Panel funded projects

(*The meeting ended at 7.05 pm*)

Approved at a meeting held on 9th June 2022