

Minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 11th November 2021 at 5.30pm

GOVERNORS PRESENT: Angela Newton-Soanes, Chair
Ben Owen
Andrew Cropley, Principal/CEO
Andrew Spencer
Bev Whitefoot
Spencer Moore
Steve Sutton

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Maxine Bagshaw, Director of Governance
Matt Vaughan, Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality
Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement & Student Experience
Diane Booth, Assistant Principal: Quality & Standards
Nikki Slack, Assistant Principal: Health, Education & Service Industries
Brian Evans, Assistant Principal: Engineering

		ACTION by whom	DATE by when
1	<u>APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR</u>		
	Angela Newton-Soanes was nominated as the chair and Ben Owen was nominated as the vice-chair. These nominations were seconded and approved.		
	AGREED:		
	a) To appoint Angela Newton-Soanes as the committee chair for 2021/22		
	b) To appoint Ben Owen as the committee vice-chair for 2021/22.		
2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u>		
	The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made, and standing declarations were noted.		
3	<u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>		

Signed :  _____ Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

Apologies for absence were received from Kate Truscott and Jane Fishwick.

4 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9TH SEPTEMBER 2021**

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2021.

There were no matters arising.

5 **ACTION PROGRESS REPORT**

The committee considered this and noted that:

- item 1 was on the agenda as a standing item
- item 2 had been completed.
- in relation to line 3, the VP: CESE advised that E&D KPIs in relation to students would be presented to the January 2022 meeting.

VP CESE

Jan 2022

6 **BALANCED SCORECARD ITEMS AND ANNUAL KPIS – 2021/22**

The vice principals drew the committee's attention to the detailed report where the priorities are highlighted. The committee were advised that, at the time of writing this report, there were still some outstanding achievements (circa 200); however, it is not envisaged that they will impact on the data. The committee were reminded that the focus on data, both nationally and by Ofsted, is not what it used to be and that, under the EIF, there is certainly more emphasis on the student experience and what is seen in the classroom.

The detailed report was considered and a number of matters were highlighted, including:

- Section 2 – gives a summary of achievement (overall) in classroom-based learning. Key statistics are:
 - The provisional overall achievement for 2020/21 year is around 86.4%, set against the national rate of 86%.
 - When there is a comparison with the 'weighted national rate', the college falls short of national by 3% (86.6% against 88%).
 - At 86.6%, the overall achievement rate for study programme learners is above the national rate of 82.6% (which is circa 4% better). However, if compared to the weighted national rate, where only the qualifications the college offers are compared, the college's performance is just below by 1.4%.
 - If the college is really self-critical and only reports against



Signed : _____ Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

courses it actually delivers, performance against national dips slightly.

- Section 3 of the report gives detail regarding the proportion of deep dives graded at 1 or 2, including the proportion of ASPIRE elements met – key matters highlighted included:
 - The college has now built the ASPIRE elements into the curriculum.
 - The current position is amber RAG-rated.
 - The college has been really critical in this area and the statistics are influenced by the fact that the focus was on areas of provision requiring improvement in the previous years.
 - Of the seven deep dives conducted, five remain RI and two are considered to be robustly good.
 - There are six ASPIRE elements, and the college is seeing a real mix of areas achieving and/or embedding these. This is an essential element of curriculum intent and implementation and, therefore, needs to be a real focus.
 - The committee were again reminded that the college has been somewhat disproportionate in terms of the areas of focus.
- Section 4 details improvements in apprenticeships, including high grades at EPA – the committee noted that there is a more detailed opportunity to discuss this as part of the QIAP progress updates at agenda item 8.
- Section 5 provides an update in relation to attendance, including maths and English:
 - This is RAG-rated as red.
 - There were some teething issues with the new register system at the start of the year which has impacted on the first month; however, the college is working hard to address this. It was agreed that there would be a detailed report provided at the next meeting, in relation to attendance.

