



**WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE  
CORPORATION BOARD  
STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

***Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held in the Board Room at the Derby Road site on Thursday 13 October 2011 at 6.00 pm***

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Kate Allsop, Chair  
Nigel Cooper-Fowkes  
Professor John Holford  
Asha Khemka  
James Stafford

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Maxine Bagshaw, Clerk to the Corporation  
Tricia Harman, Deputy Principal: Teaching & Learning  
Janice Hill, Director: Curriculum & Standards  
Nikki Witham, Head of Quality & Performance  
Linda Gratton, Head of Student Support  
Julian Walden, Staff Observer  
David Overton, Governor (Observer)  
Nevil Croston, Governor (Observer – until 6.40 pm)

	<b>ACTION by whom</b>	<b>DATE by when</b>
<p><b>11.48 <u>DECLARATION OF INTEREST IN ANY ITEMS ON THE AGENDA</u></b></p> <p>The Chair reminded those present to declare at the start of the meeting interests held in any matters to be considered. No interests were declared.</p>		
<p><b>11.49 <u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTION &amp; APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b></p> <p>Julian Walden was welcomed to his first Committee meeting. Apologies were received from Diana Gilhespy and Eleanor Taylor.</p>		
<p><b>11.50 <u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2011</u></b></p> <p>The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record of the meeting and were approved and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2011.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	Chair	13.10.11
<p><b>11.51 <u>ACTIONS OUTSTANDING &amp; MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES</u></b></p> <p>There were no matters arising and the action progress schedule was noted.</p>		
<p><b>11.52 <u>DEPUTY PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</u></b></p> <p>The Deputy Principal introduced this item and confirmed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Common Inspection Framework – this was discussed in detail at the</li> </ul>		

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_Chair

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- earlier Board meeting.
- HE validating partners – the College currently has two Higher Education validating partners, both of which have recently revised their business strategies. This is particularly in relation to partnership working and in light of this the College will review its strategic university partnership relationships in order to ensure institutional fit and to support successful implementation of the College strategy. Preparatory work includes the selection of potential partners and initial relationship building, together with the planned consolidation of University of Derby provision.
- 16-18 Bursaries – the College has received 101 applications for support under its bursary scheme, this is quite small when compared with the number of students who received EMA. Approximately 90 of the applications are at the stage where the College is awaiting evidence, and approximately 12 have been approved. The College may see an impact on retention as a result of the withdrawal of EMA and this is something that is being monitored.
- The Students` Union have confirmed that they are to sponsor a learner under the Inspire and Achieve Foundation's initiative. Also considering support are Mansfield District Council and HSBC.

Members discussed, in detail, the review of the College`s Higher Education validating partners and noted that publication of inspection results were anticipated in October or November 2011. Members were advised that it is likely that Leeds Metropolitan University (LMU) will be reducing its partnership arrangements and that this may be as a result of informal collaborative audit feedback that there is 'limited confidence' in the partnership arrangements in place. It was agreed that, if this is the finding then the College would not particularly wish to be associated with a university with this grading. Members were advised that, in real terms, it is highly likely that the College will be looking for a new validating partner.

AGREED:           to note the content of the report.

**11.53 LEARNER RECRUITMENT (TARGET & POSITIONS TO DATE)**

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and confirmed that her detailed written report relates to full time enrolments funding by:

- a) YPLA for 16-18 year learners
- b) SFA for 19+ learners and
- c) HEFCE for HE Learners

She confirmed the following:

- The target for full time 16-18 learners is 3013. Currently enrolments stand at 97% of plan. Whilst there has been a number of withdrawals, the College is confident that it will hit its target. It was noted that recruitment in this area is slightly up on last year and that the College has not particularly seen the anticipated negative impact of the withdrawal of EMA, although its impact in relation to retention has to be carefully monitored.
- The target for 19+ full time learners is 767 and, currently, enrolments are 98% of plan, there have been 24 withdrawals to date.
- HEFCE funding targets should be met through a combination of full and part time enrolments, with no over recruitment above the 5% tolerance, which would lead to a financial penalty.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_Chair

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In terms of general enrolment issues to address, members were advised that the College has seen a significant increase in the use of buses by students. It was believed that this was one consequence of the withdrawal of EMA. It was noted that the College has provided additional buses and buses to new geographical areas in this academic year.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