VP C&Q

Jan. 2022

In general discussion, it was explained that the new scan and swipe system had not worked in the way envisaged and had actually inhibited accuracy; therefore, staff were now working to backtrack to ensure that accurate data is on the system. The committee was given assurance that attendance was recorded in a number of different ways: e.g., paper-based, Pro Solution, etc. All registers were taken but there now has to be an accuracy check undertaken, which is time consuming.

- Section 6 gives an update on destinations of learners:
 - This is RAG-rated as green.
 - The college is really proud of the position achieved, given all of the challenges.
 - Section 6.2 provides some detail, and it is clear that WNC is ahead of what other colleges do in terms of capturing actual



Signed : _____

Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

destinations. The expectation is to have this closed down, save for adults, at the end of November; therefore, a full report will be available at the next meeting. The committee were advised that there is every reason to believe that this will be a very positive report.	VP CESE	Jan. 2022
- Section 7 gives an update on the community engagement strategy: - This is currently RAG-rated as amber, as this piece of work is not yet complete. - A small working group has been established to progress. - The college is aiming for an all-encompassing strategy. - Section 7.3 sets out the overarching aims. 7.4 looks at specific objectives. - The plan is to provide a draft form strategy to the executive in December. Thereafter, there will be a report to this committee at the next meeting.	VP CESE	Jan. 2022
A question from one member of the committee was in terms of social inclusion and CSR obligations, and they asked whether the college would be looking to house small organisations/community groups. The committee were advised that the college does do this and that it is predominantly in the evening. In addition, the college is looking at how the community may have options to access the college IT systems; however, this is a more complicated proposition.		
A question raised was in relation to section 2.2 of the report and the comparison with the weighted national rate. They asked if the 3% shortfall is broadly spread or in specific areas. The committee were advised that, in the main, it is broadly spread and the college does, in fact, have some really strong areas and also some 'rising stars'.		
When considering destinations, the committee asked whether there were any national comparisons to be made. Staff advised that this was not the case and that there are no real robust benchmarks; however, staff with Ofsted experience confirmed that, from their own contact with other colleges, WNC is ahead in this area. It was confirmed that partners participating in the external SAR validation process have all been very complimentary in terms of the work in this area.		
One member of the committee indicated that it would be helpful to better understand the extent of the adult and community curriculum offer, in terms of what is offered, student numbers, etc. It was agreed that an overview of this curriculum area would be given at the next meeting in terms of what it is, how it works, and how it links in with other parts of college provision. A challenge from the committee was to clearly link it to all engagement strategies developed.	VP C&Q	Jan 2022
A request from the committee was, when reporting on destinations, to	VP CESE	Jan. 2022



Signed : _____ Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

include HE data too. An example given was in terms of A-Level students progressing to university and/or the number of Oxbridge applicants. They indicated that they would like to better understand ambition and aspirations. Staff were able to advise that 48% of level 3 learners progressed to HE last year.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7

SAR 2020/21

The vice principal: curriculum & quality introduced this item and confirmed that this was a report on process and also documentation regarding position statements. He described this as a critical piece of information which really sets out intent, implementation and measures for impact. Key matters highlighted were:

- Section 2.1 – there has been real staff buy-in to the whole process. All validation meetings have now been held; these have included some governors and also peer validation by City of Wolverhampton College.
- Section 2.2 acknowledges that last year was an unprecedented year which was impacted by COVID; however, the college is making progress in all areas. English and maths is moving from strength to strength. The college is confident that a number of areas will be determined to be 'good' by the end of this term.
- Section 2.4 details the challenges in construction provision and, as a consequence, the college has had to recalibrate its approach. He described circumstances as a 'perfect storm' which have, to a certain degree, halted the improvement drive.
- Section 2.5 explains that the validation process continues with the expectation that there will be full board scrutiny challenge at the December meeting. The committee acknowledged that what was detailed was a very strong and robust process and that it was pleasing to see people engaging at all levels.

A question from one member of the group was how the current process compares in terms of engagement levels with prior year position. The vice principal confirmed that it was much improved and that there appears to be a real sea change in terms of staff confidence in the process. The college has made an investment in terms of staff CPD and has really demonstrated commitment to this process and the ability for staff to engage. This is leading to improvements and really fabulous dialogue. Staff are more reflective and self-critical and this, in turn, will inform changes to the curriculum and qualifications. The committee were advised that it is much more of a collective approach and the general consensus is that new leadership in place is having a really positive impact.

The committee all agreed that good progress appears to be being made



Signed : _____

Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

in this area and they felt confident that the board would be in a position to approve a final SAR for 2020/21 at the December board meeting.

AGREED: to note the content of the reports provided.

8 QIAP – 2021/22 PROGRESS UPDATE

The vice principal: curriculum and quality introduced this report and described it as a really robust document. He explained that the intention at this meeting was to focus on two specific areas requiring improvement: these are a) apprenticeships and b) tutorials.

The committee's attention was drawn to section 3 of the report, which gives information in relation to apprenticeships, and the vice principal indicated that the key question is whether or not the position is improving. He indicated that, in some areas, the answer is 'yes' and at a significant rate in terms of promotion, etc. However, there are some areas that have been significantly impacted by COVID. Section 3.1 shows that the overall achievement position is static; however, it has improved upon 18/19. The committee were reminded that there are still some legacy issues that are working their way through the system, although these issues are reducing.

The committee's attention was drawn to section 3.4, which gives an update on destinations, and all agreed that this was a really positive story. However, there are still a number of issues that the college is wrestling with, including:

- Use of OneFile
- Reviews
- Assessments.

Particularly in terms of frequency and recording for both reviews and assessments.

The committee's attention was drawn to section 3.5, which outlines the fact that the number of learners who have not had a review for three months or more has reduced from 33% to 23%. Whilst still not where the college needs it to be, it is improving. The committee were advised that there are some real sectoral issues in this area. In relation to the percentage of learners who have no activity recorded on OneFile, this is now 23%, which is a reduction of 12% since 11th August 2021. It was explained that some of this relates to connectivity and system issues. This remains a challenge but it was acknowledged that this is simply not good enough. In terms of the percentage of off-the-job training recorded, the position remains static and needs to improve.

The vice principal confirmed that staff do need to know that this is an area for improvement and is why the majority of areas are self-assessing as RI.



Signed : _____

Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

The committee then went on to consider the update provided in relation to tutorials. Key matters noted were:

- Section 4.2 explains how the tutorial programme has been completely revised and improved
- There is now a much more participative approach
- The college is currently rolling out the new programme
- The aim is to ensure that tutorials are valued as an essential part of the programme
- Section 5.1 provides a number of examples.

As an overview, the committee were advised that there is lots of good news in this area and the expectation is that it will move to a green RAG rating.

A question and challenge from the committee was in terms of apprenticeship delivery, deep dives, and the areas of focus, and they asked whether 'repeat offenders' were being targeted. Assurance was given that this is the case and that the college has the ability to drill down on an apprentice-by-apprentice basis and robust conversations are taking place individually with specialists. The committee were advised that the reasons for challenges are dissipating but, alongside this, there are some barriers in certain areas that the college has to help to overcome. A challenge from the committee was that the college may need, at some point, to consider performance management.

The committee raised concerns regarding the number of outstanding reviews in apprenticeship provision and made the observation that this does build up issues and consequences – for example, funding – and, therefore, the college has to consider not only quality but also the implications for funding and finance. They asked at what point the college really needs to start to move to impose consequences. All agreed that this was an area requiring continued scrutiny and focus.

The committee were advised that the college has looked at a number of different ways of completing reviews and the aim is to get to an eight to ten-week window, as the 12-week figure is just linked to funding rather than best practice and/or what is right for the student. Staff, however, acknowledged that the college has a way to go in relation to this. The committee were advised that there are some genuine mitigating factors which do influence in certain areas; however, it was confirmed that individual performance is being reviewed as well in a number of areas.