**11.54 EXAMINATION RESULTS 2010/11**

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and drew members` attention to her detailed report. She confirmed the following:

- A similar number of AS and A2 entries compared to the previous year.
- A2 results show a continuing improvement trend, a) overall pass increase from 97.2% to 98.8%, b) national pass rate increased from 97.6% to 97.8%. First year WNC pass rate is above the national average, c) percentage A\* to A grades increased by 4% to 12%, d) percentage A\* to C grades increased by 4% to 32%, e) seven passes were at the A\* grade.
- The AS pass rate a) fell by 3% from 82% in 2009/10 to 79% in 2010/11, b) percentage pass rate of AB grades reduced from 30% to 22%, c) percentage pass rate at A to C grades reduced from 59% to 53%, d) national pass rate for 2010/11 is 88.2%, compared to 78.6% for the College.
- GCSE results continue to improve a) pass rate increase from 96% in 2009/10 to 99% in 2010/11, b) percentage A\* C grades increased from 55% to 65%, c) national pass rate is 98.8% compared to 98.9% for the College, d) success rates are 69% due to poor retention.

Members all felt that the A level and GCSE results were good, but that the AS results were disappointing. It was acknowledged that there is significant work to be done in this academic year to see these improved. In relation to GCSE performance, it was acknowledged that, whilst the pass rate is good, the success rates are poor and this is as a direct result of poor retention.

Members discussed this in more detail and were advised that the issue seems to relate to the retention of Access students who take GCSEs alongside their main course. What appears to happen is that 'when the going gets tough' on the main course, students drop the GCSEs to focus on core provision. Members discussed students` views regarding success and agreed that there is a need to raise aspirations in tandem with providing outstanding teaching. The Deputy Principal indicated that advice and guidance also has a role to play in ensuring that students enrol on the right course and will 'stay the distance'. Members were advised that the College does have selection criteria in place and the hope is to always match a student with a relevant course for their aspirations.

Whilst acknowledging that there are areas that required improvement, it was felt that the results were fantastic for Mansfield and the town. The Principal accepted that this was the case, but indicated that so far as success rates were concerned, they need to improve. Members discussed the competitors in the area, Bilborough in particular was discussed as a College having an excellent reputation for A levels. The Principal indicated that the sector would benefit significantly from having an A level Academy

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_ Chair

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in Mansfield.

AGREED:           to note the update provided.

**11.55 SCHOOL REVIEWS OUTCOMES – TERM 3 2010/11**

The Director of Curriculum and Standards introduced this item and confirmed the following:

- The College's target for retention in 2010/11 was 92%, at the time of School reviews (June 2011). Six Schools were at or above the College's target, compared to five Schools at review 2 in March 2011. The College's overall retention is 91%.
- The College has set a target of 91% attendance for 2010/1, 1% above OFSTED's rating of 90% being good. At the time of the third School review, overall attendance was 90%.
- Lateness has remained static in eight Schools, with a 1% increase in one School.
- Courses performing below the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile were discussed and School Management Teams were asked to identify any emerging trends between performance, attendance, age groups and full time programmes and teaching and learning observation grades.
- Out of the eight Schools that deliver HEFCE funded programmes, in year retention has increased in four Schools and decreased in four.
- Functional Skills became the sole Skills for Life qualification for full time learners in 2010/11. Retention has remained strong in six Schools and decreased in three Schools to below the College's target.
- Overall Apprenticeship success rates have increased in four Schools and decreased in two.
- Three teaching and learning observations have been observed as inadequate, grade 4 at the time of School review 3, compared to seven at the same period in 2009/10.
- A synopsis of all external verifier reports was reviewed and School Management Teams confirmed that any action points had been addressed.
- When planning, Teams were reminded that teaching staff should be fully utilised against their contracted hours.
- Destination data and unknown outcomes needed to be completed and resolved as soon as possible, and all registers should be marked electronically.
- From 2011/12 Functional Skills will be included in overall College success rates.

Members noted the detail and accepted that it was somewhat historical at this particular point and that the focus was very much on retention for year 2011/12. As discussed in previous meetings, the significant decline in retention in the area of Hospitality, Sport and Leisure was a concern. Members were reminded that this was as a result of 'over selling' of the course and were assured that this had now been rectified.