One member of the committee asked how the start of year is feeling in terms of soft skills development. Staff advised that, in terms of pure tutorials, there was a far better start to the year than before and there have been some positive student survey responses. The structure of the new tutorial programme has helped in this area. In terms of impact,



Signed : _____

Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

behaviour in common areas is better than it has been but is not without challenges. COVID has impacted upon social interaction, particularly the appropriateness of social interaction. The college will need to chip away at this throughout the year. The college is ensuring that there are many options that allow students to just get out and about in the fresh air: an example given was the mountaineering club. In terms of CEIAG, the committee were advised that there is a real presence in the classrooms this year.

When considering apprenticeship achievement data, the committee asked whether there had been any impact in terms of furlough and potential breaks in learning. The vice principal indicated that the college has tried incredibly hard to avoid breaks and, instead, maintain learning momentum. If new learning could be gained, the college continued to deliver. This sits alongside the fact that there is a general view that continuing learning is beneficial for mental health and wellbeing; however, a negative impact of COVID was that some students were unable to complete all of the units in the timescale envisaged. Staff advised that, at all times, the focus was on the health of the student; therefore, every attempt was made to avoid breaks in learning, and this may have negatively impacted upon data.

The committee asked whether the college has had any feedback in terms of the tutorial structure – e.g., resources available, etc. The committee were advised that the plan is to undertake a deep dive but surveys have not yet been completed. The plan is to undertake these so that they provide hard evidence of impact. The committee were advised that there are some positives being shared in the learner rep meetings and learner conferences taking place.

One member of the committee asked whether the college is intending to replace the DANCOP tutors, given that these support the increase in the percentage of students going on to university, particularly Russell Group universities. The committee were advised that there is a hiatus in terms of DANCOP funding and there is currently some national debate. Because of this uncertainty, the college has had to put a hold on staffing until there is greater clarity.

A challenge from the committee was that the information provided in relation to apprenticeship provision gives a sense of déjà vu and described it as 'a thorn in the college's side' for a long time now. The committee asked whether the board can be assured in this area and, specifically, what more can the college do.

The CEO acknowledged that the numbers don't show the progress required or desired and accepted that, in some areas, the college just needs to get better. He confirmed that there are some very challenging conversations with specialists taking place. The college is confident in



Signed : _____

Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

terms of its processes and systems, and it is now a matter of holding staff to account. He confirmed that the college has tried very hard not to hide behind the impact of COVID and that this will continue. He expressed the view that there is real improvement underneath the numbers, which are not where the college wants them to be. A challenge from the committee was that the college really needs to deliver on the numbers this year.

The committee were advised that, in relation to OneFile, the college has set up a training site so that it can be assured that all specialists can use the system to maximum effect. This has been provided along with CPD, coaching and training where needed. This has helped to identify any skills gaps and will allow the college to push forward further in terms of accountability.

In terms of the learner journey, the committee were advised that the college has created a much more comprehensive plan to ensure standardisation and compliance. The CEO advised that the college has had a 'churn' of specialists and, therefore, needs to be confident that all employed have the skills required. The team are looking to evidence the skills now and then; if specialists choose not to use the skills, the college will want to know why.

A challenge from the committee was in terms of the need to flag this as an area of concern to board to ensure that it is monitored over the next 12 months.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

9 PERFORMANCE REPORT – DATA ON A PAGE 2021/22

The assistant principal presented this item, and it was acknowledged that a lot had been covered through earlier discussions relating to the QIAP. The committee were reminded that there have been some technical issues still to resolve in terms of registers, and this is a priority focus. There is also some data still outstanding, which will contribute to the residual scores (e.g., progress checks), and it was explained that teachers have flexibility in this area to factor in sequencing of learning.

The committee were reminded that the national rate comparisons are from 2018 and, therefore, are quite dated now. No data has been provided in recent years because of COVID.

In considering the data, an observation made was that retention rates for directorate 3 are lower than others, and governors asked why this was the case. It was explained that some A Levels students have chosen to go back to their schools. The college recruited exceptionally well in this area and, therefore, it was almost inevitable that some would return



Signed : _____

_____Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

to school. The committee were advised that recruitment was 90%+ up on the prior year. The committee were given assurance that PMRs were undertaken and there are no particular pockets of concern but rather a more general spread of decisions taken by students to return to school.

The committee discussed the residual score and were reminded that, if it is zero, this means that all are meeting minimum target grades, and the college would not expect to achieve this at this point in the year.

AGREED: to note the content of the report provided.

10 SED (HE) 2021/22 DRAFT

The assistant principal introduced this item and reminded the committee that this evaluation document is written against the quality code and has to be in a very specific style. She summarised the landscape for the last year and reminded that HE provision has shrunk considerably given the transfer and partnership with NTU. There remain very few learners who are relevant to the SED, but the college still has to complete it in a prescribed format.

The college is now teaching out its HNC provision and, therefore, only anticipates needing to create one more SED report for 21/22.

The committee all agreed that the SED was self-explanatory and were happy to recommend to board to approve.

AGREED: to recommend that the board approve the 2020/21 SED as presented.

11 E&D (STUDENTS) – KPI/TARGETS FOR 2021/22

The vice principal: communications, engagement & student experience introduced this item and explained that this was the first report of this type. She has broken down EDI into a number of issues, including:

- 1) Incidents involving E&D – examples given were student chat postings on Teams, homophobic allegations, and racist allegations. There have been 23 referrals via CPOMS, all of which are reported via the safeguarding summary.
- 2) Data for 2020/21 – the college seems to have closed the high needs gap when looking at it from a macro level; however, at a granular level, there are some areas which do have issues to address. The BAME gap has grown and, therefore, is a key area of focus for this committee.
- 3) Destinations – the college is still working to finalise the data in this area and will report any gaps at the next meeting.
- 4) Progression
- 5) Attendance – with the caveat already reported in terms of



Signed : _____

_____Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

register system challenges.

- 6) Exit survey outcomes – which are largely in line with prior year and expectations.

The committee's attention was then drawn to the fact that there is an EHCP appeal ongoing. The committee were also advised that the college has made a decision to apply for a Rainbow Flag Award. It is well on the way to the submission deadline in January.

The committee's attention was drawn to section 5 of the report, and the vice principal confirmed that it has been possible to bolster the numbers for the single focus groups and every effort is being made to go above and beyond. The committee asked whether governors will be invited to this, and the vice principal confirmed that they would.

Staff governor Bev Whitefoot indicated that, in relation to the Rainbow Flag application, she would be willing to offer her support. It was agreed that she would connect with Sara Arnold, who is leading on this initiative.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

12

RISK REPORT

The vice principal: curriculum and quality introduced this item and drew the committee's attention to the summary of key areas requiring focus. He advised that the only red RAG-rated risk pertinent to this committee is the risk of grade 3 at Ofsted. He confirmed that there had been a very strong SAR process and the outcome was that just over half of the areas self-assessed as RI for last year, and there are still a number of areas in 2021/22 self-assessing as a grade 3.

He described the college as coming out of a recovery phase and one which is now 'starting to motor'. Key now is whether or not enough has been done to consolidate at a grade 2. The committee were reminded that at the 2017 Ofsted inspection inspectors were very critical regarding study programmes and, therefore, this is likely to be an area of focus at the next inspection.

The committee's attention was drawn to section 3.5 and they were reminded again that the college is currently completing position statement rounds with a view to whether or not there is evidence of improvement that can be captured. He advised that the use of OneFile will continue to be highlighted as a concern and a focus. Whilst there is still more to do, he advised that the college can be very confident in terms of its plans and the progress made in many areas at inspection.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.



Signed : _____

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Date: 13/01/2022

13

LEARNER VOICE REPORT

The vice principal presented this, which is the first report for the year and focuses on the exit survey. The committee were advised that there were some very pleasing results. Governors' attention was drawn to table 2, which summarises where the college needs to improve. There is work still to be done in terms of work placements, but this is not a surprise. Responses in relation to contact made by the college if there is an absence is a concern, and all agreed that this needs to be higher.