AGREED:           to note the content of the report.

**11.56 INTERNAL REVIEWS a) 2010/11 END OF YEAR REPORT, b) PROCESSES 2011/12**

The Head of Quality and Performance introduced this item and drew members' attention to her detailed report which was split into two sections, the first summarising last year's position and the second giving an update

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in relation to 2011/12. The following was noted:

a) 2010/11 End of Year Report

- In total, 54 internal reviews were completed in 2010/11. These comprised 8 School of Learning internal reviews, six Business Support internal reviews and 40 Partner Provider reviews.
- Each School, Business Support Area and Partner Provider had different strengths and a different range of issues to address. There were some reoccurring themes and Management teams were advised where they could potentially work together to make improvements.
- The review process enabled Heads of School and Business Support Managers to work across other Schools of Learning and other Business Support areas within the College, providing an excellent opportunity for the exchange of ideas and good practice.

b) Internal Reviews 2011/12

- All Schools of Learning, Business Support Areas and Employer Responsive Providers will receive an internal review.
- In total 16 internal reviews are planned for 2011/12, and these can be broken down into 7 Schools of Learning, 8 Business Support Areas and 45 Employer Responsive Partner Providers.
- Refinements to the internal review process for 2011/12 mean that School of Learning internal reviews will focus on weaker performing provision. All elements of the student experience will be explored. All reviews will be completed by October 2011. Outcomes of the reviews will be used to build quality, teaching, learning and performance projects, which will support the School of Learning capacity to improve. Business Support Area reviews will focus on the College`s core values. Employer Responsive reviews will focus upon outcomes for learners, quality of provision, management and leadership and capacity to improve. Established Partner Providers with outstanding performance will receive a desk based internal review. The outcomes of the internal reviews will be used to build quality, teaching and learning performance projects, which will support the Partner Providers` capacity to improve.

Members reviewed the detail and acknowledged that there needs to be an increased focus on Partner Providers, given the growth in provision in this area. Members were advised that the College currently has 64 different Partners, and the intention is to have a real focus on quality.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

**11.57 HE STRATEGY**

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and confirmed that the College has developed a three year rolling HE strategy. The document presented takes into account four key areas which are:

- a) to continue to broaden and widen access to our participation in HE in Mansfield and Ashfield subject to Government priorities and alternative funding,
- b) to build on the College wide HE ethos and culture and, in particular, to ensure student and employer involvement in and contribution to course management,
- c) to review and enhance local, regional and national partnerships and

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networks, with partner universities, employers, colleges, schools, other educational providers, and other agencies to increase participation in HE,

- d) to continue to provide high standards of HE and a high quality of student experience.

Members reviewed the strategy in detail and were happy to approve the document.

AGREED: to approve the HE Strategy 2011/12 – 2013/14.

Members discussed the strategy in general terms and agreed that widening participation in the region was important and that to do this it was necessary for the College to provide an excellent teaching and learning experience. The aim for the College is to continually build upon its HE ethos and reputation, and that to do this, as discussed earlier in the meeting, it will need to find new validating partners.

In terms of HE courses on offer, the Deputy Principal explained that they tend to be in areas where the College provides similar courses at a lower level so that there are direct progression opportunities. Courses tend to be quite employer specific, vocationally driven and aim to meet the needs of the local area. In terms of future aspirations, it was acknowledged that, within funding constraints, the College would like to expand and to offer more top up courses.

Members discussed HE provision generally and questioned the age profile of HE Students. They were advised that, traditionally, full time learners fall into the 18, 19 and 20 year old category, and part time students are mature individuals at age 25+. The College has an equal split between full time and part time learners. There are approximately 600 in number and 480 FTE's. In terms of making the HE offer at College more attractive, members were advised that the HE Team is developing a premium package to support the increase in fees. The intention is that this package will be very professionally presented and hopefully alleviate some of the fee paying concerns.

AGREED: to note the update provided.

**11.58 HE – REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and drew members` attention to the summary document. It was confirmed that the HE Academic Standards Committee discussed a number of issues at its last meeting, these were HE strategy, enrolment against target, success rates, student survey outcomes, external examiner reports and the premium package previously discussed.