The vice principal then provided an update on the Your Voice meetings and confirmed that the most recent was yesterday, which was well attended. At training, the students were very positive about induction and the start of the year. Issues regarding buses are a focus, and the college is tackling issues that appear to predominantly relate to drivers. Other issues highlighted relate to catering, scanning systems for registers, and some operational aspects at Chesterfield Road (e.g., power cuts).

The vice principal indicated that there needs to be a piece of work to be done with the learner reps in terms of the use of Teams and professionalism required in this area. That said, the college is very pleased with the level of participation and this builds upon the 'rate my course' activities. As an overview, it was described as a very healthy climate.

The committee considered the QDP survey and asked whether it is possible to look at year-on-year progress rather than just a one-year snapshot. They also asked whether it is possible to look at breakdowns by department. The vice principal confirmed that this is possible and that the college does have reports by 'distance travelled' and reports by directorate. It was agreed that detail obtained in the next survey, which is the induction survey, would include the breakdown requested. It was confirmed that 'rate your course' data will also show departmental detail.

A challenge from the committee was that they would want to better understand the differences between areas of provision and the actions that are specifically being taken to address anything that can be improved.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

VP CESE

Jan. 2022

14

SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT – EXCEPTIONS REPORT FOR 2021/22


Signed : _____

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Date: 13/01/2022

The vice principal presented her comprehensive report. Key matters highlighted were:

- The college is seeing a significant increase in terms of the number of safeguarding matters to be addressed when compared with the prior year; however, at the same point last year, the college was on a 50/50 timetable.
- There has been a significant increase in CPOMS reporting in relation to attendance.
- Section 3 provides data in relation to concerns logged.
- Section 4 highlights seven referrals.
- There are 23 concerns in total, with 11 separate incidents.
- Late last week, the college received two concerns regarding serious sexual assault. One was a rape and two were inappropriate behaviours/serious sexual assaults. The college has followed DSE guidance to the letter in relation to these and has prepared risk assessments. They involve student non-attendance whilst investigations are continuing.
- Section 7 summarises the number of students who are on plans.
- Section 8 gives information regarding any attempts made to life.
- Section 9 gives an update on the Smoothwall system introduced, and it was explained that this only tracks activity on college devices.
- Section 13 provides information on outcomes data, and the committee were reminded that low numbers do impact on the data.
- Section 15 gives a summary of those with exceptional needs.
- In relation to Prevent, there have been three referrals.
- Detail is provided in relation to partner provider returns, and it was explained that most are from Inspire and Achieve.
- The college is participating in a pupil premium pilot.

The committee all agreed that what was presented was a very detailed report which gives assurance that staff really know what is happening within the college.

A challenge from the committee was when providing statistics – e.g., table 2 – to include the number of students as well as percentages.

AGREED: to note the content of the report provided.

15 **COMPLAINTS – ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020/21**

The vice principal introduced this item. Key matters highlighted were:

- 77 complaints in total.
- 45 relate to teaching and learning.
- Data is compared with 19/20 and 20/21.
- There are a high number of complaints that were influenced by lockdown: for example, students paying for bus passes that



Signed : _____ Chair

Date: 13/01/2022

couldn't then be used.

- Communication has been picked up as an area for improvement.

In general discussion, all agreed that, as an organisation, the college would want to use complaints as a way of empowering and that the key is not to overpromise and underdeliver. All agreed that there was a need to create a culture to embrace complaints as a learning opportunity.

A challenge from the committee was that, in future, it would be helpful to provide some positives, examples of case studies, and the learning opportunities that they have presented.

As an observation, the committee felt that 77 complaints was low for the size of the organisation, which gives confidence that staff are able to 'nip things in the bud' before matters progress to a more formal stage.

AGREED: to note the content of the report provided.

16 AOB

There were no items of additional business.

17 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

This was confirmed as Thursday 13th January 2022 at 5.30pm.

Meeting closed at 7.55pm.



Signed : _____ Chair

Date: 13/01/2022