Members were particularly impressed with the national student survey outcomes which showed that the students overall satisfaction rating had increased from 73% to 80% and this was above the FEC benchmark of 78%.

(Nevil Croston left the meeting at 6.40 pm).

Members discussed HE fees and were advised that they were in line with other local colleges. In terms of attracting students from further afield, the

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Principal indicated that to do so, the College needed to develop a specialism and there is also a requirement to make the town more appealing. In terms of growth, it was noted that student numbers are capped and therefore within the current climate there is little opportunity to expand.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

**11.59 SAFEGUARDING**  
**a) DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011/12 &**  
**b) 2011/12 UPDATE**

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and confirmed that the development plan presented has been approved by the Board. She indicated that a column has been added which details progress to date. Members noted the updated position. In general terms, members were advised that the College has a concern regarding e-safety and cyber bullying and it has done and continues to do a lot of work to address this area.

One Governor present questioned how safe the use of Google docs was in terms of confidentiality of information. The Principal confirmed that assurance had been received from the IT Team in this area. It was agreed that Gavin Peake would be invited to the next Board meeting, to provide an explanation to Governors as to how the system works and the safety aspects. Members questioned generally whether there was a case for an external audit on the security and safety of e-governance.

AGREED: to note the update provided.

**11.60 SURVEY RESULTS**

The Head of Student Support introduced this item and drew members' attention to the summary of findings. Members reviewed the appendices in detail. The Principal confirmed that the response to question eight, in particular, caused her some concern, this being the low response to 'my interest is engaged throughout the sessions'. She indicated that the College needs to improve on this and its teaching and learning aspirations.

Members were advised that as this was the first year that the survey has been undertaken there was no comparison data, but that when the survey is undertaken again in 2011/12, the summary report will show a year on year increase or decrease. The Principal confirmed that the College is aware that it needs to focus very clearly on the learner experience, and that this goes to the heart of retention. In general discussion, members also felt that the response rate to question 20 was a concern.

Members generally discussed the survey process and were advised that in 2010/11 the Heads of School were able to bespoke the questions presented and that this may explain some of the differentials. In 2011/12 all Heads of School will ask the same questions which will give a clear mechanism for comparison. Members indicated that in the next report, they would find it useful to have a summary of themes emerging, and particular issues identified that relate to individual aspects of provision.

Members were advised that the College has in place a number of mechanisms to gather student views, and that the results of this survey will

ACTION by whom	DATE by when
Clerk	24.11.11
Head of Student Support	2011/12

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_ Chair

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inform the College's quality and improvement plans. The Committee was advised that the College also uses text walls and learner groups as mechanisms to gather learner feedback. Members accepted that the use of QDP as a national external company was advisable as this properly provides benchmark performance data. Members wondered whether the QDP survey could be carried out on line. The Deputy Principal confirmed that QDP are looking at online provision, but that they are unable to offer it at this point in time. Members were advised that the National Learner Survey is planned for November and that a report on this will be provided to the Committee at its meeting on 26 January 2012.

AGREED: to note the update provided.

**11.61 RISK MANAGEMENT**

The Deputy Principal introduced this item and confirmed that following executive review of the risk register, two significant changes have been made:

- 1) Data ownership – residual risk scores for this risk were increased to reflect the change in emphasis and the greater expectation on colleges publishing their outcome data. As a result, this risk has moved from a medium level risk to a high risk on the College's significant risk register.
- 2) Safeguarding and Equality & Diversity – the Executive were mindful of the College's work in this area and external assessment of progress had placed the College as outstanding in both areas. In addition, the Executive considered proposals under the revised Common Inspection Framework, that both these areas no longer be considered as contributory grades. Considering all these factors, the Executive agreed that the risk be removed from the significant risk register and be placed as a contingent risk.

AGREED: to note the update provided.

**11.62 AOB**

There were no items of additional business.

**11.63 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Clerk to the Corporation confirmed that the next meeting was scheduled for 17 November 2011 and that the sole focus of the meeting would be the College's 2010/11 self-assessment report.

Meeting closed at 7.10 pm.

ACTION by whom	DATE by when
Head of Student Support	26.01.12

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_Chair

Date: